

VILLAINY ANOK



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VILLAINY AMOK

A Sourcebook for *Champions*

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DEDICATION

Nothing arises in a vacuum, and *Villainy Amok* is no exception. Many inspirations have come before. In particular, in 1989, Andy Robinson wrote *Challenges For Champions*, a book of basic *Champions* scenarios. This book isn't a reproduction of *Challenges* — the scenarios are broken down into more generic bits, and cover far more ground — but I owe a debt to Andy's work that needs to be acknowledged. Therefore I dedicate *Villainy Amok* to Andy.

SPECIAL THANKS

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INTRODUCTION



After you've played RPGs for awhile, you pick up your share of horror stories.

One of the most memorable "how not to play *Champions*" stories I've heard involves a friend who joined a *Champions* group in Las Vegas. He came to the first session filled with excitement and trepidation. He loved superheroes, and was glad that *Champions* gave him a chance to live out one of his favorite genres, but he wasn't filled with confidence in the GM.

In the first session, the PCs foiled a bank robbery.

Next week, they foiled another bank robbery.

In the third session, they foiled yet another bank robbery.

The situation continued until the fifth week, when after the fifth foiled bank robbery, my friend facetiously suggested that next time, they foil a jewelry store heist instead. One of the other players, with a look of huge relief on his face, bellowed: "At last! Something different!"

Fortunately, most gamers have more sophisticated tastes. Even so, there's still something to be said for the classics: bank robberies, kidnappings, superhero weddings, mad scientist's labs, weird superpowers drugs. As employed by a smart GM, these adventures are a vehicle to provide fun tactical challenges, advance more complex plots, and offer players opportunities for cool character bits.

Genre staples speak to the heart of comic book superheroics — they *should* see a lot of play. But they can be incredibly repetitive. How many times have you seen action movies with almost identical plots, characters, and action sequences? How many movie sequels have virtually the same plot as the original? And yet, original or not, people keep coming back to watch them because these conventions provide frameworks for emotionally satisfying experiences (or, less pedantically, because they're as fun as all heck).

Villainy Amok is about these basic scenarios... and how to twist them so the players don't moan "Not another bank robbery!" when they see you start to draw the First Federal Savings and Loan on your battlemat. Like other *HERO System* products, this is a toolkit, an aid to help the GM build interesting, challenging scenarios as quickly or as painstakingly as he wants. Or if you prefer, you can use a random scenario generator to roll up a scenario, then flesh it out from there.

Finally, to spur your imagination, there are lists of unusual plot ideas for each of the scenarios, and a whole section called *The Plot Gallery*. Although players enjoy it when they feel like they're participating in a classic comic book scenario, there's always a way to use a basic situation and turn it into an unexpected thrill.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK

Each chapter of *Villainy Amok* is dedicated to a different classic scenario.

Chapter One, *Hands In The Air!* covers that perennial favorite, the bank robbery.

Chapter Two, *The Threat From Beyond*, deals with the alien probe attack — the initial thrust of an alien invasion.

Chapter Three, *Ask Your Doctor If Metatron Is Right For You*, features the drug that gives people instant superpowers... but with terrible side effects. Better living through chemistry? Let your heroes be the judge!

Chapter Four, *Burn Baby Burn!*, covers the building fire scenario. To some extent, the advice and suggestions it offers could apply to any "disaster" scenario.

Chapter Five, *It Came From A Mad Scientist's Lab*, reviews everyone's favorite chestnut, the scientific experiment gone awry. Whether it's a monstrous creation that somehow escapes or a backfiring experiment that gives the scientist weird powers, supertech labs are a font of scenario ideas.

Chapter Six, *Honey, I Shrunk The Superheroes*, is the comic book version of the movie *Fantastic Voyage*. The heroes, shrunk down to microscopic size, have to journey into someone's body, or some other unusual location, to save a life or resolve a problem.

Chapter Seven, *My Big Fat Caped Wedding*, discusses the social event of the season — a superhero wedding! While the bride and groom just want to tie the knot, the hordes of their enemies have other ideas....

Chapter Eight, *The Plot Gallery*, provides an enormous number of plot hooks, twists, and other suggestions to help you work the PCs into the scenarios described in this book... not to mention many, many others. The concluding section of the book is an appendix containing character sheets for the two new villains described in the book.

As noted on the back cover, the scenarios in *Villainy Amok* are designed for use with characters from the *Conquerors*, *Killers*, *And Crooks* and the *Champions* sourcebooks. However, you can easily substitute other villains if you prefer.

So let the adventure begin! Let the villains run amok and try to spill the blood of heroes throughout the nation!

chapter one:



Hands In The Air!

THE BANK ROBBERY



NOT ANOTHER BANK!

Although this chapter focuses on banks and bank robberies, most of the advice, suggestions, and plots seeds it contains apply just as well to other types of robberies that target easily-carried valuables kept in secure public buildings and facilities. Villains who get tired of knocking over banks can try their hands at robbing jewelry stores, museums, antique stores, art galleries (or private art collections), and the like.

All types of genre fiction have their defining moments, scenes, and images.

In tales of the Old West, one such defining moment is the sight of two men facing each other in a wide street under the blazing sun, legs splayed, hands at their sides, eager to see who can draw his pistol first — who will live, and who will die.

In Gothic horror, it's the image of a vampire hunter standing over an open coffin, stake in hand (with thunder and lightning thrown in for additional atmosphere).

Comic books have defining moments too. Few things more clearly define the world of superheroes than a costumed man arriving at a bank robbery, hands firmly planted on his hips, a smile on his cleft-chinned face, laughing while bullets bounce off his chest. Such genre-rich moments are the heart of a good *Champions* game.

Although the bank robbery is the quintessential comic book situation, generally you shouldn't use it as the focus or the climax of a *Champions* adventure. That honor should belong to a supervillain's most important schemes (or from events initiated by player actions). But not everything in *Champions* has to be a climax; there's room for good "utility" scenarios that keep the pace of the game from getting bogged down, which provide clues to some larger plot, or which foreshadow the arrival of a new villain. The bank robbery is a great utility scenario.

There's an adage in film: "whenever things get too slow, have someone show up and fire a gun". A bank robbery has a similar function — it's a great scenario to use when the game needs a "tension buster." If the characters are in the middle of a long investigation and things have slowed to a crawl and the players are getting frustrated, interrupt the game for 10-20 minutes with a bank robbery — it keeps the players with action-oriented characters from getting too bored. Just make sure the bank robbery doesn't take the other players away from the investigation for *too* long.

Bank robberies are a good scenario for small groups. When a GM wants to spotlight a hero or a pair of heroes (which can be particularly useful if a few players are running late for a session), draw a bank on the battlemat and have the available PCs foil a robbery. With a reduced cast of PCs, most bank robbery scenarios can be run in only a few minutes.

As with other *Champions* scenarios, the bank robbery should provide an entertaining tactical challenge. But its most important function is to reinforce the genre. When PCs foil a bank robbery, the players feel like they're playing superheroes.

ORGANIZING A BANK ROBBERY SCENARIO

You can organize bank robbery scenarios in many different ways. Here's the method *Villainy Amok* uses:

First, establish a tone. You can use bank robberies in everything from Keystone Kops-style comedy to contemporary thrillers, so you should decide on the style and tailor the other details to fit their mood.

Next, decide on the 4Ws: (W)ho's robbing the bank, (W)hy are they robbing it, (W)hat's the size and location of the bank, and (W)hen is the robbery taking place?

Once you know these basic details, put yourself in the robbers' shoes and map out their attack plan. Once you understand their basic plan, insert any plot complications (including, of course, the arrival of the PCs).

Finally, decide on any consequences if the PCs fail to (or in some cases, succeed) foil the robbery.

THRILLING ADVENTURE, TENSE HOSTAGE DRAMA, OR COMEDY?

There are many possible tones for a bank robbery scenario. Here are a few of the most common ones.

ACTION-ADVENTURE

In action-adventure bank robberies, you want to ensure there's a lot of combat and a relatively quick pace. The opposition needs to be able to put up a fight, but ultimately the PCs should win (although they may collect a few battle scars). If the robbery is part of a larger scenario, one or two bad guys should sneak away with stolen cash (or an item that's important to the plot), unless the PCs are extremely vigilant.

In some action-adventure scenarios, the bank robbery's sole purpose is to make a plot point — the actual crime isn't important, but it heralds the introduction of a new major villain, a big change in an old villain, or the PCs' first meeting with an NPC who's destined to play a crucial role in the campaign.

HOSTAGE DRAMA

In this tense, deliberately paced scenario, the bank robbery is the means to an end: a hostage standoff. The bank robbers get trapped, hole themselves in, and take hostages; now it's up to the players to decide whether to resolve the situation through roleplaying or a risky tactical assault. Except in comedic scenarios, the hostage

BANK ROBBERY FACTOIDS

In the real-world United States, there's been a dramatic increase in bank robberies in the last several years — since 2000, bank robberies have increased by 10% per year. Part of the reason for this increase is the security crackdown that followed the September 11 tragedy: because border security has been tightened, some criminals who relied on narcotics trafficking for cash had to turn to other sources.

Bank robberies are typically committed by young males who are narcotics users (50%) and repeat criminal offenders (17%). In smaller cities, career criminals may commit a much higher proportion of bank robberies (for example, in the year 2003 in Vancouver, B.C., 43% of bank robberies were committed by the same six professional bank robbers).

In the real world, robbing banks is a very risky proposition: the authorities catch about 84% of all bank robbers. More than a few of them get caught because of their own stupidity (e.g., writing the ransom note on the back of something that identifies the robber, smiling and posing for the security cameras).

The FBI recorded the following data for bank robberies in the United States in 2000:

- In 2000, there were 7,456 reported bank robberies. \$74,791,306 was stolen, an average of approximately \$10,000 per robbery.
- In 642 (9%) of these robberies, the perpetrators came away empty-handed.
- 412 of these crimes (5%) were violent; firearms were discharged at 129 crimes (2%), while explosives were set off at 2 crimes (0.03%).
- 166 people were injured in these robberies: 81 bank employees, 35 customers, 23 perpetrators.
- 23 deaths occurred in these robberies: 19 perpetrators, 1 employee, 1 customer, 1 unidentified person.
- 108 people were taken hostage.
- More bank robberies are committed on Friday than on any other day, most frequently between 9:00 and 11:00 AM.
- The modus operandi for these robberies were: demand note (3,782); firearm (2,145); other weapon (132); weapon threatened (91); explosive device used or threatened (302); oral demand (4,068); vault or safe theft (94); depository trap device (9); till theft (152).

takers are, at a minimum, just capable enough to pose a serious threat to the hostages, so the PCs need to take care.

COMEDY

In the spirit of *North America's Most Intellectually Challenged Bank Robbers*, the bank robbers are bumbling louts, and the PCs can do anything they want to them. Bank robbers break their fists on the heroes' proud jutting jaws, they panic when bullets bounce off the PCs' chests, and fall to the ground and weep like babies ("please don't hurt me, Mr. Hero!") when they experience even a mild Presence Attack. This tone, which is particularly appropriate for Silver Age scenarios, makes the PCs look nearly invincible.

CAPER

Occasionally, the roles get reversed — the PCs need to break *into* a bank to uncover evidence that's in a safety deposit box, retrieve records, get their hands on a dangerous item, or stage a robbery to fool people into thinking they've jumped to the other side of the fence. In this scenario, the PCs get to plan the robbery and worry about dealing with hostages, rival superheroes, and guards... and, of course, try to avoid getting caught.

WHO AND WHY: THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

A bank robbery that's being committed by an angry, non-superpowered ex-bank employee is *very* different than a robbery that's committed by a team of supervillains. Likewise, a bank robbery where there are no guards is very different than a bank robbery where a SWAT team storms onto the scene in the middle of the crisis. And then there are the hostages....

Here's the possible cast of characters for this scenario:

The Robber

Bank robbers have many different motivations and methods. Some of these archetypes are more appropriate to the real world than to the world of Four Color or Iron Age comic books.

The Attack Squad: These robbers are a typical *Com-mando Hero* band of highly-trained, well-equipped normals (in the Champions Universe, VIPER fits this role perfectly). Maybe they're robbing the bank to raise money for their organization, or perhaps they just want to terrorize the city; either way, they're a formidable challenge for most superheroes due to their tactical skills.

The real-world equivalent of the Attack Squad is *The Professional*. This career bank robber has figured out the system, he knows how to rob a bank as efficiently as possible, and he's a master of intimidation and hit and run tactics. He'll always enter a bank wearing a mask (or in a superhuman world, an impenetrable disguise), and he'll leave the motor running in his car and have a good escape route planned.

The Anarchist: The Anarchist isn't interested in the money — he wants to disrupt the establishment, destroy records, or vandalize the bank. Some Anarchists want to keep the moral high ground and refuse to harm hostages, but others view them as "collaborators with the system" and won't show them mercy. The Anarchist works just as well in scenarios with superhumans as he does with normals.

Desperate Dale: This guy robs a bank because he needs a large amount of cash very quickly. Sometimes it's because he has an urgent legitimate need (e.g., a kid who's dying of cancer), but more often it's an illegitimate need (e.g., a big gambling debt and an impending visit from the local legbreakers). In either case, he has nothing to lose. Desperate Dale usually



doesn't want to hurt anyone, but desperation often causes sloppiness... and when nervous people are holding guns, sloppiness breeds tragedy.

Devious Dan: This type of robber is pretty rare outside four-color comics. He's using the robbery as part of a more elaborate plan (and may leave behind a clue as part of his greater scheme), or he enjoys playing cat and mouse games with the police and local superheroes. His robberies are best suited to challenge detective heroes who investigate crime scenes after the fact.

Falling Down Man: This robber's a "victim of society" — of employers who treat their employees like game pieces, of a bureaucracy that delights in humiliating the little guy, of cops who treat everyone as the enemy. He was a normal guy before The System pushed him too far. Now he's robbing a bank and "making a statement." The challenge in handling this bank robbery isn't stopping it — it's protecting the hostages that he probably doesn't really want to hurt, and to stop the authorities from overreacting and killing him.

A variation on Falling Down Man is *The Discredited Cop Who's Staging A Desperate Robbery Just To Lure The Bad Cops Into The Open*.

The Gladiator: This robber's also more likely to be found in a superhero universe. In this case, the purpose of the robbery is to lure someone (the police or a superhero) into a fight. Gladiators often make the best opponents for the PCs, but they don't provide much of an investigative challenge. Sometimes it's obvious that the villain is just provoking a fight ("what's Firewing doing robbing a bank?"), but usually the heroes don't have a choice about getting involved.

The "In Over Their Heads" Gang: These robbers figured it'd be an easy job, free of complications and certainly free of superheroes. Well, they were wrong. They're the worst kind of amateurs, easily spooked and unpredictable. Even when things are going well, they yell nervously at each other — and when they aren't, they recklessly wave guns in a desperate bid to keep control.

The Insider: Nothing is harder to counter than an inside job. The Insider has the perfect robbery planned because he knows the system. Most of the time, the Insider stays on the sidelines, though a really sneaky one might pose as a hostage and secretly work for the bad guys.

Mr. Obsession: Most people rob banks to get their hands on large sums of cash quickly, but this obsessed wacko is less interested in the cash than someone who's taken a vow of poverty. Instead, there's something in the bank vault (typically in a safety deposit box) that he *must* get his hands on. Examples include a treasure (like a family heirloom) or a piece of evidence someone's using to blackmail him. Mr. Obsession is usually a superhero or a very influential normal who employs a squad of mercenary agents or villains.

The Nervous Drug Addict: This robber fits the most common robber profile in the real world: he's stealing money to support his drug habit (or possibly some other odd desire, as in the movie *Dog Day Afternoon*). He's a solo robber, and should usually face a single superhero (unless you want to have some unexpected event occur during the robbery that requires more heroes).

Partners In Crime: Like Bonnie and Clyde or Butch and Sundance, these two lovers (or best buddies) consider crime a social activity. Since their comradeship provides them with “everything they really need in life except money,” they often have no regard for human life and will blithely blow a hostage’s brains out without a second thought.

The Hostage

In the movies, and to a lesser extent in comics, there are distinctive hostage archetypes. Adding personality to the various bit players doesn’t just provide roleplaying opportunities — it can also change the tactical situation by providing obstacles (or unexpected allies).

If you decide one of the Normal or Competent NPCs will get involved in a fight with supers, Combat Luck is his friend. Giving a hostage one level of Combat Luck helps him survive a little longer in a dangerous situation. It’s better for a hero to visit a hostage at the hospital than view a corpse at the morgue.

The Ex-Marine/Off Duty Cop: Bad luck for the robbers — they’ve taken a hostage who knows how to react in crisis situations, and how to fight. Furthermore, he’s competent. He might make one mistake — possibly even a fatal one — but never more than one. He’s a good team player, and once the PCs earn his respect (which may take some doing, if he thinks he knows more than “a bunch of amateurs wearing pajamas”), he does whatever he’s asked to do, capably and without complaints.

The Fumbling Bank Teller: This nervous young person (usually a woman) is out of his depth, but he’s trying hard to cope with the situation (though he screams anytime something unexpected happens). Sometimes, however, he displays unexpected courage in the clutch.

The Helpless But Spunky Old Person: Before the bank robbery, he spent six hours annoying the bank teller by dumping a purse full of pennies on the counter and counting them (slowly). Now he’s a hostage, frightened out of his wits, but if the bad guys push him too far, he’ll spit in their faces, whack them with an umbrella, complain bitterly about how things were better in the old days....

The Jock: This guy’s similar to the ex-Marine, but not nearly as competent. He’ll do his best to help the PCs, but will almost always be too aggressive and get himself hurt. Initially, he comes across as an idiot, but sometimes redeems himself in the end (though he may tragically die).

Mr. “We’re All Going To Die!”: This person thought having more than one business class a day at community college was stressful. Now he’s convinced death is imminent, and he’s quite happy to share that news with the rest of the group, sending everyone into a panic — especially when the heroes have a chance to organize a quiet escape. Nerdy loan officers or squirming bank vice presidents sometimes fill this role.

Mr. Wrong: Another relative of the Jock and the ex-Marine, this guy’s a lot more destructive. He invariably makes the wrong choice — he’s too aggressive when the situation requires reason, too passive (and sulky) when it requires decisive action, and *never* does what the heroes need him to (he may even help the bad guys!).

The Off-Duty Doctor/Nurse: Almost inevitably the voice of calm or reason (though he’ll get aggressive if his back is against the wall), this hostage serves as a negotiator and a medic. He keeps repeating how badly the Wounded Guy is hurt to ratchet the dramatic tension up another notch.

The Weasel: This person could have been a contestant on a Reality TV show, but he didn’t meet their ethical standards. As soon as the situation starts, he goes into Darwin mode. Never mind that everyone can get out of the situation alive. He’s convinced that being a team player is idiotic, and that people only survive by stepping over other people’s dead bodies. When he’s a hostage, other hostages die. He usually dies in the end too, since the appropriate dramatic outcome for such selfish behavior is to die from some direct result of his own attitude — and because most heroes end up hating him as much or more as the villains.

The Wounded Guy: The heroes arrived on the scene a little too late to help this guy — he needs medical attention NOW. The Wounded Guy is often a middle-aged male who has a doting, worried wife who says things like “Oh dear, he’s lost a lot of blood, somebody do something.” Alternatively, the Wounded Guy might be “Captain Cholesterol,” a porky middle-aged businessman who’s just gotten out of his third bypass surgery and whose bad ticker’s finally about to give up the ghost.

Other Commonly Involved NPCs

Most bank robberies are over too quickly to involve outside authorities, but occasionally one gets bogged down in a hostage situation and ends up with a cordon of police and journalists surrounding the bank, making a complicated situation that much worse. Some of the people your heroes might encounter in this situation include:

The Corrupt Cop: This guy is secretly an accomplice who’s stationed nearby so he can make sure no unexpected complications arise. He’ll do his best to direct superheroes to other locations; if that doesn’t work, he’ll assert his authority over the situation and insist the heroes stay away and not make things any worse. If that doesn’t work, he’ll do his best to discredit and shift blame onto the PCs.

The Corrupt Cop’s associate is *The Frightened Partner*. He knows what the guy’s doing, but he also knows that if he double-crosses the veteran, he’s dead, so he keeps his mouth shut. Getting the Frightened Partner to talk is a challenge, but keeping him alive when the Corrupt Cop decides he’s a liability can be even more challenging.

REALITY CHECK: ATM MACHINES

In a world where superhumanly strong supervillains exist, the ATM machine would be less practical than it is in our world. In all likelihood, additional security measures would be taken to protect them from theft. ATMs would have to be more physically durable, armed security guards might be stationed at them, and the machines would be better monitored (up to and including alarm feeds to the local police station and/or hero headquarters). An alarm system the PCs can monitor makes a good way to draw them into a scenario; if the PCs like to patrol, make sure the ATMs have loud and distinctive alarms.

REALITY CHECK: “WHY CAN’T MY 16D6 ENERGY BLAST MELT THE VAULT DOOR?”

In 1945, four vaults in a bank in Hiroshima, each less than 200 yards from the epicenter of the atomic bomb blast, survived the attack with their contents intact. The vault locations were used as a focal point to survey the city — and provided a publicity bonanza for the manufacturer.

The Hapless Rent-A-Cop: It’s tough being a security guard in a superhero world. Sure, some rent-a-cops are lazy bums who are barely capable of scaring away an obnoxious teenager. But usually they’re poor, unfortunate people who try to do their jobs well but get knocked out at the beginning of the adventure, only to get woken up by the heroes, muttering: “someone hit me from behind, I didn’t see who it was...”

The Journalist Who Can’t Keep Out of Trouble: Most journalists in the real world are reluctant to cross a police line... but in the comics, they’re not legally-enforced barriers, just ignorable suggestions. Unfortunately, this attitude can put a journalist in the middle of a terrifying situation, forcing a superhero to rescue someone who’s potentially his harshest critic.

The Know-It-All SWAT Commander: When the SWAT team shows up, its members fall into one of two camps. The best ones (from the PCs’ point of view) are helpful individuals who’ll completely put aside their egos and follow a superhero’s every command (even though, at best, the hero probably has a fraction of a SWAT officers’ training and doesn’t spend hours every day practicing hostage operations). Or they’re hardcases with terminal testosterone poisoning who’ll ridicule the hero’s costume and scream at them to stay away from “their” hostages.

The SWAT team commander is particularly likely to fall into the latter group. This is *his* crime scene, dammit, and he doesn’t need any costumed pantywaist amateurs getting in the way. Sometimes the PCs can win over the Know-It-All SWAT Commander by showing they know what they’re doing and can positively contribute to the situation (though the Commander may get annoyed when he discovers the situation is really way beyond his abilities). On the other hand, the PCs may only get to make friends with a Know-It-All SWAT Commander when the even more obnoxious Know-It-All City Official arrives and makes everyone’s life a living hell.

The Lookout: This guy is a stooge. He’s there to keep an eye out for the cops and signal the bad guys if he sees anyone with a cape approaching the crime scene. He might be an unwilling dupe, or he might be a lowlife with dreams of criminal grandeur. In the comics, he exists solely to make a mess of his pants when the heroes arrive and perform an 8-10d6 Presence Attack on him.

The Wheelman: This guy serves a similar purpose as the Lookout. The typical gag is that he gets frightened, tries to drive away, and the PCs do something that makes him look ineffectual. Sometimes it’ll be a brick PC who lands in the middle of the street, braces, and lets him ram him (which bruises the brick and completely totals the car). Sometimes the brick PC gets behind the car and hold it up

so the wheels spin, or a cyberkinetic or gadgeteer takes control of the steering wheel so the car drives wildly around the street (and eventually crashes). Then there’s the ever-popular speedster who uses his speed to take apart the engine or remove the tires. Sure these gags are clichés, but players love them.

The Wino Witness: Not all bystanders are involved in the actual crime. This drunk may be the only witness to a crime and the PCs’ only lead (although his credibility is so low that even a novice defense attorney could shred him if he ever made it to the witness stand). The roleplaying challenge in handling this NPC is getting some useful information out of him. In a combat situation, he can stagger into the middle of a fight scene and provide an additional complication.

LOCATION

Banks come in all shapes and sizes, from the small bank that’s attached to the local strip mall, to the corporate office, to national gold depositories such as the US Treasury Department’s famous vault at Fort Knox. A supervillain who targets a small bank has a very different agenda than someone who’s hitting a major commercial bank

BANK OUTLETS

These can be as small as an ATM machine and a desk in a local supermarket. They’re less heavily guarded than a major bank, and probably have a lot of innocent bystanders doing other things. They won’t have savings deposit boxes or a large vault, and the relatively small amount of currency is probably stored in a small but sturdy safe.

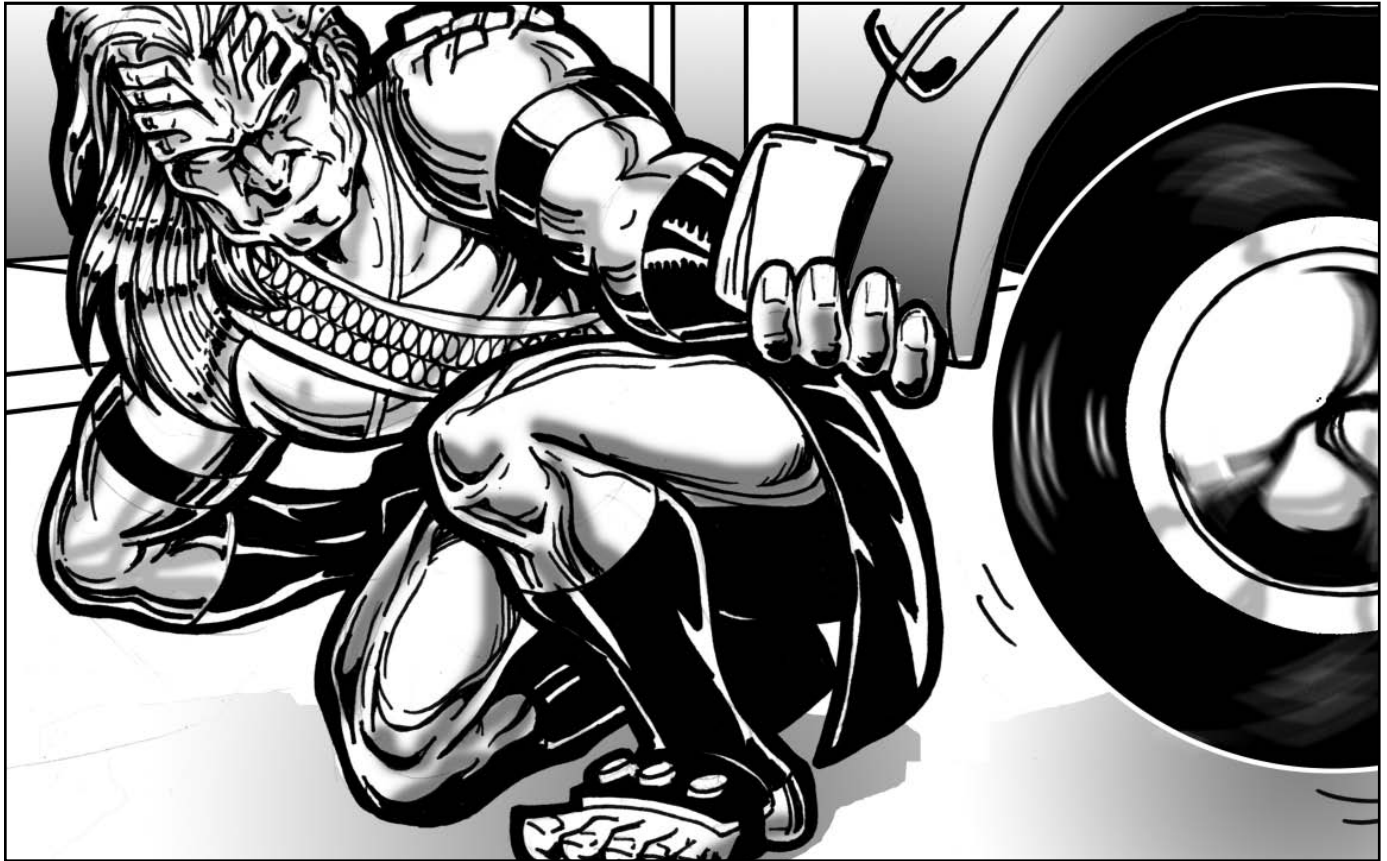
TYPICAL BANKS

This is a separate building devoted to banking, probably with a small section where ATM machines are located (possibly including a drive-thru ATM), a section with bank teller windows for traditional transactions, some offices, and a vault that contains safety deposit boxes and the like. The typical bank robbery (both in comics and in real life) involves one of these facilities.

RESERVE BANKS

In the United States, the twelve reserve banks probably have the largest cash supplies (between \$23 million and \$130 million in currency on hand, depending on the location). In a *Champions* game, these banks become tempting targets for greedy supervillains with the ability and/or skill to plan a way to rob them; they’re *heavily* secured.

Corporate bank headquarters and other major banking institutions are similar. However, they aren’t likely to have any currency (though dim-witted bank robbers might assume they *must* have



more currency than “small banks” and try to rob them anyway).

BANK SCENERY

A few items commonly found in banks warrant further examination.

ATM Machines

For many people, the ATM machine has become the *de facto* bank of choice. Hundreds of ATM machines supply cash in major metropolitan centers, including the typical *Champions* campaign city. An ATM machine has the following stats:

DEF 5, BODY 4

Access: Lockpicking at -3 penalty (Security Systems and Electronics are Complementary Skills)

Security: security cameras monitor everything in front of an ATM

As of 2005, most ATM machines have a 1,000 or 2,000 note capacity and store only \$20 bills, so they typically have between \$20,000 and \$40,000 in them depending on how recently they were restocked. Machines that dispense multiple denominations require one 1,000-note cassette for each denomination.

Most ATMs are embedded in a wall or similar structure. To rip one out, a character needs to do

enough STR damage to the wall to tear a hex-sized hole in it (see *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, pages 447-49).

Bank Vaults

Bank vaults are probably the most heavily built structure most people will encounter in their daily lives. Built of thick steel (on *all* sides — there are no weak spots, even in the floor or ceiling), a typical bank vault is set on a time delay and only accessible at certain hours of the day; inside the vault are usually rows of safety deposit boxes and/or various storage rooms.

To prevent robbers from killing hostages, bank vaults are *not* air-tight (though they might be in a superhero universe after the banks have encountered one too many supervillains with gaseous transformation powers).

A typical bank vault door has the following stats:

DEF 16 (Hardened), BODY 9

Lack of Weakness: 7 points

Access: Lockpicking (-9 penalty; Security Systems and Electronics are Complementary Skills). Additionally, the vault is probably protected by multiple security systems that the PCs have to defeat if they don't want to trip alarms (these typically have -6 or higher Skill Roll modifiers)

BANG, BANG, CLICK, CLICK

You can divide bank robberies into three types of scenarios, depending on when the PCs arrive at the scene.

The *Early Warning* scenario is when the PCs learn about an upcoming bank robbery and have a chance to prepare for it.

The *Crime In Progress* scenario is when the PCs arrive on the scene in the middle of the crime and must react to the crime as it's happening by gathering information on the fly and dealing with threats as they materialize. This is the most common type of bank robbery scenario in most campaigns.

Finally, there's the *Aftermath* scenario, where the PCs arrive at the crime scene after the robbery has occurred and need to piece it together.

The Early Warning Scenario

There are two benefits to Early Warning scenarios. First, when PCs receive advance word of a robbery, they can make clever plans and proactively prevent the operation from taking place. Because most superhero games are reactive (the characters react to what the bad guys do), a scenario that lets the PCs pre-empt criminal action provides a welcome change of pace. Second, they're a great reward for players who like to go out onto the streets, bust heads, and gather information. When players behave true to the genre, always try to reward them.

There are two ways to get advance word on a robbery: an NPC can leak the information; or a hero can force it out of an NPC (usually by beating him up, using telepathy, or PRE-based Skill rolls).

When information is leaked, it usually means the word is out that a robber is looking for "talent" (people with skills) or "muscle," which gives heroes a chance to disguise themselves and infiltrate an operation. The word may have gotten out because some lowlife NPC can't keep his mouth shut, but it could mean someone involved in the operation wants to stop it (or pull a double cross). Alternatively, the information might be leaked by a precognitive who wants to get into the PCs' good graces or who has his own reasons for wanting to foil the robbery ("The Sinister Swami... ur, I mean the Reformed Swami... has another prediction on the next major bank robbery to hit this fair city!")

Another possibility is that the leaked information is inaccurate (someone's trying to lure the heroes away from their *real* operation), incomplete (requiring further investigation), or incongruous ("Bulldozer doesn't have the brains to order a Happy Meal, let alone mastermind the robbery of the federal reserve"). Another possibility is that the villain himself leaked clues so he can play a game with the PCs — what's known as a "riddle crime." ("Anagram says the victim of her next bank job is 'Almost First.' I suppose the Second National Bank is just a tad too obvious... but wait! The president of Capital Investment Savings and Loan is Werner *Furst*, who's vowed that no costumed thug will ever rob his bank!")

Finally, there's the possibility that the information is false and the heroes are being led into a

trap, ambush, or (worse) a frame (see text box). If it's known the PCs like to bully officials into having things go their way, a villain might give the PCs advance notice of an imminent threat. When the PCs throw their weight around with reckless abandon and the threat doesn't materialize (and angry NPCs tell the PCs to never bother them again), it can be a humbling experience for Our Heroes.

A truly manipulative villain may anticipate that an NPC will betray him and use the stoolie as a conduit to feed the PCs misinformation. When the heroes realize that a once reliable source of information's been compromised, they have to take on a new task — keeping the source alive once the villain realizes he's no longer of any use.

Encourage the players to use Early Warning scenarios as an excuse to make complicated plans: adopt disguises; plant bugs in sacks of cash and track the bad guys back to their lair; spring an ambush in the most dramatic way possible. Allowing the PCs to get the drop on the bad guys may not make for the greatest tactical challenge in the genre, but it gives the PCs a sense of control that they don't often experience, and rewards imaginative players by giving them a chance to make plans that aren't likely to go wrong. One of the biggest mistakes a GM can make is to never hand the PCs an easy victory: everyone needs one once in a while.

THREE WAYS TO FRAME A PC FOR BANK ROBBERY

But That Doesn't Look Anything Like Me! Stage a late night bank robbery to lure the PCs to the scene. Use the bank cameras to take pictures of someone else dressed in a PC's costume sneaking away with sacks of cash, then change the time codes so the time matches the time the PCs were at the bank. Voila, instant frame-job. This is most believable when it's done to heroes with anti-social reputations. For extra nastiness, a frame can coincide with money troubles: the PC's favorite charity can be struggling in debt at the time (or someone who's known to be the PC's friend could be on the losing end of a lawsuit). Somehow the stolen money finds its way into the hands of someone the PC likes....

Foreclose This! A hard-nosed bank vice president/loan officer cuts off funding for a pet project (an orphanage, clinic, or other extremely worthwhile enterprise) because the loan is overdue. The PC has a very loud and public argument with the vice president that makes it clear the man's a heartless jerk (and for good measure, he hates superheroes, too). Shortly after that, the bank is robbed by a superhuman, completely dressed in black, whose powers match the PC's right down to the special effects. Even though no one can prove he's the bank robber, the PC has a major stain on his reputation. The media picks up on the robbery, points out other instances where superheroes put on different costumes to commit robberies, and a witch hunt is born.

I Love Telepaths: During a robbery, a PC is unexpectedly jumped by a powerful mentalist, who uses his powers to mentally paralyze him. The bad guys plant a stash of bills on him, and then the police arrive just in time to catch the PC red-handed. (This is particularly effective if the hero has Unluck and/or poor relations with the police and the media).

The Crime in Progress Scenario

In the comics, most bank robbery scenarios take place when the crime's still in progress, and most *Champions* games adopt this genre convention.

GETTING INVOLVED

There are many ways for a superhero to spot a Crime in Progress. The most obvious one is hearing the distinctive sound of a bank alarm or an explosion while out on patrol (“that came from the Sixth National Bank!”). The alert patroller may also spot another tell-tale sign of a bank robbery: the Suspicious Character, a man with a furrowed brow and dark clothes who's lurking around the bank (he's either about to commit a robbery, or he's a lookout for a robbery in progress). If the police have been informed about a robbery, a superhero might pick up the message by listening to the police bands.

A superhero doesn't always have to be on patrol when the crime occurs. He might be in his secret identity when he gets the news, forcing him to choose between stopping the robbery and his real life situation (“Not now! I've been waiting two years to discuss my raise!”). One interesting possibility is to have the hero in the bank in his secret identity when the robbery takes place. You can run the scenario by quickly cutting between the character in the bank and the superheroes outside the bank. However, this device may make the player of the “inside” PC feel trapped or helpless. As an alternative, put a DNPC in the bank, then use vignette scenes to showcase his plight.

BRING ON THE BAD GUYS

When the heroes are interrupting a robbery that's in progress, they generally do so at one of three dramatic moments.

Gimme A Sec And We're In

The robbers are on the bank doorstep, and they're about to blow the front door or disable the security systems. The PCs face two challenges in this situation: first, stop the robbery; second, prevent the robbers from committing a lot of property damage.

You can stage a similar situation inside the bank, substituting the vault door for the front entrance. The robbers are gathered around the vault, readying their tools and salivating over the fortune they're about to steal when they blow the door open — and that's when the superheroes arrive and spoil their fun.

This Is A Stick-Up!

This is probably the most common bank robbery situation. The robbers have the tellers, customers, and managers at gunpoint, they're rifling through cash drawers and being generally unpleasant, and that's when the PCs make their entrance. In classic comic books, when the heroes intervene, more often than not the villains will drop everything and attack the heroes.

This arrangement works well for villains who like to fight (or who have a strong code of

honor). On the other hand, cowardly villains or overmatched agents are far more likely to cut their losses or grab a hostage and use him as a human shield to fight their way out, especially when they've shot the hero a few times and he just laughed at them.

You can also play “Stick-Em-Ups” as a comedic scene. The bad guy who's waving a gun at a teller doesn't notice the PC's entrance, allowing the hero to show off a little or make a Presence Attack (“Don't tell me Nighthawk's standing directly behind me, that's the oldest trick in the book!”).

We Got The Money, Let's Book!

In this situation, the villains have completed the robbery and are just about to make their escape. It's a chase scene — the bad guys would rather escape than fight, so they're desperately trying to get to their escape vehicle (see “Wheel Man” in the character archetypes list) or scatter. One or two hired goons might delay the heroes by picking a fight, but for the most part the robbers want to get out of the area as quickly as possible. The challenge for the heroes is to hunt the bad guys down and keep them from escaping. If they're expecting trouble, the robbers may set up diversions (explosives, pre-programmed hologram cubes, remote control-triggered vertigo devices...) to throw the heroes off the trail.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Once you determine how the characters learn about the bank robbery and the stage of the robbery upon their arrival, you should give some thought to the forces involved in the scenario. Factors to be taken into consideration include:

How even are the odds? Combat can serve two purposes: first, it's a tactical challenge; second, it's an opportunity for the PCs to show off, swash their buckles, and feel cool. The former requires even (or tough) odds, while the latter is usually best achieved when the odds are heavily in the PCs' favor.

If you're running the bank robbery as a solo adventure or as a spotlight on a particular character, be careful about tough fights and long, dragged-out combats. Avoid battles between two bricks with high DEFs and RECs, low SPDs, and 75% Damage Reduction (or Martial Artists who like to use a lot of Martial Blocks) — it'll take *forever*. No single player warrants an hour (or more) worth of playing time in the spotlight if the other players get bored.

How skilled are the robbers? This dictates the plan of attack. If the robbers are hired muscle or brutes, they're likely to be noisy and prone to violence. If they're a team of skilled intrusion specialists, then they'll be more likely to sneak in after hours, and try to scatter (or surrender) when confronted by an obviously superior force.

What's their motivation? Before your villains stage a bank robbery, you should make sure you know what they're trying to steal. Most bank robbers are after quick cash (and lots of it), but not all. As noted in the personality types section, some rob-



bers are interested in special items hidden in a safety deposit box; others want to torch the bank to make a political statement, while others target a manager, teller, or patron for revenge. Some criminals commit robberies for cheap thrills or (in a superhero world) to win the title “World’s Greatest Bank Robber.”

What’s their plan of attack? If you have time, plot out the crime from beginning to end (as the robbers envision it happening) using a timeline or similar organizational tool. Ask yourself the following questions: How do the villains intend to enter the bank? At what time of day? Do they have any plans to handle the security system? Do they have any contingency plans to deal with the police or superheroes? How will they treat potential hostages? Is there anyone assigned to deal with them? Do they intend to get into the vault? If so, how? How do they intend to make their escape, and what’s their plan (if more than one robber is involved) for dividing the loot? Are there any objects that need to be resold? If so, who’s their fence?

IT’S ALL GONE SO TERRIBLY WRONG

The mere presence of superheroes usually means the villains’ plans have gone awry. However, there are a lot of other monkey wrenches you can throw into a bank robbery so it doesn’t turn into “just another shoot-’em-up.” Possible plot complications include:

Someone Gets Shot: And it’s not a PC who laughs at bullets. As the robbery’s taking place, something tragic happens — either one of the robbers delib-

erately targets a hostage, or someone accidentally walks into the wrong place at the wrong time, or a stray bullet clips someone. In any event, an innocent bystander has been shot and needs medical attention *now*.

A Fire Starts: One of the robbers brought a special chemical to blow up the bank vault. Unfortunately, the substance was extremely unstable and (thanks to a stray energy blast) it ignited, spraying flammable material throughout the bank. Worse, the bank’s fire suppression system was damaged (or disabled) and the fire is spreading quickly...

Now, The Real Menace Arrives: PCs aren’t the only people who can learn about an upcoming robbery and make plans. Why should a supervillain team risk their necks pulling a bank job when they can have some schmuck open the vault for them and then jump the robbers from behind? And now heroes who were carving their way through common thugs suddenly find themselves facing a much tougher opponent.

A Crazy Bystander Intervenes: Imagine if the PCs had to deal with a rogue cop who’s wife’s been taken hostage — a man who’d do anything to save her, but who doesn’t trust superheroes to save his life? A man who’d rather die hard than work with others?

Those action movie heroes look great in the movies, but have you ever tried to work with them in real life?

A Kaboom With A View: In the middle of a firefight, a PC discovers that a large package has been planted in the bank. It contains a bomb that’s big enough to blow up the entire bank (vault excepted).

Arrival Of The Rival!: At the end of a hard fight, who happens to show up but the media's favorite superhero! The darling arrives to score the finishing blow — just in time to be photographed by the city's leading newspaper photographer — and before you know it, the rival gets all the credit for stopping the robbery.

Aaaarggh!: A hostage (or if there are no hostages, someone in hiding who wasn't noticed until the worst possible moment) suddenly panics and puts himself into the line of fire. The PCs have to keep him from being killed.

Dirty Cops: An alert PC is asked to vouch for the evidence. He notices the money sack he handed to the police a few minutes ago feels a bit lighter. Is one of the cops a thief... or is there some sneaky teleporter operating in the area who's using the bank robbery as a cover to abscond with a few thousand bucks?

"We Have A Celebrity In Our Midst!": Do the stakes get higher when the mayor, the police chief, the governor, the billionaire, and/or the action movie hero get taken hostage? You bet they do. Do they have a much higher chance of being kidnapped at the end of the operation?

"Hey! How'd Black Harlequin's Face Get On the Twenty Dollar Bill?": What happens when the robbers realize the bank vault they just hit is full of counterfeit money? How did it get there, and when was it placed there? Was it really Black Harlequin, or just someone trying to impersonate his *modus operandi*? And while the money is the size of money from a popular boardgame, the paper feels almost exactly the same as real currency....

For a *really* dirty trick, make it so the Harleybucks have acidic ink that comes off and burns when it makes contact with human flesh (HKA 1 point, 1 Continuing Charge lasting for ½d6 Segments).

It's All An Illusion!: The bank robbery does not exist. Instead, someone was playing an elaborate game in one of the PCs' minds — and the PC breaks free from the illusion holding up a bank president in one hand, and the other fist cocked. (Or is *that* the illusion?)

I Want No Part Of This: A robber who's ordered to do something especially heinous (such as shoot a hostage) refuses to do it. If the PCs intervene, they can persuade him to turn his back on his fellow criminals.

Someone Else Got Here First: The criminals discover someone else robbed the bank first! The most dramatic way to do this is to have several criminals in the vault (away from the main fight) suddenly gasp in amazement and announce they've been double-crossed.

Switching Sides: One of the hostages (or employees) is actually a plant. He'll show his true colors when he's needed (and has a clear shot at a PC's back).

Who Do These People Think They're Dealing With?: During the confusion, one of the bank managers disappears — and a few seconds later, a powerful supervillain appears and begins to blast the robbers. The bank manager *is* the supervillain, and he doesn't want anyone messing with *his* stuff. (Villains have secret identities, too.) If that seems a little too obvious, perhaps the bank manager and the supervillain are unrelated, but the villain has something in the vault he wants to protect at all costs.

Aftermath Scenarios

In the real world, the authorities rarely get to a bank robbery as it's occurring. While the superhero genre is more dramatic than real, there's still some value in having the PCs arrive on the scene after the robbery's taken place, if only because it gives detective characters a chance to search for clues and perform their role.

TRACKING THE BAD GUYS

The easiest way to run an Aftermath adventure is to make it a "track the bad guy" scenario. The characters know who robbed the bank (the bank cameras caught everything on film) but they don't know where he took the money or (in the case of swag that's been pilfered) where the loot's being stored or fenced.

If you want an investigation to proceed as smoothly and coolly as they do in movies, television, and the comics, you have to be on the PCs' side (just like TV, comic, and movie writers are on the side of the protagonists in their media). You should leave small forensic puzzles lying around (a piece of clothing that contains residual background radiation levels equal to an area around a nuclear plant, soil samples impregnated with a chemical that's only found in a limited number of locations in the campaign city, or the like) and let the PCs work on them. (See *Dark Champions* for copious information about forensics and criminalistics.) Without clues, investigating heroes can't accomplish much. If any of the PCs have unusual Detects, use them. This makes a situation where the city's crack forensics unit missed something — but (the comparatively untrained and inexperienced) hero notices it immediately — much more plausible.

Alternately, if you're running a campy Silver Age campaign and don't mind "winging it" in the game, use the "Adam West Batman" method: no matter how absurd the conclusion, when the PCs form a hypothesis for a mystery, they're right! Then all you have to do is run the rest of the adventure as a reaction to what they do with their hypothesis. A similar (but more sensible) method is for you to formulate a solution to a puzzle, but listen carefully to the players as they develop theories, then integrate the players' solution as much as possible into your own. Don't become so completely infatuated with your ideas that the game slows to a crawl and the players feel like idiots because they've missed some obscure clue or haven't followed your train of thought. Likewise, on those days when the PCs

DYE PACKS

Dye packs are a real world strategy in the war against bank robbery. Banks place time-release dye pellets in money sacks when they're stored in a bank vault. The pellets are only triggered if the notes aren't removed from the sack within a certain amount of time.

In a superhero world where advanced technology exists, money sacks might have embedded micro-transmitters set to give a pulse transmission if they're moved too far from a central transponder in a bank. If possible, let the PCs initiate the bugging; that lets them feel cleverly proactive.

TEN UNUSUAL BANK ROBBERY SCENARIOS

1. Cold, Heartless Cash: The bank is possessed — it's alive, and it's sending out a subconscious telepathic message to get people to "donate" (*i.e.*, deposit) as much money into it as possible. Worse, it won't let anyone make withdrawals. The bank robbers are actually good guys, allies of a benign mystic hero who believes that if cash is removed from the bank vault, the demon possessing the bank will be weakened.

If the heroes take the fight into the bank, the bank perceives *every* combatant as a possible threat and attacks indiscriminately — alarms ring with enough intensity to deafen, acid shoots out of the sprinkler system, and so on. Additionally, the poltergeist will telekinetically throw around the furniture and the big desk where the deposit slips are kept. To defeat the possessor, the heroes have to destroy (or find a way to drive an evil spirit out of) the building's cornerstone.

2. The Over-The-Hill Gang: The bank robbers are actually a group of infamous 1960s bank robbers, the Vault Club, most of whom have spent several decades in prison. Their leader is dying of cancer, and he wants to pull one last bank job before he passes away. Complicating matters is that two Club members' kids are superhuman and eager to help, and a couple of others have stolen battle armor (including one person who can be described as "tough-as-nails except he's on his fourth heart bypass" — when his gang starts to lose, his heart gives out, requiring immediate medical attention).

3. Cornerstone: An alien refugee hid the soul of his people in the cornerstone of a bank building (it seemed like a good idea at the time). The aliens who are hunting the soul have tracked it down to the bank, but they believe it's in the vault, so they're disguising themselves as terrestrial bank robbers so they can enter the bank and track down the "animus." Of course, the soul also has a device to warn the refugee when the enemy's near, so he'll arrive on the scene at about the same time as the poor unsuspecting superheroes.

4. Does This Mean the Money's Less Valuable?: A genius who's a great scientist but not much of a physical specimen has invented a solution to the problem of lifting heavy money sacks — a shrinking ray (see page 112). What happens when a bank robbery consists of shrinking the bank and lifting the entire structure out of the ground?

5. He's Stealing What?: A metal-controlling master villain isn't robbing the bank for the money. What he wants are the thick vault doors, which he can easily reshape into an impregnable metal hide for his new robot weapon. He'll enter the vault and lock himself in until he's ready to make his move (at which point the vault doors get telekinetically sucked into the robot, which becomes a massive juggernaut of Silver Age comic destruction).

6. The Immortal Crime: Once a week, the same group of robbers rob a particular bank, something happens during the robbery, and the robbers die. A week later, they come back to life and attempt the bank robbery again. They die, and a week later, they come back again.

And again. And again.

Who's responsible for this bizarre situation? A mutant with resurrection powers? A demon who made a pact with the villains to help them succeed in the robbery (but never promised they wouldn't repeatedly fail and die before they succeeded)? Captain Chronos? What happens if they succeed — will this end the cycle, or will something happen (their car crashes, supervillains kill them and take the money) that starts the whole thing over again?

7. It's Art, I Tell You, Art!: This villainous bank robber isn't interested in becoming rich, powerful, or obtaining vengeance. He just thinks it'd be really neat to take a bank full of money, telekinetically fold the bills into origami cranes, and fly them around the city. Of course, a flock of hundred dollar bill origami cranes flying around skid row will probably create its own problems...

8. Root Of All Evil: Arriving at the bank after a robbery, the heroes discover that all the cash is gone, but tiny scorch marks have been left throughout the bank, concentrated near the tills and the safe. The authorities would like the heroes to figure out what happened. There are trace amounts of ash mixed in with the scorch marks, and a brimstone smell permeates the building.

The cash was actually transformed into fire imps (the higher the denomination, the more powerful the imp) by a sorcerer testing a new spell. He's playing a game with the heroes — he wants them to figure out what he did. Once the news disseminates into the general public, he'll blackmail the city by threatening to transform every piece of currency in town into a tiny, ram-paging monster.

9. The Bank Was Just Robbed By Who?: A series of robberies are being committed by bank presidents, vice presidents, and loan officers! This gang calls itself "The Corporate Elite." After taking doses of Metatron (see page 61), these middle-aged crazies are robbing banks. They're actually being manipulated by a mentalist (before he developed powers, the telepath served five years in a maximum security prison for bank robbery, and it's payback time).

The telepath runs his operation out of the city's elite country club (for Millennium City based campaigns, the Millennium City Golf Club in the city's Northside section makes a splendid venue). He works as a caddy, a perfect position from which to spy on the city's rich and famous.

10. What Do You Mean The Bank Is Robbing Itself?!?: A sorcerer has found a unique way to rob a bank — he casts a spell that transforms currency into "money elementals." The elementals walk out of the bank, smash ATMs, absorb the cash into their bodies, trundle back to the sorcerer and — *voila!* — daddy has enough cash to buy all the rare spell components he'll ever need. Unfortunately for the sorcerer, money elementals are easy to follow; they leave a literal money trail that attracts a lot of attention.

are whipping through your puzzles so easily that it makes you feel like a halfwit, feel free to add additional twists to keep the PCs on their toes. Striking the right balance between challenge and frustration is the height of the art of GMing.

COMPLICATIONS AND VARIATIONS

A common scenario in the comics that doesn't translate well to gaming is "How'd they do it?" scenarios. It might seem like a good plot hook for money to mysteriously disappear from a bank, but there are so many ways that this could happen in a superpowered world that you *really* need to provide direction to narrow down the possibilities — and that sort of defeats the purpose of a howdunit. But a howdunit can be a good way to introduce a new power for an old villain into the campaign ("but Captain Zanzibar can't become Desolidified!").

On the other hand, a type of Aftermath scenario that works well is the "who's got the loot?" complication. The cops chased the villains after the robbery, so they stashed the loot at a convenient drop-off point. Unfortunately, the drop went awry, and a petty criminal (or a schizophrenic who thinks it's a gift from God) found the loot. The original criminals want to get it back — and will gladly kill the person who took it. In this situation, the PCs have to find the loot *and* protect the fall guy from the villains, even though he's probably not going to be very cooperative if it means that he's gotta give up all that beautiful money.

Another complication is "the Human Shield Taken Hostage" situation. What happens when the villain decides to keep a hostage as insurance? Now it's not just a recovery mission, it's a rescue.

And finally, don't overlook the intriguing "Robin Hood" moral quandry. What if the robber gives the stolen cash (or part of it) to a charitable cause or distributes it to the poor? Will the heroes try to get \$50,000 back from the poor man who needs to pay for an organ transplant?

CHARACTERS

Here are a few stock characters for use in your bank robbery scenarios.

MARK NOVAKOVICH, HOT-HEADED BANK TELLER

15	STR	13	DEX	13	CON	11	BODY
13	INT	11	EGO	15	PRE	16	COM
6	PD	6	ED	3	SPD	6	REC
26	END	26	STUN				

Abilities: Martial Arts (Tae Kwon Do, with WE: Clubs, Staffs); Breakfall 12-; Bureaucratics 12-; Conversation 12-; Paramedics 12-; KS: Accounting 12-; KS: Superhumans 11-; KS: Tae Kwon Do 11-; PS: Hockey 11-; Seduction 12-

25+ Disadvantages: Enraged: when insulted, go 8-, recover 14-; Psychological Limitation: Ambitious; Psychological Limitation: Overconfidence

Notes: A handsome kid (despite badly breaking his nose in a tae kwon do tournament two years ago), Mark Novakovich is a young man who's going places — possibly including the morgue if he's not careful. This affable yet intense young bank teller is just competent enough to get himself into serious trouble. He's a business student who works at the bank as a teller, the first step toward a career as a bank manager (if he can't make it into the NHL). Mark respects superheroes and will follow their lead, but he's also a bit of a hot-head. Without direction, he's likely to do something foolish in a hostage situation.

Novakovich is a 6'1" tall Caucasian male, weighing about 215 pounds. He has brown hair, brown eyes, and a broad face that reflects his Ukrainian ancestry.

DANE PARIS, SWAT COMMANDER

15 STR	11 DEX	13 CON	15 BODY
15 INT	13 EGO	20 PRE	12 COM
8 PD	6 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
26 END	30 STUN		

Abilities: Running +3"; +1 PER with all Sense Groups; Martial Arts (Commando Training with +1 Extra DC and WE: Clubs, Knives); Fringe Benefit: Federal Police Powers; Bribery 13-; Bureaucratics 13-; Bugging 12-; Concealment 12-; Criminology 12-; Conversation 13-; Deduction 12-; Disguise 12-; Forensic Medicine 12-; Interrogation 13-; KS: Guns 13-; KS: Criminal Law And Procedure 11-; KS: The Law Enforcement World 11-; PS: Hostage Negotiation 12-; Shadowing 12-; Stealth 11-; Streetwise 13-; Tactics 12-; Teamwork 11-; Tracking 12-; WF: Small Arms

50+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features: Uniform; Psychological Limitation: Dislike Of Superheroes; Rivalry: Professional (other police commanders); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Some people live really complicated lives — and then there's Dane Paris. He's a crooked SWAT commander with mob connections the PCs will uncover if they look into his background. If they dig deeper, they'll discover his true loyalty is to the FBI, and that being a dirty cop is actually a cover story.

One thing that isn't fake, however, is Dane's loathing of superheroes. Throughout his career, he's tripped over one cape after another — an obnoxious cape-wearing goofball wrecking an operation here, a smartass vigilante who thought dumping the contents of a water tower on him was cool there ("you need cooling off, mister") — it's no wonder the burly SWAT commander feels an intense, contemptuous hatred of "the capes and cowls crowd."

In a hostage situation that doesn't involve working for the mob, Dane's a capable officer who does his job well. Unlike many SWAT members, he's cautious about sending his team into a dangerous situation, preferring negotiation to a show of force. His men, who don't know his allegiances, obey him enthusiastically. He doesn't get along well with anyone else, and he's also under orders from the mob to make superheroes look bad whenever possible, an order he carries out enthusiastically.

Dane is a burly Caucasian male in his late 30s, 6'3" and close to 255 pounds. He has naturally brown hair, but he's shaved it bald to hide his receding hairline. Dane holds conversations in barks reminiscent of a Marine Corps drill sergeant.

PATRICK STEVENS, CAREER CRIMINAL

13 STR	11 DEX	13 CON	11 BODY
8 INT	8 EGO	13 PRE	9 COM
5 PD	5 ED	2 SPD	6 REC
26 END	25 STUN		

Abilities: Running +1"; +1 PER with all Sense Groups; Combat Driving 11-; Concealment 11-; Interrogation 12-; KS: Cars 12-; Lockpicking 11-; Mechanics 11-; PS: Street Criminal 12-; Security Systems 11-; Streetwise 12-; WF: Handguns; Contact: a good fence 12-

25+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Probation Officer 11- (As Pow, Watching); Psychological Limitation: Greedy; Social Limitation: Criminal Record

Notes: Patrick Stevens is a career criminal. Having spent twelve of the last fifteen years in the slammer has not mellowed him or encouraged him to find a different career. His specialty is car theft; he's an expert at breaking into an automobile and driving off with it. Patrick's a big, tough guy who knows how to commit robberies, and that's enough to get him regular employment as a thug. He's also a bully, though not psychotic (he's more interested in making money than hurting people).

Patrick makes a pretty good "generic criminal" template for many scenarios. To make him a bit more of a challenge for superhumans, increase his DEX to 14, his SPD to 3, and give him 2 Range Levels with pistols, and 1 Combat level.

Patrick is a Caucasian male in his early 40s, with crew cut red hair and green eyes. Pat's 6'1" and thickly built (having made good use of the prison weight room and anabolic steroids).

JAVIER MONEZ, INTRUSION SPECIALIST

10 STR	14 DEX	13 CON	14 BODY
15 INT	12 EGO	15 PRE	10 COM
4 PD	4 ED	3 SPD	5 REC
26 END	26 STUN		

Abilities: Bugging 12-; Climbing 12-; Computer Programming 12-; Concealment 12-; Demolitions 12-; Electronics 12-; High Society 12-; KS: Gemstones 11-; KS: Law Enforcement 11-; KS: Safes 12-; Language: Spanish (fluent conversation); Lockpicking 12-; Mechanics 12-; PS: Criminal 12-; PS: Jewelry Maker/Lapidary 12-; Security Systems 12-; Navigation 12-; Shadowing 12-; Stealth 12-; Streetwise 12-; WF: Small Arms; Contact: Fence 14-; Money: Well Off

50+ Disadvantages: Hunted: FBI 8- (As Pow, NCI, Harshly Punish); Psychological Limitation: Loves A Challenge; Psychological Limitation: Sociopath; Rivalry: Professional (other safecrackers)

Notes: The child of Cuban immigrants, and a former street gang member, Javier Monez fought and self-taught his way out of poverty and into a life as a professional safecracker. This chain-smoking sociopath and self-made man is wanted by the FBI for involvement in over two dozen bank jobs. While Javier has made a comfortable living from bank heists, the big payday, the one that will allow him to move to South America, smoke Cuban cigars, and drink Jamaican rum for the rest of his

life, has always eluded him. He's working toward that "one big job" (although he'd miss the challenge and thrill of pulling a bank heist if he ever succeeded, and he knows it).

Monez is a Hispanic male in his early 30s with long brown hair, brown eyes, and a serpent tattoo on his arm (he almost joined VIPER in prison). He's 6'0" with a lean build; he's a snappy dresser with a thick Cuban accent.

SCENARIO: THE NATIONAL UNION BANK

Here's an example bank robbery scenario you can run.

The National Union Bank is the largest in Millennium City. Its Ford Street branch, while relatively small, is located in one of Millennium City's upscale neighborhoods, making it a tempting target for supervillain bank robbers. Today, someone's giving in to temptation.

The default villains for this scenario are Utility, Stormfront, Shrinker, and Ogre. They'll be accompanied by three or more goons with guns (use Patrick Stevens's stats as a general template) and one or more specialists (use Javier Monez's character sheet for these). See the accompanying text box for a breakdown of the bad guys' forces.

The villains have several goals in this robbery. First, it's a cash cow for other operations, so they want as much cash as possible. Second, Utility hopes to access bank records and use a new decryption program he's acquired to download personal information from account holders (which he has various uses for). Third, Miles Humboldt, a prominent multimillionaire, recently passed away, and some of his family's treasures are stored in the bank vault. These include a Renoir worth over ten million dollars, a collection of rare Australian opals valued at over six million dollars, and a pink diamond known as the Argyle Astoria, which is valued at three million dollars.

The Utility Players (as they might be dubbed) also tried to recruit Shadowdragon and Vibron into the operation. Vibron turned them down, but Shadowdragon didn't. You can leak word to the PCs about the robbery by having Shadowdragon face them a few days before the fight — if he's captured, he might tell them what he knows ("Utility plans to rob the Ford Street National Union Bank sometime within the next three days... I don't know the full details").

VILLAINS

Number Of PCs	Villains
1	Utility, 3 Goons, 1 Specialist
2	add Stormfront, 1 Goon
3	add Ogre, 1 Goon
4	add Shrinker, 1 Goon
5	add Shadowdragon, 1 Specialist
6	add Lazer, 1 Goon
7	add Howler
8	add Hornet

High Powered Substitutions: Mechassassin for Utility; Gargantua for Ogre

MATERIALS IN THE BANK

Material	DEF	BODY
ATM Machine	5	4
Anti-Telepathy Device	2	3
Bank Vault	16	9
Furniture	4	5
Giant Pig	1	5
Rope	2	1
Rope Holders	5	3
Security Camera	2	2
Table, Glass	1	4
Tables, Wooden	4	5
Walls	7	5
Windows, Reinforced	3	2

LOCATION

The Ford Street National Union branch is located in a single story building at the north end of a strip mall. It's of recent construction (1994) (the original was wrecked in the destruction of Detroit). Its sturdy reinforced concrete walls are built on a steel frame with special reinforced glass windows. Many of the bank's clients think it's too small, and the bank's having discussions with its neighbors (Tony's Textiles and Storey's Stationary and Office Supplies) to buy them out and expand.

The bank has a very high ceiling (30 feet, or 5"), except for a 3" ceiling in the section cordoned off for the ATM machines. The bank is currently running its "Junior Entrepreneur" promotion, giving away free plastic piggy banks to anyone under the age of ten who opens an account; there's a giant (8 feet long and 4 feet wide [1" x .5"]) *papier-mache* pig suspended from the ceiling as part of the promotion, and pig-shaped balloons are flying next to every teller's window.

THE PLAN OF ATTACK

The plan for the robbery is as follows. One of the newly hired tellers is a plant; she'll turn off the security cameras and pop a pig balloon on her teller window as the signal. She'll remain among the hostages for the rest of the scenario. The attack team is positioned in several mini-vans outside the bank (they're parked in the handicapped spaces, and each vehicle has a wheelman who also serves as a lookout).

If This Is A Solo Scenario

Utility's goons take hostages and loot the tills while the Specialist tries to open the Vault and Utility gets the records. Once Utility's finished, he proceeds to the Vault and helps the Specialist. The Renoir painting is their highest priority. Once that's in their custody, they proceed to the escape plan.

If This Is A Team Scenario

The Utility Gang, stationed in two minivans as described above, divides into teams and hit the bank. One goon will accompany Stormfront through the ATM entrance and round up hostages, the others will use the front entrance. Three goons will take hostages, round them up, strip them to their underwear, and hold them in the waiting area.

Once the bank's secure, one goon accompanies Utility to the bank president's office and serves as a lookout as he rummages through the files. Stormfront uses his telekinetic winds to attach an explosive device to the belly of the giant pig that's suspended from the ceiling; it's a C4 explosive loaded with a payload of ball bearings (RKA 5d6, Explosion (-1 DC per 3")). It has a remote control detonator that's in Utility's possession. When that's secure, the villains and the specialist(s) hit the vault. When they've acquired all of the treasures of the Humboldt Estate, they proceed to the escape plan.

If anti-telepathy technology is appropriate to the campaign, have the villains set up a small anti-telepathic device where the goons are holding guns on the hostages. It's a small device mounted on a tripod that generates 20 points of Mental Defense in a 4" radius (with one Continuing Charge lasting 5 Minutes). This is particularly useful if one of the PCs is overly fond of using a combination of Mind Scan and Mind Control (or Ego Attack) to solve a scenario without getting anyone's hands dirty.

If the heroes arrive and the bomb's been set, the villains use it to try to threaten their way out. Utility is bluffing — he'd *never* willingly kill a hostage — but the PCs may not know this. As an additional complication, when Stormfront went over the plans of the robbery, he realized Utility would never go through with this part of the plan, so he had a back-up detonator made, and he *will* push the button.

The Hostages

There are 6-12 hostages in the scenario (six, plus one per PC to a maximum of 12) and several complications to make life even more interesting. First of all, one of the PC's closest friends, Contacts, or DNPCs is among them (let the player roleplay the DNPC during the scenario). Second, Becky Savage, the teller who's actually a plant, is still among them, and she'll betray the hero's presence (with a sudden sneeze or cough) if she spots a sneaky PC trying to rescue them. Third, one of the other tellers, Mark Novakovich, is feeling rather heroic today, and will probably choose a stupid moment to jump the gunmen unless one of the other hostages (the DNPC) or a telepathic or invisible PC tells him not to.

The Escape Plan

Utility plans to return to the parking lot and drive away. There are several other vehicles positioned in a park several miles from a bank — they'll drive to the park, switch vehicles, and try to blend into traffic. Several hours later, they'll meet in a warehouse on the outskirts of town and split the loot. Proceeds from the Renoir and other Humboldt treasures will be divided among the villains, and the specialist receives a 10% fee.

If the PCs destroy the escape vehicles, the bad guys plan to take as much treasure as they can carry, escape on foot, and scatter. The goons have stashed clothing and other quick disguises in several locations (public men's rooms, garbage bins, and the like) within a six block radius. Also, Utility

knows that a dry cleaners in another nearby mall is a VIPER front. Utility is *not* a big fan of VIPER, but if he's forced to make a choice between giving VIPER a percentage of the robbery and not getting a penny, he'll solicit VIPER's help.

ENTER THE HEROES

The PCs should arrive on the scene at one of two points. First, they might receive advance word from Shadowdragon, Vibron, or a local underworld thug who was recruited for the scenario (in which case they can keep the bank under surveillance until they make their move).

If the PCs get the bank's (or the Humboldt estate's executor's) cooperation in moving the Humboldt treasures to another location, there's a good chance Becky Savage (the plant) will realize what's going on and inform Utility of the change in plan, in which case the villains try to acquire the treasures during the transfer.

The other likely entry point for the PCs is as the robbery's happening. The hostages have been rounded up, stripped, and are being held at gunpoint, the bomb has been placed on the belly of the giant pig, Utility is in the bank president's office, and the other villains and the specialist are just about to open the vault (having the PCs arrive just as the specialist says, "I've got it open, the loot's ours!" is a particularly fun touch). From there, the scenario plays out naturally.

LINGERING PLOT COMPLICATIONS

Bank robberies can be straightforward combat scenarios, and "The National Union Bank" certainly falls into this category. The disposition of the Humboldt treasures might resurface (perhaps the Argyle Astoria is an old Australian aboriginal artifact). In addition, the data that Utility collected might lead to plot complications in the future — perhaps there was something in the bank records he was trying to use to blackmail someone?

Becky Savage disappears from sight as soon as possible. If the PCs don't nab her, something reveals her involvement after the fact. She might pop up later as a minor criminal nemesis ("I'd be rich now if it weren't for those stupid heroes!") or as a new supervillainess.

If the heroes foil the bank robbery without complications, the bank manager thanks them profusely (and gives them piggy banks, should they want any). Mark Novakovich offers every-one season tickets to his minor league hockey team — and if any attractive PC shows interest, he'd certainly be open to a friendship or a romantic relationship.



RANDOM BANK ROBBERY GENERATOR

You can use the following tables to randomly roll up a bank robbery scenario's details.

Table 1-1: Time of Day

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-1

- 1-3 Morning
- 4 Afternoon
- 5-6 Night

Table 2-1: Bank Size

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 3-1

- 1 ATM Machine
- 2-3 Small Bank
- 4-5 Average Bank
- 6 Special (Reserve Bank, Depository, or other, at the GM's discretion)

Table 3-1: Crime Difficulty

Roll 1d6

- 1 Cakewalk (roll on Table 3-1-1)
- 2-3 Easy (roll on Table 3-1-2)
- 4-5 Hard (roll on Table 3-1-3)
- 6 Damn Tough (roll on Table 3-1-4)

Table 3-1-1: Cakewalk Crime, Primary Adversary/Leader

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 4-1

- 1-2 Overly Aggressive Mook
- 3 Talented Normal
- 4-5 Slightly Lowered Powered Villain (-2 CV, -1 SPD, -10 Active Point Attack, -5 DEF over benchmark character)
- 6 Aspiring Crime Lord (Normal Who Wants To Carve His Own Niche, use GM's discretion)

Table 3-1-2: Easy Crime, Primary Adversary/Leader

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 4-1

- 1 Overly Aggressive Mook
- 2 Talented Normal
- 3 Slightly Lower-Powered Villain (-2 CV, -1 SPD, -10 Active Point Attack, -5 DEF over benchmark character)
- 4 Normal-Powered Villain (Identical CV, SPD, Active Points, and DEF as benchmark character)
- 5 Slightly Higher-Powered Villain (+1 CV, +0 SPD, +10 Active Point Attack, +3 DEF over benchmark character)
- 6 Crime Lord/Normal With A Lot of Non-Combat Influence (use GM's discretion)

Table 3-1-3: Hard Crime, Primary Adversary/Leader

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 4-1

- 1-2 Slightly Higher-Powered Villain (+1 CV, +0 SPD, +10 Active Point Attack, +3 DEF over benchmark character)
- 3-4 Moderately Higher-Powered Villain (+2 CV, +1 SPD, +15 Active Point Attack, +5 DEF over benchmark character)
- 5 Much Higher-Powered Villain (+3 CV, +1 SPD, +20 Active Point Attack, +8 DEF over benchmark character)
- 6 Crime Lord/Normal With A Lot of Non-Combat Influence (use GM's discretion)

Table 3-1-4: Damn Tough Crime, Primary Adversary/Leader

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 4-1

- 1-3 Moderately Higher-Powered Villain (+2 CV, +1 SPD, +15 Active Point Attack, +5 DEF over benchmark character)
- 4-5 Much Higher-Powered Villain (+3 CV, +1 SPD, +20 Active Point Attack, +8 DEF over benchmark character)
- 6 Master Villain (use GM's discretion)

Table 4-1: Robbery Motivation

Roll 1d6

- 1-3 Money (roll on Table 5-1)
- 4 Steal an Item From The Vault (roll on Table 4-2)
- 5 Vandalism (roll on Table 5-1)
- 6 Special (roll on Table 4-3)

Table 4-2: Vault Items

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 5-1

- 1 Antique, Object
- 2 Art
- 3 Bullion
- 4 Jewelry
- 5 Book/Manuscript
- 6 Stocks and Bonds

Table 4-3: Robbery, Special Motivations

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 5-1

- 1 Anti-Capitalist Act of Terror
- 2 Assassinate a target at the bank (reroll if nighttime)
- 3 Acquire Bank Records on Someone
- 4 Destroy the Bank As Part of an Insurance Fraud Scheme
- 5 Ego (a dare, a wager, a competition to win the "Bank Robber of the Year" title, or as part of a "biggest crime contest" among supervillains, use GM's discretion)
- 6 Revenge on a Bank Employee

Table 5-1: PC Arrival

Roll 1d6

- 1 Early Warning (Roll On Tables 5-1-1, 5-1-2, and 5-1-3)
- 2-5 Crime In Progress (Roll On Table 5-2-1)
- 6 Aftermath (roll on Table 5-3-1)

Table 5-1-1 Early Warning Crime Source

Roll 1d6

- 1 Relative/Loved One Of One Of The Robbers Who Doesn't Want Him/Her To Get Hurt
- 2 Undercover Police Officer/Journalist Who's Infiltrated A Criminal Gang
- 3 Professional Stoolie
- 4 Disaffected Villain (Gives Information Voluntarily To Mess With Someone Else)
- 5 Loudmouthed Villain (Must Beat Up, Interrogate, or Telepathically Pry Information First)
- 6 Anonymous Tip From Someone Who's Furthering A Hidden Agenda (Use GM's discretion)

Table 5-1-2: Early Warning Information Comprehensibility

Roll 1d6

- 1-2 All particulars are known
- 3 The informant does not know the exact identity of the robbers
- 4 The informant does not know the intended time of the robbery
- 5 The informant does not know the exact location of the robbery
- 6 Two pieces of information are not known (Use GM's discretion)

Table 5-1-3: Early Warning Reliability

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 7-1 if desired

- 1-3 Information is completely reliable
- 4 The identity of the robbers is inaccurate (reroll if identity is unknown)
- 5 The time of the robbery is inaccurate (reroll if time is unknown)
- 5 The location of the robbery is inaccurate (reroll if location is unknown)
- 6 The entire warning is a fraud designed to lure the PCs into a prearranged trap

Table 5-2-1: Crime In Progress (Stage of Crime)

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 5-2-2

- 1 Crime In Progress: The Beginning (Villains Have Arrived At The Bank And Are About To Break In)
- 2-3 Crime In Progress Early (Villains Recently Arrived On Scene, Have Just Made Demands)
- 4-5 Crime In Progress Middle (Villains Have Rounded Up Hostages and Are Looting Them, About To Break Into Safe)
- 6 Crime In Progress Late (Villains Finishing Robbery, About To Leave)

Table 5-2-2: Crime In Progress (Number of Complications)

Roll 1d6

- 1-2 No Complications
- 3-4 Common Complications (roll on Table 5-2-2-1, Common Complications Table)
- 5 Unusual Complications (roll on Table 5-2-2-2, Unusual Complications Table)
- 6 Common and Unusual Complications (roll on both Table 5-2-2-1 and 5-2-2-2)

Table 5-2-2-1 Common Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 Hostages (If daytime, roll on Table 5-3-1; if nighttime, roll on 5-4-1)
- 2 Explosive Device (roll on Table 5-5-1)
- 3 Hunteds Appear (Reroll for each PC's Hunteds, the first Hunted rolled is the one that hits the scene — if none are rolled, assign an enemy)
- 4 Police Arrive On The Scene (and interfere with the hero)
- 5 Rival Hero Arrives On The Scene (and interferes with the hero)
- 6 Hostage (and roll again on this table)

Table 5-2-2 Uncommon Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 Other villains (GM's discretion) will attack the scene when it looks like the heroes and PCs have worn down each other.
- 2 One of the bad guys Switches Sides
- 3 Good Guy (non-PC) Switches Sides; if none are already present, fake cops show up and soon make their true loyalties clear, or a brainwashed hero shows up to help the bad guys (use GM's discretion)
- 4 Bank has already been robbed
- 5 Chemicals are accidentally struck by an attack, and a fire starts.
- 6 Robbery is an illusionary hoax or a training exercise designed by one of the PCs (consult your PC team leader first)

Table 5-3-1 Number Of Hostages, Daytime

Bank Size Number

- | | |
|------------|---|
| ATM | 1d3 Customers |
| Small Bank | 3+1d3 Bank Employees plus 2+1d3 Customers |
| Large Bank | 4+1d6 Bank Employees plus 3+2d6 Customers |
| Larger | Use GM's discretion |

Roll 1d6

- 1-3 Hostage are quiet and unremarkable, and will cooperate with the rescue to the best of their ability
- 4-6 Roll on Table 5-3-2

Table 5-3-2 Daytime Hostage Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 Hostage includes a DNPC
- 2 Hostage includes a villainous plant who will try to cause trouble
- 3 Hostages includes a reckless person who will jump the bad guys at the wrong moment
- 4 Hostages include someone who will panic at the wrong moment
- 5 Hostages include a wounded person/person with a heart condition who needs medical help
- 6 Special (roll Table 5-3-3)

Table 5-3-3 Special Hostage Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 One of the hostage will be a PC hero in his secret ID
- 2 Hostages will be wired with explosives set to trigger via motion sensor (roll on Table 5-5-1)
- 3 The villains will use mind control to force hostages to help them.
- 4 Hostages include a supervillain in his secret ID
- 5 Hostages include an important NPC (mayor, police official, newspaper publisher, business tycoon) who may turn into a kidnapping victim
- 6 Roll again, then roll again on Table 5-3-2

Table 5-4-1 Number Of Hostages, Nighttime

Bank Size Number

- | | |
|------------|--|
| ATM | 1d2 Customers |
| Small Bank | 1d2 Customers plus 1d3-1 Passersby |
| Large Bank | 1d2 Customers plus 1d3-1 Passersby plus 1d2-1 Private Security |
| Larger | Use GM's discretion |

Roll 1d6

- 1-3 Hostage are quiet and unremarkable, and will cooperate with the rescue to the best of their ability
- 4-6 Roll on Table 5-4-2

Table 5-4-2 Nighttime Hostage Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1-2 Hostages includes a reckless person who will jump the bad guys at the wrong moment
- 3-4 Hostages include someone who will panic at the wrong moment
- 5-6 Hostages include a wounded person/person with a heart condition who needs medical help

Table 5-5-1 Explosives

Roll 1d6

- 1-2 Explosive Device is a Dud
- 3-4 Explosive Device is Small (3d6 RKA, Explosion)
- 5 Explosive Device is Large (4½d6 RKA, Explosion, —1 per 2")
- 6 Explosive Device is Huge (6d6 RKA Explosion, -1 per 4")

Table 6 Aftermath Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1-2 None
- 3 Villains Took People Hostages During The Robbery (roll on 5-3 or 5-4 series tables)
- 4 Villains Lost The Money/Stolen Goods During The Robbery
- 5 Villains Left Behind A Bomb That Needs Defusing (See Table 5-5-1, Explosives)
- 6 Villains Distributed Money To The Poor And Needy

Table 7-1 Plot Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 Some money is missing from the bank (if the robbery was foiled, it was stolen beforehand). Find it.
- 2 The identity of the culprit behind the robbery is unknown. Figure out who was behind it.
- 3 A shadowy figure was observing the robbery, but vanished before he could be cornered. Figure out who he is and why he was there.
- 4 One of the victims (hostage, bank manager) approaches the PC and asks for help with a personal problem (roll on Table 7-3)
- 5 Something that the villains stole/tried to steal is the clue to a larger mystery.
- 6 Rare Plot Complication (roll on Table 7-2)

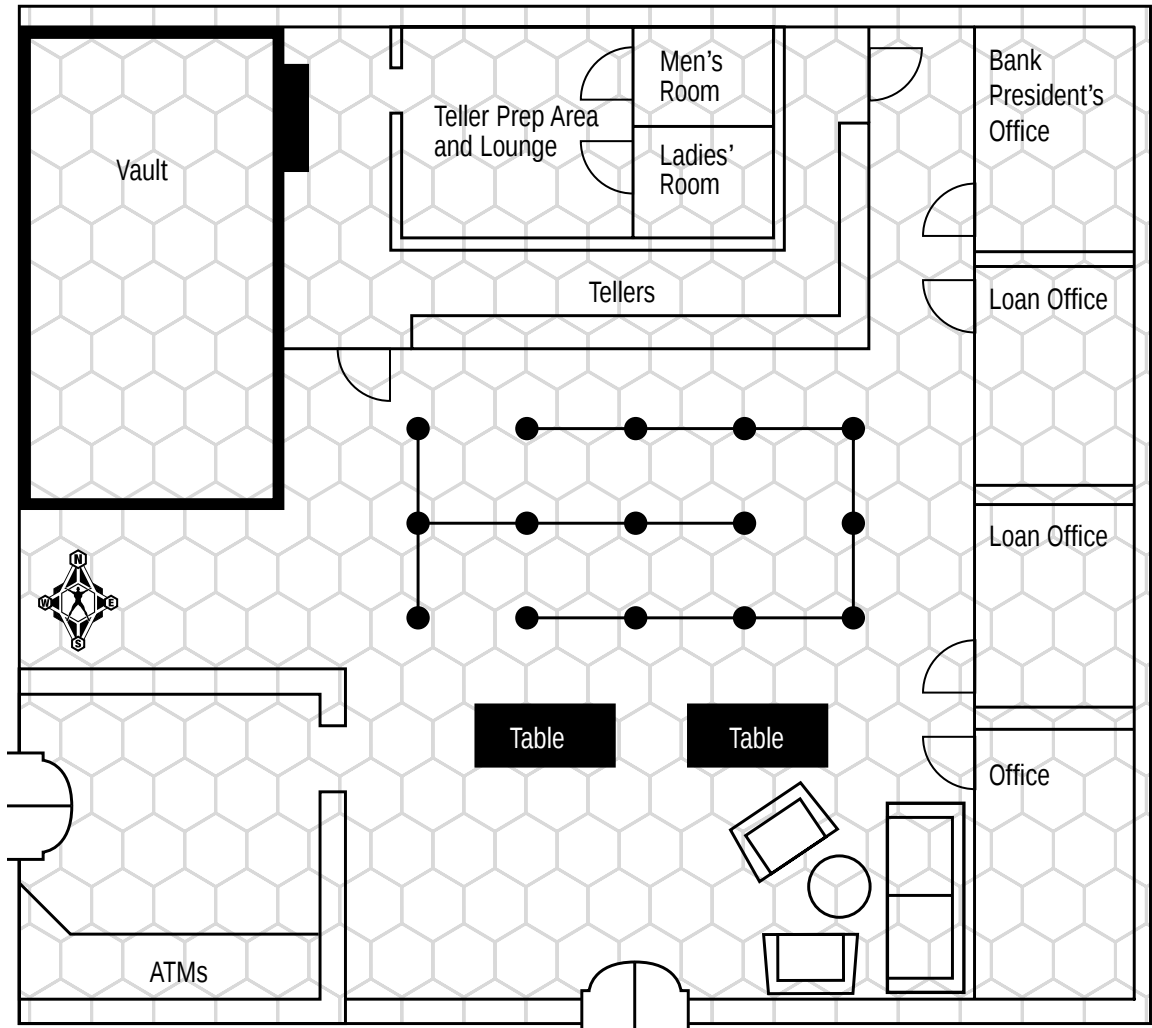


Table 7-2 Rare Dangling Plot Complications
Roll 1d6

- 1 One of the hostages becomes obsessed with the hero who saved him, and starts stalking him.
- 2 One of the robbers who was badly thrashed by the PCs is determined that this will never happen again. He'll either mutate himself in an experiment or get high-tech gear and become a supervillain!
- 3 The grateful bank decides to honor the PCs with a special award ceremony. (Note: if the Rival Hero complication was rolled, *he* gets the special award — and the PCs are asked to show up and pay homage.)
- 4 One of the victims of the robbery (hostage, bank manager) sues the PC for damages and emotional stress that occurred during the robbery.
- 5 One of the victims of the robbery begins training and (months later) becomes a ruthless vigilante with no love for the PCs.
- 6 One of the victims accuses the PC of stealing money from the bank during the operation.

Table 7-3 Dangling Plot Complication Requests
Roll 1d6

- 1 The requestor works with juvenile delinquents and wants the heroes to talk with them.
- 2 The requestor is a crackpot inventor who needs the hero's help because only a superhero is tough enough to risk testing his gizmo.
- 3 The requestor believes that one of his relatives is a supervillain.
- 4 The requestor works in marketing and has a *great* idea for a licensed product (movie, underwear, cologne...) or wants the hero to do a commercial endorsement.
- 5 The requestor knows someone with super-powers who's not very good at controlling them. He'd like the hero to help.
- 6 The requestor wants to draft the hero into a political race, and won't take no for an answer.

chapter two:



The Threat Beyond

PRELUDE TO INVASION



As depicted in four-color comic books, outer space holds a plethora of exquisite wonders, but the wonders pale in comparison to the many terrors that lurk among the stars. Worse, these terrors (for inexplicable reasons) are frequently obsessed with bringing misery to a small planet called Earth. It often seems like every alien species has a burning need to test Earth's defenses, gauge its natives' military and moral worthiness, and repeatedly practice impregnation techniques on terrestrial females.

The entire scope of "the alien invasion scenario" could easily fill an entire sourcebook, so *Villainy Amok* limits its coverage to the alien probe attack: the lesser activity that's prelude to a full-scale invasion. Even when you restrict yourself to this premise, there are many scenario possibilities: shapeshifting spies trapped on Earth trying to get home; isolated rural towns whose citizens are under a mind control that turns them into virtual zombies; exiled extraterrestrial princes desperately trying to escape their pursuers; alien gladiators on a Zen-like quest to find the perfect opponent (who inevitably turns out to be one of the PCs)... and, of course, the simple "beginnings of a military conquest" action-adventure scenario.

When aliens appear in a campaign, the heroes should take notice. Even the cockiest or most powerful hero cannot ignore the raw destructive power an alien armada brings to Earth. The probe scenario should demonstrate the threat the aliens would pose to Earth if they direct all of their attention to the planet — something the PCs have to thwart by decisively stopping the probe attack, of course! It should also allow PCs of extraterrestrial origin to interact with other aliens and show sides of their personality they may have to repress around humans.

PEOPLE MATTER, TOO

Alien war machines don't always make for great role-playing. When your social interaction with the enemy is limited to "We will crush you!" / "Sez you," there's not much room for player dramatics. These scenarios can be quite dramatic, but the drama comes from *other people's* reaction to the invasion and the tragedy. If you're running a long alien probe scenario, don't just focus on the aliens, also look at the actions of the people around them: the paranoia, the panic, the heroism, and the triumph that results when people overcome their fear of the "unstoppable" enemy.

ALIEN PROBE ATTACK BASICS

Every type of scenario has its own unique challenges. *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (an alien ship comes to Earth to warn humanity to change its ways) and *War Of The Worlds* (boom! bang! explosions!) are both alien probe scenarios, but they're very different in tone and execution. Likewise a scenario inspired by Dr. Who's *The Time Warrior* (a Sontaran soldier crashes in England during the Middle Ages and enslaves the population to repair his ship) is different than *The Sontaran Experiment* (where a Sontaran probe in the far future captures and tortures human specimens to determine how easily the species can be conquered). And of course, for a more terrestrial version of this scenario you could easily substitute "Atlanteans" or "mole-men" for "aliens."

First, consider the motivation of the aliens. Once you establish what they want, you can determine what kind of alien probe is involved in the scenario (and thus how the aliens hope to accomplish their goals), how the PCs can get involved, typical locations, and common plot twists.

PROBE MOTIVATIONS

In comic books, alien probes usually land on a planet to test its defenses as a prelude to an invasion (usually because Earth's location makes it strategically important in some great galactic war, because Humans are somehow "special" and thus worth conquering, or because the aliens are militaristic and *enjoy* conquering people). However, that's not the only possible reason. Other probe motivations include:

DAMAGED SHIP

A damaged alien ship crash lands on Earth, and the pilot's trying to avoid notice while doing his best to collect the technology prototypes he needs to repair his vessel. Unfortunately, desperation breeds misunderstanding, and misunderstanding breeds conflict.

For a more malevolent spin, give the pilot of the damaged ship telepathic abilities (either natural or technological) that he can use to transform a small town's population into psionically controlled zombies who work unceasingly to repair the damage (of course, the aliens' standard protocol is to kill the workers once they've served their function).



Alternatively, the damaged ship can be part of an *Injured Alien* storyline. The probe is trying to find someone with the ability to heal its master, but its search is either destructive (the telepathic ray it uses to sense whether people have the knowledge leaves humans in a coma) or gets misconstrued by the authorities as an attack.

THE DUEL

It's amazing how many comic book scenarios end up as an excuse to stage a *mano a mano* combat. Here the probe intends to capture a great human warrior to be used in a duel. Perhaps the probe was sent by the duelist, or maybe by a more sympathetic culture that desperately needs a duelist to fight an alien tyrant. For this scenario, the probe's weapons should be set to capture a PC, then quickly transport "the Earth champion" back to their home-world (or an alien arena world) for the big fight. In the Champions Universe, the planet Malva (and Malvan characters such as the villain Firewing) are usually involved in such scenarios.

FAKER

The alien probe isn't a probe. It's actually a device created by a terrestrial scientific genius who's posing as an alien invader to increase his invention's fear factor. Of course, when the alien probe asks for a thousand bars of gold bullion as payment for sparing the Earth, that might tip off the heroes that the villain is actually a greedy human being.

HUMANITY MUST DIE!

The alien race is at war with another race of aliens — and the conflict's reached a genocidal level. The probe was sent to Earth to collect genetic samples and determine if humanity is genetically compatible with their enemy. If humanity can breed with their enemy (and perpetuate the enemy species), the aliens will "sterilize" the planet. Of course, it almost always turns out that Humanity *is* compatible....

In this scenario, while it's a good idea to destroy the probe, it's more important to discover the probe's objective (and fudge the collected data to make sure its owners spare the Earth). On the other hand, proactive or vengeful heroes might decide to take the fight to the probe's alien masters....

IMPREGNATION

Why an alien would come to Earth just to inject its offspring into a human host (which bursts out of the body and eats its parent when they're born) is one of the great mysteries of the universe. Nevertheless some aliens do this, especially nomads who've just happened to enter Earth's sector and are searching for the nearest habitable world.

Alternatively, an alien species might not look on Human females as walking incubation chambers. An enlightened but dying species may genuinely seek Humanity's help to maintain its existence... but first it has to send a probe to determine if Humanity's worthy of such an "honor."

FIRST CONTACT

In alien probe attack scenarios, the first contact with the aliens doesn't necessarily involve the heroes or a violent confrontation. Some stereotypical possibilities include:

—children or kindly old people (in this situation, the alien is usually beneficent, and the first contactees soon realize that, and end up trying to protect the alien against the hostile and aggressive Army, superheroes, or the like)

—deranged people, drunkards, or other "unreliables" whose stories about encountering the probe are greeted with scorn

—criminal types who take advantage of the gullible aliens to commit crimes or improve the criminals' standing in the underworld

UNINVITED GUESTS

Capturing a hero and taking him to an alien world has one big drawback: it leaves the rest of the PCs on Earth while another PC is stranded light years away. If possible, you should find some way to keep the PCs together: give them a chance to stow away on the transport pod, have the transport open a warp gate that's accessible for a short time (long enough for the PCs to follow), have the aliens offer to bring the other heroes to the contest as official witnesses and/or seconds, or have the alien resistance movement contact the other PCs and beg for their help (which comes with a free trip across the galaxy).

LITTLE PROBE LOST

The probe isn't supposed to be on Earth — it was sent to another world (or perhaps even another galaxy). It may believe it's found its target ("on with the destruction!") or it may realize that it's damaged and try to gauge its surroundings before activating its weapons systems. In the latter case, a misunderstanding (such as an attack by hot-headed heroes or superstitious townsfolk) may cause the probe to activate anyway.

THE LONG DEAD PROBE LIVES!

Millennia ago, an alien probe fell to Earth and was worshipped as a god by the puny Human residents. Ages passed, and even though the probe was buried in an ancient cataclysm, it remained functional over the eons. Now, it's been released from stasis by an unfortunate team of archeologists who inadvertently reactivated its probe protocol: to seek out and "test" humanoid lifeforms.

A similar hook is the *Long Dead Sentry* scenario. Here the alien probe has no wish to interact with humanity, but stands watch over a long-lost piece of alien technology (or, more poignantly, the grave of its long-dead pilot). Only if someone actually tries to get past it does it become hostile... *really* hostile.

QUEST FOR X'KHAL YVBER'N

Aliens believe one of their most important artifacts is hidden on Earth. The artifact may be: a powerful (but extremely unstable) weapon prototype, a religious relic (telepathic remains of a prophet, lost sacred scriptures, necessary components for the internment of a religious leader...), or valuable data (a crystal containing weapon specs, battle plans, or a map to a lost civilization, the cure for an alien plague). The point is, they want it, and Earth unknowingly has it.

Another possibility is that the long-sought artifact is one piece of a greater artifact (*e.g.*, part of a key that opens a wormhole to safe travel, or enables practical time travel) or has great material value or cultural significance (it's a planet's energy source, the crown of the *true* alien ruler, a unique piece of telepathic art, or the like). If the aliens are travelling halfway across the cosmos in pursuit of an artifact, the odds are good it's *extremely* important.

Similarly, aliens might come to earth to capture a spy who's hiding on the planet. Sometimes the spy is a member of the probe's own race who's turned his back on his people for the love of a human (or he's suffering from amnesia and has forgotten his duty to his people; or he's just trying to retire in a place where he won't be killed). Other times, the spy belongs to the probe's enemy race; he can be sympathetic (he's a leader of the good guys in an alien war) or malevolent (he's trying to provoke a war between Earth and the probe's race, or he's secreted away a weapon on earth that has the potential to kill billions of people).

Spies aren't the only ones who might need to hide on earth. Alien criminals sometimes realize that this planet makes an attractive bolthole, what

with its primitive technology and lack of contact with the galactic community. Criminals run the gamut from monstrous (an alien scientist who wants to use the population of Earth as guinea pigs in an experiment, an old man who committed war crimes when he was younger and now needs a safe haven), to benevolent (a well-meaning thief who doesn't quite realize the value of the artifact he stole, an innocent who's being accused of a murder he didn't commit), to oppressed (an escaped political prisoner whose plot to overthrow an alien tyrant went awry).

Finally, the Earth may turn out to be a center of philosophical enlightenment. Perhaps it fits the prophecy of the birthplace of some galactic messiah (whose birth the alien probe wants to stop), an interstellar cult views it as "the promised land" (whose natives must be driven out or exterminated), or a philosophical group looking for the perfect religion to introduce to its people decides Christianity, Islam, Shinto, or Buddhism is the One True Faith. (Never underestimate the tenacity of someone looking for enlightenment.)

SAVE MY BABY!

The probe is actually an incubator for a superhuman infant, the last survivor of his race. It seeks an appropriate home for the child — a place where the infant can grow without interference from the authorities — and may ask the PCs to help find a suitable set of parents willing to take on the burden.

Alternatively, an alien infant may have gotten into the probe by accident. When he crawls free, he's frightened and uses his superpowers to cause destruction out of pure reflex. Here the PCs have to figure out what's happening and *not* beat the space baby into powder (aside from the fact that that wouldn't be very heroic, his very powerful parents are coming to Earth to collect him...).

Finally, there's the *Come Home, My Son* variation on this plot. A PC is actually an important alien who fled his civilization for one reason or another (exiled as a baby, considered a criminal by the current emperor) and the probe has specifically come to bring him home (possibly whether he wants to go or not). This is particularly amusing if the PC doesn't know he's an alien....

TEST OF WORTH

The probe seeks someone with the superhuman capabilities to solve a special problem. Perhaps its masters want the handsomest man in the galaxy (as a groom for the galaxy's most spoiled princess). Maybe they're looking for someone who's so morally perfect he can penetrate a force shield barrier generated by an ancient artifact that bars all but the most worthy. Perhaps they're a species of pacifists who seek a great warrior (you may need to explain how the pacifists got their hands on a space probe full of weapons, and why the probe doesn't qualify as a "great warrior" that can defend its culture, but hey, that's part of the fun of GMing).

WE NEED HUMANS

Aliens seem to kidnap humans all the time, especially from small isolated communities. There are many possible reasons for these disappearances: the aliens wanted to replace some townsfolk with shape-shifting spies; they need human genetic material, and the townsfolk were their best bet (in which case the people are killed and dissected). Perhaps the aliens need slave labor and made a secret deal with the town leaders to take away their criminals, delinquents, and troublemakers. Maybe no one was taken at all — they're actually invisible and intangible (they've been shunted into a parallel dimension as a side effect of the experiments the alien's been conducting to repair damage to his FTL drive, and the alien has no idea that anyone's gone missing). Perhaps they were actually given a choice: anyone who wanted to be genetically altered and turned into a superior alien-human hybrids willingly went with the aliens (those who refused had their memories altered so they forgot about the whole thing).

For a true 1950s cheesy movie feel, the one plot that captures that sub-genre is "the aliens need our women." And, inevitably, the alien prince always falls for the hero's girlfriend/DNPC. Other classic alien movies involve aliens coming to earth for our supply of water or some other resource. This requires even more of a willing suspension of disbelief than most scenarios (except for certain organic compounds, it's hard to think of anything that a culture with spacefaring technology couldn't manufacture), but some players would rather enjoy a classic plot than worry about bad science.

TARGET LOCATIONS

Once you've decided on the probe's motivation, you need to find a place for it to land. Common probe landing spots include:

Downtown: This is a simple one: the aliens land in the center of downtown and begin to tear up the joint. The heroes arrive to defend the place, and combat ensues. Inevitably a lot of collateral damage occurs when alien probes attack in populated centers. The heroes may not be enthused, but a genre-faithful GM should play up this angle.

Aliens that land in the middle of populated areas usually want to intimidate the population, or they're deliberately trying to attract someone's attention (exiled alien princes, the legendary galactic Super-Warrior whom the oracle says is their best hope of saving their people). If the aliens come to issue a "do not develop space travel until you've become civilized" ultimatum or similar threat, they have to land in a public place.

Local Military Base: The aliens want to strike for the jugular by taking out Earth's military capabilities. Doing a Pearl Harbor strike against the local military is a great way for the aliens to show they mean business. It also ensures (in most situations) that the local superheroes are the first ones on the scene.

Out In the Desert: There's a tradition of spacecraft crashing in the desert in the comics and pulp sci-

fi. For some reason, aliens who crash in the desert tend to be more benign than those who land elsewhere; they often require repairs or a rescue from hostile terrestrials.

Small Town In Rural America: This is the location for the most insidious alien plots — the paranoid people of this small backwater are taken over by the aliens and forced to obey their every command. To the casual observer, it's a peaceful small town, but lurking behind the façade of normalcy are the most malevolent beings anyone will ever encounter.

Snowbound Wilderness: For some reason, remote icy wilderness areas tend to attract plant-based probes, which lay dormant in the ice for millennia until global warming, scientific survey teams, and/or thugs working for mad botanists unearth them.

The Deep Woods: Fifty miles out of town, noticed by only a few drifters and a small boy, an alien probe lands on Earth. The deep woods is usually close enough to civilization that the probe can bide its time, figure out what's going on, attack isolated forest park stations and power stations, and then stage a devastating assault once it's up to full strength.

CHARACTERS

Characters in an alien probe scenario can be as varied as the probes themselves. Most scenarios are based on a classic movie or television series, which suggests certain stock characters, though you shouldn't feel constrained by such things. For example, if you want the Army to act intelligent and restrained, you don't need to have a stereotypical cigar-chomping, trigger-happy general on the scene just because most 1950s B-movies had one.

If the scenario is a pure slugfest, then a big cast isn't needed, but if the scenario involves a mystery, you need a large cast of characters. Look at the list, and match the characters to the type of scenario you'd like.

PROBE TYPES

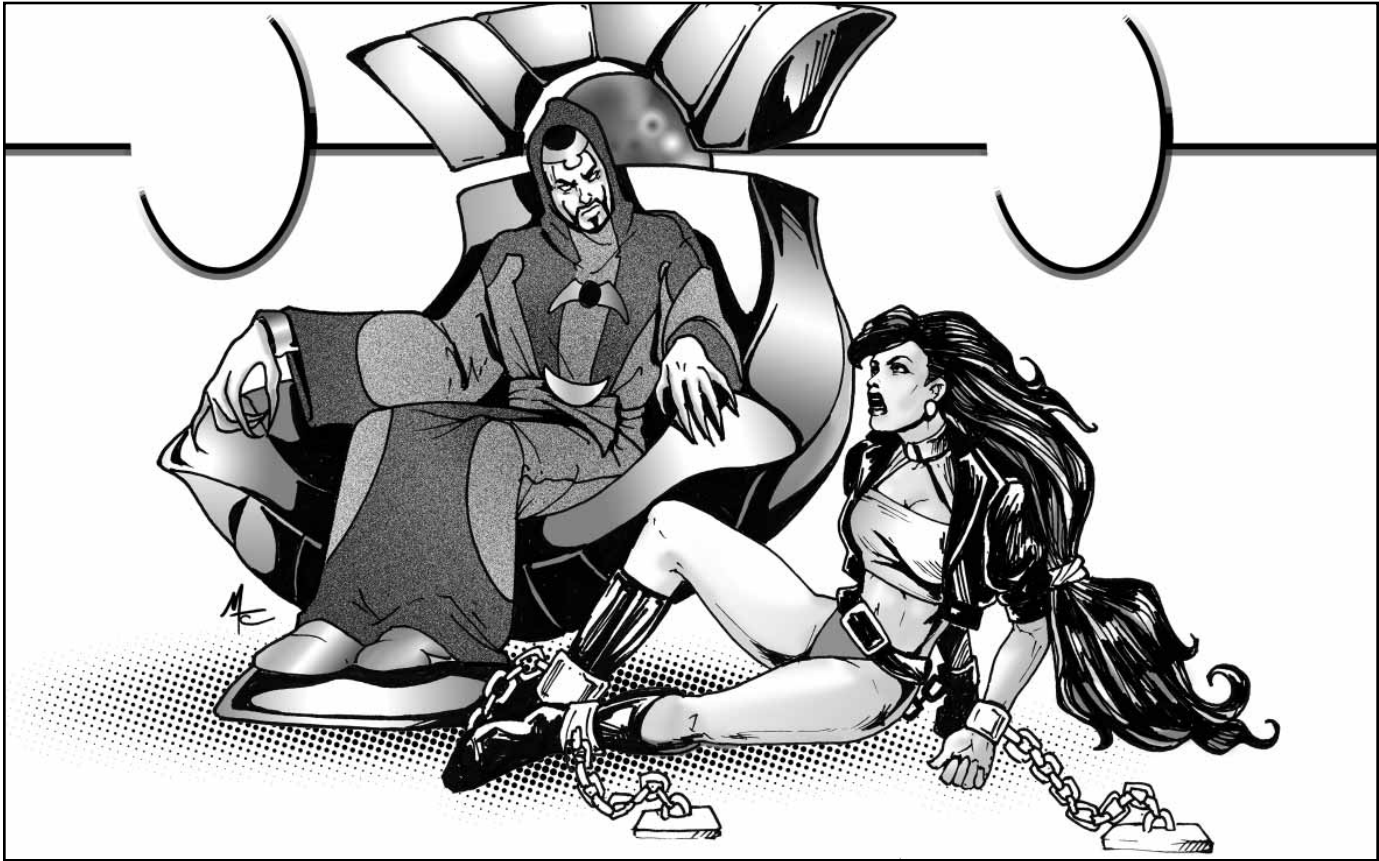
The main character in the scenario is the probe, which can run the gamut from a standard war machine to some genuine SF oddities. Probe types include:

The Biological Probe: This alien isn't a machine, it's an organism. Often it's a blob that dissolves (and absorbs) anything it touches and can only be harmed by certain esoteric attack forms. Other times, it's an alien being designed to change shape into the image of the first sentient life form it touches (which runs around in the buff until it's assimilated enough human culture to know how to clothe itself), but has vast powers.

The Ecosystem Probe: Perhaps the weirdest probe of them all, the ecosystem probe doesn't directly attack its target. Instead it sends out a variety of spores, pollens, and other lifeforms to test the surrounding environment and transform it into something where it can thrive. It may also want to take

FROM THE MOON TO THE EARTH

While alien probes attack the Earth, don't overlook the possibility of taking the fight to a mother ship or a small home base on the Moon, particularly if space technology in the campaign is not well-developed (which would explain why the world didn't notice them) and the PCs have a way to get there.



samples of all the creatures and plants it encounters back to its home planet.

Giant Robot! This probe practically has its own sub-genre; the “send a giant humanoid shaped robot to earth to test its defenses” plot is a classic. The giant robot is a merciless engine of destruction, but sometimes a plucky little boy either befriends the robot (when it’s suffering from amnesia from damage sustained during its the landing) or crawls into the emergency pilot compartment and turns it away from the path of evil (at which point the army and the government forces hunting the robot often become the villain of the scenario).

Master And Commander: A very good choice for comic book scenarios — start with a giant robot or a tripod war-giant and put it under the control of an alien humanoid commander who’s served by the engine of destruction. This allows for both human-scale interaction and a big fight.

The Swarm: Similar to the other invaders, but these are creepy ant-like aliens rather than frightening alien war machines. They land, gather resources, and construct a terrible weapon to advance their agenda (this process takes time, so the PCs can launch an assault on the weapon just as it’s about to come online).

Similar to the Swarm are the Mind Worms (also known as “body stealers”). This is a central organism that implants controls in humans and mentally dominates them so they become a hive that carry out the will of the central authority.

The Tripod War-Giant: The tripod war-giant has been wreaking havoc since the days of H.G. Wells. This probe’s agenda is purely military: attack as

hard as possible; measure how well the natives fight back; and if it does enough damage, launch an invasion. Alternatively, if the aliens get their heads handed to them, they might launch an invasion to “provide their warriors with a *real* challenge” (or use a much disliked race/social class as cannon fodder in a bloody war solely to get rid of them without troubling the general population).

The Vivisector: This alien isn’t interested in conquest, he wants an intimate knowledge of human biology. It specializes in grabbing humans, dissecting them, giving them proctology exams, mutating people into human-alien hybrids, and injecting alien embryos into them.

NON-ALIEN CHARACTERS

Besides the aliens and their probe(s), there are plenty of Humans for the PCs to interact with in these scenarios:

The Advance Scout With An Alien Heart Of Gold: The probe sent out a humanoid creature to mingle with the local population and determine what it’s about... only to fall in love with one of the natives and turn against his master. In the end, the advance scout often dies a heroic death (or is exiled to earth by his master).

The Crank Who’s Right: Just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean they’re not out to get you. The same principle applies to this man: just because he wears tinfoil hats and predicted that the world would come to an end 23 years ago, it doesn’t mean his reports of alien invaders are wrong. The Crank Who’s Right is the only person who’s nosy enough to poke around and discover the truth, although

STRANGE ALIEN LIGHTS

People are always seeing strange lights when aliens take an interest in the Earth. The lights are hypnotic, produced by a machine that issues a telepathic command. The machine has DEF 10, 6 BODY; it continuously produces a Mind Control 10d6, Telepathic, Area Of Effect (48" Radius) around itself, with one command. That command could be:

- "Go to the mines and labor until you drop."
- "Walk down a certain path and jump off a cliff."
- "Go back to town and kill anyone who acts suspicious."

When the machine is attacked, it sends a signal to its master to let it know that an enemy capable of challenging its authority has arrived.

when someone talks with him, separating fact from conspiracy fiction can be a real trick.

Dr. Idealist: Often referred to by his other name, Dr. Stupid, this man of science believes nothing of extra-terrestrial origin could ever be harmful — humans must communicate with the alien and promote understanding and tolerance. (This attitude can be particularly baffling if the campaign has already had previous alien invasions, or if the probe takes obviously aggressive action.) He does everything he can to help the probe, even when it's obvious to everyone else on the planet the probe intends to destroy all life on Earth. It's only after he suffers a vicious and tragic betrayal by the probe that he becomes bitter and helps the heroes (usually at the cost of his own life).

Harry Hothead: This guy, a naturally aggressive bully, knows something's gone wrong — and he's not going to take it. The only way to solve a problem is to charge head first and point a shotgun at it. If the heroes tell him to calm down and leave the situation to the professionals, he becomes even more determined to get his way, because *no one* tells Harry Hothead what to do!

Unfortunately, Harry usually doesn't die alone.

Mrs. Everything's Normal: This frightened housewife knows something terribly wrong is happening, but she thinks that if she ignores it and acts like everything's normal, somehow she'll survive. Unlike the Frightened Old Person, she doesn't know much about the situation, and she's actively trying to forget what little she does know.

The Frightened Old Person: Something horrible and unspeakable has happened — and only this person has seen it. Unfortunately, he just wants to be left alone and forget what he's seen, even when it's obvious the problem won't go away and everyone's life is at risk. Worse, any attempt to pry information from the Frightened Old Person always seems to bring on a fatal heart attack ("Okay, you use the fully invisible Telepathy, I'll aid her BODY, INT, and PRE, Lancer covers her with the double Hardened Force Field... hey, we covered all of the bases, why's she clutching her chest?").

The Little Boy: This heroic little boy doesn't quite realize what he's gotten into, but he's got a strong conscience to go with that mischievous streak. He'll gladly teach the probe that it doesn't have to obey its programming, and that "*You* get to choose whether or not you're a weapon!" Unfortunately, once the probe has bonded with the little boy and the boy gets hurt, the probe's rampage is doubly gruesome because it's fueled by grief on top of misunderstanding.

The Opportunistic Villain: Don't you just hate it that once you've beaten the alien probe (or persuaded it not to attack the Earth) suddenly some supervillain like Holocaust or the Engineer comes along and absconds with the probe so he can transform it into his own personal instrument of destruction? Of course, when the probe turns on him (as it inevitably does), the supervillain quickly calls on the heroes for help.

The Rabid General: Carried over from 1950s monster movies, the Rabid General is a stereotype's stereotype who thinks George C. Scott in *Dr. Strangelove* was a pansy. He only knows one response to any situation — extreme military force. When it comes to aliens, he *knows* they're out to enslave/kill/eat Humanity and have to be stopped with *extreme* prejudice. He wants to tattoo the word "mass" on ET's butt so he has an excuse to use weapons of mass destruction. Oddly enough, the more benign the alien, the harder time the Rabid General has realizing that and the more force he wants to use. Worst of all, when a situation occurs that compels even the Rabid General to calm down and act reasonably, inevitably a Government Bureaucrat comes onto the scene who's even more foolish and bullheaded than the military.

For a plot twist, maybe the Rabid General is *right*....

The Politician Who Wants You To Go Away: There's always one of them around: a spineless cretin who doesn't want any trouble in his fair town. If that means that people get turned into alien zombie slaves, well, at least it's orderly. Although this politician may seem to be weak and spineless, somehow he never seems to have much trouble finding the courage to tell powerful superheroes to take a hike. Like most self-important NPCs who oppose the heroes in this type of adventure, the politician usually dies an ignominious, ironic death sometime before the climax of the adventure.

GETTING THE HEROES INVOLVED

If the probe lands in the middle of a military base, in front of city hall, or outside the PCs' headquarters with "Bring Me the Heroes or Die!" blaring on the loudspeaker, the PCs should find it quite easy to get involved in the scenario. But if the probe landed in a remote region and the aliens act surreptitiously, it's going to be a lot harder to get the PCs into the adventure. Some shortcuts to PC involvement include:

My Cousin's Acting Mighty Strange: A PC has a reason to phone his relatives (a sick mother, a sister who's had a baby and wants the rest of the family to know). But when he reaches his cousin (who's normally a gregarious chatterbox) the cousin is extremely hostile and barely has anything to say. If the PC follows up the conversation by paying him a small visit, the cousin and nearby townsfolk (who had previously been a very friendly bunch) try to get rid of the "strangers" as quickly as possible.

The All-Seeing Astronomer: This is a staple of 1950s SF movies, where astronomers were so good that not only could they detect the probe streaking toward Earth, they could calculate its precise landing point (and contact the PCs so they could be there to greet the aliens as soon as they arrive). This is appropriate to a Silver Age game, but feels cheesy in a campaign with a more modern tone.

Camping Trip Coincidence: Yes, it's corny for your heroes to be out camping when the alien probe just happens to drop out of warp space and crashes five miles away in the woods. But if your campaign has a Silver Age tone, stuff like this happens all the time.

Fun With Secret Identities: Use the players' professions to get them into a scenario. Assign intrepid reporters to go out and investigate the appearance. Have musicians booked to perform concerts in strange little towns. Is the PC a vigilante? No problem — just arrange for that serial killer he's pursuing to hole up in the backwoods (where a strange glow was recently seen). A doctor? A medical emergency ("but why would my son have radiation sickness, and who do I sue?"). A lawyer? (see last quote).

Heroes, We've Seen Something Strange: If the PCs are respected and known for investigating strange things, bring them in as consultants. Evidence of an alien presence that might attract a PC's attention include: locals reporting that they've seen a strange glow and/or scorch marks on the ground; locals finding shards of a strange alien metal; animal mutilations ("these creatures were dissected with the precision of a master surgeon, but why?"); activity at long-abandoned mines; or a ranger's station or a lighthouse that's suddenly stopped communicating with the outside world.

DEVELOPING THE SCENARIO

Once the PCs have hit the scene, the scenario can evolve in a number of ways toward the climactic battle with the aliens. Common scenario structures include:

One Big Fight: The alien probe lands. A fight happens. The heroes end the alien menace by winning. (Better have a backup plan in case the dice betray them and they *lose*....)

A Fight, Then The Real Menace Emerges: The alien probe lands. A fight happens. After the fight, the heroes learn there's been a misunderstanding. The alien probe isn't the *real* threat — it actually came

ALIEN PROBES VERSUS THE WORLD

There's one serious problem with aliens openly attacking in public: when it's a possible precursor to an invasion, even when the world is used to the idea of aliens, every major hero and government on the planet should, given any degree of "realism," converge on the landing site. The devastation an alien invasion might cause is so great that other superheroes can't afford to ignore it just because it's on the PCs' turf. Of course, having other NPCs come into the PCs' hometown to deal with the PCs' problem is no fun at all.

So how do you solve it? Unless your PCs *are* acknowledged as the world's most powerful superheroes, you should consider one of the following approaches:

First, use the problem to your benefit. The NPC heroes storm into town, the major media networks get on their knees and say "problem's solved!" and the NPCs tense their muscles and get ready to perform an alpha strike against the probe. Then the probe contacts one of the PCs, and it turns out its intentions are benign (or so it says...). Of course, the NPC heroes and the Army will have none of it, so the PCs get to defend the alien probe against Earth's most respected heroes and/or their own government.

Second, establish a "personal connection" between the probe and the PCs. Perhaps one of the PCs is the only expert in the world on the invading race. When the authorities learn this, they give the PCs the first crack at dealing with the newcomers. Obviously, the PCs' reputation must be nearly spotless (or the situation has to be *really* desperate) for this approach to be credible. Another possibility is that the probe initiates contact with Humanity through one or more PCs, making them Earth's ambassadors by default.

Third, there's the hostile takeover method. Other NPCs and the Army did attack the probe. They were defeated (or worse, they've been mind controlled and now they're *defending* the probe). Yikes!

Fourth, if you can do it without straining believability, arrange to have other prominent heroes otherwise occupied. Maybe they're on an extended adventure in another dimension and can't be reached.

Fifth, there's the brute force defense method. The aliens have isolated the area with a giant force bubble, and the PCs are the only ones inside who can stop them.

to Earth to warn about the threat. The real threat could be external (other alien races, alien criminals come to Earth, an alien plague carrier, alien smugglers brought a superweapon to Earth) or terrestrial (Humans kidnapped an alien's mate, it's seeking another [wounded] alien, a supervillain lured it to Earth with a promise, it's been led to believe that "human agents in green" used a Dimensional Space Portal to wreak havoc on one of their colonies...).

Investigation, Fight: This is the "investigation leads to a confrontation" two-act scenario. In the first act, the heroes investigate a mystery (mysterious lights, hostile townsfolk, strange disappearances, or the like). When they've uncovered enough evidence to figure out what's going on, they track the aliens to their lair or lure them out into the open and resolve the situation (usually through combat).

The Epic Confrontation: This is the classic multiple-act structure for a big adventure (possibly one lasting for multiple game sessions or forming a major story arc within the campaign). The scenario starts with an inciting incident and investigation in Act I, followed by a minor combat in Act II. Act III brings an unexpected twist (for example, "the alien probe is millions of years old — it's attacking Earth because it's tired and wants to be destroyed"), followed by either another battle (or another plot twist/revelation) in Act IV. The scenario continues with additional fights, revelations, and plot twists until it reaches a conclusion. If you want to draw things out, convert each "act" into one or more distinct adventures.

In an Epic Confrontation, the aliens have a *major*, Earth-shattering master plan that has to be uncovered, or dire consequences will result. Since the probe is a prelude to invasion, typically the master plan is "conquer the Earth." The combats escalate as the characters get nearer to the ultimate truth or as the aliens' master plan nears its final stage.

The aliens in this scenario need to present a credible threat. They should have access to more resources than the initial probe (other probes arrive at Earth, their factories produce additional resources, they awaken other probes...). At some point, when they feel the PCs put pressure on their plan, the aliens should perform a retaliatory strike.

Aliens in Epic Confrontations should also have multiple objectives. It helps to give them secondary objectives (kidnap a particular scientist, build a special facility, send a mind controlled general into an army base to nab some secret plans...) that the heroes can foil without putting the alien's master plan in jeopardy. That way the heroes can triumph during the course of the overall story without derailing the entire plot. Eventually, the scenario ends with a climactic confrontation (usually a huge fight) followed by many explosions as the bad guys and their facilities get blown to pieces.



SPECIAL SCENES

In any genre adventure milieu, there are scenes that are staples of the genre. When you include them in an adventure, you can reinforce the genre feel of the scenario. Most of these can be found in 1950s alien movies.

The Alien Emerges... And All Hell Breaks Loose: The spaceship door opens, an alien emerges, someone approaches him in friendship — and gets blasted to smithereens. The mob around the ship panics, the probe fires indiscriminately, and all hell breaks loose. This is appropriate as a prelude to a one-act *Alien Probe Goes On A Rampage* scenario. If you're not prepared to let the heroes go in and bash the aliens, try to arrange it so the PCs are watching at a safe distance as this unfolds.

The Alien Emerges... And All Hell Breaks Loose (Version 2): The spaceship door opens, an alien emerges, someone approaches in friendship... and then some idiot in the crowd shoots the alien. The alien gets dragged back into his ship, the probe weapon comes out, and, well, you can guess the rest. This is appropriate as a prelude to a one-act *Alien Probe Goes On A Rampage* scenario where you *want* the alien to be sympathetic. In this case, the heroes have to stop the rampage while convincing the alien that Humanity isn't entirely composed of idiots.

Meaningful Destruction: This happens in the course of the climactic battle, and typically requires the PCs to fight a big, Tripod-style war engine. In the middle of the firefight, the alien probe should blast something big and meaningful (an old historic building, a statue that commemorates a hero greatly respected by the PCs, the PCs' favorite vehicle, the team HQ...). To differentiate this from your typical "superhero

PLACES TO INVESTIGATE THE ALIENS

Abandoned Mines:

Mines are always a good, claustrophobic place for the bad guys to have left evidence, or for brain-washed humans to mine the necessary metals to repair a damaged alien spacecraft.

Backwoods: Never underestimate how much fear the PCs will experience when they uncover a grizzly bear corpse that's been mutilated with surgical precision ("he took apart the bear and put it back together after it died?").

Power Stations/ Communications Relay: If the alien probe plans to launch a military attack on Earth, a logical starting target is infrastructure.

Smoldering Crater: This is an obvious one: when the PCs arrive, they find a smoldering crater where the probe landed... and all remnants of the probe gone.

fights supervillain” campaign battle, the collateral damage in the fight needs to be more intense. If the PCs actively work to keep casualties down, oblige them by keeping the body count low and make sure public officials tell them things would have been much worse if they hadn’t been there.

The Frightened Mob Turns On Our Heroes: This works best when you’re playing with the “alien probe terrorizing the backwoods or isolated village” scenario. Before the heroes showed up, the frightened locals had reached a comfortable state of equilibrium, but as soon as the PCs arrive, something terrible happens. It’s not the PCs’ fault, but instead of blaming the aliens, the townsfolk turn on the PCs. Of course, they know they can’t kill the PCs, but that won’t stop an angry mob (led by the local hot-head) from throwing rocks at the PCs and telling them to go home. This may be followed by an interesting “why do I bother?” epiphany scene (if the PCs don’t choose to ask the question, perhaps an allied NPC hero or a close friend of the PCs should).

When you run this scene, you should also run a corresponding *Remorseful Townsfolk Apologize To The Heroes* scene at the end of the scenario.

THE CLIMAX

Once you decide on a scenario structure, you need to figure out how you ideally want the adventure to end. Players never do exactly what you expect, so you should be ready for other contingencies, but with most alien probe attack scenarios the action leads toward a conclusion you usually won’t have too much trouble arranging.

In most alien probe attack adventures, the climactic scene is a big battle. A big battle against an alien probe should provide a lot of thrills — the sight of a Tripod War Machine tumbling to the ground, smoke billowing from its head just before it explodes, should be enough of an adrenaline rush to bring the game to an exciting climax. However, sometimes the story calls for higher stakes and more of a sense of jeopardy. Here are some elements you can add to give the scenario some additional urgency:

Dambuster: The alien probe decides to drown humans like rats and turns its attention to destroying a dam. The water will flood an entire valley, killing thousands of people. The War Machine will not veer away from its attempt to destroy the dam until it’s reduced to half BODY. Stop it.

Dams aren’t the only possible source of catastrophe. Others include launching nuclear missiles to create a worldwide atomic holocaust; destroying a nuclear power plant so the meltdown accomplishes much the same result as destroying a dam; drawing an asteroid down to crash into the Earth; and melting the polar ice caps.

Find The Aliens’ Weakness... And Blast Them: If the PCs had trouble against the alien probe in their first battle, they get a chance to uncover a clue about the probe’s weak spot — a substance or attack form against which they have no defense. Potential weaknesses include:

- A particular radio frequency that affects the alien technology, or a sonic frequency that produces a dangerous resonance in its metals (Susceptibility 2d6 per Phase, requires data and an Inventor roll)
- An acidic compound that counters the “heavy bonding” process of the alien metal ($1\frac{1}{2} \times$ BODY from a particular acid, requires data and an Inventor roll).
- A weak spot in the probe superstructure ($1\frac{1}{2} \times$ BODY from attacks that take a –6 OCV Placed Shot penalty)
- The common cold virus infecting the advance guard. Just expose the alien to a concentrated sample (though this may be perceived as anti-climactic).

Find The Autodestruct: It makes very little sense for an alien race to provide any access to its probe’s autodestruct, let alone make it easy. However, the classic scenarios often use this particular *deus ex machina*. If you want a challenge for a low powered team, give them an extremely tough alien adversary, but link some of the power to the autodestruct — so, when a small team infiltrates the alien base and triggers the auto-destruct, the probe is damaged to the point where most of its armor and weapons are on Activation Rolls and the heroes have a good chance to thrash it.

In The Name Of Humanity, Stop Brainwashing That Alien: High powered NPCs may be obnoxious and suffocating, but no one wants them as an enemy. So when Hyperion’s being reprogrammed into a weapon of war by aliens who want to be led by the perfect tyrant, that gives the heroes a deadline — destroy the brainwashing machine before its effect becomes irreversible.

Send The Signal: In the climax of this adventure, slaves or mechanical servants have built an FTL communications portal and have just fed it enough power to open up a gateway and send a message authorizing the invasion of Earth. The PCs have to recognize what’s going on: either have them use their computer skills to check out the alien database, or (if the PCs are Skill deficient or “blast first” types) have a large countdown clock tick away the alien seconds until the time the system comes online. Set a time during the fight (Turn 2, Segment 8 for small groups, Turn 3, Segment 4 for large ones) when the message will be sent. If the PCs destroy the communications array before the deadline, they win the day.

Take Off — With The Prisoners/Key Data: Sometimes a probe’s mission is to gather critical pieces of intelligence and transport them back to the homeworld. Having to destroy the probe as it’s taking off (hopefully after rescuing any hostages) complicates this mission.

AFTER THE BRAWL

There are several directions you can spin off the alien probe scenario for future adventures. The most obvious one — and the most amount of work for you — is to run an alien invasion scenario. If the PCs have set off an alien invasion, but you don't want to run one, there are a number of options you can employ.

Alien Revelation: “No! It can't be!” During the scenario, someone (possibly a PC, though friendly NPCs and DNPCs work better) learns he's part alien. Now he finds himself driven to explore his heritage, look for lost siblings, and uncover technological artifacts that are his birthright, all while his friends get to watch him become colder and more inhuman as he gets closer to his alien roots.

The Bomb: You beat the aliens. Unfortunately they have a scorched Earth policy — literally. Now you need to disarm a *big* weapon.

Forestall The Invasion! There are plenty of things the heroes can do to prevent an invasion, particularly if extraterrestrial cultures are well-entrenched in the campaign setting. They need to gather as much information as possible about the aliens (other alien PCs might have useful information). They can develop technology to deal with the alien's weaknesses, make arrangements to spy on them, and perhaps even form diplomatic alliances with other alien empires to protect the Earth (which will undoubtedly come back to haunt everyone in the future). For some hero teams, the best bet might be to journey out into space and smash the invaders on their home turf, before they get anywhere close to Earth.

The Gift: Something good happened during the scenario, and an alien (if the villain became sympathetic at the end) or an alien enemy of the villain rewarded a PC with a special box inscribed with alien runes. The giver of the gift says there's “something wonderful” inside, but the heroes have to prove themselves worthy of the gift by solving some puzzle or riddle. (You, get to decide what's in the box: bonus Experience Points, the soul of an alien princess who'll become a hero's beloved consort, a cool gadget, an excuse for a radiation accident, or anything else that seems fun).

There's a more horrific alternative to the gift: the actions of the probe has left a PC or NPC pregnant. Don't spring this one on a PC by surprise, though — not everyone wants to play a pregnant character.

Master, I Will Not Fail You! Before the probe was destroyed, it captured a petty criminal and seduced him with dreams of greatness. Now that criminal has been given vast cosmic powers. He sits in a cocoon, waiting to hatch and advance the plans of his new masters.

The Probe, Redux: How do you stage a rematch with the probe without cheapening the first adventure or launching an invasion? This is a tall order, but it can be done. The easiest answer is that there were two probes, but that can seem contrived. The other possibility is that the alien probe wasn't completely destroyed — sure, the PCs did a real number on it, but before it was destroyed, the probe hid a “backup” system deep underground, and it's growing....

“The Probe Failed?! Perhaps Humanity Is Worthy Of Our Attention...”: What happens when you're an intergalactic power who's been spying on your enemies, and you watch one of your enemy's mightiest probes get shot to pieces by primitive primates in tights? You send your own probe, of course! Alternatively, the evil alien princess eavesdropping on the battle develops an infatuation with one of the PCs and try to kidnap him.

They'll Reach Earth In How Many Years?: Okay, so they've launched an invasion. At relativistic speeds. Their armada will reach Earth in 200 years, so unless the PCs are immortal, it's someone else's problem.

Yeah, it's a cop-out, and it's unsatisfying. However, if a fairly long stretch of time (two real-world years) occurs between the probe landing and the invasion, it gives the PCs a chance to prepare and you a chance to build up the menace of the approaching fleet.

TEN UNUSUAL ALIEN PROBE SCENARIOS

1. Aren't They Supposed To Attack People?: The aliens are a humanoid species, but physically they have more in common with certain animal species (dogs, cats, bears, raccoons, eagles, whales...) than *Homo sapiens*. As a result, instead of capturing Humans to test their capabilities, they capture members of the appropriate species, then test (and mutate) them. Some of them may have developed near-Human levels of intelligence and superhuman abilities.

Alternatively, the aliens may need females of an endangered species ("Cetaceanus needs female blue whales!") to propagate their species. But when they kidnap *every* female of the species, superheroes may not look kindly on them (especially heroes with animal motifs or who are self-proclaimed champions of the animal's environment.)

2. Can I Use Your Brain For A Cosmic Tow?: An alien ship that's stranded three light-years from Earth sends out a probe to find some fuel. Unfortunately, its fuel source is psionic energy, the telepaths who willingly bonded with the ship are dead, and the vessel is looking for telepaths under every rock within ten parsecs. The alien probe hones in on sources of psionic energy, drains them dry (leaving telepathic supers without their powers and in a mentally confused state). Can the heroes figure out why the probe has been sent and help the aliens in their time of need without destroying any Human telepaths to do it?

3. Downsized: Thousands of years ago, the Numerians, a race of galactic recordkeepers, were sent by a species to keep an eye on Earth. The Numerian probe was programmed for replacement when Earth's population reaches ten billion people. However, the probe doesn't *want* to retire, so it decides to cull the rapidly multiplying Humans before they reach the critical number. The Numerian robot can Regenerate, but the heroes can permanently defeat it by feeding it false data that Earth's population now exceeds ten billion, or by finding a way to alter its programming so it can send false reports without feeling the need to manipulate the data.

4. Hothouse: The alien invasion isn't a personal conquest — rather, it's an attack from an environment. The alien invader is a race of sentient shrubs (approximately 10-15 cubic meters when fully grown) that communicate through spores and floral scents. They want to find out what happens when they use their standard hybridization techniques with terrestrial plantforms.

Surprisingly, the Daisioids are relatively benign (they just want places where they can grow in peace), and they could actually cohabit Earth without destroying the environment. There would be, however, minor drawbacks. First, their leaves, when distilled, can be used to manufacture an extremely potent hallucinogen. Second, they're not as well adapted to water as Earth plants, and consume a lot of water for their size. Thus, except in the lushest of rain forests or most heavily irrigated areas, they dry up the soil, killing all but the hardiest forms of vegetation. Third, bees who pollinate these plants experience dramatic mutations; their offspring grow five to ten times their normal size and become extremely aggressive.

The PCs get into the scenario when they hear reports of mutant bee swarms attacking people in a remote area. The initial report indicates a supervillain is involved. They have to find out what's really responsible and (hopefully) find a way to accommodate everyone.

5. "I'm Your Biggest Fan!": An alien probe lands in the campaign city and specifically requests that the PCs meet it NOW! As soon as the PCs arrive, the probe attacks. However, after they defeat the probe, an impish figure crawls out of the wreckage — it's an alien who's watched the PCs on television and now hero-worships them. He got

to experience a fight against them in person! How cool is that?

Annoy the Alien Imp offers to use his amazing powers to help the PCs in their struggle against evil. It seems like a good deal at first, but Annoy gets in the PCs' way and messes things up time and time again. So how do the heroes rid themselves of this turbulent, powerful pest?

6. It's A Gift: Seeing the cultural sophistication of the planet Earth, an alien sculptor decides to share his gift with humanity by sending down recreations of gigantic (1000 feet [150"] tall) structures (they look like tangled, multi-colored pop art metal shapes, though they're undeniably beautiful). While it's a generous gift, there are serious drawbacks. First, he constructs the sculptures in the middle of city parkland, wreaking havoc. Second, to make sure people pay attention to his work, the egotistical artist places a device in each of his sculptures that sends out a mind control signal compelling any person within 10 kilometers to walk the statue and stare at it for a few minutes every day.

7. The Big Broadcast Of 1938: An experimental Mars probe has returned to Earth — and when it lands in New Jersey, it sprouts metal legs and starts firing a death ray. Yes, the great *War Of The Worlds* broadcast of 1938 wasn't fiction — instead, Orson Welles actually had a premonition of a real event that was destined to take place 60-70 years in the future.

8. Three Wise Aliens: Alien mystics from a faraway world have determined that an extremely important spiritual figure was born on a world called Earth. Although it's taken two thousand years for light from the celestial phenomenon to reach the alien's homeworld, the Three Wise Aliens have made the pilgrimage. But they never guessed the figure's race would have such a short lifespan, and soon discovered the celestial shepherd was long dead. Worse, when they arrived on Earth, they found the spiritual figure's homeland in ruins. They came to North America to investigate His disciples, but the man they consulted was a charismatic, greedy phony. The fraud exploits the alien's need for cosmic communion and tricks them into using their vast powers to commit crimes.

9. Trailer Park Toys: The aliens decided to probe what they perceived as one of the weak spots in modern society — a trailer park in an unnamed American state. Unfortunately, as soon as the locals came into contact with aliens, one of them mutated into a superhero (Captain Brewski, the self-proclaimed "laziest hero on Earth") and together they beat the aliens back and absconded with their technology. Now there's a posse of 15-20 hard-charging red-necks armed with alien weapons that put the best Army ordnance to shame. Furthermore, because they served their country by beating back an alien threat, they've unilaterally decided they never need to pay their taxes again.

The IRS is after them, the ATF is after them, PRIMUS and VIPER want their weapons, and the humiliated aliens want their technology back (along with a healthy measure of revenge). Can the heroes find some way to resolve the situation?

10. You Want Captain Who? How About A Bald Frenchman Instead?: The alien probe has watched too much Human television. Somehow its AI circuitry has failed to distinguish between a thirty-five year old science fiction show and reality. The probe wishes to speak to a legendary starship captain and will wreak a swath of destruction if its demands are not met. Unfortunately, the actor is a *lot* older and probably won't be the person the probe expects to find; it's also possible the probe, while arguing the point that "illogic doesn't make computers go insane," may try to kill him.

CHARACTERS

Here are a few stock characters for use in your alien probe attack scenarios.



GUS JETHRO, BRAINWASHED SHERIFF

13	STR	11	DEX	13	CON	15	BODY
13	INT	11	EGO	18	PRE	10	COM
6	PD	5	ED	2	SPD	6	REC
26	END	29	STUN				

Abilities: Running +4"; +2 with Firearms; Bribery 13-; Bugging 12-; Bureaucratics 13-; Concealment 12-; Interrogation 13-; Lockpicking 11-; Oratory 13-; PS: Law Enforcement Officer 13-; Shadowing 12-; Stealth 11-; Streetwise 13-; Tactics 12-; Fringe Benefits: Local Police Powers, Weapon Permit

50+ Disadvantages: Enraged: when openly defied (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 11-; Psychological Limitation: Sadist; Social Limitation: Subject to Orders

Description: Naturally a bully and a control freak, Sheriff Jethro has become thoroughly drunk with the dreams of power the aliens have offered him. He has no real clue what he's being offered (or the tragic fate that will probably befall him), but the aliens offer to keep his job secure and help him take care of a few troublemakers, and that works for him. Oddly enough, he sees anyone who openly challenges him (such as superheroes) as more of an outsider than the aliens.

Jethro is a big Caucasian male, 6'4," close to 300 pounds (both fat and muscle), in his mid-30s. He's always seen in his sheriff's uniform.

DR. CLEMENT CARLYLE

8	STR	8	DEX	10	CON	8	BODY
18	INT	15	EGO	18	PRE	14	COM
2	PD	2	ED	2	SPD	4	REC
20	END	17	STUN				

Abilities: Mental Defense (10 points total); Bureaucratics 13-; High Society 13-; KS: The Scientific World 13-; PS: Public Relations 14-; Persuasion 13-; SS: Biology 13-; SS: Chemistry 13-; SS: Mathematics 11-; SS: Physics 11-; SS: Superhuman Genetics 13-; SS: Xenobiology 12-; Scientist; Contacts (all 12-): Local University Professor, Television News Producer

50+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Protective Of Aliens; Psychological Limitation: Refuses To Accept When He's Wrong

Notes: A former peace activist, now a left-wing university professor, Dr. Clement Carlyle charmed his way into becoming the "expert commentator" brought in by a major network whenever something happens that involves aliens. He's a grandstander who likes to provoke people by defending aliens and Humanity's contact with them, painting extraterrestrials as blameless, benign beings who have only Humanity's best interests at heart (even when it's obvious they don't). Over time, Clement's come to believe his own bull, and now he'll do nearly anything to protect an alien, short of killing.

Clement Carlyle is a Caucasian male in his late-30s, who's often described as "classically handsome." He's 5'11" tall with a slim build that borders on athletic, blue eyes, silver hair, and a ruddy complexion.



TUVARIAN, ALIEN COMMANDER

20	STR	20	DEX	23	CON	13	BODY
18	INT	20	EGO	20	PRE	12	COM
8	PD	8	ED	5	SPD	10	REC
46	END	35	STUN				

Abilities: Hypno-Gun (Mind Control 12d6, OAF, 12 Charges); Telepathic Headband (Mind Link, any 16 alien minds, OAF), Commando Training (+4 Extra DCs); Breakfall 13-; Mechanics 13-; Mimicry 13-; Navigation 13-; Paramedics 13-; Persuasion 13-; Seduction 13-; Shadowing 13-; Stealth 17-; Survival (Temperate/Subtropical) 13-; Tactics 13-; Universal Translator 15-

50+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Features: Light Green-Tinged Skin; Enraged: when insulted by a member of a “lesser” species (Uncommon), go 8-, recover 14-; Psychological Limitation: Arrogance Toward Aliens (including humans); Psychological Limitation: Hatred Of The Hzeel; Psychological Limitation: Likes To Seduce Alien Women; Social Limitation: Subject to Orders

Notes: Bound to duty, convinced of his personal superiority, and thirsting to avenge the destruction of his colony, Stargunner Tuvorian is a Solemnid Commander on a mission to destroy all traces of the Hzeel species. He tracks them relentlessly along the Orion arm of the Galaxy. His hatred of Hzeel injustice doesn’t keep him from being a creep; he looks down on all lesser species (that is, anyone who isn’t at a Hzeel/Solemnid/Perseid level of technology) with utter contempt, although he enjoys mating with compatible humanoid females (including Humans).

Solemnids are a race of light green-skinned humanoids with feathery dark green hair, feathery eyebrows, and pronounced webbing between their fingers and toes. An exemplary member of his species, Tuvorian most closely resembles a prime Human athletic male in his early 30s. He wears a silver uniform (it somewhat resembles a Nehru jacket) with white trim.

ALIEN PROBES

SILVER OOZE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
0	STR	-10	9-	Lift 25.0 kg; 0d6 [1]
26	DEX	48	14-	OCV: 9/DCV: 9
0	CON	-20	9-	
30	BODY	40	15-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
0	EGO	0	—	ECV: N/A
50	PRE	40	19-	PRE Attack: 10d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
0	PD	0		Total: 12 PD (12 rPD)
0	ED	0		Total: 12 ED (12 rED)
5	SPD	14		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
0	REC	0		
0	END	0		
—	STUN	—		Total Characteristic Cost: 106

Movement: Running: 11"/22"

Cost	Powers	END
60	<i>Silver Ooze Form:</i> Takes No STUN	0
15	<i>Silver Ooze Form:</i> Does Not Bleed	0
36	<i>Silver Ooze Form:</i> Desolidification (affected by any attack), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½), Inherent (+¼); Does Not Protect Against Damage (-1), Cannot Pass Through Solid Objects (-½)	0
30	<i>Silver Ooze Form:</i> Stretching 4," Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
247	<i>Absorb Someone's Essence And Memories:</i> HKA 3d6, Affects Physical World (+2), NND (defense is being covered from head to toe in solid armor or a force field; +1), Does BODY (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
315	<i>Tractor Beam:</i> Telekinesis (60 STR), Affects Physical World (+2), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
360	<i>Silver Ooze Form:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75%	0
108	<i>Silver Ooze Form:</i> Armor (12 PD/12 ED)	0
45	<i>Silver Ooze Form:</i> Life Support (Total)	0
12	<i>Communications Suite:</i> HRRP (Radio Group)	0
27	<i>Sense Intelligence:</i> Detect Sentient Minds 11- (Mental Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Sense, Targeting	0
10	<i>Silver Ooze Form:</i> Running +5" (11" total)	1
11	<i>Silver Ooze Form:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) for Running 11"	0
1	<i>Silver Ooze Form:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) for Swimming 2"	0
16	<i>Silver Ooze Form:</i> Clinging (18 STR)	0

Talents

- 3 Bump Of Direction
- 5 Eidetic Memory

Skills

- 3 Deduction 11-
- 41 KS: Knowledge Of Persons Absorbed 50-
- 3 Systems Operation 11-

3 Tracking 11-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 1,351

Total Cost: 1,457

200+ Disadvantages

- 20 Physical Limitation: No Hands Or Conventional Manipulatory Organs (All the Time, Greatly Impairing)
 - 20 Physical Limitation: Mute (All the Time, Greatly Impairing)
 - 20 Social Limitation: Subject to Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
 - 5 Vulnerability: GM's choice of an Uncommon attack form
- 1,192 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 1,457

Description: Created by an alien race that prizes knowledge above life, the Silver Ooze is carried to Earth in a starship, seeks out sentient lifeforms, then engulfs them and tries to dissolve them. Dissolving a lifeform gives the Ooze telepathic access to their memories (its KS represents its databanks of memory impressions). When a Silver Ooze dissolves a lifeform, an eerie blue-green glow surrounds it — a side effect of the tachyon surge it uses to transmit information back to its home planet via HRRP. It continues doing this until its masters tell it to stop and return (or until it's destroyed).

The Silver Ooze is an emotionless monster that's completely dedicated to its duty. It cannot be reasoned with; it only understands force.



TRIPOD WAR MACHINE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
80	STR	70	25-	Lift 1.6 ktons; 16d6 [8]
8	DEX	-6	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
0	CON	-20	9-	
40	BODY	60	17-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
0	EGO	0	13-	ECV: N/A
10	PRE	0	11-	PRE Attack: 2d6
10	COM	0	11-	
5	PD	0		Total: 17 PD (12 rPD)
0	ED	0		Total: 12 ED (12 rED)
4	SPD	22		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
0	REC	-32		
0	END	0		
—	STUN	—		Total Characteristic Cost: 94
Movement:				Running: 24"/48" Leaping: 0"/0"
Cost	Powers		END	
60	<i>Tripod Form:</i> Takes No STUN		0	
15	<i>Tripod Form:</i> Does Not Bleed		0	
40	<i>Tripod Form:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) for STR 80		0	
202	<i>Destructo-Ray:</i> RKA 6d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Personal Immunity (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)		0	
115	<i>Radio Suppression Field:</i> Suppress 6d6, all Radio-based powers simultaneously (+2), Area Of Effect (14" Radius; +1), MegaArea (1" = 1,000 km wide, deep, and broad; +1), Personal Immunity (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Range (-½)		0	

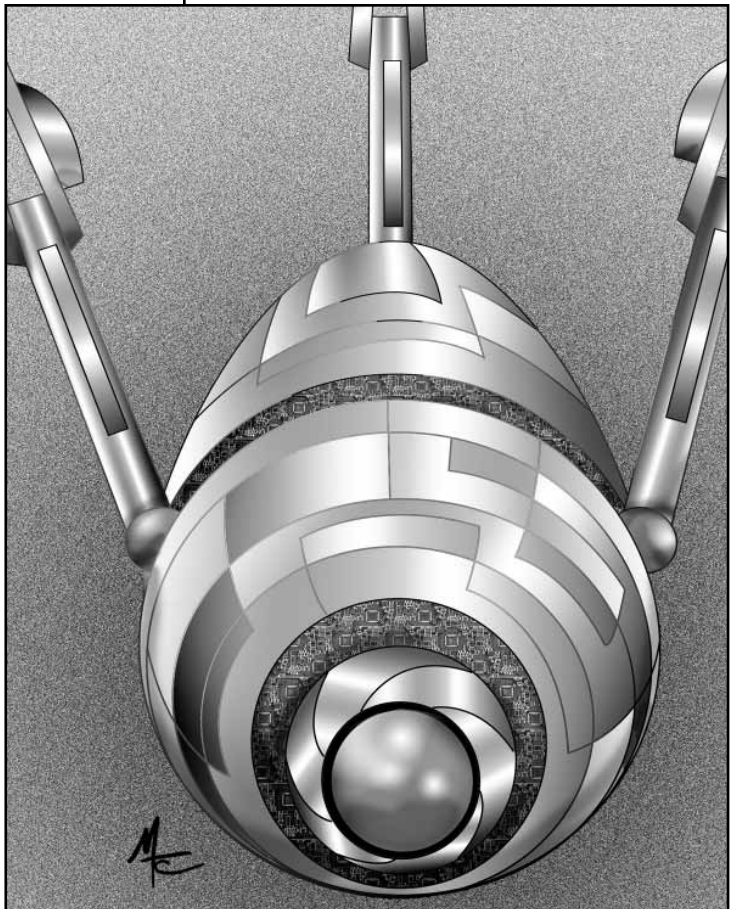
116	<i>Self-Destruct Device:</i> RKA 27d6 (standard effect: 81 BODY), Explosion (+½), Trigger (capture imminent or radio command from controller; +½); Extra Time (once activated, takes 1 Minute to arm and detonate; -1½), No Range (-½), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4) [1nr]	
108	<i>Tripod Form:</i> Armor (12 PD/12 ED)	0
90	<i>Conventional Weapons Can't Stop It:</i> Armor (+12 PD/+12 ED), Hardened (+¼); Only Versus Limited Type Of Attack (conventional military weapons, is completely negated by a successful Find Weakness roll; -½)	0
30	<i>Tripod Form:</i> Knockback Resistance -5"	0
45	<i>Tripod Form:</i> Life Support (Total)	0
36	<i>Three Long Legs:</i> Running +18" (24" total)	4
24	<i>Tripod Form:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) for Running 24"	0
1	<i>Tripod Form:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) for Swimming 2"	0
12	<i>Communications Suite:</i> HRRP (Radio Group)	0
26	<i>Military Sensors:</i> Detect Target's Military Capabilities 17- (Sight Group), Discriminatory, Analyze	
Talents		
3	Absolute Range Sense	
3	Absolute Time Sense	
3	Bump Of Direction	
5	Eidetic Memory	
Skills		
32	+4 with All Combat	
3	Tactics 11-	

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 969
Total Cost: 1,063

200+ Disadvantages

25	<i>Distinctive Features:</i> Giant Tripod War Machine (Not Concealable; Extreme Reaction)
16	<i>Physical Limitation:</i> Cannot Leap (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
5	<i>Physical Limitation:</i> Requires a Full Phase and a successful DEX Roll to regain its footing when knocked down; cannot act until it regains its footing (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
15	<i>Physical Limitation:</i> Mute (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
15	<i>Physical Limitation:</i> Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
20	<i>Social Limitation:</i> Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
15	<i>Susceptibility:</i> when toppled, takes 3d6 damage instantly (Uncommon)
5	<i>Vulnerability (Know Weak Points):</i> 1½ x BODY when someone's already fought a tripod and makes a Tactics roll at a -3 penalty (Uncommon)
747	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 1,063



Description: The Tripod War Machine is a mighty weapon of war designed to smash any target. It lands in a remote location, then performs sensor sweeps for a few days. When it feels it's gathered enough information, it chooses the best military target and attacks.

In the movies and comics, conventional forces are often far less effective against Tripod War Machines than superheroes, but the power level of military weapons in *Champions* tends to make them an effective option against a Tripod. The extra defense against conventional weapons changes that, but the “not usable against Find Weakness” effect allows PCs with conventional weapons to use them effectively (if the PC doesn't have Find Weakness, allow him access to a prototype technological device that can find weak spots).

It's amazing how often a Tripod War Machine is dramatically less effective the second (and subsequent) time someone fights them. The Vulnerability rewards good PC tacticians and enforces this genre convention.

FROND OF UIAMATU

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6400.0 kg; 8d6 [4]
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
30	CON	40	15-	
40	BODY	60	17-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
23	EGO	26	14-	ECV: 8
30	PRE	20	15-	PRE Attack: 6d6
18	COM	4	13-	
10	PD	2		Total: 30 PD (20 rPD)
10	ED	4		Total: 30 ED (20 rED)
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
14	REC	0		
60	END	0		
75	STUN	0		Total Characteristic Cost: 224

Movement: Running: 0"/0"
Leaping: 0"/0"
Swimming: 0"/0"

Cost	Powers	END
142	<i>Control Spores:</i> Mind Control 18d6, Telepathic (+¼), Area Of Effect (400" Radius; +2), NND (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing or appropriate Immunity] or not having a sense of smell; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Based On CON (PD applies; -1), Set Effect (defend Frond from attack; -½), No Range (-½)	0
162	<i>Alter Atmosphere:</i> Change Environment 16,000" radius, +3 Temperature Levels, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Limited Effect (CE begins with an 8" radius in the first month of the Frond's life and doubles for every month thereafter until it reaches its maximum size; -0)	0
50	<i>Tough Plant:</i> Armor (20 PD/20 ED), Hardened (+¼); Does Not Work Against Cold Attacks (-½)	0
5	<i>Tough Plant:</i> Lack Of Weakness (-5) for Resistant Defenses	
4	<i>Tough Plant:</i> Life Support (Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Heat)	0
3	<i>Mind Of The Uiamatu Jungle:</i> Mind Link, single mind (Uiamatu “hive mind”), unlimited range in this dimension, No LOS Needed; Extra Time (1 Month, -5)	0
-12	<i>Plant:</i> Running -6" (0" total)	
-2	<i>Plant:</i> Swimming -2" (0" total)	

Skills

16 +8 OCV with Control Spores

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 368

Total Cost: 592

200+ Disadvantages

- 8 Physical Limitation: Cannot Leap (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Mute (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)

- 10 Psychological Limitation: Paranoid (Common, Moderate)
- 10 Reputation: cosmic botanical scourge, 11- (Extreme; Known Only To A Small Group)
- 5 Vulnerability: 1½ x BODY from Cold Attacks (Uncommon)
- 5 Vulnerability: 1½ x STUN from Cold Attacks (Uncommon)
- 324 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 592

Description: The Uiamatu, a species of “cosmic weeds,” is one of the most despised species in the Galaxy, and its method of conquering planets far more insidious than a typical invasion. A gigantic Uiamatu ship travels through the Milky Way. When it encounters a planet with an atmosphere, it shoots dozens of flame-resistant spores onto it. If one makes it to the surface and finds the appropriate soil and climate, it takes root. It doubles in size every month (except in winter, when it’s dormant). If it expands fourteen times and reaches its full size, the planet is judged to be hospitable, and the probe sends a signal to the mother ship to launch a full-scale invasion (which involves shooting millions of spores at the target planet).

The frond of Uiamatu resembles a large red-brown fern, a little under three meters in height. The frond has no obvious attack modes, but emits spores whose scent is mesmerizing — it usually has a half dozen to a dozen local defenders; fully armed military personnel and local superheroes and villains may certainly fall prey to its rapturous charms. When superheroes attack the plant, defeating its local defenders is often a more difficult task than destroying it.

A frond should be tough enough that the PCs can’t just call in an airstrike against it, but easy enough for a dedicated team of supers to defeat with effort. The mentally enslaved minions should dictate the challenge level of the fight, not the Frond itself.

VIVISECTOR

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1600.0kg; 6d6 [3]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
0	CON	-20	9-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
0	EGO	0	9-	ECV: 0
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
3	COM	-3	10-	
2	PD	0		Total: 11 PD (9 rPD)
0	ED	0		Total: 9 ED (9 rED)
6	SPD	30		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
6	REC	0		
0	END	0		
—	STUN	—		Total Characteristic Cost: 74

Movement: Running: 11”/22”
Leaping: 6”/12”

Cost Powers END

60	<i>Robot Form:</i> Takes No STUN	
15	<i>Robot Form:</i> Does Not Bleed	
15	<i>Robot Form:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) for STR 30	0
45	<i>Scythe Arms And Scalpel Fingers:</i> HKA 2d6 (3d6+1 w/STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
105	<i>Mind Control Ray:</i> Mind Control 12d6, Telepathic (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
10	<i>Servos:</i> Running +5” (11” total)	0
81	<i>Robot Form:</i> Armor (9 PD/9 ED)	0
45	<i>Robot Form:</i> Life Support (Total)	0
11	<i>Servos:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) for Running 11”	0
1	<i>Servos:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) for Swimming 2”	0
12	<i>Communications Suite:</i> HRRP (Radio Group)	0
3	<i>Dissection:</i> Detect Genetic Properties 12- (Touch Group), Discriminatory, Analyze; Extra Time (1 Hour, -3), Only Works On Living Beings Killed With HKA (-½)	0
5	<i>Grappling Tendrils:</i> Extra Limbs (8)	0

Talents

3	Absolute Range Sense
3	Absolute Time Sense
3	Bump Of Direction
5	Eidetic Memory
3	Lightning Calculator

Skills

16	+2 with All Combat
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Concealment 12-
3	Forensic Medicine 12-
5	KS: Anatomy 14-
13	Shadowing 17-
11	Stealth 17-
3	Systems Operation 12-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 482

Total Cost: 556

200+ Disadvantages

- 25 Distinctive Features: Killer Robot (Not Concealable; Extreme Reaction)
- 20 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
- 311 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 556

Description: The servants of an alien commander, these two meter tall steel killing machines resemble metal-framed skeletons with scythes for arms, scalpels for fingers, and grappling tendrils coming from each shoulder and each hip. Vivisectors perform genetic examinations of specimens. They find an area full of prey, locate a target, activate their silencing protocols, grab the prey, paralyze it, kill it, and dissect it. They also serve as bodyguards for the probe team commander.

SCENARIO: MENACE IN THE DOWNTOWN CORE

Here's an example alien probe attack scenario you can run. The default villains for this scenario are a Tripod War Machine (page 40), the Engineer (page 169), and Tuvorian (page 38). Because of the Hzeel origins of their powers, Oculon (from *VIPER: Coils of the Serpent*) and the supervillains Howler and the Warlord (see *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*) might also become involved.

THE HZEEL-SOLEMNID WAR

One of the main challengers of the Hzeel for supremacy in the rimward edges of galactic space is the Solemnid Concordium. An aggressive species who have made continuous war on their neighbors (including Ironclad's people, the Perseids), the Solemnids are finally receiving their comeuppance. Thirty years ago, a Solemnid excursion into Hzeel space escalated a small border skirmish into a brutal war, and the Solemnids are losing. Angered by atrocities committed by the Solemnids in the early days of the war, the Hzeel are giving no quarter. Key Solemnid worlds are being eliminated, minor worlds subjugated. The Solemnids are on the verge of collapse.

Enter Commander Tuvorian. Many years ago, the Solemnids noticed Hzeel interest in a planet named Earth, and Tuvorian became convinced that one of the Solemnids' most crushing defeats was caused by a hidden Hzeel supply base located on the planet. Tuvorian swore he'd do something about it, so he maneuvered his starship to Earth's solar system and made a passing swing to detect Hzeel technology.

He found it. Although the Hzeel have not openly established bases on Earth, Hzeel agents have landed here on numerous occasions. Their technology has been collected by at least two supervillains, the Warlord and Howler; one of VIPER's most dangerous supervillains, Oculon, has the eyes of a Hzeel soldier. Tuvorian also detected two pieces of Hzeel tech in one of Earth's larger cities, so he dispatched a Tripod probe to investigate.

The two artifacts Tuvorian detected were an oddly shaped piece of metal that's been mistakenly placed in a modern art museum, and a section of the Warlord's armor (it was captured years ago in a superbattle and now belongs to a superhero museum). Once the Tripod discovers this, Tuvorian will have no further use for the probe — and that's when the real threat begins.

LOCATION

This downtown area is a very upscale section of the city: numerous corporate offices fill the skyscrapers and buildings in the area, and there's a convention center and hundreds of hostages. Aside from the usual obstacles, there are some specialized targets here an industrious character can use for some extra power.

Because of its scale, this scenario is run on a cinematic scale (10 meters per 1") map as opposed to the standard Champions 2:1 scale.

PLACES OF NOTE

There are a few locations and/or objects in the area with special tactical properties.

Freeway: This is packed with cars, including a fuel tanker. If a PC can drive the fuel tanker off the freeway and ram it into the Tripod, it does the following damage:

- **The Big Boom:** 20d6 Normal Damage Explosion
- **Lingering Fire:** 2d6 Killing Damage in a 7" Radius, Uncontrolled (costs 7 END per Phase and has SPD 3; is fed by a 400 END, 0 REC Endurance Reserve)
- **Smoke:** Change Environment 4" radius, -3 to Sight Group PER Rolls, Uncontrolled (costs 2 END per Phase; has same SPD and is fed by the same Endurance Reserve as Lingering Fire)
- **Heat:** ½d6 NND damage (the defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: Intense Heat]) (costs 1 END per Phase; has same SPD and is fed by the same Endurance Reserve as Lingering Fire)

Gas Tower: Atop the corporate office of a utility company there's a decorative gas tank filled with propane. If a character succeeds with a Demolitions roll, he can rupture the tank in a controlled manner, producing a RKA 5d6 Explosion. If the Tripod is near the tank (which is on about the same level as its "body"), it takes damage.

Spotlight: At the front of the Museum of Fine Art are a pair of very powerful floodlights. If the heroes shine these directly into the Tripod's visual sensors, they serve as a Sight Group Flash 10d6.

Statue: This 100 foot (16") tall cast iron statue of a superhero (choose someone appropriate to your campaign's background) weighs 1.6 kilotons. It's attached to its base with bolts and cables that have a total of 8 DEF, 15 BODY. If a character can topple the statue onto the Tripod, the Tripod takes crushing damage (see page 422 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook).

SPECIAL OBJECTS IN THE DOWNTOWN CORE

Material	DEF	BODY
Building Exterior, Concrete	6	3
Building Exterior, Glass	3	3
Car, Midsize	3	8
Car, SUV	4	12
Gas Tower, Container	4	3
Giant Statue	9	30
Spotlights	2	5

Subway Line: If the PCs can lure the fight over to the subway station, the line carries a powerful electric charge. This is treated as 4d6 Killing Damage. With an Inventor roll and coordination with the proper city authorities, a character can increase this (add +1 DC if he makes his roll exactly, and another +1 DC for every point by which he makes it, to a maximum of 5½d6).

THE PLAN OF ATTACK

The Tripod comes in for a controlled crash at the edge of Beowulf Park. It spends two minutes evaluating the situation, then emerges from the crater. It moves one hex on the downtown map per two Phases, blasting nearby cars and buildings every other Phase, until it reaches the Museum of Fine Art. It spends a minute combing through what will (by that time) be a pile of rubble instead of a museum, decides the artifact there is no threat, then proceeds to the superhuman museum. It spends 30 seconds evaluating that device, and when it's determined that device isn't significant, it triggers its self-destruct.

ENTER THE HEROES

The PCs should learn about the craft as soon as it touches down (if nothing else, they'll hear the tremendous *BOOM* of its landing). Because of the lethality of the Tripod's attacks, they should arrive early in the scenario (the most opportune time is probably when the Tripod has reached the Museum of Fine Art and discovered the unimportance of the first Hzeel artifact). The easiest way to bring in the PCs is to make a simple, dramatic announcement that something crashed into Beowulf Park and is now running amok in the city.

There are numerous other ways to bring in the PCs: they could be attending a fundraiser in the conference center at the time as the crash; they could be foiling a museum robbery; they could just happen to be in the neighborhood. PCs with slow movement rates should be closer to the site, while those with high movement rates (or MegaScale movement) can be further away.

Another complication is to have the PCs confront some of the destruction (burning cars and buildings) before they meet the Tripod. Have them rescue a few innocents before they get a chance to meet the alien that's responsible for this carnage — and let them consider just what's at stake in the scenario.

Avoid letting the PCs know about the crash before it happens — if they detect the ship coming into the atmosphere, then they might logically be at the site to greet it. Keep the defenders local. If you feel like it, throw in a couple of friendly NPC heroes who are roughly the same power level as the PCs. Have them take a few hits each instead of the PCs and then drop. This gives a sense of “the superhero community coming together to handle a huge threat” without stealing the PCs' thunder. In a similar vein, NPC heroes might decide to rescue civilians while exhorting the PCs to take the fight to the enemy (“Go! You're the only one here who can stop that thing!”).

THE COURSE OF EVENTS

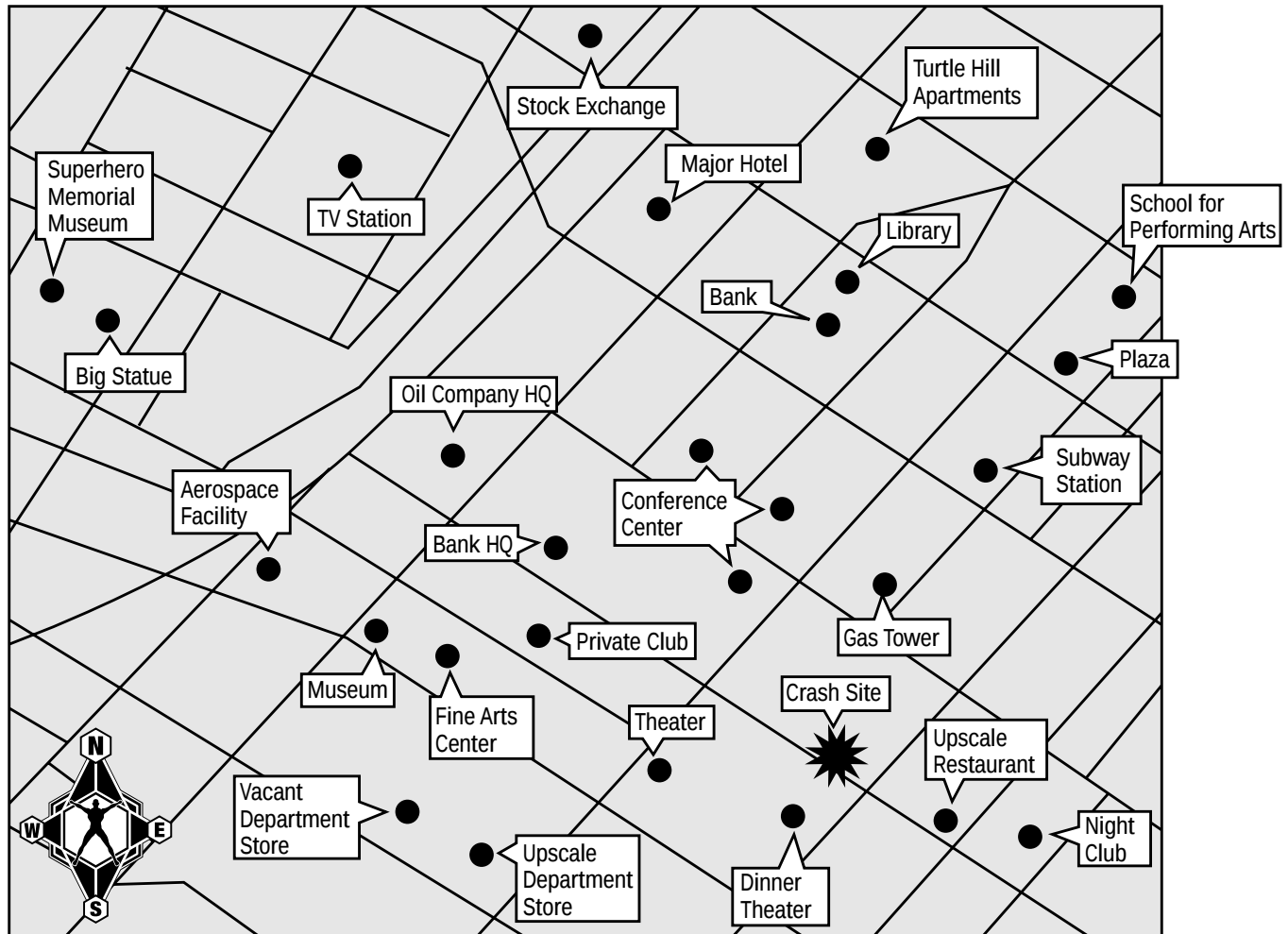
Once the heroes meet the Tripod, it's a dog-fight. Because it's using an Area Of Effect (One Hex) attack, the Tripod does massive amounts of collateral damage to the vicinity. The PCs don't just have to stop the Tripod, they've also got to perform rescue duty. They may also get to witness desperate acts of heroism (or stupidity): a cop taking out a shotgun and firing at the Tripod to distract its attention away from innocents; men rushing into burning buildings that immediately collapse on top of them; trapped people on their cellphones bravely fighting to keep their composure as they talk to their loved ones while the holocaust around them worsens.

COMMUNICATION

The Tripod won't stop to talk. It has no will to negotiate. If the PCs use the Engineer as an intermediary (see below), then it may be able to find a peaceful accommodation. Tuvorian is currently located in a cloaked Solemnid travel pod in geosynchronous orbit above the campaign city. He's actively monitoring the situation, so it's possible to talk with him either through the Engineer or a Systems Operation roll made at -3 by someone with High Range Radio Perception who spends a minimum of 1 Turn trying to narrow down the frequencies. Even then, Tuvorian isn't interested in dialogue: primitives are meant to be sneered at; he wouldn't deign to have a constructive dialogue with them. A character with Tracking on his High Range Radio Perception might be able to track the signal to its source.

ENTER — THE ENGINEER

Aside from whatever minor incidents the GM cares to throw into the pot, the other wild card in the scenario is the Engineer. She was in the neighborhood at the time; naturally, she's greatly interested to the device. Her organic side is slightly ahead in its perpetual battle with her machine side, so she won't actively aid the Tripod, although she's more dismayed by the prospect of destroying such a “beautiful” machine than by the casualties it's inflicting. She might, if she hears someone call for help, mentally repair a building's extinguisher system and boost its abilities, “just to keep down the noise.”



The Engineer is primarily interested in recovering samples of the alien metal and circuitry after the heroes have finished destroying the machine. She might help the heroes, if a cyborg or someone in powered armor asks her — and if they allow her to leave unmolested with her samples. She's quite willing to shut down the Tripod's self-destruct system, if she hasn't been attacked and she's asked politely. If the PCs attack, she'll mutter something about "picking on the wrong target," transform her devices into a jetpack, and fly away. If she's really annoyed at the heroes, she'll form some robots out of the wreckage and order them to attack.

THE SELF-DESTRUCT

The big moment the scenario's working toward is the activation of the Tripod's self-destruct sequence. When the Tripod is damaged to below 5 BODY, it will immediately stop, glow with a brilliant white light, and begin resonating an ominous hum. On a panel on its underbelly, a timer in alien script displays a six-second countdown. At the beginning of the sixth segment after the countdown begins, the Tripod blows up.

If there's any doubt in the players' mind about what's happening, then tell them: "it sure looks like it's triggered a self-destruct device — and you probably don't have much time."

The self-destruct device can be deactivated in the following ways:

- **The Engineer:** If the PCs make a devil's bargain with her, she'll gladly shut it down.
- **More Damage:** If the Tripod's reduced below 0 BODY, the self-destruct mechanism acquires an Activation Roll: -1 to -5 BODY is a 15-; -6 to -10 BODY is a 14-; -11 to -15 BODY is a 12-; -16 to -20 BODY is an 11-; and -21 to -40 BODY is an 8-. If the Tripod is completely destroyed (-41 BODY or lower), the device stops.
- **Reprogramming:** It's possible for someone to access the self destruct system by pulling away a panel and reprogramming it. It takes a one Full Phase Action for a Systems Operation at -2 to access the controls, and a Full Phase Action for a Computer Programming roll at a -5 penalty to shut it down. If the hero's familiar with Solemnid script (such as a Perseid like Ironclad), reduce these penalties to -1 and -2, respectively.

LINGERING PLOT COMPLICATIONS

Obviously, you can use this as a setup for a future alien invasion scenario — probably the long-planned invasion by the Hzeel, since the Solemnids aren't in any shape to invade Earth.

Tuvarian might escape to fight another day. He's convinced there's a Hzeel base on Earth, and will seek it out with an obsession that would give even Captain Ahab pause. Should the Hzeel step up their operations against Earth, Tuvarian may even become a useful ally — albeit a loose cannon.

If the PCs agreed to let the Engineer have the samples, then at some time, that decision is going to have to come back to haunt them. In all likelihood, she'll use any technology she acquires to build robots that Mechanon can't turn against her, but she'll also incorporate it into some of her engineering projects. And, of course, if a hero treated her kindly, she may initiate a "fatal attraction" relationship with him.

External threats may have two additional consequences. First, if there was extensive loss of life and property damage (particularly if the self-destruct was triggered), then the heroes' reputation may be sullied (if not nationally, then locally). Second, a major alien attack may draw Humans (particularly Human supers) closer together, as the need to unite against an external threat becomes clearer. Even some supervillains may see the wisdom in an alliance of convenience. How this alliance takes shape — and how people with their own agenda could abuse it — is the stuff from which "to be continued" captions are drawn.

RANDOM ALIEN PROBE
ATTACK GENERATOR

You can use the following tables to randomly roll up an alien probe attack's details.

Table 1-1 Scenario Complexity

Roll 1d6

- 1-4 Simple Battle: probe lands, wreaks havoc, heroes stop it (roll on Table 2-1)
- 5-6 Complicated (2 or more acts) (roll on Table 3-1)

Table 2-1 One Act Battle Location

Roll 1d6, then on Table 5-1, if desired

- 1 Government Facility (roll on Table 2-2)
- 2 Military Facility (to Test Earth's Military Defenses)
- 3 Superhuman Team HQ (roll on Table 2-2)
- 4 Downtown Core (roll on Table 2-2)
- 5 University/Commercial Research Facility (roll on Table 2-2)
- 6 Residential Building (roll on Table 2-2)

Table 2-2 One Act Battle Alien Probe Motivation

Roll 1d6

- 1-2 Test Earth's military defenses
- 3 Kidnap a human (roll on Table 2-3)
- 4 Kidnap an alien (roll on Table 2-4)
- 5 Retrieve an artifact (use GM discretion)
- 6 Other (use GM Discretion)

Table 2-3 Human Kidnapping Victim

Roll 1d6

- 1 Prominent human scientist
- 2 Everyday citizen
- 3 Prominent human politician
- 4 Prominent human military man
- 5 Local superhero
- 6 Other (roll on Table 2-3-1)

Table 2-3-1 Other Human Kidnapping Victims

Roll 1d6

- 1 Famous artist
- 2 Famous writer
- 3 Model/Actress/Actor
- 4 Anti-alien rights advocate
- 5 Local supervillain
- 6 Former astronaut

Table 2-4 Alien Kidnapping Victims

Roll 1d6

- 1 Alien citizen who thinks he's a human being and is completely unaware of his alien heritage
- 2 Alien spy
- 3 Alien criminal
- 4 Old alien soldier, looking for peace on a planet of primitives
- 5 Alien royalty/ex-ruler, from the same culture, hiding among humans
- 6 Alien royalty/ex-ruler, from an enemy culture, hiding among humans

Table 3-1 Complicated Scenario, Complexity

Roll 1d6

- 1-4 2 Incidents (Investigation, followed by Battle, Roll on Table 3-2-1, then on 4-1)
- 5-6 3+ Incidents (Investigation, followed by a minor battle, further investigation, leading to a climactic battle; roll on Table 3-2-1 for the initial situation, then improvise the rest of the scenario.

Table 3-2-1 Starting Incident

Roll 1d6. If it's a two act scenario, roll on Table 4-1. If it's a three act scenario, roll on Table 3-2-2.

- 1 Mysterious disappearances and/or strange lights in a backwoods area (roll on Table 3-2-2, then Table 3-2-3, then Table 4-1)
- 2 The aliens land openly and issue an ultimatum, they demand the Humans find a lost artifact and safely deliver it to them (roll on Table 3-2-2, then Table 3-2-4, then Table 4-1)
- 3 A friendly NPC discovers an alien object (roll on Table 3-2-1-1) and asks a PC for help in finding the source. He gives them the general location where the artifact was found (roll on Table 3-2-2, then Table 3-2-5, then Table 4-1)
- 4 The PCs discover people in an isolated community are acting really strangely; they're under alien mind control (roll on Table 3-2-2, then Table 3-2-6, then Table 4-1)
- 5 The PCs spot strange individuals chasing a young woman. The men are brainwashed Humans armed with alien weapons, while the woman is an alien (roll on Table 2-4). The young woman says she might be able to track down the alien command ship if they provide her with specialized technology (roll on Table 3-2-2, then Table 3-2-7, then Table 4-1)
- 6 A piece of high technology is stolen from a research lab. The technology has no obvious use. It's actually going to be used as a replacement part to repair a damaged spaceship roll on Table 3-2-2, then Table 3-2-8, then Table 4-1)

Table 3-2-1-1 Alien Objects

Roll 1d6

- 1 A perfectly smooth silver orb.
- 2 Piece of strange glass, as strong as steel
- 3 Metal fragment that diamond drills can't scratch.
- 4 Weird shaped piece of heavy plastic with alien markings.
- 5 Glowing bioluminescent orb that emits no measurable radiation.
- 6 Device in perpetual motion without a visible motor

Table 3-2-2 Interim Battle

Roll 1d6

- 1 Gang of humans with shotguns, coerced or mentally controlled by the aliens.
- 2 Gang of humans, coerced or mentally controlled by the aliens, augmented with alien abilities and weapons
- 3 Pack of mutated attack animals (wolves, bears — use GM's discretion; if the aliens don't have the capability of doing this, reroll)

- 4 Federal agents, possibly under alien control.
- 5 A gang of Vivisectors (1 per 3 characters)
- 6 A supervillain, coerced or mentally controlled by the alien (Moderately more powerful than the benchmark character, +2 CV, +1 SPD, +15 Active Point Attack, +5 DEF over benchmark character)

Table 3-2-3 Mysterious Disappearance, Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 A sheriff who's working for the aliens is constantly trying to misdirect the PCs, directing them into an alien death trap.
- 2 The townspeople return, but they're really shapeshifting alien spies (or they're normal people possessed by aliens).
- 3 The missing people are criminals, delinquents, and troublemakers. The townspeople made a secret deal with the aliens: the aliens would leave them alone in exchange for their silence and thirty of their most undesirable citizens (who are now zombieified slaves). Their loved ones want them restored.
- 4 The missing people are actually invisible and intangible and shunted into a parallel dimension as a side effect of repairs to the alien FTL drive. The alien *might* be able to bring them back.
- 5 The missing people were actually sucked into the black hole at the center of the alien's damaged singularity drive. The alien is shielded from its effects, but the black hole is growing, with potentially deadly consequences.
- 6 The alien offered to genetically alter the townsfolk into superior alien-human hybrids. The disappeared willingly went with the aliens; they erased the memories of those that refused.

Table 3-2-4 Ultimatum, Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 The artifact is sentient, has telepathic powers, and is mentally manipulating people to prevent it from being "enslaved" again by its masters.
- 2 The artifact was accidentally destroyed. Nothing exists to give to the alien.
- 3 A supervillain has the artifact, and is using it to augment his powers (add +4 DCs to the villain's main attack, +2 SPD, +30 END, +30 STUN and a +15 PD, +15 ED force field)
- 4 The PCs discover that the artifact is an extremely powerful weapon — one that other aliens will attest they've used in the past to commit atrocities.
- 5 The artifact is performing some miraculous good deed and returning it will negate the miracle (e.g., it's found its way into the hands of a children's terminal cancer ward — and is emitting a cellular stabilization field that puts their disease into remission; if they lose it, the cancer will return).
- 6 The alien claims that the artifact rightfully belongs to his people, but the artifact is held by another alien who swears its *his* people's property.

Table 3-2-5 Alien Object, Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 Alien object turns out to contain someone's life force — it's dying, and must be reconnected to another alien body.
- 2 Alien object is the control to someone's ship — the alien is stranded without it. But it can also open up another alien installation.
- 3 Alien object is a recording that's directing people to go to a remote location.
- 4 Alien object is giving off increasingly deadly levels of radiation — and has fixed itself in place and can't be moved or destroyed. The radiation sequence needs to be neutralized, or the area will become uninhabitable.
- 5 The alien object seems to be able to teleport at random. The teleportation needs to be neutralized if it's to be reliably examined.
- 6 Alien object is an extremely cherished personal memento of the alien commander (the last memories of a dead wife, his father's honor trophy...). It's a great bargaining chip (he'd see the world in flames rather than lose it), but it better not get broken.

Table 3-2-6 Isolated Community, Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 People begin to mutate and take on alien features.
- 2 Children begin to get sick — a common virus for the alien is a deadly plague to Humans.
- 3 The people plot to kidnap someone the PCs hold dear — they'll trade him back if the PCs agree to leave them alone.
- 4 The alien's mind control process begins to lose its grip — but people begin to suffer from anxiety to the point where everyone in the town starts having a nervous breakdown or psychotic episodes.
- 5 The people experience hallucinations in which they perceive the PCs are monsters (and out come the shotguns).
- 6 A series of random disasters effects the community — fires, tremblers, tornadoes, etc. It's actually a side effect of alien research, but the PCs are blamed.

Table 3-2-7 Alien Woman Running, Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 The woman turns out to have her own (far more sinister) designs toward Humanity.
- 2 The woman is actually pregnant — she's carrying a rightful ruler or someone who's predestined to be a major religious figure, or someone who has an "over the limit chance" of becoming (according to a probability/pre-emptive justice machine) a mass murderer.
- 3 The woman falls in love with a PC.
- 4 The woman is a rebel who wants to recruit the PCs to join in her revolution.
- 5 The woman is a spy — and the initial pursuit was a set-up meant to win the PCs' confidence.
- 6 The woman isn't really what she appears to be — she's a robot, shapechanging monster, or the like who's forgotten her true nature.

Table 3-2-8 Stolen Tech, Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 The stolen tech that's being used to repair a damaged ship is defective — it'll cause the ship to blow and take out everything else in a 100 kilometer radius.
- 2 The stolen tech's inventor decides to recover it himself, with potentially tragic results.
- 3 The stolen tech was actually invented by the Engineer or another tech-oriented supervillain. The company from which it was stolen had bid on artifacts recovered from one of her old bases. She wants it back.
- 4 The stolen tech is not what the heroes are told it was — it's not innocuous, it's a weapon.
- 5 The stolen tech is leaking dangerous levels of radiation. It's a threat to the entire area and anyone who's exposed to it (except the alien, who's shielded).
- 6 The stolen tech is only a component of what the alien needs — he needs to send someone back to the lab and steal another part.

Table 4-1 Final Battle

Roll 1d6, then on Table 4-2, if desired

- 1 Alien commander is a powerful superhuman (+3 CV, +1 SPD, +20 Active Point Attack, +8 DEF over benchmark character)
- 2 Alien commander has access to a squad that's effectively superhuman (+1 CV, +0 SPD, +5 Active Point Attack, +3 DEF over benchmark character)
- 3 Alien commander unleashes a squad of Vivisectors
- 4 Alien commander unleashes a Silver Ooze
- 5-6 Alien commander unleashes a Tripod War Giant

Table 4-2 Final Battle, Additional Complication

Roll 1d6

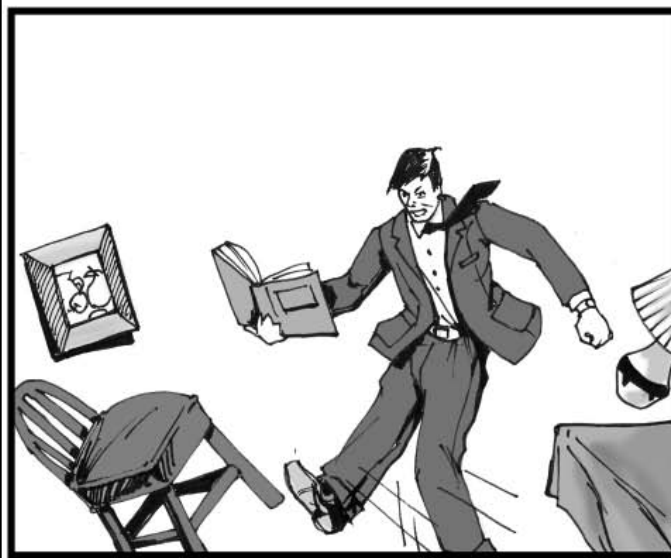
- 1-3 None
- 4 The alien has constructed a doomsday weapon that needs to be destroyed.
- 5 The alien is building a communications relay to send word to its masters that the planet's suitable for invasion.
- 6 The alien is about to launch a ship full of kidnap victims back into space.

Table 5-1: Dangling Plot Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1-2 None
- 3 The alien left behind a bomb — a big bomb that needs to be defused.
- 4 The alien probe was actually a test — which the PCs passed! One of them receives a mysterious gift (use GM's discretion)
- 5 There's another probe buried elsewhere — and it's going to wake out of its hibernation soon.
- 6 The aliens left people behind who have been transformed into powerful superhumans.

chapter three:



Ask Your Doctor If
Metatron Is
Right For You

THE SUPER- POWERS DRUG



So who wants to be a superhuman? Well, that's a dumb question in a superhero world — *lots* of people do. When someone is a nerdy, puny nobody who spends six hours a day watching the latest exploits of the Justice Squadron on the news, why wouldn't he want to be a superhero? Of course, in all but a handful of campaign worlds, everyone can't be a superhero, and that creates a lot of demand.

And where there's a demand, there's a market. In a superhero universe, it's not hard to sit down for a few minutes and think about the logical ramifications of the demand for superhuman abilities. Just the infomercials alone would be mind-boggling. Now add Internet spam, snake oil salesmen, and religious cults that claim to transform people into angels. In such a climate, everyone wouldn't just *want* to turn into a superhuman, they'd expect it. It'd be like the Charles Atlas "Hero of the Beach" ads taken to the Nth Power.

The scams are bad enough, but they wouldn't be so attractive if people actually didn't acquire superhuman abilities through artificial means. There will always, in spite of the obvious risk, be some poor sap who wants to take a magic pill and transform into Captain Superlative. This especially applies to criminals: when you've been beaten up for the fifth time by some smug muscle-bound oaf in spandex, all you want is payback (and you quit caring about the potential side effects three beatings ago).

The Instant Superpowers scenario does more than just allow you to play with superpowered thugs, the ways in which they recklessly try to get superpowers, and the horrible things that happen to them. It lets you examine the themes of empowerment and duty. It gives a chance for PCs with superpowers to say, "there but for the grace of God go I" — and perhaps more importantly, "a person isn't characterized by his gifts and abilities, it's what he does with them that counts."

BAD DRUGS FOR DOCTORED MEDICINE: THE APPROACH

There are a lot of approaches (and tones) you can take to this scenario. They include:

Action: The superpowers drug scenario is an excuse to create new foes for your heroes — they get to fight their way through hordes of super-thugs. The PCs' job is simple: defeat the evil drug ring, recover stolen goods, and put a stop to the madness. The PCs face one different super-thug type after another, but little time is spent dwelling on the implications or the personal tragedy, because they're too busy fighting.

Cautionary Tale: In a Cautionary Tale, the game stops every few minutes so an NPC can give a lecture on the evils of drugs. Drug use isn't just an insidious addiction — it instantly transforms people from law-abiding citizens into narcotics-crazed demons. While there's plenty of room in a superpowers drug scenario to explore the negative consequences of narcotics use (see Tragic Melodrama, below), unless you're deliberately running a parody of a hysterical 1950s anti-drug film, players will probably not appreciate this approach.

Horror: The horrific fate of those who dared to oppose the natural forces of the world is the focus of this approach. Good people die or become monsters, and humanity's noblest instincts devolve into bestial behavior, as the mutations transform people into abominations that spread misery. The PCs are an imperfect shield against the horror who may save a few people and close the floodgates of despair... but an awful lot of people suffer and die before the final success, and the PCs feel nearly helpless for most of the adventure.

Tragic Melodrama: The world is full of good people who make miserable choices and who pay for them for the rest of their lives. In this type of scenario, you should use one NPC to represent the tragedy. Perhaps he's a paroled ex-VIPER agent who's reformed and is raising a family. Maybe he's the son of an old family friend who's been in trouble with the law but who's now straightening out his life. Perhaps he's an ex-college athlete whose career was cut short by an injury. Maybe he's the one robber at a bank job who talked his fellow robbers into *not* hurting the hostages and was sensible enough to surrender. The PCs get to know the individual in question, like him, understand his motives, *almost* redeem him... and then they get to watch as his life falls apart. The NPC turns to the drug as a quick fix and ends up wrecking his life.

THE BAD GUYS

Once you've decided on the tone of the scenario, you should figure out who's behind the drug operation or driving the scenario. Prime candidates include:

The Good-Hearted (But Damned) NPC: In this scenario, a friend of one of the PCs secretly envies him, feels grossly inferior, and wants to compete at the same level, so he turns to drugs to grant him powers or bolster existing ones. This tends to lead to a spiral of overaggressive behavior, shattered friendships, addiction, and (lastly) tragedy, as the shattered shell of a former close friend completely loses it, is forced to choose between the drug and his friends and makes the wrong choice, and ends up turning against everyone he previously loved.

Hypocritical Politician: Suppose a prominent Representative who hates superheroes and has staked his political career by positioning himself as a leading champion of the war on drugs. He decides that if he secretly funded a disastrous superpowers drug, he'd discredit superheroes and get more money for his programs and political benefactors. Invictus (page

REMEMBER KIDS, WINNERS DON'T USE DRUGS (THEY USE SUPERHUMAN- SOLDIER SERUMS!)

In part because Golden Age comics reflect the awe in which early twentieth century society held wonder drugs (penicillin, insulin, the polio vaccine...), many of the most venerated characters in comics got their powers from drugs. This was considered appropriate until the 1960s, when society's awe of wonder drugs was supplanted by its general distaste for recreational pharmaceuticals (and a widespread contempt for the counter-culture that advocated them). Later scandals associated with the use of performance-enhancing drugs in sports, not to mention the "War On Drugs" of the 1980s, only made such origins even less common.

The explanation some people use to accommodate this dilemma — that some heroes are *meant* to have powers, but for everyone else attempting to get them via drugs is an act of hubris — raises issues of elitism (or at least predestination) that are also interesting. When society sends out mixed signals on a subject, there's a story hook to be found. What happens when one of the oldest and most respected superheroes in the world turns out to be a drug addict? Suppose the heroes find evidence that one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies has been backing a "war on drugs" as a smokescreen to keep a rival company's "metahumanogenic" drug off the mass market, because when people are incapable of getting sick (and superhumans, fights aside, are a remarkably healthy lot) they'll lose a fortune?

Of course, if your players just want to bash things and don't want to think too hard about the implications of where the villains get their powers, don't worry about it. These sorts of deep philosophical issues aren't appropriate for every campaign.

172) might be behind this; or he could be manipulating the politician (he knows the Representative will eventually discredit himself, and he [Invictus] will move up the ladder in several important Congressional committees.) A great finale for this scenario is to have the politician convene a Congressional committee on the drug crisis — and when the PCs figure out he's the one behind it, they blast through the doors of the Capitol and publicly expose him just as the committee is grilling a friend of the PCs (perhaps a friendly local police chief or an honest federal agent who's being set up as a fall guy).

Legitimate Commercial Process Gone Wrong: In this scenario, the mutations aren't an underground criminal enterprise — they're a cutting edge pharmaceutical process that starts out as a legitimate drug. When the PCs discover the true effects of the fad drug and persuade the authorities to shut down the operation, the drug invariably goes underground (where criminal chemists develop more potent and dangerous versions).

Local Entrepreneurial Criminal Looking To Expand: The narcotics underworld is (literally) a cutthroat business, and any edge means bigger profits and more power. The developer of the drug intends to use it to corner the illegal drug market.

Mad Scientist I: The developer is a scientist with ulterior motives. He may want to raise money to finance other experiments, or perhaps he's determined to show the world that spurned him what a genius he is. All he cares about is his goal; the fact that innocent people get hurt because of his actions doesn't bother him at all.

Mad Scientist II: Alternately, the scientist's experiments are a means to an end, and that end is Science! To this villain, the causes of human evolution and scientific progress are all-important. He uses the criminal underworld as a laboratory (and thugs as lab rats). This motivation turns this adventure into a modern-day Frankenstein scenario, with drug-induced mutation replacing corpse sewing as an expression of human hubris.

Revenge Is A Dish Best Served By A Superhuman! This revenge-crazed bad guy desperately wants to become a superhuman, to the extent that he'll finance a criminal druggist and experiment on himself. Perhaps he wants revenge on a former boss who screwed him out of millions of dollars. Maybe he was an ambitious thug who was beaten to a bloody pulp by a superhero and sent to prison. Ultimately, he wants revenge on someone, and he needs to become superhuman to get it. And if the process ends up killing him, he won't care until it's too late.

The Space Case Who Gives Away His Spare Supply: This scenario has a smaller scope than others. The villain is a chemical genius who's manufacturing the drug for recreational purposes. Sometimes he gives samples of his drugs to his friends without thinking about the consequences. The chaos caused is purely an accident.

FOR (WILLING) TRAGEDIANS ONLY

If you know a player enjoys running deeply tragic characters, get together with him privately and ask if he'd like to take center stage in a drug addiction scenario. Perhaps the hero's powers were failing and he turned to Metatron for a quick fix, or maybe he took Metatron and became an addict while working undercover. Perhaps someone slipped him the drug, or he took it by accident. Whatever the cause, he's become addicted and has to go through all of the stages: denial, desperation, the agony of recovery.

Never impose such a sensitive plot on a player — he's got to volunteer knowingly. Make sure he understands this plot has the potential to be a character buster: some hero teams may not want to deal with a recovering drug addict and the bad publicity they'll generate; villains who find out about a PC's old drug habit will try to exploit it. If the player agrees, allow him to run for a few sessions as a secret addict before the secret comes out, then sit back and watch the fun.

RUNNING THE GAME

Once you've got your approach and your bad guys in mind, it's time to plan the adventure.

Setting Up The Scenario

You can set up the superpowers drug scenario in several ways:

Cult Of The Month: Some modern religious cults like to trumpet themselves as mankind's best hope for self-improvement. What could be more of an improvement than making yourself superhuman? What better way for an egomaniacal cult leader to bolster his own delusions of godhood than by turning himself into a god... and his followers into demi-gods?

In this version, the PCs get involved with the adventure when someone close to them starts attending "the First Church of Spiritual Fulfillment" and begins going to church socials that involve mutation, hypnotic commands, and robberies. The situation soon escalates into all-out war between the heroes and the cult... but of course the heroes have to be careful not to injure their opponents, who are essentially innocent dupes.

Drug Lab, Mk. I: This is an example of a "set up your plot months in advance" technique. If you plan to use a criminal pharmacologist as a major villain, run a small scenario where the PCs smash his lab. It's an easy win for the PCs — none of the thugs have the ability to threaten them yet. As the pharmacologist's being dragged away by the cops, have him declare — loudly — that the PCs

have destroyed his life's work, that they're arrogant worms who think they're above the common man, and that he'll bring them down to earth if it's the last thing he does. Ten adventures later, the pharmacologist's out of jail and brewing up some revenge. This approach doesn't particularly work if the PCs are of homicidal bent ("...if it's the last thing I do — GAK!"), though the "after the criminal pharmacologist is murdered by a vigilante, his genius brother turns to crime" scenario fills the same niche.

Hey, Coach: The adventure begins when the PCs go to a high school football game at their alma mater. One of the teams has a long tradition of being the worst team in the area. But *this* time they decimate the opposition with moves that would be impressive in the professional leagues — and end up sending half of the opposition players to the hospital. Clearly something's not right here, and that should lead to a PC investigation. If the PCs ignore the warning signs, the team decides to turn to crime as the "ultimate touchdown" and you have a new low-powered superteen villain group in your campaign.

It's The Latest Fad: This goes hand-in-hand with the "*Legitimate Commercial Process Gone Wrong*" scenario. It begins with some casual contact with people using mutagens as a more extreme version of body piercing (the animal-hybrid mutation templates are particularly good for this scenario). Somehow the PCs become suspicious of the trend (either the authorities ask them to investigate, or they find that previously law-abiding teenagers are turning into criminals while under the drug's influence) and decide to investigate.



Make Them Bleed: Hired agents attack the PCs with extremely sharp (double Penetrating) weapons. Some of the heroes bleed during the fight. After the battle, the bad guys take blood samples and encode the PCs' DNA into a mutagen drug (the mutagenic effects mimic the affected PCs' powers). At the end of the scenario, make sure the PCs learn about the source of the drug and how it was acquired.

What The Hell Happened To These Guys?: Nothing gets the players' attention like one or two encounters with thugs they've previously fought who've mutated themselves into low-grade supers.

Developing The Scenario

Once you've hooked the heroes into the scenario, you need to build toward the climax. As with other superhero scenarios, it's best to structure the scenario as a sequence of acts that swing between tactical combat and investigation.

Once the PCs have gathered enough information to answer most of the basic questions of the scenario (who are the bad guys, what is their ultimate aim, how are they making the drug, where is the drug being manufactured...), you can either throw in some twists (see *Complications*, below) or the PCs can take the fight directly to the villains for a big climactic showdown.

Here are some suggested plot developments for a superpowers drug scenario. Some of them involve some pretty despicable actions on the part of the bad guys, so make sure they're appropriate to the tone and feel of your campaign.

All Heck Breaks Loose: If the bad guys have a malicious streak, they might release their drug at the worst possible time and place. This could include a major sporting event, a street festival, a political rally, on or near a major holiday, or any other situation that combines lots of people or factors that lead to maximum chaos.

Drugging The Loved One: When the villains of the scenario gets really irritated by the PCs, the kid gloves come off. They find someone the PC loves, kidnap him, inject him with an extremely addictive drug until they think he's hooked, then throws the hapless pal out on the streets. Alternately, they expose him to a particularly dangerous form of the superpowers drug, leaving the PCs with the task of having to defeat a super-mega-powerful mutated loved one without inflicting any permanent harm.

You should play the NPC card sparingly, or at least with an eye on the fact that the players often hate it when you victimize their characters' NPCs this badly. On the other hand, tragedian players may love the chance to have a few scenes trying to help an NPC kick his addiction.

"Look, Up In The Sky!": Elementary school kids who want to be superhuman take the superpowers drug, dress up with bath towels for capes, and jump out of windows in a tall building, thinking the drug will help them fly. Unfortunately, the drug doesn't work that way, and even with the drug toughening them physically, they're going to get hurt... if the PCs don't rescue them.

Hey, We're Supposed To Vote Them Out, Not Kill Them!: Eight camera-hogging strangers share a house in Millennium City as part of a hip reality TV series. What happens when they stop being polite and start mutating into monsters?

Ho Ho Ho, Oh No!: At the office Christmas party for one of the city's major corporations, a drug-dealing creep dresses like Santa and passes out candy canes laced with the mutagen. (This works especially well for a villain with a revenge motif — maybe he formerly worked in the corporation's labs).

Isn't This A Lovely Home... Hey!: Senior citizens get mutation along with their daily dose of medicine. They go berserk. Unfortunately, a lot of them can't take the physical strain of the drug, so they need to be calmed down without being harmed.

It's A Prison Break: Imagine lacing the food in a maximum security prison facility with a drug that turns the inmates into superhumans. Not only would they be causing a major riot and prison break, but what better advertising could the villains get for their wares?

A Mistrial, And Then Some...: Suppose the villains infiltrated the biggest trial of the year and laced the jury's food with Teleron, the telepathy drug. Not only would this cause a mistrial, but watching the proceedings as the jurors realize all of the deceptions being played out in the average criminal trial might be worth the price of admission.

Rave Of Death: The ideal place to slip someone a drug is at a party. Perhaps a PC attends a society function in his secret identity and people start mutating around him. He has to put a stop to it without blowing his cover.

Whatcha Gonna Do When They Come For You?: Although drugging the favorite cop shop/doughnut house is a little silly, what happens when the heroes encounter extremely aggressive superhuman cops taking out their frustrations on speeders, litterers, jaywalkers, and people who talk on their cell phones while driving?

Schoolyard Bully: If you want an encounter with a little pathos, give the superpowers drug to a scrawny fourteen year old kid who's always been the butt of everyone's jokes, then watch the tragedy unfold. After following a trail of injured people (at least a few of whom deserved a little of what they got), the heroes arrive on the scene and have to talk the student out of his rage as he's crushing a vice-principal's throat.

Shore Leave: While on leave, soldiers scheduled to return to a war zone decide to test the drug to see if it'll make them better combatants (and keep them alive in battle). Unfortunately, tempers begin to flare, especially when the soldiers visit an anti-war rally.

They Mutate Horses, Don't They?: If people can mutate themselves and give themselves animal characteristics, why not mutate animals and give them human characteristics? Suppose a radical animal rights group hired the criminal pharmacist

to develop a “primate mutagen,” then slipped it into the food supply at a zoo. Suddenly little kids see bestial humans shaking the bars of their cages, and hear the elephants asking to be let free.

Those Who Are Prepared To Give Up A Little Security... The city responds to the superpowers drug situation by calling out the National Guard, declaring a strict evening curfew, and suspending civil liberties so the authorities can freely search for the drug. These might seem to be reasonable precautions during a crisis of this magnitude, but it seems a few politicians and law enforcement officials are using the crisis to settle old scores....

Trial By Furor: The city has just had a sensational trial on an extremely volatile issue (race relations, abortion rights, gay rights, union rights...) and tempers are at a boiling point. Then a verdict comes down that’s sure to enflame a large number of people on one side of the issue. Someone decides that “the problem is that we have no power, let’s go get some!” That’s when the superpowers drug dealers get busy (they might even be making deals in the middle of the riot).

Vigilante Force, Unite!: This option works particularly well if you’re using the “legitimate drug that gets banned when people see it’s dangerous” scenario. Early in the scenario, the drug manufacturer proudly announces the creation of “The Metatron Men,” talented young people who’ve experienced the treatment and volunteered to become superheroes. They start off performing with a polish and professionalism that most superhero teams sorely lack: they follow police procedures; file the proper reports; say kind words to pensioners; set up appointments at “victim’s rights centers”; their uniforms (complete with corporate logo) are never dirty, torn, or bloody; and they perform their duty with a slightly cloying smile. They make the PCs look like pikers. This gives the drug a legitimacy that sends sales through the roof and makes it acceptable for respectable people to try it. Perhaps even the mayor (needing a gimmick for his re-election campaign) decides to become a user. As the scenario progresses, the new superheroes become more and more psychotic, until by the end of the adventure they’re a homicidal villain team.

What If We Did This... At the start of the scenario, both the drug’s effects and side effects are pretty minor. Then Teleios, who sees the drug as both an insultingly amateurish concoction and cut-rate competition for his services, decides to do something about it. He secretly re-engineers the drug for greater power and much more dramatic side effects. Suddenly, what began as a minor nuisance and a controversy turns into a major threat to the campaign city.

Complications

Lest things become too predictable, you should also include some twists, opportunities for the heroes to fight back against the drug, and the like.

Alliance Of Convenience: With the superpowers drug as popular as it is, a rival kingpin is having problems moving his narcotics. He’s willing to put aside his differences with the PCs, track down one of the facilities where the villains manufacture the superpowers drug, and perform a joint raid — but is this just a ruse to take the supply for himself?

But Dr. Silverback’s A Good Guy!: As the PCs track down the source of the drug, they uncover evidence linking it a close personal friend, one of the most respected superheroes in the world. Furthermore, even though he swears he has nothing to do with the drug, the PCs discover he’s been brewing up a mutagen for his own secret purposes, or that one of his lab assistants has a link to organized crime through a relative or lover. Is this a red herring, or is one of the world’s greatest heroes involved in a monstrous experiment?

Cheap Knockoffs: What happens when the superpowers drug craze becomes so out of control that some people are pushing cheap hallucinogens and telling people it’s the mutagen? Well, aside from creating angry customers, it makes it hard for an investigator to find the real drug traffickers when all of these imposters are running around... and when he keeps having to rescue people who put themselves in danger because they think they have powers.

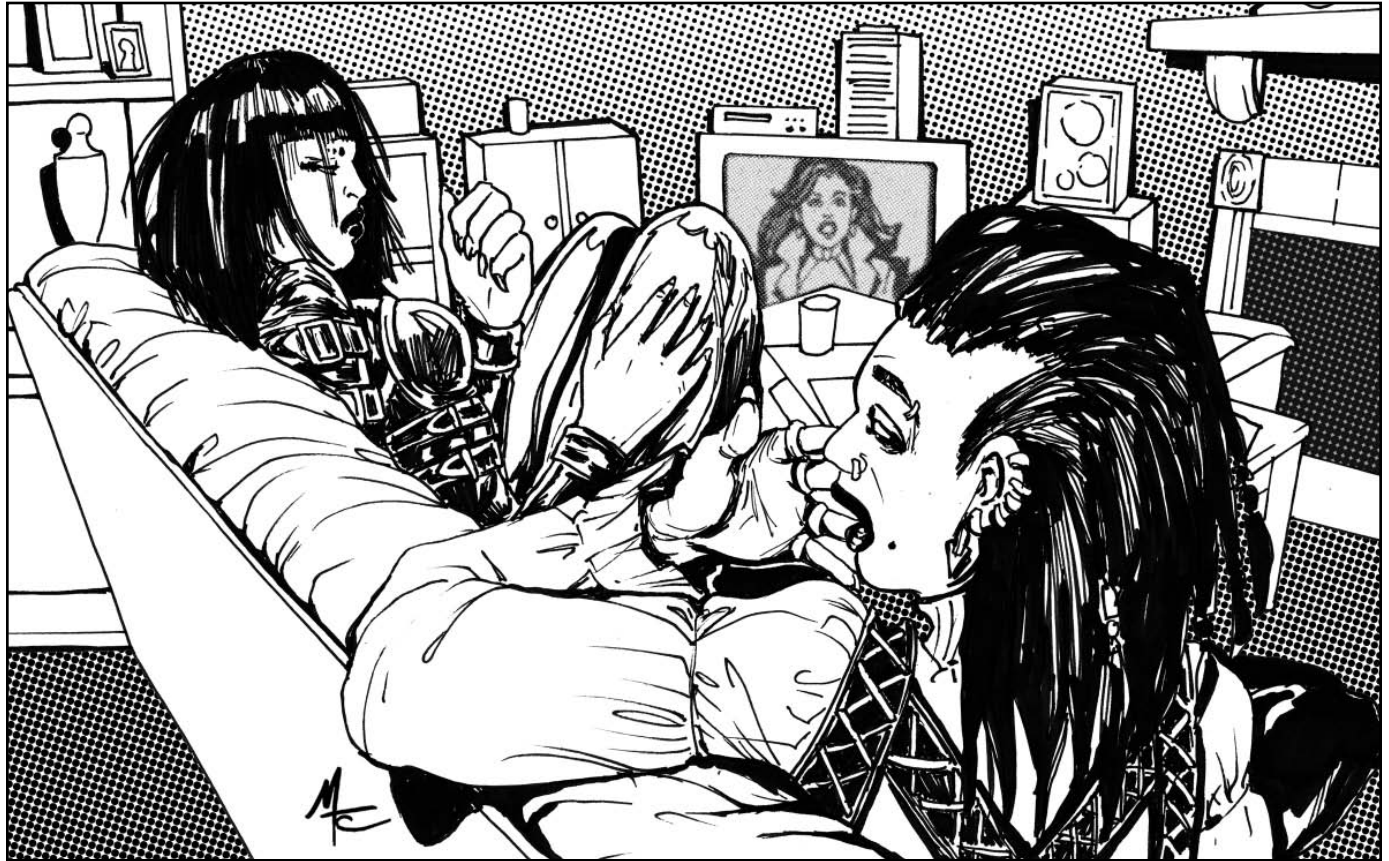
Dealer’s Regret: A drug dealer’s kid brother goes berserk due to the effects of the drug and puts his brother in a coma before the police shoot him dead. The heroes can persuade the comatose drug dealer to turn on the drug ring... if they can wake him up. Meanwhile the drug ring, realizing its vulnerability, has sent a superpowered hit man (or three) to the hospital to kill the dealer.

Empty Warehouses: The PCs learn where the drug’s being manufactured. They gather their forces, rush in to make the bust — and they’re too late. The paranoid drug lord moves his operation to a new place on a regular basis.

Hit The Streets: This is the standard tactic for anyone dealing with street crime: hit the street, corner the dealers, and get them to spill their guts and reveal some leads. Of course, anytime you have a lead, you also have the possibility of an ambush or a booby trap (not to mention some of the other complications listed in this section, such as *Empty Warehouses*). And what if the dealer the hero always leans on has gotten tired of the bullying and taken the drug himself?

How Dare You!: If the public sees the drug as a miracle cure, opposing its distribution might make the PCs extremely unpopular with the general public. Depending on how much they rely on public support (such as official government sanction) to do their jobs, their plummeting popularity could *really* complicate matters.

Interrupting The Supply Train: The villains have to get the raw materials for manufacturing the superpowers drug from someplace, right? When the pharmacologist needs some special ingredient to refine his serum, give the PCs a lead on it (especially



if they're the sort of crimefighter that likes to hit the streets and gather information), then let them intercept the operation.

If you want the PCs to intercept the precursor chemicals but not track down the drug lab (yet), make sure the bad guys have a good lookout (to spot them coming) and use transport vehicles the PCs can't track. The villains should have technology that lets them counteract any of the heroes' known superpowers the heroes could use to follow them (such as Shrinking, Desolidification, and Teleportation).

It's possible to turn this into a kidnapping operation: the formula requires genetic samples from a living mutant with certain powers. For example, maybe the drugmakers used one of two teenaged mutant twins to manufacture the drug, but the mutant died. Now the sibling is their best hope of remaining in business.

Another option is to let the heroes intercept an *export* operation. Perhaps the pharmacist's men deliver the drug to a courier who takes it to some mob kingpin in another city in an effort to spread the use of the drug and create problems for other people.

Meet The New Boss: The PCs track down the people in charge of the operation and discover they've been bought out. The originals were just amateurs, but now a professional crime boss has muscled his way into the racket and taken over manufacturing and distribution. Similarly, a supervillain may learn about the operation, decide this would be a great way to expand his business, confiscate the equipment and the supplies, and begin a new phase of his criminal career.

Public Service Announcement: If the PCs are respected by the community, they might make a public service

commercial warning about the dangers of the superpowers drug. While superhuman battles can happen *anywhere* in a *Champions* campaign, this is also a great place for non-tactical conflict. What happens when the script the PC's given is so cliched and trite it'll probably end up as an object of mockery by the target audience? What if an obnoxious cameraman makes flippant remarks about the superhero ("let's face it, if you ever lost your powers, you'd be sucking down Metatron just like everyone else")?

Remembrance — And Anger: A funeral for a person who died from the superpowers drug turns into a rally by local community leaders and parents to keep their kids from using it. They ask the PCs to address the rally — which turns violent when some of the users decide to terrorize the people trying to take away their drugs.

If you're running the "tragic melodrama" option with a sympathetic NPC, this makes a good turning point. In true soap opera fashion, the PCs put pressure on him to reveal what he knows, and he's just about to spill his guts when the drug users attack. The NPC loses his best chance at redemption, or gets killed just before he can tell the heroes what they need to know.

A different type of rally is the *Drug Legalization Rally*. In this one, the people who are protesting are in favor of the drug — as far as they're concerned, anyone who's against the drug is a fascist who's trying to prevent otherwise lawful citizens from getting access to superpowers ("my brother might not've been murdered if he'd taken Metatron and been able to defend himself!"). This becomes especially poignant if the drug helped some physically disabled people overcome their affliction, or otherwise allowed for some inarguably good results.

There Is No Drug: Or at least it's not the drug that mutates people. Instead, the drug serves as a primer for a telepathic mutant with human evolutionary powers. The mutant mentally hones in on the target and uses his powers to trigger a psionic transformation that temporarily turns the user into an evolved human.

Trapped Buildings: The ruthless drug lords lure the PCs to a small operation that looks like one of their major manufacturing centers... but it's really an ordinary building stuffed full of explosives rigged to go off when the heroes enter. Alternately, the villains lure other people into the trap, leak word to the PCs, then watch them race against time to prevent the innocents from being blown to kingdom come.

We Need A Cure: The PCs get a sample of the drug and work to develop a counteragent (if they don't have a super-expert in genetics on the team, they can send it to an outside expert such as Dr. Silverback). The PCs have to gather the resources needed to manufacture the counteragent, arrange to have it manufactured quickly, then track down the victims and administer it. And of course, the villains will react when they start losing their client base — they might use their own genetics knowledge to develop counteragents to the PCs' concoction!

Alternatively, the PCs might strike a devil's bargain with a supervillain scientist like Teleios to invent a counteragent in exchange for "a future favor that involves breaking no laws and threatening no innocent persons." (There's no way he can abuse that agreement. Sure.)

The Grand Finale

Once the PCs have gathered enough information on the villains to figure out where to confront them, it's time for an endgame. The easiest way to do this is to put all of the eggs in one basket: cram the drug lord, the manufacturing process, the bulk of the superhuman goons, and whatever's needed to make the process into a big warehouse, and let them slug it out. But there are other places to hold fights besides warehouses and/or the bad guy's home turf. Other situations and locations that can bring this scenario to a climax include:

Drugging The Local Reservoir: The villains decide to dump the superpowers drug in the local water supply and expose *everyone* to it. Given the amount of mutagen it would take to mutate the population of a major city, this option strains credibility... but if you're running a four-color game, incredulity isn't always a vice. This ending gives the PCs a clear goal: intercept and stop the villains before they can drug the city. Alternatively, they could arrive just a little too late, then have to defeat the villains and find a way to purify the water before the serum dissipates.

Alternately, the villains may arrange to deliver the drug via an airborne toxin. The gas containing the toxin is stored in a special float for the city's holiday parade and timed for release when the crowd's at its largest....

BUT I WAS EXPECTING THEM TO OPPOSE THE DRUG!

The superpowers drug scenario has two fixed premises: first, that the superpowers drug poses a serious threat to the wellbeing of the general public; second, that the PCs recognize the threat and oppose it. The first premise is under your control, but the second premise isn't... and players have an extraordinary capacity for not doing what you expect. What if the PCs see the drug as a *good* thing, and encourage its use?

The heavy-handed approach is to make it clear the heroes are wrong by throwing a lot of negative incidents at them, putting public pressure on them, and having trusted NPCs tell them "maybe the drug's a good thing in theory, but the execution sucks!". In this case, the heavy-handed approach might be the best one to keep the campaign stable.

A wilder option is to allow the drug — perhaps in a milder, safer form — to work its way into society and spark a mutagenic revolution. Thanks to Metatron B, most people are healthier, hardier, and have low-level superhuman abilities. That's the good news. The bad news is that the world wasn't ready to handle it, so a lot of society's security protocols are useless. Will a super-powered society be a polite society? What happens when the drug spreads into the Third World and you have petty dictators with armies of low-grade superhumans? These are interesting questions to explore, though it takes a brave GM to make such a radical change in the status quo.

Expose The Villain At A Special Event: If the person behind the plot is in a position of authority (a corporate executive, the mayor, or the like), after the PCs have gathered the evidence, it's always great to storm into a highly public meeting (a stockholders meeting, a rally, a public birthday celebration...) and destroy the bastard's career at his moment of triumph. Another possibility would be to use the wedding chapel from Chapter Seven to stage the exposé at the villain's daughter's wedding. Then the ushers, the best man, and the groom all pop the superpowers drug, leading to a fight against a mutated wedding party.

Fire In The Hothouse!: If the drug is at all botanical in origin, consider placing the final battle in a greenhouse. For true Silver Age flavor, use Thorn from *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks* as the villain — he concocted the superpowers drug as a way to discredit superhumans ("if they want to act like wild animals, let them *become* wild animals"). Now the PCs have to face Thorn's "garden of killer weeds" before they can stop the horticultural horror himself.

Take The Speedboat And Motor!: The villains are a little smarter than most of their ilk. They realize they've overstayed their welcome, so they're going to take their profits and get out of the city while they can. They're on a big, fast, heavily armed yacht as they try to get away, with the PCs attacking them in a running battle. This ending gives the PCs the chance to sink the boat and then exclaim "no one could have survived that!" — a perfect genre moment that sets the stage for the villains' eventual return.

It's All Happening At The Zoo: If you're using the Animal Hybrid drug you can combine this scenario with Chapter Five by making the villain a mad zoologist and designating the local zoo or game farm as his lab. When the PCs arrive to confront him, they find themselves facing a small army of mutant animals.

AFTERMATH

When the heroes have defeated the drug ring and destroyed the drug, it's time to celebrate. But it shouldn't come as too much of a surprise that this scenario has the potential for some extremely nasty aftershocks.

I Didn't Inhale: Now that the PCs have broken up a drug ring, someone decides they'd make perfect spokesmen for public service announcements against drug use. Of course, it's possible that back in his college days, one of the superheroes had his own experiences with casual drug use, and the press loves to expose hypocrisy. Even if the PC wasn't a user, he may have spent enough time around the party scene that people figured he had to be using, "because everybody did it back then."

Kick The Addiction: Some poor soul (maybe even a PC) became addicted to the drug. It requires weeks of treatment to purge the effects of the drug from the body, but the psychological effects take even longer to overcome. An NPC who experienced a tantalizing taste of the superpowered life may occasionally mutter "if only I had my Metatron, I could help!" when there's a crisis.

Mass Hysteria: If some chemically-empowered supers caused problems, the public may conclude that *all* chemically-mutated supers have the potential to cause problems. Superheroes suddenly find themselves facing a lot of questions about where their superpowers came from, whether they're appropriate role-models, and so forth. Heroes whose powers derive from super-sera or the like may find themselves ostracized or condemned.

New Villains For Old: As the drug supply dries up, people return to normal — except for a small group of people whose physiology was "exceptionally compatible" with the drug, resulting in permanent mutations. These new supervillains blame the PCs for robbing their "brothers" of their powers and preventing them from taking over the city. Unsurprisingly, vengeance is high on their agenda (and so is obtaining new mutagens to expand their ranks and increase their powers). If you're running the Tragic Melodrama option, the person who didn't live up to the PCs' hopes is a prime candidate to become the leader of this new villain team.

Not Over Yet: The PCs cleaned up the drug supply... except for one sample and some incomplete notes. A rival crimelord stole them, and now he's sent them to a criminal drug lab. As a coda to the last adventure, the PCs need to track down the last supply of the drug and destroy it before it reaches the lab and the crisis happens all over again.

SUPER-DRUG TEMPLATES

Here are several sample superpowers drugs you can use as part of this scenario. Pick the one best suited to the adventure you have in mind, or mix-and-match them for a truly bizarre adventure!

Each template describes not only the additional abilities the user obtains, but the additional Disadvantages and/or Side Effects he suffers as well. In most cases the Disadvantages (if any) only apply while the drug remains in effect, but Dependence (Addiction) Disadvantages are permanent until bought off with Experience Points or otherwise cured in the game.



Transformation Templates

These templates represent superpowers drugs that physically transform the user in some obvious way.

ANIMAL HYBRID TEMPLATES

These templates represent drugs that cause a short-term genetic mutation lasting about six hours. When someone takes the drug, he almost immediately takes on the physical characteristics of a particular animal, creating a man-animal hybrid being. Depending on how you want to run the scenario, either specific drugs transform people in specific animals, the transformation varies depending on the user’s genes, or the transformation depends on the person’s psyche and changes him into the dangerous animal most compatible with his personality.

In game terms, these drugs are built as Major Transforms with a “heal back” condition defined as “after six hours passes.” Since the exact mechanics of the Transform don’t really matter — the drug’s just a plot device, after all — the templates simply list the effects and the END cost, if any, for using the abilities the user receives.

Bear Hybrid

When a drug dealer needs some heavy muscle, these burly boys get the job done. Bear Hybrids are single-minded adversaries given to taking long naps (12+ hours!) when they’re not under the influence of the drug.

BEAR HYBRID TEMPLATE

Cost	Power	END
10	<i>Bear-Man Transformation:</i> +15 STR; No Figured Characteristics (-½)	1
13	<i>Bear-Man Transformation:</i> +10 CON; No Figured Characteristics (-½)	0
8	<i>Bear-Man Transformation:</i> +8 PD	0
8	<i>Bear-Man Transformation:</i> +8 ED	0
15	<i>Bear’s Claws:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR)	1
5	<i>Bear’s Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (5 PD/5 ED)	0
10	<i>Bear’s Nose:</i> Discriminatory for Smell/ Taste Group	0
3	Climbing	

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 72

Value	Disadvantage
25	Dependence: must take the superpowers drug once per day or suffer Incompetence (Uncommon, Addiction)
10	Enraged: when challenged (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 14-
10	Psychological Limitation: Urge To Scavenge For Food (Common, Moderate)
10	Psychological Limitation: Enjoys Displays Of Physical Dominance (Common, Moderate)

Total Value Of Template Disadvantages: 55

PANTHER HYBRID TEMPLATE

Cost	Power	END
7	<i>Panther-Man Transformation:</i> +10 STR; No Figured Characteristics (-½)	1
16	<i>Panther-Man Transformation:</i> +8 DEX; No Figured Characteristics (-½)	0
11	<i>Panther-Man Transformation:</i> +8 CON; No Figured Characteristics (-½)	0
5	<i>Panther-Man Transformation:</i> +5 PD	0
5	<i>Panther-Man Transformation:</i> +5 ED	0
15	<i>Panther’s Claws:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR)	1
3	<i>Panther’s Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (3 PD/3 ED)	0
10	<i>Panther’s Legs:</i> Running +5”	1
5	<i>Panther’s Eyes:</i> Nightvision	0
10	<i>Panther’s Nose:</i> Discriminatory for Smell/ Taste Group	0
3	Climbing	
3	Shadowing	
3	Stealth	

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 96

Value	Disadvantage
25	Dependence: must take the superpowers drug once per day or suffer Incompetence (Uncommon, Addiction)
10	Enraged: when kept away from his prey (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 14-
10	Physical Limitation: Night Person (suffers -1 to all Skill and Characteristic Rolls in daylight) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
10	Psychological Limitation: Likes To Kill (Common, Moderate)

Total Value Of Template Disadvantages: 55

Panther Hybrid

Perfect for the thug who needs to be on the prowl at night, this template combines physical power with stealth abilities. Some panther hybrids are portrayed as a more noble than other “manimals,” but this version is quite savage, willing and able to rip out a person’s throat when he’s hungry.

RAPTOR HYBRID TEMPLATE

Cost	Power	END
15	<i>Raptor’s Speed:</i> +5 DEX	0
3	<i>Raptor’s Body:</i> +3 PD	0
3	<i>Raptor’s Body:</i> +3 ED	0
16	<i>Wings:</i> Flight 12”; Gestures (throughout; -½)	2
7	<i>Claws:</i> HKA ½d6; No STR Bonus (-½)	1
15	<i>Talons:</i> HKA 1d6 (up to 2d6 with STR)	1
9	<i>Raptor’s Eyes:</i> +6 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group	0

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 68

Cost	Option	END
5	<i>Owl’s Eyes:</i> Nightvision	0
Value	Disadvantage	
25	Dependence: must take the superpowers drug once per day or suffer Incompetence (Uncommon, Addiction)	
10	Psychological Limitation: Claustrophobia (Common, Moderate)	

Total Value Of Template Disadvantages: 35

Raptor Hybrid

This hybrid melds a human with a bird of prey — typically a hawk or eagle, but possibly a falcon, owl, or vulture. He grows wings under his arms and talons on his fingers and feet, and his eyes become bird-like. His nose usually enlarges and lengthens, becoming a sort of “beak.”

Reptile Hybrid

Some thugs who take the Animal Hybrid drug get turned into reptile-man forms — usually serpent-men, but sometimes toad-men or other equally ugly shapes.

REPTILE HYBRID TEMPLATE

Cost	Power	END
5	<i>Reptilian Strength</i> : +5 STR	1
24	<i>Reptilian Speed</i> : +8 DEX	0
3	<i>Reptilian Body</i> : +3 PD	0
3	<i>Reptilian Body</i> : +3 ED	0
7	<i>Fangs</i> : HKA ½d6; No STR Bonus (-½)	1
3	<i>Reptilian Scales</i> : Damage Resistance (3 PD/3 ED)	0
5	<i>Reptilian Eyes</i> : Nightvision	0

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 50

Cost	Option	END
8	<i>Toad-Man</i> : Leaping +8”	1
15	<i>Claws</i> : HKA 1d6 (up to 2d6 with STR)	1
33	<i>Venom</i> : Drain CON 3d6, Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Hour; +1), NND (defense is appropriate LS [Immunity]; +1), Personal Immunity (+¼); 4 Charges (-1), HKA Must Do BODY (-½), Extra Time (onset time begins 5 Minutes after victim is bitten; -2), Gradual Effect (15 Minutes; 1d6/5 Minutes; -¾) plus RKA 2d6, NND (defense is appropriate LS [Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Personal Immunity (+¼); No Range (-½), 4 Charges (-1), HKA Must Do BODY (-½), Extra Time (onset time begins 5 Minutes after victim is bitten; -2), Gradual Effect (10 Minutes; 1d6/5 minutes; -¾), Linked (-½)	[4]

Value	Disadvantage
25	Dependence: must take the superpowers drug once per day or suffer Incompetence (Uncommon, Addiction)
10	Psychological Limitation: Likes To Kill (Common, Moderate)

Total Value Of Template Disadvantages: 35

Wolf Hybrid

Who’s afraid of the big bad wolfen? Wolf super-thugs are loyal, competent, and have great teamwork, which makes them the first choice of many crime bosses looking to upgrade their operatives. Unfortunately, sometimes the wolf-man’s only loyalty is to his pack (and to the strongest member, the pack leader), and the employer is in for a rude awakening.

WOLF HYBRID TEMPLATE

Cost	Power	END
3	<i>Wolf-Man Transformation</i> : +5 STR;	
	No Figured Characteristics (-½)	1
10	<i>Wolf-Man Transformation</i> : +5 DEX;	
	No Figured Characteristics (-½)	0
7	<i>Wolf-Man Transformation</i> : +5 CON;	
	No Figured Characteristics (-½)	0
5	<i>Wolf-Man Transformation</i> : +5 PD	0
5	<i>Wolf-Man Transformation</i> : +5 ED	0
10	<i>Wolf’s Claws</i> : HKA ½d6 (up to 1d6+1 with STR)	1
3	<i>Wolf’s Skin</i> : Damage Resistance (3 PD/3 ED)	0
10	<i>Wolf’s Legs</i> : Running +5”	1
5	<i>Wolf’s Eyes</i> : Nightvision	0
6	<i>Wolf’s Senses</i> : +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0
10	<i>Wolf’s Nose</i> : Discriminatory for Smell/Taste Group	0
10	<i>Wolf’s Nose</i> : Tracking for Smell/Taste Group	0
3	Stealth	
3	Teamwork	

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 90

Value	Disadvantage
25	Dependence: must take the superpowers drug once per day or suffer Incompetence (Uncommon, Addiction)
10	Enraged: when kept away from his prey (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 14-
10	Physical Limitation: Night Person (suffers -1 to all Skill and Characteristic Rolls in daylight) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
10	Psychological Limitation: Trusts Only Pack Brothers (Common, Moderate)
10	Psychological Limitation: Love Of The Hunt (Common, Moderate)

Total Value Of Template Disadvantages: 65

BRUTE TEMPLATE

One of the classic types of super-drug transformation is to make the user bigger, tougher, stronger, and dumber. For an interesting twist, remove the penalties to INT and EGO so the Brute remains as intelligent as ever while becoming immensely strong.

BRUTE HYBRID TEMPLATE

Cost	Power	END
30	<i>Brute Strength:</i> +30 STR	3
20	<i>Brute Toughness:</i> +10 CON	0
10	<i>Brute Size:</i> +5 BODY	0
10	<i>Brute Toughness:</i> +10 PD	0
8	<i>Brute Toughness:</i> +8 ED	0
Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 78		
Cost	Option	
60	<i>Really Tough Brute:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
13	<i>Brutish Fists:</i> HA +4d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	2
Value	Disadvantage	
-5	-5 INT	
-6	-3 EGO	
25	Dependence: must take the superpowers drug once per day or suffer Incompetence (Uncommon, Addiction)	
25	Enraged: in combat (Very Common), go 11-, recover 11-	
Total Value Of Template Disadvantages: 50 + -11		

Other Drugs

ELECTONIC DRUG

The human brain stores surprisingly large amounts of electricity. An *electonic* is a drug that enhances the brain's electrical capacity and makes it possible for the user to perform amazing feats. The downside is that the human brain is not meant to serve in this capacity, and those who become addicted to this drug often burn out in a very short period of time.

HERMES DRUG

This mutagen is a superstimulant that increases the speed and efficiency of the human nervous system, providing the user with some truly wonderful superhuman abilities. The downside? Lack of emotional control and sleep deprivation that's serious enough to eventually drive the user insane.

ELECTONIC DRUG TEMPLATE

Cost	Power	END
20	<i>Electonic Energy Reserve:</i> Endurance Reserve (100 END, 10 REC)	
29	<i>Electonic Blast:</i> Energy Blast 10d6; Activation Roll 14- (-½), Reduced By Range (-¼)	5
10	<i>Machine Manipulation:</i> Telekinesis (10 STR), Fine Manipulation; Only To Control Electrical Devices (-1), Activation Roll 14- (-½)	2
32	<i>Electrical Immunity:</i> Force Field (0 PD/40 ED); Only Works Against Limited Type Of Attack (electricity; -¼)	4
10	<i>Super-Static Charge:</i> Clinging (normal STR)	0
Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 101		
Value	Disadvantage	
25	Dependence: must take the superpowers drug once per day or suffer Incompetence (Uncommon, Addiction)	
5	Susceptibility: to having his Endurance Reserve go below 50 END, takes 1d6 damage instantly (Uncommon)	
5	Susceptibility: to failing one of his Activation Rolls, takes 1d6 damage instantly (Uncommon)	
Total Value Of Template Disadvantages: 35		

HERMES DRUG TEMPLATE

Cost	Power	END
30	<i>Hermes Reflexes:</i> +10 DEX	0
20	<i>Hermes Reflexes:</i> +2 SPD	0
20	<i>Hermes Swiftiness:</i> Running +10"	2
20	<i>High-Speed Punches:</i> HA +6d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	
Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 90		
Value	Disadvantage	
25	Dependence: must take the superpowers drug once per day or suffer Incompetence (Uncommon, Addiction)	
15	Enraged: whenever he uses his powers (Very Common), go 8-, recover 14-	
5	Physical Limitation: while drug is in effect and for 24 hours after it wears off, can only get to sleep by making an EGO Roll at -6; if goes more than 24 hours without sleep, all rolls to go Enraged are at +3 (<i>i.e.</i> , 11- instead of 8-) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)	
Total Value Of Template Disadvantages: 45		

MACABRE DRUG

A concoction with black magic properties, Macabre was first encountered in Vibora Bay, where it was probably introduced by some evil extradimensional entity who sought to spread misery among Humanity. This serum (which looks and tastes almost exactly like human blood) “attunes you to the night,” according to users. The subject’s demeanor becomes much more fearsome, and he can make people experience intense fear with only a touch. But Macabre changes its user — soon after he starts using the powers bestowed by the drug, a physical and psychological transformation occurs. He begins to feel he’s a breed apart from humanity, a creature of the night.

Genuine creatures of the night hold Macabre addicts in such contempt that it cannot be adequately described... but they’ll never hesitate to exploit the effects. Macabre often serves as a literal gateway drug that leads the user into black magic practices. More than a few people have sold their souls for it.

MACABRE DRUG TEMPLATE

Cost	Power	END
8	<i>Fearful Demeanor</i> : +20 PRE; Only For Fear-/Intimidation-Based Presence Attacks (-1), Only Works In Darkness (-½)	0
33	<i>Touch Of Fear</i> : Drain PRE 4d6, Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Minute; +¼); Only Works In Darkness (-½)	5
13	<i>Blend Into Shadows</i> : Invisibility to Sight Group; Only Works In Darkness/Shadows (-½)	2
10	<i>Shield Of Night</i> : Force Field (7 PD/8 ED); Only Works In Darkness (-½)	1
5	<i>Macabre Eyes</i> : Nightvision	0

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 69

Value	Disadvantage
25	Dependence: must take the superpowers drug once per day or suffer Incompetence (Uncommon, Addiction)
10	Physical Limitation: Night Person (suffers -1 to all Skill and Characteristic Rolls in daylight) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
10	Psychological Limitation: Shuns Bright Light (Common, Moderate)
10	Vulnerability: 1½ x Effect from Light-Based Sight Group Flashes (Common)

Total Value Of Template Disadvantages: 55

METATRON

Metatron, “the beautiful drug,” is an extremely powerful mutagen that unleashes the “mind over matter” potential of the human brain. It reshapes a person so he becomes an idealized version of his real self: stronger, tougher, faster, more impressive, and certainly more attractive. Proclaimed as a revolution when it was first developed, its nasty side effect soon became apparent when its use became widespread. Metatron deadens the brain’s stress-coping mechanisms. Anyone who becomes angry while under the influence of the drug suffers cumulative brain damage, thus losing the ability to understand the moral consequences of his actions.

METATRON TEMPLATE

Cost	Power	END
13	<i>Metatron Actualization</i> : +20 STR; No Figured Characteristics (-½)	1
20	<i>Metatron Actualization</i> : +10 DEX; No Figured Characteristics (-½)	0
13	<i>Metatron Actualization</i> : +10 CON; No Figured Characteristics (-½)	0
4	<i>Metatron Actualization</i> : +8 COM	0
3	<i>Metatron Actualization</i> : +3 PD	0
3	<i>Metatron Actualization</i> : +3 ED	0
20	<i>Metatron Actualization</i> : +2 SPD	0
67	<i>Metatron Psychokinesis</i> : Telekinesis (30 STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
30	<i>Metatron Psychokinetic Shield</i> : Force Field (10 PD/10 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
20	<i>Metatron Psychokinetic Flight</i> : Flight 10”	2

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 193

Value	Disadvantage
25	Dependence: must take the superpowers drug once per day or suffer Incompetence (Uncommon, Addiction)
10	Enraged: when insulted (Uncommon), go 8-, recover 11-
10	Enraged: when attacked (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 14-
10	Physical Limitation: becoming Enraged triggers Psychological Limitations described below (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)

Total Value Of Template Disadvantages: 55

Metatron’s Insidious Side Effects

Every time someone under the effects of Metatron becomes Enraged (or otherwise loses his temper), he experiences a Major Transform 1d6. When the Transform damage equals the character’s EGO, he suffers a change. He keeps accumulating damage, and as he achieves multiples of his EGO, his mental condition worsens until he finally becomes a psychotic monster.

EGO	Effect
1x EGO	<i>Gain Psychological Limitation</i> : Arrogant And Self-Centered (Common, Moderate) <i>Gain Enraged</i> : when takes any BODY damage (Uncommon), go 14-, recover 11- Enraged when insulted changes to go 11-
2x EGO	<i>Increase Psychological Limitation</i> : Arrogant And Self-Centered to Strong <i>Gain Psychological Limitation</i> : Amoral, Disdains Society’s Moral Authority (Common, Moderate) Enraged when insulted increases to go 14-, recover 11-
3x EGO	<i>Gain Psychological Limitation</i> : Sadistic (Common, Moderate) <i>Increase Psychological Limitation</i> : Amoral to Strong Enraged when insulted Increases to 14-, Recover 8-
4x EGO	<i>Gain Enraged</i> : when Contradicted or Impulses Denied (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 11- <i>Increase Psychological Limitation</i> : Sadistic to Strong



PSI-SERUM

This drug (which might actually come in pill or powder form; it doesn't have to be a literal serum) stimulates the user's brain, giving him psionic powers. Unfortunately, using those powers too often can cause the victim intense pain.

PSI-SERUM TEMPLATE

Cost	Power	END
27	<i>Psionic Powers:</i> Multipower, 40-point reserve, all Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	
3u	1) <i>Mindblast:</i> Ego Attack 4d6; Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	8
3u	2) <i>Mental Control:</i> Mind Control 8d6; Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	8
3u	3) <i>Mindscape:</i> Mental Illusions 8d6; Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	8
3u	4) <i>Mindreading:</i> Telepathy 8d6; Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	8
20	<i>Psychokinesis:</i> Telekinesis (20 STR); Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	6
7	<i>Psionic Power:</i> +30 END; Only For Psionic Powers (-1)	0
Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 66		
Value	Disadvantage	
25	Dependence: must take the superpowers drug once per day or suffer Incompetence (Uncommon, Addiction)	
10	Enraged: when mentally attacked (Uncommon), go 8-, recover 11-	
15	Susceptibility: to spending more than 30 END in a Turn using his psionic powers, takes 2d6 damage instantly (Common)	
Total Value Of Template Disadvantages: 35		

CHARACTERS

Here are a few stock characters for use in your superpowers drug scenarios.

RICK BINGHAM

15	STR	11	DEX	18	CON	13	BODY
10	INT	10	EGO	18	PRE	10	COM
6	PD	6	ED	3	SPD	7	REC
36	END	30	STUN				

Abilities: Combat Driving 11-; Interrogation 13-; Mechanics 11-; Streetwise 13-

50+ Disadvantages: None

Background: A big street punk who's a good friend to his few buddies (and a nightmare to everyone else), Rick "the Brick" Bingham works as an enforcer for various small-time criminals... possibly including the manufacturers of a super-drug. He's a prime candidate for a Bear Hybrid drug. Being somewhat lazy, he prefers guarding the warehouse to going out and busting heads.

Rick is a Caucasian male with dark hair, brown eyes (sometimes described as "beady"), a pronounced nose and a powerlifter's build.

CARL CHESTERTON

13 STR	14 DEX	15 CON	12 BODY
13 INT	15 EGO	13 PRE	10 COM
6 PD	6 ED	3 SPD	7 REC
30 END	27 STUN		

Abilities: +2 with VIPER Blasters; Breakfall 12-; Conversation 13-; KS: The Superhuman World 8-; KS: The Local Underworld 11-; KS: VIPER 11-; Persuasion 13-; PS: Sales And Marketing 13-; PS: VIPER Agent 11-; Seduction 13-; Stealth 14-; Streetwise 14-; WF: Small Arms, Blades

50+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Amoral And Greedy; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: A low-grade VIPER agent who cooperated with the authorities after superheroes busted his Nest, Carl starts out as the sympathetic bad guy trying to go straight. However, over the course of a scenario, a lot of bad things happen to him: he discovers his wife cheating on him with someone he thought was his best friend; he ends up in jail after beating up his (former) best friend; an ambitious co-worker investigates his past and gets him fired by publicly revealing that he's ex-VIPER; a group of former VIPER victims tries to kill him... and, after going through all that, he becomes addicted to Metatron. As the drug gets a stronger and stronger grip on him, he becomes more and more unpredictable and violent, until the point where someone offers to get him back into treatment and help put his life together — at which point he decides that with Metatron, he doesn't need help, attacks the person who tried to help him, and damns himself.

Carl is a big black man (6'2", 210 pounds) with an athletic build, black hair, and brown eyes.

ROLLIE ("MISTER MEDICINE") KENYON

10 STR	11 DEX	13 CON	11 BODY
20 INT	18 EGO	20 PRE	10 COM
4 PD	4 ED	2 SPD	5 REC
26 END	23 STUN		

Abilities: Discriminatory and Analyze with Smell/Taste Group; Deduction 13-; Inventor 13-; KS: The Criminal Underworld 14-; KS: Metahuman Power Theory 15-; KS: Narcotics 15-; SS: Biochemistry 16-; SS: Chemistry 15-; SS: Genetics 16-; SS: Pharmacology 14-

50+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Local Police 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Harshly Punish); Psychological Limitation: Believes Illegal Drugs Are the Answer to All of Life's Problems; Psychological Limitation: Hates Authority

Notes: This silver-haired charmer and career criminal first started formulating narcotics when he was a young man in 1960s San Francisco. He's honed his skills to become one of the world's best criminal pharmacists. He even has one ability that might be a superpower: he can analyze narcotics by sniffing and tasting them (including ones without odor or taste). Despite his lengthy criminal career, "Uncle Rollie" (*a.k.a.* "Mr. Medicine") remains an extremely congenial fellow who's well-liked by all who know him, even by some of the cops who've arrested him. Rollie's stubborn belief that drugs are the answer to life's problems ("looking at the role they played in ancient civilizations, they're the reason humanity formed communities in the first place!") may be the only bone of contention people have to pick with him.

Rollie is in his mid-50s. He's a tall, slender gentleman with silver hair, blue eyes and a short well-trimmed silver beard.

VERA ELLARD

10 STR	15 DEX	13 CON	11 BODY
18 INT	12 EGO	18 PRE	14 COM
5 PD	5 ED	3 SPD	5 REC
26 END	23 STUN		

Abilities: Martial Arts (Capoeira with +2 Extra DCs); Acrobatics 12-; Breakfall 12-; KS: Narcotics 12-; SS: Biochemistry 12-; SS: Pharmacology 12-; Shadowing 13-; Sleight Of Hand 12-; Streetwise 13-

50+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Wants To Be Feared And Respected; Psychological Limitation: Casual Killer

Notes: A vicious young woman, Vera Ellard committed her first murder at the age of 13, when she killed a young Pakistani immigrant girl because she acted like a "spaz," smelled funny, and looked at Vera's boyfriend in ways Vera didn't like. Despite overwhelming evidence, Vera was acquitted of the charges. A year after the trial, Vera ran away from home, learned Capoeira, joined a drug ring, and taught herself how to distill narcotics. Perhaps inspired by some time she spent as a "sidekick" to the supervillain Freakshow (see *Millennium City*), Vera joined forces with Rollie Kenyon and started using Macabre. She always liked the idea of "becoming the ultimate fear bitch" — and now she is. She's still Kenyon's lover, but she's only using him to further her goals.

Vera is 5'2", 120 pounds, with medium length red hair (dyed purple), green eyes, and a stocky build.

TEN UNUSUAL SUPERPOWERS DRUG SCENARIOS

1. Applied Heroic Philosophy: A quasi-religious cult, the Eroica College, is actually a front for the local VIPER cell. At several offices in Millennium City, they offer to give people a “hero within” test to determine their aptitude for superhuman abilities, promising to help the best candidates make their dream come true. Their real plan, however, is *much* crueler. They’re actually testing people to determine who’s best suited for the use of Metatron. VIPER knows how Metatron works, and figures a new crop of “heroes” who screw up constantly and eventually become villains will tarnish the image of superheroes generally (and VIPER’s right). Can the PCs get these (addicted) idiots to abandon a career for which they have incredible enthusiasm but absolutely no talent — or can you shape them into real heroes, ones not dependent on drugs, and beat VIPER at its own game?

2. Happiness Shall Prevail: Thanks to advances in genetic engineering and pharmacology, a criminal chemist has found a way to engineer the human brain so it continuously produces a substance that stimulates the brain’s pleasure centers, leaving the subject in a state of perpetual joy. This is *not* illegal (yet) and has an enormous potential for abuse, but might also have enormous benefits in treating people suffering from severe, chronic depression. The PCs know the pharmacologist finances his research with underworld money, and his reputation is such that no legitimate laboratory would hire him. They have the ability to shut him down — but he assures them that if they agree to look the other way, some enormous good will come out of his research.

3. I Need Less Power: An old, respected superhero tires of his powers and the responsibility they entail. He’s so desperate to get rid of them that he’s willing to make a deal with a crime boss: he’ll withhold evidence of the boss’s superpowers drug manufacturing operation if the boss can develop a treatment to neutralize his abilities. Can the PCs dissuade the old hero from his folly? Will they keep quiet about it, or are they willing to expose what he’s doing and destroy his reputation along with his powers?

4. No Pain, We Gain: In the 1960s, a pharmacologist invented a drug called Perfect Groove (also called “pergroo”) that made users unable to become unhappy by paralyzing the brain’s pain centers. This also allowed them to produce surges of strength that bordered on the superhuman. The formula for pergroo was lost years ago, but now it’s resurfaced. The drug’s getting back into circulation with an added twist — the new version also affects the brain’s moral decision centers, making it likely users will put aside their inhibitions and commit crimes.

5. The Poison Of The Blood: A local crimelord has hired a group of international vampire hunters to

capture the children of the night. He hopes to distill chemicals from vampire blood (and the dust of dead vampires) to create an immortality drug with only a minimum of horrific side effects. Naturally, the vampire hunters are going to mess up the PCs’ lives — and the drug’s likely to create some sort of tragedy.

6. Surreal: A powerful new hallucinogen has a psionic component. People who use it acquire the ability to make their drug-addled visions come to life. The city’s turned into one big acid trip, and the PCs need to stop it.

7. The Don’s New Duds: Tired of being beaten by people with superpowers, the local mob boss turns to an expert pharmacologist to obtain superhuman abilities for himself and his chief lieutenants. Unfortunately, the expert’s a fraud... and unless he makes some progress in the next forty-eight hours, he’ll be a dead fraud. He dispatches his mob gangster errand boys to steal some absurd ingredients whose names spell out a riddle he hopes will lead local superheroes to his location without making his patron suspicious.

8. Variable Evolution: A supervillain’s time travel experiment goes awry... *really* awry. In exploring the probability streams of parallel evolution, he accidentally replaces certain people — users whose minds have been altered by the hot new designer drug on the streets — with superhuman counterparts from timelines where creatures other than primates evolved into sentient beings. Now the city is filling up with superhuman black bears, raccoons, otters, parrots, and bullfrogs, and no one’s quite sure where they came from. The PCs have to shut down the temporal breach and find the source of the drug that’s inadvertently making people an acceptable host for the transformation.

9. Who Needs Dreams?: Someone’s discovered a drug that grants telepathic powers... but when they’re used on people, it stimulates certain centers of the brain that control people’s ability to rest, relax, sleep, or concentrate. As a result, hundreds of people are experiencing constant overdrive binges and it’s driving them insane. Furthermore, using the telepathy drug has an addictive effect on the telepath, so that even those who realize what’s happening find it almost impossible to resist using the drug. The situation is rapidly getting out of hand, and not just for the victims — there’s a rising panic in the general public and anti-telepath sentiment is about to explode. The PCs have to put a stop to the problem somehow.

10. The Zoo: An eccentric billionaire has had hundreds of wild animals illegally imported into his estate. He doesn’t just plan to create his own zoo — he plans to have criminal pharmacologists use these creatures to make drugs from dozens of species, inject them into his followers, and create his own private menagerie/army of animal-human hybrids.

SCENARIO: METATRON FALLS FROM THE HEAVENLY HEIGHTS

Here's an example superpowers drug scenario you can run. It includes a map of a modified warehouse suitable for use and re-use in a number of scenarios.

BACKGROUND

Rollie Kenyon, the most amiable career criminals you'll ever meet, was beginning to feel his years, and wondered whether his glory days were behind him. To try to prove (to himself) that he's still a force to be reckoned in the drug world, he studied new techniques of drug manufacturing, virology, and genetic engineering — and hit the jackpot. He created Metatron, the beautiful drug, which promised to unlock the secret of infinite human potential.

Unfortunately, Rollie's only backers were from the criminal underworld. Whereas Rollie saw a chance to bring about an age of universal enlightenment, the gangsters saw a chance to bring about an age of universal big profits and develop an unprecedented amount of super-human muscle that could turn the tide in the underworld's battle against superheroes. The leader of the gang, Phillip Grady, is an old street gang member, a career criminal who's a long time associate of Kenyon's. Grady, however, is the front man. The *real* power behind Metatron is the New Purple Gang, who've financed and backed the experiments as part of their leader's larger agenda (see *Millennium City*). The Gang has carefully kept some distance between itself and the Metatron pack, to minimize the risk of superhero backlash.

Complicating matters is Vera Ellard, a venomous young woman who's being used by the New Purple Gang to control Kenyon. This attractive but homicidal lady has seduced the aging biochemist and persuaded him to develop several other new drugs, such as Electonic.

Our drama begins with a criminal pharmacist who's enjoying something of an Indian summer of his life — he's in demand, respected, and smitten with the love of a pretty young girl. Unfortunately, Indian summers never last long, and Kenyon's due for a very harsh fall. Busting Kenyon's operation instead of letting it last long enough for Rollie to get betrayed by everyone he trusts might actually be a mercy.

PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

Kenyon manufactures Metatron at a warehouse in Millennium City. It's distributed to three narcotics distributors via private shipment. The shipments move via truck from the drug lab to a secret location that changes each time. The distributor transfers money into an offshore account, and when Kenyon verifies the payment, he's told where to go for the pickup. These locations are out-of-the-way (but not unused) storage facilities that aren't

likely to be pilfered or raise suspicion. To avoid screw-ups, the drug lab stations a lookout who verifies the drugs have been picked up. Each distributor circulates the drugs into the hands of about a dozen dealers apiece, and money flows down the normal criminal channels.

A hit of Metatron has a street value of about \$4,000-6,000. For obvious reasons, demand vastly exceeds supply.

GETTING THE HEROES INVOLVED

You should use the staple of the scenario — drug sales — to get the PCs to a showdown with the gang at its drug lab at its warehouse headquarters. Leads the PCs might follow to track down the drug ring's central location include:

■ **Our Old Friend, the Guard:** One of the people working for Kenyon was a friend of one of the PCs before he (the friend) turned to crime. He doesn't like what the drug does to innocent people, so he contacts the PC and tells him he has information about Metatron... and a few hours later, the police finds his body in the river. However, those close to him have a pretty good idea where he worked (which gives the PCs a reason to scout the area).

■ **Intercept the Distribution:** The distribution system is designed to prevent exposure, but there's always the chance the PCs might see a suspicious-looking truck making a delivery and investigate.

■ **The "Set Up A Meeting" Approach:** If the PCs corner one of the distributors, they might be able to send a message to the drug lords posing as someone who wants to open a fourth distribution channel, or (more enticingly) who has discovered a young prodigy who's an excellent biochemist and has discovered interesting ways to alter Metatron and increase the duration of its effects.

■ **Track the Early Incidents:** Early on, Kenyon and his people distributed the drugs themselves. The first few incidents are clustered in a two-kilometer radius, giving the PCs a much smaller search grid.

If the drug lab feels too much heat from the heroes, the New Purple Gang leadership retaliates by hiring mercenary villains to attempt to eliminate them.

THE DRUG LAB

The drug lab is a warehouse located in Chibaville Industrial Park near the waterfront. The warehouse itself is an unmarked brick building; its windows are blackened, but not boarded. It's rented by a company called the Dunning Group, which is a dummy corporation set up by the New Purple Gang. It's surrounded by parking lots on three sides, and has a loading area on the fourth.

Inside, the drug lab is a large open area, with a second story filled with crates containing supplies. The most interesting features of the lab include:

Catwalk: There's a catwalk surrounding part of the warehouse. It's constructed from a cheap steel alloy (DEF 4, BODY 6 per hex) and mounted four meters (2") above the warehouse floor. Anyone standing on the catwalk over the vats when that part of the catwalk is destroyed needs to make a DEX Roll at -3 to avoid falling in.

Crates: In the areas marked by heavy concentrations of crates on the map, characters can use crates as cover, or push them on top of people. Toppled crates do crushing damage (see page 422 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook).

Kitchen: In this room, there's a microwave, a fridge, a vending machine, and a coffee maker. Given time, a gadgeteer hero can probably come up with all sorts of interesting devices given that supply of "raw materials."

Office: Each office has a desk with a computer, a filing cabinet, a bookshelf, and a small plant. The leftmost office is Kenyon's; it's easy to tell because there are several marijuana bushes growing here. The middle office is Phillip Grady's (it's in really bad shape; Grady's an absolute slob). The rightmost office serves as a lounge; there's a TV that's illegally hooked up to cable.

The Vats: The central area contains four large vats, each holding a chemical stew. This is where Kenyon makes Metatron; the process takes about four days, and each vat yields about 120 doses. One vat is harvested each day.

The raw mutagen is highly toxic. If a tank is punctured, it sprays out in a four meter (2") line in the direction of the puncture for 2 Segments, doing AVLD 2d6 Does BODY (the defense is Power Defense) per Segment. If anyone falls into the tank and gets immersed in the fluid, roll on the accompanying Mutagen Immersion table.

Weapons Cache: This is where the thugs store their guns. There are several boxes filled with blasters (Energy Blast 9d6, Autofire, +1 OCV, +2 RMod, 32 Charges) and energy packs for them.

OBJECTS IN THE DRUG LAB		
Material	DEF	BODY
Building Exterior, Brick	5	3
Building Exterior, Glass	2	3
Catwalk	7	2
Crate, each	3	2
Forklift	5	10
Vat	5	2

THE BAD GUYS

The warehouse is heavily guarded at all times. There are armed guards (use any generic thug character sheets, such as the ones on pages 176-78 of *Champions*) stationed around the warehouse, including on the catwalks.

A suggested complement for the bad guys is: one Gun-toting Thug per PC; three Metatron Users per two PCs; one Macabre User per two PCs; one Hermes User; Rollie Kenyon; Vera Ellard under the influence of Macabre; and one mercenary supervil-

MUTAGEN IMMERSION

Roll 1d6	Result
1	Character is blinded. He receives 25 points for the Physical Limitation that he can use to boost current abilities (he cannot use them to buy new abilities, such as Enhanced Senses to overcome his blindness). After one week, the character may make a CON Roll at -3 to regain his sight (and lose the points); if he fails the roll, he rerolls at each step down the Time Chart thereafter. When his sight comes back, he loses the extra points. Characters who are already blind experience no effect.
2	Character gets mutated as if he took Metatron, but immediately goes Berserk (recover 8-). He suffers the maximum psychological and physical effects from the drug. After one day, he may make a CON roll at -3 to come to himself. If he fails the roll, he rerolls at each step down the Time Chart thereafter. When the effects finally wear off, he is not addicted to the drug.
3	Character falls into a coma for one week. After one week, he may make a CON roll at -3 to awaken. If he fails the roll, he rerolls at each step down the Time Chart thereafter. When the effects finally wear off, he is not addicted to the drug.
4	A telekinetic construct with the same appearance, powers, abilities, and memories as the PC emerges from the tank, but he's the character's "dark side." He immediately tries to flee. If he gets free, he'll do his best to destroy the character's personal life and sully his reputation. If killed, he dissipates into goo.
5	The character suffers a radiation accident. He may freely change anything on his character sheet (subject to your approval and campaign guidelines, of course).
6	No effect

lain of your choice. Kenyon won't participate in a fight, just watch in amazement and horror.

Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks villains who might be a good fit for the scenario include Ankylosaur, Fenris, Hornet, and Lazer. If you have the *Millennium City* supplement, Freakshow might associate with the gang by choice.

PLOT COMPLICATIONS

This scenario pretty much calls for *someone* to go flying into the vats and mutate. If an NPC who's the subject of a tragic "almost redemption" storyline is here, he should take the plunge. He falls into the tank, goes into a coma from which the doctors think he'll never emerge, but awakens six months later as a major villain and a PC nemesis.

If you're not using the tragic storyline, Kenyon's a prime candidate. Vera Ellard gets upset that everything's falling apart, that the heroes are wrecking her beautiful plans. Then Kenyon grabs her and tells her they've got to escape, that the operation is nothing compared to their love. That's when she pushes him into the tank.

There are also crates marked “Flammable” that contain explosive substances. Someone could hit them at some point during the fight and turn the place into an inferno (see Chapter Four for advice on handling fires).

AFTERMATH

Because the operation was so centralized, the destruction of the lab ends the threat of Metatron, at least in the short term. It’s always possible samples of the drug will end up in the hands of the New Purple Gang, and its leadership may want to uncork them in the future. If Kenyon escaped, he may develop an even more dangerous concoction at some point. And if you ran the “tragic NPC” option, there’s a good chance there’s a new villain in town.

There’s another, even more dangerous, consequence of Metatron: it tells people they can be superhuman, and that it’s relatively easy to achieve. Sales of phony superpowers drugs will dramatically increase after the Metatron ring is busted. Eccentric billionaires will throw fortunes at anyone with a biochemistry degree who offers the promise of superhuman abilities and immortality. The PCs may have won the battle, but they can’t be blamed if they feel the enemy’s gained a small, dangerous foothold in the ongoing war against evil that’s at the heart of every *Champions* campaign.

TEN EXOTIC SUPPLIES FOR A INSTANT SUPERPOWERS DRUG LAB

1. The remains of a dead superhero
2. A highly radioactive isotope found only in a few fallen meteors.
3. A live superhero/supervillain.
4. A rare South American flower.
5. Mutant mice or rhesus monkeys from a local university hypergenetics lab.
6. Genetic samples from assorted superheroes.
7. A strange, glowing green chemical goo that violently changes shape whenever it’s touched.
8. Ever-evolving fireflies that mutate in size and color every few minutes.
9. A cat that continuously radiates a strong (2d6 NND) electric field.
10. Mummy dust.

RANDOM SUPERPOWERS DRUG SCENARIO GENERATOR

Table 1-1 Drug

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-1

- 1 Animal Hybrid Mutagen
- 2 Electonic
- 3 Hermes
- 4 Metatron
- 5 Macabre
- 6 Brute or GM's custom design

Table 2-1: Drug was created by whom, and for what purpose:

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-2

- 1-3 Manufactured by a criminal drug ring to make money through drug sales.
- 4 Created by a corporation looking to make windfall profits, but was too dangerous to put into production.
- 5 Created by someone with pharmacology knowledge to enhance someone to superhuman levels for the sole purpose of obtaining revenge (roll on Table 2-1-2, then roll on Table 2-2).
- 6 Uncommon Reason (roll on Table 2-1-1)

Table 2-1-1: Uncommon Reasons for Drug Manufacture

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-2

- 1 Manufactured by a religious cult to bring its members closer to God.
- 2 Created by a cult, from an ancient mystical text, to transform people into "worthy vessels" for some dark power.
- 3 Created by an aging billionaire seeking immortality.
- 4 Created by a genius high school chemistry student to help his football team win the big game.
- 5 Invented by a pharmaceutical company to treat some illness.
- 6 Secretly created by the military to augment soldiers, then leaked into the general populace.

Table 2-1-2 Revenge Target

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-2

- 1 A PC.
- 2 A DNPC or a close personal friend of the PCs.
- 3 A major politician.
- 4 A major law enforcement official.
- 5 An old boss.
- 6 An old girlfriend/boyfriend/celebrity who rejected him.

Table 2-2 Incidents (Common)

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3

- 1 Heroes intercept a robbery that's intended to get money to pay for the drug.
- 2 Heroes intercept someone selling the drug to a potential user.
- 3 The heroes encounter a mugging being committed by someone who's on the drug.

- 4 A DNPC or a friend of a PC becomes addicted to the drug.
- 5 An otherwise law-abiding user in a public place (park, museum, sports venue) goes berserk.
- 6 Reroll twice on Table 2-2.

Table 2-3 Incidents (Uncommon)

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-4

- 1 A vengeful high school kid takes the drug and threatens to go on a rampage.
- 2 Soldiers on shore leave take the drug and get out of control.
- 3 The drug is slipped into the beverages at a charity ball.
- 4 A group of bigots take the drug and attack the object of their hatred.
- 5 Reroll twice on Table 2-2.
- 6 Rare Incident, roll on Table 2-3-1.

Table 2-3-1 Incidents (Rare)

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-4

- 1 Professional athletes who've taken the drug run amok during the big game — then go into the stands.
- 2 A local celebrity is slipped the drug, mutates on camera, and goes berserk.
- 3 The drug is smuggled into a nearby prison; drug-spawned supervillains stage a prison break.
- 4 The jury at a highly publicized trial are slipped the drug.
- 5 A group of drug users who claim to be a new superhero team challenges the PCs to meet them in public and resolve their differences.
- 6 Reroll twice on Table 2-2

Table 2-4 Scenario Complications

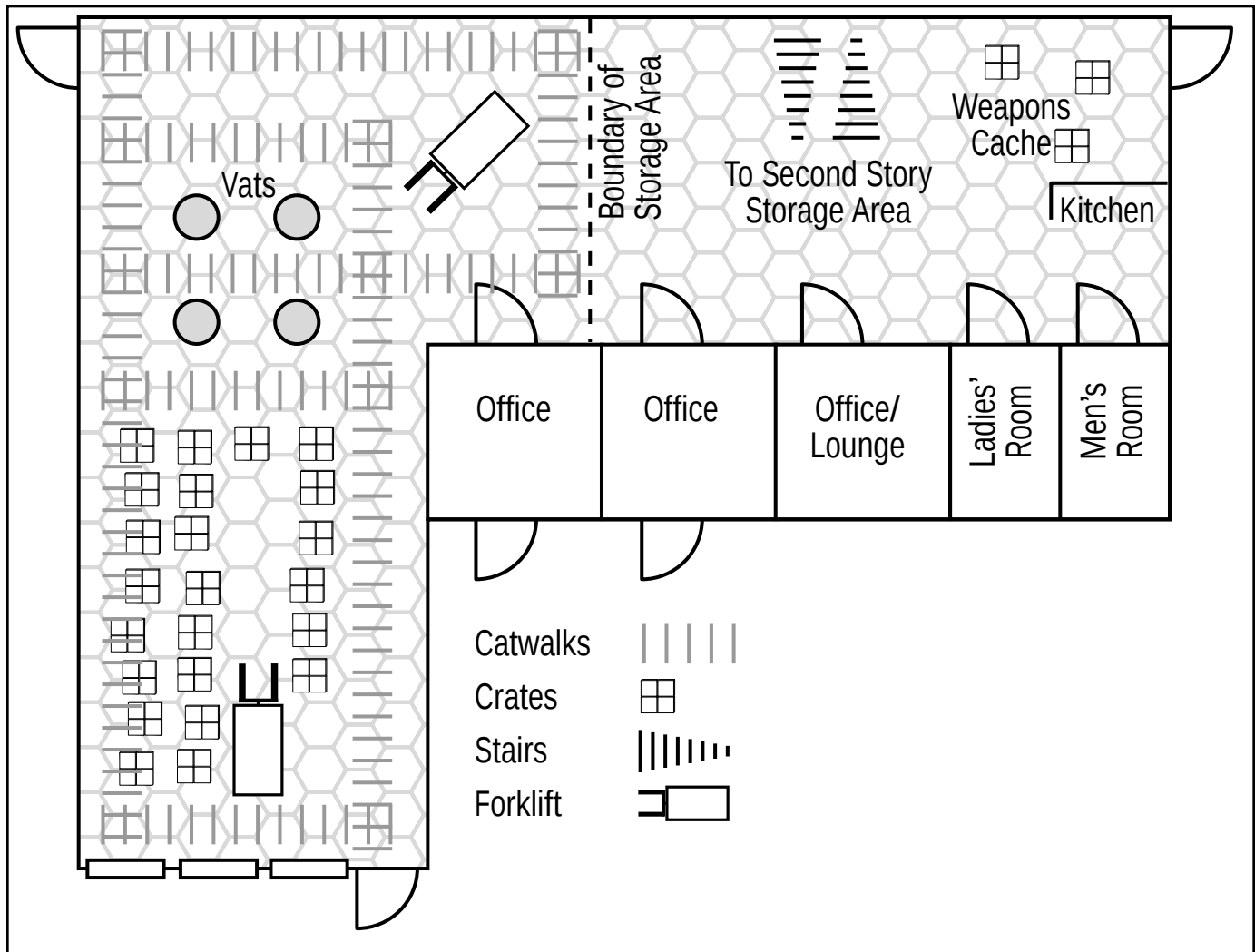
Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-5

- 1 A crime boss wants to collaborate with the PCs to stop the drug.
- 2 Several local politicians openly advocate the drug's use.
- 3 The local government calls out the National Guard and imposes a curfew.
- 4 A powerful villain (whose identity is a GM option) takes over the operation and organizes it more efficiently.
- 5 The heroes find evidence that suggests a friend/popular NPC hero may be behind the plot.
- 6 Someone claiming to be the pharmacist who invented the drug wants to meet with the PCs and surrender everything he knows.

Table 2-5 Scenario Complications, Secondary

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-6

- 1 Heroes encounter little kids taking the drug and putting themselves in danger.
- 2 The villains try to lead the heroes into a trapped building.
- 3 The heroes encounter someone marketing cheap knockoffs of the drug.
- 4 The heroes are asked to address a funeral for a drug victim.
- 5 The heroes are asked to make a public service announcement about the dangers of the drug.
- 6 Reroll twice on Table 2-5

**Table 2-6 Public Reaction To the Drug**

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 3-1

- 1-3 The public largely views the drug as a menace and believe the heroes need to do more to stop it.
- 4 The public largely views the drug as a potential nirvana and resents anyone who stands in the way of progress.
- 5 The public is conflicted about the drug, and no one's happy with our heroes.
- 6 Superhuman powers drug? Again? Wake us when you've finished beating up the bad guys.

Table 3-1 Final Confrontation, Location

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 4-1

- 1-2 Warehouse
- 3 Underground level below a warehouse
- 4 Commercial research lab
- 5 Secret department of a corporate office (reroll if villains are not a corporation)
- 6 Unusual Location (roll on Table 3-1-1)

Table 3-1-1 Final Confrontation, Unusual Location

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 4-1

- 1 Cathedral
- 2 Political Rally
- 3 Army Base
- 4 Greenhouse
- 5 Retirement Home
- 6 Zoo

Table 4-1 Aftershocks

Roll 1d6

- 1 A new supervillain, with powers permanently given to him by the drug, is created.
- 2 PCs have to track down one remaining sample of the drug, or the problem reoccurs.
- 3 PCs need to help a friend through withdrawal symptoms.
- 4 PCs are hassled about the source of their powers.
- 5-6 None. Congratulations on a job well done.

chapter four:



B u r n ,
B a b y
B u r n !



Fire: man's deadly friend. In the real world, it may have fostered the rise from the primordial depths and helped build civilization — but in the world of the comics, it's often far less benign. Time and time again, a superhero's moxie is put to the test by his willingness to run into a burning building and risk his life rescuing children, pets, and prized possessions.

Fires aren't usually the climax of a scenario (although when a building is set on fire during the climax of a fight scene, it adds a significant amount of tension to the scene). Instead, they're a test of a character's cleverness and courage, particularly if the PC depends mostly on Skills and/or gadgets instead of true superpowers. Anyone can be a "super," but it takes someone who's willing to put himself at risk to be a "hero."

THE BASICS OF FIRE

Fire is a chemical reaction between oxygen and some sort of fuel (a flammable material, such as wood, gasoline, paper, or the like). For combustion to occur, oxygen and fuel must be present, and the fuel has to be heated to its *ignition temperature* — in other words, the temperature at which it catches fire. In short, to have a fire, you need three things: fuel, oxygen, and heat. One of the things that makes fire so dangerous is that it's self-perpetuating: once a fire starts, it supplies enough heat to keep itself going as long as there's fuel and oxygen available.

Putting out a fire involves depriving the fire of one of those three elements. Water can be used to remove the heat and/or raise the ignition temperature of substances; chemicals or smothering a fire with sand can remove the oxygen from the area and thus snuff the fire. Characters with weather control, air/wind, matter manipulation, elemental control, fire, telekinetic, or chemical powers may be able to find all sorts of ways to extinguish a fire.

On Earth and other planets, gravity determines how a flame burns. Since the hot gases in a flame are lighter than the surrounding air, they rise. That's why most fires spread in an upward direction, and flames tend to look "pointed" at the top and thicker at the bottom. In a microgravitic environment, fire forms a sphere.

Real-World Arson Data

According to *Fire Loss In The United States During 2002* by the National Fire Protection Association, in the United States in 2002:

- Just under 1.7 million fires were reported (with many others going unreported).

- An estimated 44,500 intentionally set structure fires occurred.

- 3,380 civilians lost their lives as the result of fire, and 18,425 civilians suffered injury. Intentionally set fires in structures resulted in 350 civilian deaths. 80 percent of these deaths occurred in residences.

- 100 firefighters were killed in the line of duty.

- Property loss due to fire is estimated at \$10.3 billion, with \$919 million of that caused by intentionally set structure fires.

- 41,000 intentionally set vehicle fires occurred, causing \$222 million in property damage.

The most common accelerants used to commit arson in 2002 were gasoline, kerosene, turpentine, and diesel fuel. Sometimes fire investigations employ specially trained dogs to sniff for accelerants in the surrounding air. A more advanced technique, however, is headspace gas chromatography, which involves collecting samples of the debris from the point of the fire's origin and placing them inside a sealed evidence container. A criminalistics technician heats the container, then inserts a needle to extract samples of the heated gas. He separates the gas in a gas chromatogram for analysis, which allows him to locate traces of the hydrocarbons in accelerants.

ADVANCED FIRE RULES

For the most part, you can handle the effects of fire via improvisation and, if necessary, the rules on pages 444-45 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook. But expanded rules may suggest ways to use fire you hadn't previously considered and make some in-game situations easier to adjudicate. If you like, use the following rules to determine how a fire spreads, burns, and dies out.

FIRE CHARACTERISTICS

For purposes of the advanced rules, treat a fire as a sort of character with the following Characteristics:

BODY: A rough measure of the heat and intensity of a fire. It governs the damage and flammability of the fire. It also determines how easy it is for someone to use Adjustment Powers on a fire to snuff it out (or enhance it).

You determine a fire's BODY per hex. Take the number of Damage Classes of damage done by the fire in a given hex. Divide that number by 2 to derive the BODY of the fire in that hex (or just consult the accompanying table).

SIZE: This measures how many hexes a fire occupies. Size changes as a fire grows and spreads, is extinguished, dies out in places, and so forth.

SPEED: A fire's SPD determines when and how quickly (a) it spreads, and (b) it does damage to someone in the midst of it. All natural fires are SPD 2, but unnatural (supernatural, superpower-enhanced, and so forth) fires may burn with higher SPDs. Assume all fires act last in a Phase, after all characters and other effects have acted.

END RESERVE: A fire's Endurance Reserve measures how much fuel it has. Technically it's more a "Characteristic" of the local environment than the fire itself. When the Endurance Reserve drops to zero, the fire burns out.

DAMAGE: A "Figured Characteristic" derived from a fire's BODY, the DAM rating indicates how much Energy Killing Damage the fire does to persons and things within it, or that contact it.

In the case of normal, natural fires, the maximum DAM a fire can have is 1½d6 outdoors, 2d6 indoors. Unnatural or unusual fires can exceed this ceiling.

FLAMMABILITY: A "Figured Characteristic" derived from a fire's BODY, the FLAM rating indicates how likely the fire is to spread, as defined by an "Activation Roll." Certain conditions, such as the presence of highly flammable objects or being downwind, can improve FLAM, as described in the accompanying table.

FIRE BODY, DAMAGE, AND FLAMMABILITY

BODY	Damage	Flammability	Notes
1	1 point to ½d6	9-	Candle
2	1d6 to 1d6+1	10-	House Fire
3	1½d6 to 2d6	11-	Raging House Fire
4	2d6+1 to 2½d6	12-	
5	3d6 to 3d6+1	13-	Chemical Fire
6	3½d6 to 4d6	14-	Elemental Fire (magic)
7	4d6+1 to 4½d6	15-	Demonic Fire (magic)
8	5d6 to 5d6+1	16-	
9	5½d6 to 6d6	17-	Plasma Fire

FLAMMABILITY MODIFIERS, GENERAL

Condition	Modifier
Damp conditions	-1 to -3
Fire retardant substances present	-2 to -4
Extremely combustible materials (e.g., accelerants)	+5 or more
Highly combustible materials (e.g., loose papers)	+2 to +4
Lots of fuel present	+1
Very little fuel present	-1
Person setting fire succeeds with a Demolitions roll	+1 per 2 points roll is made by

FLAMMABILITY MODIFIERS, DOWNWIND

Wind	Inches Per Turn	Wind Speed (MPH)	Modifier
None	0"	0	-0
Very Light	12" to 36"	4-17	+1
Light	48" to 72"	18-30	+1
Moderate	84" to 108"	31-44	+2
Heavy	120" to 144"	45-57	+2
Very Heavy	156" to 180"	58-71	+3
Storm Force	192" or more	72 or more	+4

HOW FIRES CAUSE DAMAGE

Generally, you should treat a fire as a Constant area-affecting attack (as described on pages 98-100 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook). Thus, a character takes damage from a fire on the Segment when he moves into the fire, and on every Phase the fire has thereafter (as indicated by its SPD). However, unlike with standard area-affecting attacks, as described on pages 444-45 of the rulebook, if a character moves through multiple hexes of a fire in a Segment, he takes damage from *each hex* he moves through (his defenses apply to each one, of course). In effect, each hex of a fire is a separate Constant area-affecting attack.

Fire damage is Killing Damage and Energy damage. Secondary effects, such as smoke, are bought in other ways (see below). Neither it nor the related effects it causes (such as smoke or superheated metal) cause Knockback.

HOW FIRES SPREAD AND GROW

Every time a fire has a Phase, the GM should make a Flammability roll. If the roll succeeds, the fire intensifies and/or spreads.

All fires begin as a 1 point killing attack. When a Flammability check succeeds, increase the fire's damage by 1 DC (which may change its BODY, DAM, and FLAM). When a fire reaches its maximum possible DAM (as noted above, for natural fires this is 1½d6 outdoors, 2d6 indoors), it starts to spread to adjacent hexes. At the GM's option, a fire can start to spread earlier instead of gaining DCs; this is particularly appropriate in environments with a lot of easily-flammable material.

For greatest "realism" and accuracy, the GM should make a Flammability check for *each hex* of a fire. However, that can significantly slow down the game. To speed things up, the GM should do one of the following:

- make his rolls in advance so that he knows what happens in the absence of PC action
- make one roll for the entire fire, using the FLAM of the hex with the highest BODY. If the roll succeeds, increase the DCs of all hexes by 1, and/or have the fire spread appropriately.

The GM can always dispense with a Flammability roll in the interest of common or dramatic sense.

Spreading Fires

The GM has discretion over which hexes a fire spreads into. Generally, fires spread outward from the hex where they begin, either (a) along a path of flammable substances, and/or (b) as directed by the wind and air pressure. Because the hot gases in flames rise, fires often spread upward along walls, tree trunks, and the like; upward tends to offer the easiest "path along a flammable substance."

When a fire reaches a barrier such as a wall or a door, it stops spreading, but it inflicts its damage on the barrier in each of its Phases. If the fire "reduces" the barrier's BODY to 0, that hex of the barrier catches on fire. The GM should then begin



tracking damage to that hex of wall from being caught on fire. When the BODY of that hex of barrier reaches 0, it's burned all the way through, leaving a hex-sized hole.

HOW FIRES BURN OUT AND FADE AWAY

Technically, each hex should have its own Endurance Reserve, and the fire dies out in that hex when that hex's Endurance Reserve drops to 0. However, that would require a nightmarish amount of bookkeeping, so these rules opt for an easier way. Each overall fire, no matter how many hexes of Size it consists of, has a single Endurance Reserve. When it spreads to a new hex, it adds the Endurance Reserve of that hex to the total reserve. See the accompanying table for suggested Endurance Reserve additions based on the substances in the newly enflamed hex.

Every phase that a fire burns, it has to pay END. The END cost of a fire equals the base END of the Killing attack, plus 1 END per every doubling in size the fire is over 1 hex (a 2 hex fire is +1 extra END, a 3-4 hex fire is +2 END, 5-8 hexes is +3 END, 9-16 hexes is +4 END, 17-32 hexes is +5 END, and so forth). When the Endurance Reserve of a fire drops to 0, each hex has to make a Flammability check every phase to remain ablaze. When all hexes are extinguished, the fire is out, though ashes remain.

Refuge In The Midst Of A Fire

People trapped in a fire may attempt to find a safe place with a PER Roll modified by the thickness of the smoke (-1 for trace of smoke or a light amount of smoke; -2 for moderate amounts of

ENDURANCE RESERVE ADDITIONS

Substance In Hex	END Added
Accelerant (any amount)	+50-100
Brick, concrete, stone	+0-10
Brush	+20-30
Paper, cardboard	+60-70
Wood	
Damp	+10-20
Average	+30-40
Dry	+50-60

"Substance in hex" assumes that at least half of the hex contains the substance in question, or that the substances is otherwise present in large amounts. (Accelerants such as gas, kerosene, paint thinner, and the like are an exception; any reasonable amount of them qualifies for the modifier.) The GM should adjust the END added based on how much of the substance there is, how flammable he judges it to be, and so forth.

smoke; -3 for large amounts of smoke). A "safe place" is one that hasn't caught fire yet, though it's probably exposed to tremendous heat (see *Heat*, below).

Characters who wrap themselves in a wet blanket (or the like) receive +2 DEF against the fire.

SMOKE

Fire in a confined space creates smoke, which does NND Damage; the defense is Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing). Treat this as a Constant area-affecting attack, but characters caught in a smokey area only take damage once in each of the

SMOKE DAMAGE

Conditions	Damage
Confined area	
Trace of smoke	1 point
Moderate amount of smoke	½d6
Large amount of smoke	2d6
Open area, large amount of smoke	1 point
Chemical fire	+1d6

fire’s Phases, not once per hex they move through. The accompanying table indicates the amount of smoke damage.

It takes a fire time to fill an area with smoke. Assume that one hex of fire generates a hex of smoke per Turn, with lesser fires filling proportionately smaller volumes.

HEAT

As noted above under “Refuge,” even a hex that’s not on fire can be harmful if it’s in the midst of a fire — the heat alone can be enough to burn and blister skin, dehydrate and exhaust people, and so forth. A hex that’s surrounded by three or more hexes that are on fire does one-quarter damage if a character stands in one place, and only half damage if he attempts to move through the fiery area (standard rounding rules apply). Characters with Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Heat) do not suffer this damage.

OTHER EFFECTS

Some other possible damaging effects of a fire include:

Hot Metal: Inside a burning building, metal (doorknobs, steel desks, and the like) can become superheated. If touched, superheated metal without protection does 1d6 Normal Damage per DC of the deadliest surrounding fire’s Killing Damage (e.g., metal heated in a normal house fire [1d6 KA, or 3 DCs] inflicts 3d6 Normal Damage). If a character uses something to handle the hot metal (such as a towel or wet rag), it may act as DEF against the damage, or in the GM’s option may prevent him from taking any damage at all. If the character has personal Defense Powers (like an ED Force Field), they provide their usual protection.

Spray Of Sparks: When something begins to combust, there’s often a spray of sparks. Anyone caught within 1” of a spark cascade takes 1d6 x 3 points of fire Killing Damage.

See also *Into The Fire*, page 80, for more information on hazards in a burning building.

FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT

Now that you’ve seen how fires work, here’s how people fight them.

FIRE ENGINE				
Val	Char	Cost	Notes	
7	Size	35	5” x 2.5”; 12.5 tons; -7 KB; -4 DCV	
45	STR	0	Lift 12.5 tons; 9d6 HTH	
12	DEX	6	OCV: 4/DCV: 4	
20	BODY	3		
4	DEF	5	Limited Coverage (not on wind-shield/windows; -¼)	
3	SPD	8	Phases: 4, 8, 12	
Total Characteristic Cost: 57				

Movement: Ground: 22”/88”
Swimming: 0”/0”

Abilities & Equipment			END
Cost	Power		
12	<i>Motorized Wheeled Vehicle:</i> Ground Movement +16” (22” total), x4 Noncombat; OAF (standard tires; -1½), Limited Maneuverability (-¼), Only On Appropriate Terrain (-¼), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily-obtained fuel; 6 Hours; -0) [1cc]		
-2	<i>Ground Vehicle:</i> Swimming -2” (0” total)		
4	<i>Heavy Tires</i> (3 DEF, 3 BODY; see TUV, page 41)		0
2	<i>Automatic Tire Chains:</i> Make tires equivalent of Snow Tires as well (TUV, page 41)		0
114	<i>Firehoses:</i> Extra Limbs (number varies, based on type of fire engine); Only To Use Water Lines (-1), Limited Manipulation (-¼) plus Stretching 30”, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Limited Body Parts (Extra Limbs only; -¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), Cannot Do Damage (can only spray Water Lines; -½)		0
40	<i>Water Lines:</i> Multipower, 99-point reserve; all OAF Bulky (-1½)		
4u	1) <i>Water Lines For Extinguishing Fires:</i> Dispel Fire Powers 11d6 (see text), all Fire Powers simultaneously (+2); OAF Bulky (-1½)		10
3u	2) <i>Water Lines As Weapons:</i> Energy Blast 7d6 (physical; see text), Area Of Effect (14” Line; +1), Double Knockback (+¾); OAF Bulky (-1½)		10
12	<i>Water Tank</i> (2,000 Gallons): Endurance Reserve (300 END, 0 REC); OAF Bulky (-1½)		0
2	<i>Water Tank:</i> 5 REC for Endurance Reserve; Limited Recovery (must be refilled with water; -2)		0
9	<i>Hydrant-Connecting Water Lines:</i> 30 REC for Endurance Reserve; OAF Bulky (-1½); Extra Time (takes 1 Turn to hook hose up to hydrant; -¾)		0
10	<i>Hydrant-Connecting Water Lines:</i> 3 more sets of lines (total of 4)		
8	<i>Air Packs:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing), Usable Simultaneously (up to four people at once, engine never “gives” an Air Pack to itself; +¾); OAF (-1), 1 Con-		

- tinuing Fuel Charge lasting 30 Minutes (easy to refuel at fire station; -0) [1cc]
- 15 *The Jaws Of Life*: Telekinesis (30 STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF Bulky (-1½), Only For Tearing/Prying Things Apart To Free Trapped Victims (-2) 0
- 4 *Radio*: Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group); OAF Bulky (-1½), Affected As Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-¼) 0
- 10 *Emergency Lights And Siren*: Sight and Hearing Group Images, +4 to PER Rolls, 1" radius, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF Bulky (-1½), No Range (-½), Set Effect (-1) 0
- Skills/Laboratories**
- 7 Paramedics 11-
- 7 PS: Fight Fires 16-

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 261

Total Vehicle Cost: 318

Value Disadvantages

None

Total Disadvantage Points: 0

Total Cost: 318/5 = 64

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

- | Cost | Equipment |
|------|--|
| 55 | <i>Ladder/Skylift</i> : Extra Limb (1); Only To Lift And Move A Person And Firehose (-1), Limited Manipulation (-¼) plus Stretching 16", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Limited Body Parts (Extra Limb only; -¼), Always Direct (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), Cannot Do Damage (-½) |
| 26 | <i>Fireaxes</i> : Four axes, use game writeup for the Francisca (<i>HERO System 5th Edition, Revised</i> , page 481) |
| -6 | <i>Water Tank (1,000 Gallons)</i> : Change to Endurance Reserve (150 END, 0 REC); OAF Bulky (-1½) |
| -9 | <i>Water Tank (500 Gallons)</i> : Change to Endurance Reserve (75 END, 0 REC); OAF Bulky (-1½) |

Description: Well-known to even the smallest schoolchildren because of their distinctive bright red (or sometimes yellow) color and unique equipment, fire engines are large vehicles designed to help firefighters put out fires and perform related tasks.

Fire engines' main equipment are the hoses it uses to spray water on fires. The length and size of the hoses varies. The *Water Lines* power on the character sheet represents a *deluge gun*, the largest sort of water-sprayer a fire engine comes equipped with. It can pump out 1,000 gallons of water per minute or more, and is usually supplied from a built-in water tank holding 2,000 gallons of water. (Some engines have smaller tanks.) The tank is represented as an Endurance Reserve for the Water Lines.

An engine may also have other hoses, represented as Extra Limbs (with Stretching) that can only use the Water Lines power. The number of

FIREHOSES

Diameter	Dice Of Effect	Rate
5 inches	Dispel 11d6/EB 7d6	Up to 1,000 gallons per minute
2.5 inches	Dispel 9d6/EB 5d6	Up to 250 gallons per minute
1.5 inches	Dispel 7d6/EB 3d6	Up to 95 gallons per minute

If you're using the advanced rules, you can instead represent a fire hose as a Drain END that only works on the Endurance Reserve of a fire. The Drain END takes the place of the Dispel; the Energy Blast remains the same. The deluge gun on the character sheet does Drain END 5d6. For the firehoses listed above, divide the Dispel dice by two and round down. If the Drain reduces the Endurance Reserve for a hex of fire to 0 or below, it extinguishes the fire in that hex. For ease of game play, that hex cannot catch on fire anymore, nor does the END return at the rate of 5 Character Points per Turn.

dice of Dispel or Energy Blast a given hose can use depends on its diameter in inches, as indicated by the accompanying table.

If an engine wants to use multiple hoses on a given fire, the GM can consider the fire as "one target" and adjudicate the "attack" as a Sweep. If you're using the advanced fire rules, an engine can use each of its hoses to attack a separate hex of fire (or aim two or more at a single hex, if it prefers), depending on how many people are available to operate the hoses.

Engines also have separate lengths of hose which firefighters can connect to fire hydrants. These still require pressure from the fire engine's pump, so they're bought as a way to provide REC for the truck's Endurance Reserve.

Some fire engines also carry fire-retarding foam, which they spray on areas where they've doused a fire to prevent the fire from starting again. This has no particular game effect; it's just part of the use of the *PS: Fight Fires* Skill.

Some fire engines are *ladder trucks*, meaning they have a large, extendable arm (a "skylift") or ladder for getting a firefighter (and possibly a hose) to the top floors of a building to rescue trapped inhabitants or attack the fire from a different angle. You can represent this as a separate Extra Limb with Stretching, if necessary.

A fire engine typically carries 6-10 firefighters (including the one who drives the engine).

OTHER FIRE ENGINE EQUIPMENT

In addition to the equipment described above, fire engines have medical kits and equipment (though not nearly as much as an ambulance), tools for ripping apart sheet rock and the like, the *Jaws Of Life* for prying car crash victims out of mangled autos, and many other tools. Except for the items described below, and fireaxes (for which you can use the Battle Axe write-up on page 481 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook), you can represent all these tools with the *Paramedics* and *PS: Fight Fires* Skills, which are Complementary to the same Skill possessed by firefighters.

Other fire engine equipment includes:

- **Barrel Strainer**: An attachment that filters lake water so it isn't clogged with debris
- **Piercing Nozzle**: A special nozzle used to adjust the spray from a line so it punches through walls (in game terms, consider this

SUPERHEROES VERSUS “REALITY”: ALL FIRES ARE NOT THE SAME

There's one truism about fires in comic books and movies — they often bear no resemblance to real-world fires. They spread as quickly as the plot requires, and when the characters get involved, they become blazing infernos. But somehow, if the heroes haven't arrived yet, a fire can burn for hours and not really threaten anyone.

Verisimilitude is often a casualty of the needs of the narrative. If you have a DNPC in a burning building, bend over backwards to let a PCs rescue him, even if he waits for Turns on end for a rescue with “everything collapsing around him.” If the players question you, you can always say the DNPC has Luck.

to provide the *Indirect Advantage* to a fire-hose)

■ **Sheet Rock Puller:** A tool to pry open walls so the crew can spray water between the walls (treat this as similar to the *Spreaders And Rams* slot of the *Jaws Of Life* Multipower)

■ **Gated Y:** A device that allows firefighters to fit more than one hose to a fire junction

The Jaws Of Life: A system of piston-hydraulic tools — cutters, rams, and spreaders — that allow emergency personnel to rescue people trapped in wrecked cars, collapsed buildings, and the like.

Cost Power

- | | |
|----|---|
| 16 | <i>Jaws Of Life:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve; all OAF Bulky (-1½), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼) |
| 2u | 1) <i>Spreaders And Rams:</i> Telekinesis (40 STR); OAF Bulky (-1½), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼) |
| 1u | 2) <i>Cutters:</i> HKA 4d6; OAF Bulky (-1½), Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), No STR Bonus (-½) |
| 8 | <i>Engine:</i> Endurance Reserve (200 END); OAF Bulky (-1½) |
| 3 | <i>Engine:</i> Endurance Reserve (10 REC); OAF Bulky (-1½), Limited Recovery (only when refilled with fuel; -1) |

Total cost: 30 points

Exhaust Fan: This device sucks smoke out of a building, or blows it through to the other side, so the people inside aren't affected by it. Of course, once the fan is turned off or moved to another area, a still-burning fire can refill an area with smoke.

Dispel Energy Blast 6d6, *Area Of Effect* (16" Radius; +1¼) (49 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½) (total cost: 20 points) **plus** *Endurance Reserve* (as for *Jaws Of Life*; total cost: 11 points). Total cost: 31 points.

Firefighter Suit: For heavy fires, firefighters need all the protection they can get. The suit worn by a firefighter fighting a chemical blaze is one of those rare examples of real world technology that doesn't look out of place in a superhero game. Firefighter gear typically weighs about 23 kilograms (50 pounds).

Cost Powers

- | | |
|---|--|
| 6 | <i>Insulated Suit:</i> Armor (2 PD/4 ED) (9 Active Points); OIF (-½) |
| 3 | <i>Filters And Air Supply:</i> Life Support (Expanded Breathing in toxic smoke and high heat conditions) (5 Active Points); OIF (-½) |
| 7 | <i>Communications Gear:</i> Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group) (10 Active Points); OIF (-½) |

Total cost: 16 points

Drop Net: Firefighters use this device to catch people who jump out of buildings.

+12 PD, *Usable By Other* (+¼) (15 Active Points); OAF Bulky (-1½), *Only Works Against Limited Type Of Attack* (falling damage; -1), *Requires Multiple Users* (needs at least three people to hold it up; -½). Total cost: 4 points.

FIRE SCENARIO BASICS

The tone of a fire scenario depends on the variety of challenge you want to throw at the PCs. Some possibilities include:

Action: You can play a fire scenario as a straightforward “Man versus Nature” challenge: the PCs have to risk their lives to battle a towering inferno and rescue the occupants. This scenario isn't concerned about who started the fire and why — it's the tale of some very heroic people and the lives they save (and sometimes, the lives they fail to save).

Mystery: In the mystery scenario, the emphasis isn't on stopping the fire, it's on figuring out who set it. Characters in a mystery scenario attempt to reconstruct the crime to figure out how it was committed, and try to guess at the arsonist's motivation (which often involves financial interests, such as insurance fraud, some sort of revenge scheme, or pyromania).

See *Dark Champions*, page 156, for more information on investigating arson and explosions.

Thriller: The thriller scenario resembles the Mystery, but it emphasizes figuring out the pattern of multiple arson incidents, preventing future attacks, and protecting the people who stumble into harm's way. This is usually a long adventure marked by multiple plot twists, red herrings, and a final surprise ending.

Psychological Study: Instead of trying to solve a crime or beat someone up, this type of fire scenario explores the psychology of the arsonist. Furthermore, if a character has any tragedy involving a fire, or any Psychological Limitations about fire, you should showcase them in this scenario along with the psychological quirks of the arsonist.

THE BAD GUYS

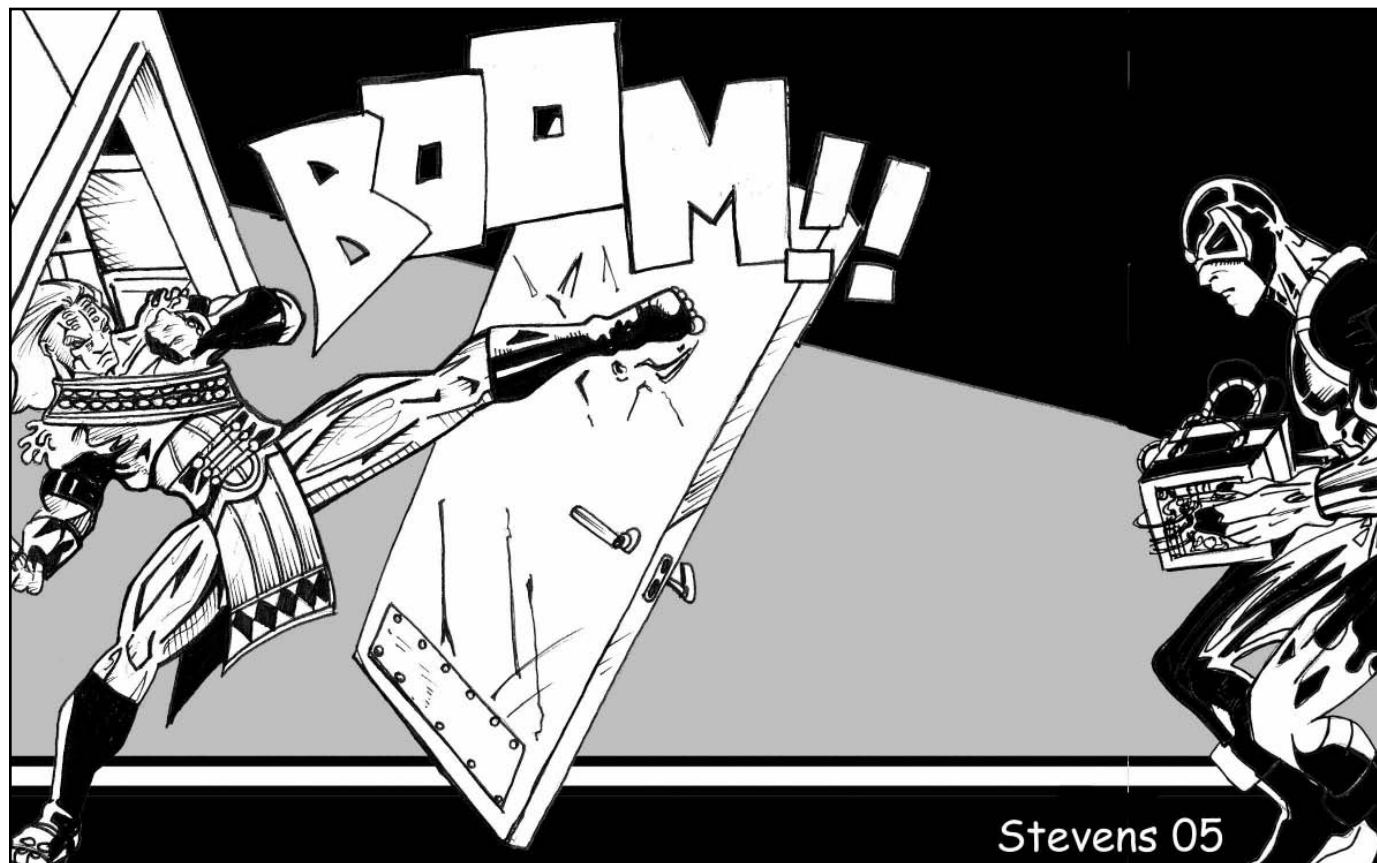
Fire scenarios feature two types of villains: the arsonist, and the guy who hires him.

THE ARSONIST

Not all arsonists are the same. In comic books, movies, and other forms of fiction, some of the types often encountered include:

All Dreams And Schemes: The world is full of petty hustlers and “players” looking for a quick buck. This guy commits arson because (a) he thinks he can fool the fire insurance people and strike it rich, or (b) he's desperate for the money from an insurance settlement. Usually he's not a serial arsonist; this is either a one-time thing or his crimes run toward other types of schemes. In any event, “realistically” the odds are against him — insurance companies have skilled investigators are *very* suspicious.

The Criminal Hiding His Crime: This is a very common motivation in the real world (though not as much in comics). The arsonist set the fire in the hopes of covering up a crime, such as burglary or murder. “Realistically,” destroying a corpse with fire is very difficult (it requires special crematorium



Stevens 05

equipment), but hiding evidence of property crimes and the like is much more possible.

The Fan: Suspense thrillers often set up an obvious suspect for the crime and then make the culprit someone who's deliberately trying to copy the suspect's traditional modus operandi. The arsonist's "fan" has studied his "career," considers him a "true artist," and wants to emulate him.

The Ironic Arsonist: Sometimes "the last likely person" to commit the crime is the best choice for the arsonist. In this type of scenario, fire investigators and firefighters are great choices for the ironic villain role; they chose their profession because of their fascination with fire, but can no longer control themselves. But don't overuse the "ironic villain" concept — players quickly catch onto it.

The Old Friend Of The PCs: Remember back when your PC was a winsome six-year-old lad, and you and your bestest pal Jack accidentally burned down that barn and kept quiet about how the fire started? Well, now that hero has to deal with his old childhood friend, who's grown up to be an out-of-control firebug! Maybe you should have ratted him out after all....

Ooops! Sorry!: Sometimes what appears to be a fire scenario isn't arson at all, it's an accident. A kid who throws a cigarette butt in the wrong place or sets off fireworks when he shouldn't, a young mutant whose fire powers are emerging, or the like. The mystery here is figuring out that the fire wasn't deliberately set and then confronting the "villain" to help him cope with the guilt.

The Professional Torch: This guy knows what he's doing. He knows how to make fires look like an accident, he knows how to get the fire started and make it spread more quickly. He has no concern about human life (unless his employer tells him to look out for people, in which case he charges extra). He's not necessarily a pyromaniac (at least not to the extent that he puts the job at risk).

The Purity Nutcase: This character, while rare in the real world, shows up a lot in genre fiction. Usually he's a deranged maniac who justifies his actions by citing religious passages taken out of context. He believes fire is purity, the world is corrupt, and the only way to purify a corrupt world is to burn it. He's usually a strange, disheveled guy (possibly a schizophrenic) whom everyone avoids, but he may seem perfectly ordinary until something triggers one of his rants. Despite his other mental challenges, when it comes to setting fires, this guy's got almost supernatural skill.

The Pyromaniac: The archetypal villain for arson scenarios. It's human nature to be fascinated with fire, but the pyromaniac takes it to obsessive levels. He may not always stay around and watch, but at the very least he'll come around some time after the fire to inspect his handiwork. He also enjoys watching other people's fires — so while he's always high on the suspect list for arson, it's not a slam dunk.

The Suicidal Idiot: If someone wants to kill himself, a fire is one way to go out and make sure everyone notices him! And if he takes out a few other people he despises — or if he hates the world in general and doesn't care if he racks up a bodycount — so much the better for adventure purposes.

The Vengeful Burner: Vengeance is a great motivation for nearly every crime, and arson is no exception. If a woman files a restraining order against her husband, or a boss fires someone with an explosive temper, the “wronged” person may decide that revenge is a dish best served burning hot. The vengeful burner also makes a great red herring, especially when he gets drunk and can’t remember where he was on the night of the fire.

BEHIND THE SCENES ADVERSARIES

People who might pay an arsonist to commit crimes include:

The Evil Developer: This guy has the veneer of a respected businessman, but he’s a ruthless bastard who’ll stop at nothing to get his hands on the development property he wants — and arson is a great way to get rid of someone who’s in his way (not to mention a building he wants to tear down). The Evil Developer typically hires the professional torch to do his dirty work.

The Insurance Fraud Scam Ring: While the vast majority of fire claims are genuine accidents, some people know how to work the system like a fine instrument. Insurance fraud scams are sometimes committed by rings of professional criminals who collaborate with each other and split the proceeds.

Mobsters, It’s Always Mobsters: When a mob boss thinks there’s a problem, burning a building (particularly if it’s owned or occupied by an enemy) is a great way to “send a message.” It’s also a good way to hide the evidence in rack-up-the-orders-then-steal-the-goods-without-paying scams. As with other mob-related crimes, the mob boss always uses a flunky or a mercenary to keep from getting his hands dirty.

SETTING UP THE SCENARIO

As with bank robberies, how you set up a fire scenario depends on the tone of the adventure and whether it’s a standalone or a campaign adventure. Standalones work best if you need a quick, off the cuff adventure. You should integrate campaign adventures into the major storylines of the campaign so they have a long-term effect on characters’ lives.

STANDALONE ADVENTURES

Standalone scenarios involve the PCs rescuing people from a fire and using their powers in creative ways to battle the flames. For the most part, they don’t worry about who started the fire, and the fire’s not part of a larger scheme — it simply provides a chance for the PCs to be heroic.

Getting a hero into a standalone scenario is easy. Characters can spot smoke while on patrol, hear distant explosions, or have their attention drawn to the problem by a fire alarm or a fire engine siren.

Short Standalones

Some premises that might make the typical standalone scenario more interesting include:

Accident And Consequences: The PCs have a chance to prevent the blaze before it starts. This might include situations such as an out-of-control tanker truck careening toward the side of a building, or a dock fire threatening to spread into a building.

Collateral Damage: The fire resulted from the events of an earlier battle. Perhaps a villain used fire powers too close to a cache of high explosives, or one of the bad guys reflected a PC’s lightning bolts into a propane tank. In any event, the PCs have to worry about the fire spreading *and* engage in a fight.

A Day In The Life: A city official asks the hero(es) to spend a day along with a local fire brigade and fight fires alongside them. It may be a publicity stunt, or the department may genuinely be worried about the firefighters’ safety for some reason.

Fetch: The evidence that would clear a man who’s been falsely convicted of murder is stored in a cabinet in an apartment building — but the building’s

EXPANDING “A DAY IN THE LIFE”

A Day In The Life is an especially good premise for a quick pick-up game — if only two or three players came to play, it’s a short, roleplaying intensive session that reinforces a heroic feel, but doesn’t change the campaign’s status quo. Incidents that might occur while working with firefighters include:

The Firehouse Dog: In genre fiction, firehouses usually have a canine mascot (often a Dalmatian). The dog can inspire many scenarios: it runs away; there’s a dognapping ring; someone has to tell the firefighters their beloved (but limping) mascot is too old and need to be put down; and all sorts of weird stuff (“what do you mean our dog is actually a long-missing superhero who was transmorphed into a dog by sorcery back in 1988?”).

The Firehouse Poker Game: Everyone has a poker ace in their midst, including this station. But what happens when a game gets so competitive that a hero with a secret identity is tempted to throw his mask into the pot?

Heroic Resentment: One firefighter, a brawny young man gifted with great looks and physical ability, has always felt like the “star” at the station. Now he’s being ignored by his pals as they get to know the superheroes, and by the media when the heroes’ actions easily eclipse his own. Naturally, he tries to find a way to make the heroes look bad.

My Secret Identity: One of the firefighters is really uncomfortable having the heroes around, and the other firefighters note that “Skip” is always nervous around strangers. He also has a history of running away at the oddest moments (later offering the lamest excuses in human history to cover his absences). In fact, Skip is actually a rival superhero in his secret identity.

Unexpected Catastrophe: A routine job which the firefighters assure the heroes can do without help turns deadly when an unnoticed canister filled with high explosives detonates. The heroes find themselves in the thick of a crisis — and after the crisis, one of the firefighters says the explosion was obviously set by one of the PCs’ archenemies and thus was *their* fault.

been torched. Not only do the heroes need to save people, they have to retrieve the evidence of the murder rap.

Hey, That's My House! There's nothing more personal than someone setting fire to one of the PCs' own houses, or the PCs' headquarters.

Long Standalones

Not all standalones are short. For longer ones, here are some typical setups:

Escaped! One of the easiest fire scenario setups is to let the heroes know a notorious arsonist just escaped from prison... and fellow inmates say he plans "to set the city on fire" now that he's out. The authorities give the PCs access to a few scribbled notes he wrote in prison, in the hope they contain clues to his current whereabouts and plans.

Foil the Arson Ring: The authorities contact the PCs and tell them there's an arson ring active in the city. They'd like the heroes to put a stop to it. Alternatively, the heroes can find out about the arson ring in the news, or arrive at a fire and overhear firefighters talking about a recent dramatic increase in suspicious fires. Make a fire investigator available to the PCs and give them a chance to talk with him and establish that the burnings have a common pattern (they use an unusual accelerant, their placement indicates someone's extensively studied blueprints...).

"I'll Find Everything You Care About — And Burn It!": If you've got a pyromaniac villain in mind for a scenario (such as Blowtorch in the Champions Universe), set him up months in advance. Have the PCs come upon him setting a fire and easily foil his actions. The would-be arsonist starts ranting, and the PCs laugh at him until the police demolitions expert notes that his firebombs were extremely sophisticated and well-placed and would have killed a lot of people. Months later, an ineffectual justice system hands the arsonist his parole and he embarks on a campaign of destruction, targeting known PC installations and friends, always seeming to be one step ahead of them (and occasionally taunting them with untraceable phone conversations or other messages). (With a little work, you can expand this into a campaign adventure.)

Riddle Me This: The arson was caused by a riddle-loving villain who's left the clues to the locations of six more pyrotechnic devices he's hidden around the city (and as a whole, the clues point toward the villain's secret lair). He contacts the heroes directly and draws them directly into the scenario with his twisted game.

CAMPAIGN ADVENTURES

You can create a standalone adventure by coming up with a few obstacles for the heroes. More involved adventures require scenes which advance the plot and foreshadow future events. Scenes and plot twists that can be thrown into the campaign include:

Demolition Blackmail: This works best if an arsonist is obviously targeting a specific set of individuals (usually wealthy businessmen, or city services).

After the first and second crimes, the arsonist makes a blackmail demand to the target. The super-heroes should have the chance to make the delivery (or to supervise it) if the arsonist and his victim come to an agreement... assuming they can't foil the plot before it comes to that.

New Arsonist In Town: When someone with super-human abilities puts pressure on a petty criminal or "legitimate" businessman, one of the natural responses is to call for a hired gun. Perhaps the unscrupulous tycoon who was trying to clear the docks district is so tired of having his boys beaten up by a bunch of guys in tights that he hires a specialist, typically a person with fire powers who loves to commit arson, to burn the places the PCs cherish. (In the Champions Universe, Blowtorch [see *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*] doesn't just fill this niche, he owns it.) To get the PCs into this scenario, the characters might come upon a meeting between Blowtorch and an agent of his employer, or someone could take pictures of him arriving at an airport or a train station and show them to the heroes. This should tell the PCs the stakes are getting higher.

Taunt Me A New One: Arson is a crime where you rarely get to directly confront the perpetrator, and it's hard to build up a villain from just his handiwork. One method that's used in the movies is to give the villain a cell phone (which should use a scrambled frequency the PCs can't easily trace). He can call them periodically and go through the crime step by step as he's planting the bomb, taunt them about what will happen when the bomb goes off, and so forth. This allows for some interaction between the PCs and the villains without risking a quick, premature end to the scenario and builds up animosity.

The heroes may decide to devote all their resources (Contacts, Favors, money, and so on) to tracking the arsonist down the next time he phones. This is anti-climactic... but if the PCs are clever and exploit the arsonist's Psychological Limitations long enough to keep him on the line, let them do it. It's better to let the PCs have an anti-climactic victory than to teach the players that any actions deviating from your ideas and plans will go unrewarded (or worse, punished).

Too Late! NPC death is cheap (sometimes too cheap), but there's one scene that often plays out in the source material: the "it's too late to save him" scene. The PCs hear about a major fire set by the arsonist and are about to go deal with it. Then some other crisis happens, and the PCs get delayed. They reach the fire just in time to see the building go off like a bomb, then comb through the wreckage to find the body of a dead (or dying) friendly NPC. The arsonist has just made a terrifying enemy (and a terrible mistake).

Turning On the Employer: One common scene in genre fiction is when the mercenary bad guy turns on his employer. Often the merc develops an obsessive adversarial relationship with the heroes that the employer (rightly) feels is bad for business. When the employer tries to rein the mercenary in,

the merc turns on him, usually in an ironic way (e.g., giving the employer a cigar, asking him if he needs a light, then burning him alive).

But movies aren't games, and this scene has one big drawback in a game: the PCs aren't involved. If you want to use it, you have to find a way to *get* them involved. For example, as with "Taunt Me A New One," maybe the merc phones the PCs while he's having the conversation with his employer and make asides ("What do you think, heroes? Should I take the money and leave?"). At least one PC will figure out what he's planning when he starts the ironic murder, but of course the employer won't be able to hear the shouted warnings because the merc's holding the phone or he hangs up. Another possibility is that the merc knocks out the employer and leaves him to die in a fire. That gives the PCs a chance to rescue (and, given the tendencies of most PCs, interrogate/intimidate) the employer. This lets you play out another classic scene, where the villain reveals just how crazy the merc is ("He's nuts, I tell you, totally nuts! He wants to burn down the entire city!").

The Usual (Wrong) Suspects: In genre fiction, when the PCs aren't law enforcement officers, the cops' competence usually plummets — after all, you can't have NPCs routinely outshining the main characters. One of the clearest ways to demonstrate this is the False Arrest. The police arrest an innocent person who committed a few offenses ten or fifteen years ago. The accused compounds the appearance of guilt by lying to them or mouthing off... and before you know it, he's facing the death penalty because a cop was killed in the fire. With an incompetent lawyer and the entire world thinking he's guilty, he turns to the PCs and begs them to clear him. Meanwhile, the real arsonist, no longer under suspicion, plots bigger crimes. If the arsonist turns out to be one of the authorities, he might even turn out to be the cop who arrested the guy (and maybe who planted evidence in his apartment to frame him).

DEVELOPING THE SCENARIO

Once the PCs are aware of the fire, they have to deal with it. First you have to consider the hazards of the actual fire itself.

INTO THE FIRE

When PCs enter a burning building, there are a lot of obstacles that need to be navigated.

Fire, Smoke, And Heat Damage

See above for listed damage caused by fire, smoke, and heat.

People Jumping Out Of Windows

People who jump out of windows to escape a fire take Falling damage (see page 434 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook, which also has rules about catching falling people and the like). The accompanying table provides a quick-reference for falling based on the stories in a building (precise distances may vary depending on the structure).

BUILDING STORIES AND FALLING DAMAGE

Stories	Height	Segments To Fall	Damage
1	2"-3"	1	2d6
2	4"-5"	1	4d6
3	6"-7"	2	6d6
4	8"-9"	2	8d6
5-7	10"-30"	2	10d6
8-12	30"-50"	3	15d6
13-18	51"-75"	4	20d6
19-25	76"-105"	5	25d6
26-32	106"-135"	6	30d6
32-38	136"-165"	7	35d6
39-45	166"-195"	8	40d6

Breaking Floorboards

Fire damage can weaken floorboards (apply the fire's damage to the DEF and BODY of the wood and/or other substances in the floor to determine whether it loses BODY and thus becomes weak). When a character walks through a hex with damaged floorboards, apply crushing damage to the floor based on his weight (if he's heavy enough, even a solid floor may not hold him!). If the crushing damage breaks the floor, he must succeed with a DEX Roll. If the roll fails, the floor breaks and he falls through to the next floor, sustaining 4d6 Normal Damage (and if the next floor is weakened, he may keep falling...). At your option, a character who falls may have to succeed with a STR Roll to free himself from debris, being wedged in the next floor, and so forth.

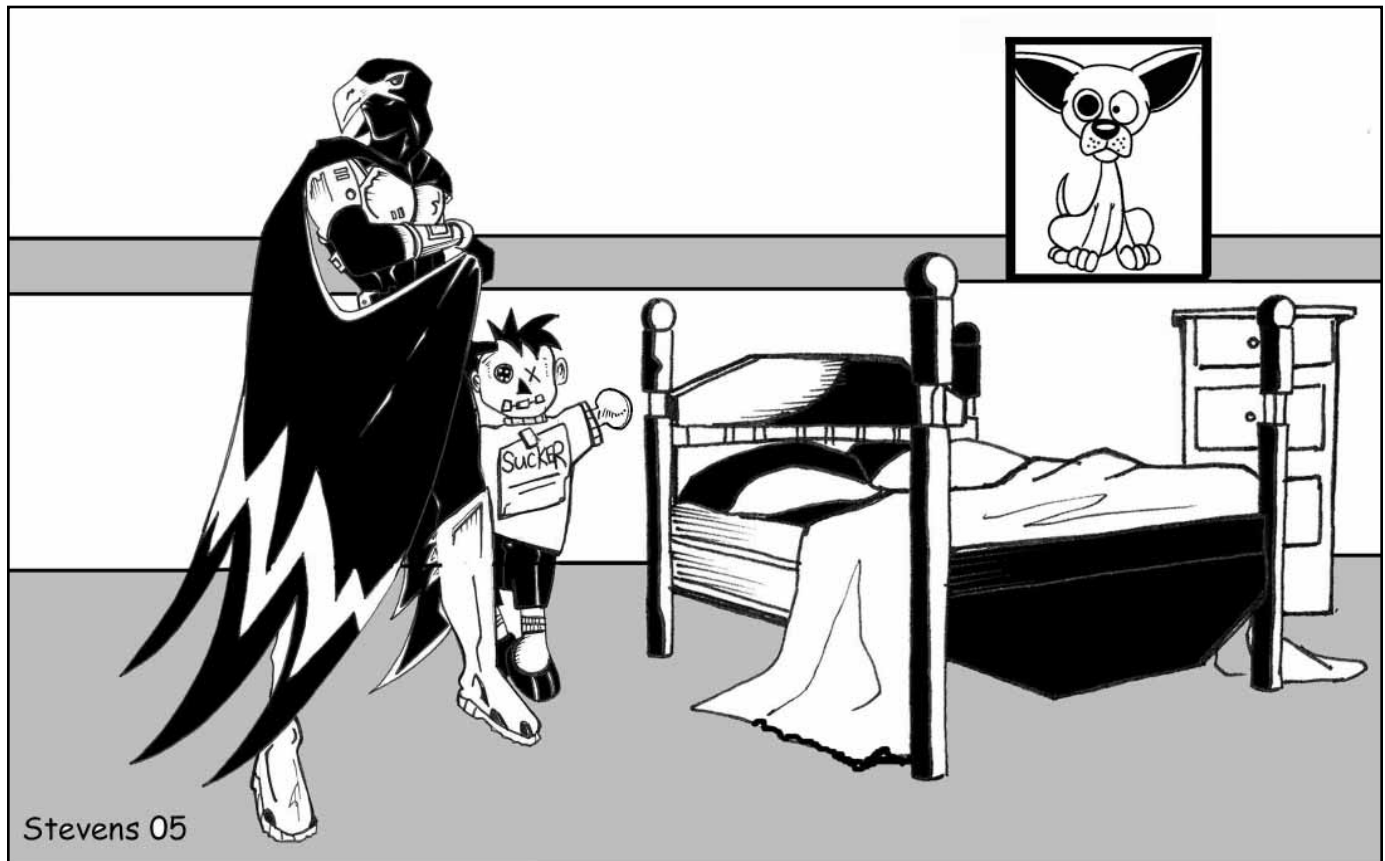
Collapsing Structures

Characters in burning buildings need to watch the ceilings as well as the floors — fire damage may create a risk of falling timbers, collapsing ceilings and light fixtures, and so forth. If the ceiling (*i.e.*, the floor on the story above the character) has taken enough damage that it has only 1-2 BODY, it may collapse as he passes underneath. (You can roll randomly to determine this, or have it happen when it seems dramatically appropriate.) If there's a collapse, the character has to succeed with a DEX Roll. If he fails, he suffers the same damage and effects as if he'd fallen through the floor — possibly *more* damage, if there are heavy objects on the floor above!

If It Reaches the Boilers...

A regular fire isn't always enough. Sometimes you need added danger, and the boiler room or furnace room provides it. If the fire reaches this place, there'll be an explosion that'll turn the building into a giant bomb and rock the neighborhood (assume a 20d6 Normal Dice Explosion, with -1 DC/3"). Obviously, the heroes should try to prevent this from happening, so what began as a rescue mission turns into a "stop the catastrophe" scenario.

Even when you don't have a catastrophic situation such as "the boiler room," broken gas lines are a notoriously combustible. When they're ignited, they can do a 10-15d6 Energy Blast Explosion. Hollywood pyrotechnics experts like to show this as a chain reaction of explosions, so a cascade of smaller explosions that culminate in one big explosion is very appropriate.



Look Who Else Is In Here

Not everyone in a fire is an innocent bystander. Some supervillains are crazy enough (or resilient enough) to fight someone inside a burning building. The PC could run into mystical villains and their flaming servants (such as fire imps) who have no problem surviving in fires and love to mess around in the flames.

SAVE THE CHILDREN!

The fire is the most obvious obstacle in this scenario, but there's another major challenge: the people the heroes have to rescue.

The Child With No Sense Of Self-Preservation: In the stereotypical fire scenario, children in danger are pretty much a given. They tightly hold dolls and floppy teddy bears as they hide in corners and under furniture; they worry that something will happen to their pet Scruffy (though dogs and cats probably have more sense than kids). They also drop their dolls in the middle of the burning building, and suddenly turn around to run back for them at inopportune times.

Firefighter Trapped Under Debris: Since PCs have to be the heroes of the scenario, the other heroes have to fail. That means firefighters come in two varieties: the ones who stand outside with hoses and yell "don't go in there!" at people; and the ones who went into the building and got trapped under debris, who'll die unless a superhero saves them.

Scruffy, The Family Pet: Normally, this pet would escape, but it's too loyal to leave its owner (even if he's dead). It's sitting next to its master's fallen body, whining and yowling. Scruffy gives the heroes a way to home in on someone who's in trouble. Alternatively, a child could ask the hero to look for Scruffy, but the pet's already escaped — and starts happily barking a few seconds before the hero can depart on a fool's errand.

The Woman Who's Trapped At The Window: The higher the building, the more likely the heroes are to find someone (in genre films, usually a woman) who has acute acrophobia (fear of heights). She knows she's going to die, but she just can't bring herself to jump (even when the fire crew has a drop net ready to catch her). Alternately, she may be holding a baby whom she wants to throw to someone who can catch him, willingly sacrificing her own life if she can save her child.

The Would-Be Hero: Another victim of the "nobody outshines the PCs" rule, this guy had good intentions — he rushed into the building to save people — but he overstayed his welcome, so now he's face-down on the floor, coughing his lungs out or unconscious. In either case, the Would-Be Hero needs a hero to save him. (For an ironic twist, the Would-Be Hero could actually be the arsonist — he set the fire so he'd look heroic when he saved people, or the like.)

ESCALATING FLAME SCENARIOS

Anytime you run the same type of adventure so close together, you run the risk of having your players become too accustomed to it. Some situations (such as combat) can be repeatedly run for a playing group, but there's probably a reason that there isn't a Firefighter RPG on the market — there's not much variety in the scenario. If you intend to have multiple fires in a scenario, find a way to make each fire distinctive. For example, in one fire, there's someone operating a daycare in their homes that's in danger; in another fire, there are open gas mains and the potential for lots of explosions. Start small and work your way up to nastier blazes.

THE GRAND FINALE

If your fire scenario is the climax of a major campaign adventure, it needs a big finish. “A big finish” usually means “a Really Big Fire with Really High Stakes that resolves the conflict with the arsonist.” Places where this might occur are:

Booby-Trapped Building: The arsonist is tired of the heroes always spoiling his fun, so he’s going to get rid of them once and for all. He’ll use lures (trussed up victims, recordings of people who scream for help) to get them into a trapped building and then detonate his bombs. Of course, the arsonist has to be *very* close to the scene of the crime to make this work. Even if he’s carefully avoided making any mistakes throughout the adventure, he should make one now. Perfect villains are frustrating — and worse, boring.

Chase The Arsonist Into The Burning Building: Okay, the heroes have caught up to the arsonist. In a bid to escape, he enters the burning building. The PCs, tired of chasing the arsonist and determined that they’re not going to hear the words “no one could survive that,” pursue the villain into the inferno, where they race each other through a collapsing structure.

Chase scenes are great climaxes for movies, but they rely on visual effects, quick cuts, and other cinematic techniques to build suspense, so they’re better suited to that medium than they are to role-playing games. Nonetheless, chase scenes are such an expected component in any genre adventure that a good GM should experiment with them. Here are a few suggested techniques to make chase scenes more dramatic.

Quick Cuts And Parallelism: This technique comes directly from the movies. It involves jumping back and forth quickly between scenes focused on the villain (even if the PCs ordinarily can’t see him) and ones focused on the heroes. For example, if the PCs have to go through an obstacle, make a quick cut and let them see the villain deal with it. Have the villain make rolls to jump over holes in the floor or avoid burning debris. If he fails, let the PCs catch up to him (after they make a few rolls of course).

Justifiable Combat Penalties: One of the problems with chase scenes is that PCs usually end them too quickly for them to be dramatically effective. There are ways to tweak combat so the PCs don’t have quite as much of an advantage. First, apply an OCV penalty so anyone attacking at range gets a -2 to -4 OCV situational penalty for fighting in a burning building. Second, use Concealment bonuses (as the villain races through the building, he’ll have enough Concealment that the heroes won’t get a clean shot.). Third, slow down the PCs on the grounds

that they have to move carefully or risk falling through the floor or triggering a collapsing ceiling — give them bonuses to their DEX Rolls if they restrict themselves to no more than 3” per Phase, penalize their rolls for faster movement. Fourth, if necessary impose “dramatic rules” on the combat for the purposes of lengthening the scene and heightening tension, such as “Placed Shots to the legs and feet are forbidden.”

Countdown: This is a standard, reliable tactic: the PCs capture the arsonist while he’s planting a bomb — but he’s already armed it. The bomb’s big enough to demolish everything in a six block radius, or worse. Of course, there are only a few seconds left before everyone’s blown to kingdom come....

AFTERMATH

The aftermath of the arson scenario should be relatively straightforward. Dead NPCs get buried; old friends killed in the blaze are honorably interred. The arsonist is captured or dead, and the person who commissioned the arsonist should either be exposed and captured (if he’s a short-term villain) or forced to abandon his plans (if he’s a long-term foe).

If the arsonist was not a supervillain and he survives the scenario, consider giving him a makeover. Provide him with access to technology similar to Blowtorch’s, or give him full-fledged fire powers, and elevate him to supervillain status. This depends, of course, on whether you established emotional connections between PCs and the villain. If they thought he was just a garden-variety nutcase and didn’t care whether he lived or died, then there’s not much point.

One sobering reality of the arson scenario is the sight of a smoldering, burnt out hulk of a building after the fire has taken its toll. Even when a fire’s extinguished, the job’s not over. Superheroes can help clear through the wreckage and quickly salvage a victim’s most precious belongings; they may also (depending on their relations with local trade unions) be asked to clean up the wreckage and assist with the rebuilding and the repairs.

Then there’s handling the brains behind the arson ring. You know the organized crime boss who set everything in motion, the big man who was previously untouchable? Well, the heroes may not have direct proof of his involvement, but they’ve got enough evidence to take to the grand jury — and they get the privilege of accompanying the federal agent serving the subpoena so they can see the look on his face when his schemes start to backfire. Even if he beats the rap, he’s attracted enough attention that his criminal empire may never recover.

CHARACTERS

Here are a few stock characters (and related resources) for use in your fire scenarios.

FIREFIGHTING PACKAGE DEALS

Besides police officers, firefighters may be the closest thing to heroes that people encounter in their daily lives. Here are two Package Deals for them: one for volunteer firefighters; one for full-timers. While every firefighter probably isn't as talented as those who take this Package Deal, they work perfectly for cinematically competent firefighters. The Fire Marshal Package Deal is for fire department employees who investigate fires; they're sworn law enforcement officers who carry badges and guns and can make arrests.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities

Cost	Ability
1	Bureaucratics 8-
3	Climbing
1	CK: campaign city 8-
2	KS: Fires 11-
1	KS: Structural Engineering 8-
3	Paramedics
2	PS: Firefighter 11-
1	TF: Fire Engines
1	Fringe Benefit: Licensed Volunteer Fireman

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 15

Disadvantages

Value Disadvantage

15	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Frequently, Major)
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Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 15

PROFESSIONAL FIREFIGHTER PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities

Cost	Ability
3	+3 STR
4	+2 CON
1	Bureaucratics 8-
3	Climbing
2	CK: campaign city 11-
3	KS: Fires (INT-based)
2	KS: Structural Engineering 11-
3	Paramedics
3	PS: Firefighter (INT-based)
1	TF: Fire Engines
1	WF: Axes
1	Fringe Benefit: Licensed Fireman

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 27

Disadvantages

Value Disadvantage

15	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Frequently, Major)
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Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 15

FIRE MARSHAL PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities

Cost Ability

3	Bureaucratics
3	Criminology
3	Deduction
2	CK: campaign city 11-
3	KS: Arsonists (INT-based)
3	KS: Fires (INT-based)
2	KS: Structural Engineering 11-
3	Paramedics
3	PS: Fire Marshal (INT-based)
5	SS: Arson/Explosion Investigation (INT +2)
5	Fringe Benefits: Local Police Powers, Law Enforcement Rank, Weapon Permit

Total Cost Of Package Abilities And Equipment: 35

Disadvantages

Value Disadvantage

15	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Frequently, Major)
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Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 15

DORY ALLEN, ARSONIST

13	STR	14	DEX	13	CON	10	BODY
13	INT	10	EGO	13	PRE	8	COM
3	PD	5	ED	3	SPD	6	REC
26	END	24	STUN				

Abilities: Running +1"; Martial Arts (Karate); Climbing 13-; Criminology 8-; Demolitions 14-; Disguise 12-; Electronics 12-; KS: Explosives 13-; KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 8-; KS: The Superhuman World 8-; Lockpicking 8-; Security Systems 8-; Shadowing 12-; Stealth 12-; Streetwise 12-; Systems Operation 12-; WF: Small Arms, Flamethrowers

50+ Disadvantages: Enraged: when someone disarms his weapon (Uncommon), go 8-, recover 14-; Hunted: Local Superheroes 8- (Mo Pow, Harshly Punish); Hunted: FBI 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Harshly Punish); Psychological Limitation: Enjoys Playing Cat And Mouse Games; Psychological Limitation: Pyromaniac; Social Limitation: Dishonorable Discharge From US Army; Social Limitation: Criminal Record

Notes: Dory Allen was a normal middle class kid until he joined the Army as a Communications Specialist, where he fell in with the wrong crowd and turned into a hard-core anarchist. Following an incident involving explosives and the destruction of the officers' mess, Allen was court-martialed and spent six years in prison. Now he's older, bitter, and totally dedicated to the violent overthrow of society. He sees superheroes as the one force that's keeping humanity out of the abyss where it so richly deserves to be sent, so he'll easily develop obsessive relationships with the PCs. Despite being a socio-path, Allen is extremely cunning and intelligent; he's a technical expert and a self-taught master of disguise. He's 5'11", about 160 pounds, with brown hair and brown eyes.

FRED FENTON, FIRE INVESTIGATOR

13 STR	11 DEX	13 CON	13 BODY
14 INT	12 EGO	15 PRE	10 COM
6 PD	6 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
26 END	27 STUN		

Abilities: Bureaucratics 12-; Conversation 12-; Climbing 11-; Criminology 12-; Deduction 12-; CK: campaign city 11-; KS: Arsonists 12-; KS: Fires 13-; KS: Structural Engineering 11-; Paramedics 12-; PS: Firefighter 11-; PS: Fire Marshal 12-; SS: Arson/Explosion Investigation 14-; Shadowing 12-; Stealth 11-; Streetwise 13-; TF: Fire Engines; WF: Axes; Contact: FBI 12-; Fringe Benefits: Local Police Powers, Law Enforcement Rank, Weapon Permit

50+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Workaholic; Psychological Limitation: Thinks He's God's Gift to Women; Unluck: 1d6

Notes: Despite being born on the wrong side of the tracks, Fred Fenton worked his way out of poverty as a firefighter, then became a fire investigator. He's something of a self-centered jerk (as indicated by his three divorces), but he's a dedicated professional who's very good at his work. He likes superheroes — and doesn't hesitate to cooperate with them unless they have really bad reputations — but he likes superheroines more. (A *lot* more.) Fred has a habit of attracting obsessed wackos and arsonists (one of who may eventually prove to his undoing). He's a Caucasian male, 6'1", 210 pounds, in his mid-30s.

SCENARIO: OUT OF THE FRYING PAN...

A street gang stole a cache of weapons without realizing what they'd taken, and now they've gotten their hands on enough concentrated nerve gas to kill a quarter of the population of the city. Worse, they've stored the gas in an apartment — and thanks to a local arsonist, the apartment building's on fire. Any minute now, the fire will melt through the casing and release a cloud of deadly nerve gas over the city.

Enter our heroes. They've tracked the stolen nerve gas to the apartment and arrive just as fire engulfs the building. Now they have to enter the burning building, brave the inferno, and stop this catastrophe from happening.

GETTING THEM THERE

It's easy to get PCs to the fire, but informing them about the nerve gas is a much tougher job. Respected heroes with a military background might be recruited to help in the search; otherwise the heroes are likely to learn about the theft from street contacts, the local police, or a journalist. However they learn about the nerve gas, they should arrive at the building knowing exactly what the stakes are.

Alternatively, because the arsonist knows about the nerve gas, you can arrange for him to leave cell

phones in rooms where the fire's starting. Using binoculars to survey his "accomplishment" (and a gas mask and NBC suit to protect himself from the nerve gas), he sits on a second story rooftop on an adjacent building (about 15' from the apartment) using Concealment to stay hidden. When he sees that heroes have entered the burning apartment, he'll use the cellphones to converse with the heroes, inform them about the nerve gas, and taunt them.

THE BUILDING

The apartment building is a four-story structure. The second floor is currently on fire.

The weapons stash is located in the apartment of a gangbanger named Hebrew Jones. He lives in apartment 206, while the weapons cache is in apartment 207 (which he also rents).

It's early evening (about 6:30 PM). The billowing smoke is clearly visible for several miles around the apartment. A crowd of survivors (most of them evacuated from the first floor) huddles around the building, looking worried. One little girl, Rachel Bishop, is sobbing wildly; she says one of her neighbors, a man named Mr. Strong, lowered her down the fire escape, but hasn't left the building yet.

THE BURNING BUILDING

The fire was set by serial arsonist and anarchist Dory Allen (see page 83), who heard about the stolen weapons cache from an old Army buddy. Dory looked for the nerve gas, and discovering the presence of gangbangers and "welfare cheats," he decided to burn the building down and incinerate them all. He rented room 229 and started the fire, using turpentine and gasoline as accelerants. He also turned off the sprinkler system and a system that relayed the fire alarms to the local fire station, so the fire department hasn't arrived on the scene yet (the first fire engine arrives in five minutes, or 25 Turns, after the PCs get there).

The fire has the following stats:

BODY:	5
SIZE:	190 hexes
SPD:	4
END RESERVE:	5400
END Cost:	195/Phase
DAM:	1½d6
FLAM:	10- (9- for fire intensity, +1 for wooden construction)

Each hex of the building counts as wood, so it adds 40 END to the Endurance Reserve.

Other Hazards

The fire itself isn't the only problem:

Smoke: The fire encompasses part of the second floor and is rapidly spreading to the third floor (several rooms above the heart of the blaze are on fire). Thick smoke (2d6 NND) fills the hallways on the second floor, thinner smoke (½d6 NND) fills the first and third floors.

Loose Floor Boards: Particularly in Rooms 228 and 235-236, loose floor boards will cause people to fall through the floor, possibly getting trapped (see page 80 for full rules). You should decide which hexes are riskiest.

TEN UNUSUAL FIRE SCENARIOS

1. An Evil Forged In The Flames: In a crossover with the superpowers drug scenario, a pharmacist villain has developed Phlogiston, a drug that makes people immune to fire and able to breathe smoke. Since Phlogiston users suffer less effect from flames than ordinary people, they've been setting fire to buildings and looting them before they burn down. The Phlogiston Gang is a particularly destructive menace — and responsible for the deaths of three firefighters who tried to stop it.

2. Elementally, My Dear Hero: An intelligent fire elemental that was summoned to a building by a cult to burn it down has filed an injunction with the city, demanding that people stop trying to extinguish it. It's actually summoned treasures from its home plane of existence to buy the building where it now resides and pay for lawyers. The city's fire department doesn't want a perpetual inferno in its city; unable to extinguish the fire itself, they're now asking the city's superheroes (*i.e.*, the PCs) for help in removing "the city's most unruly tenant."

3. Engine 1620, Where Are You?: A rash of fires has occurred in the city. On each occasion, Fire Engine 1620, an engine in immaculate condition manned by an impossibly handsome and skilled fire crew, arrives on the scene to save the day. Despite the severity of the fires, no one's suffered a serious injury thanks to the efforts of the 1620's crew. Normally, their heroics would qualify them for the key to the city — except that there is no Engine 1620 in any official listing, and no one can figure out where it came from, where it goes, or even what starts the fires.

So what is Engine 1620? Is it a product of Notaro the Magic Boy, a nearly omnipotent little kid from another dimension who created the engine (and the fires) as one of his cosmic games of "let's pretend"? Or are they the spirits of the greatest firefighters in history, awakened to combat the ghost of the greatest arsonist in history who was never brought to justice?

4. Fire And Ice: In a suburban commercial district, a rash of arsons have occurred with an unusual *modus operandi*: although the buildings were razed to the ground, the surrounding area was covered in ice that didn't melt even in the most intense heat. All attempts to direct the hoses to douse the fire failed miserably, as the ice provided a nearly impenetrable shield. Clearly someone (or something) superhuman is involved, but who — a pair of "Fire and Ice" twin supervillains? And if so, why are they showcasing their powers in this way? Extortion, revenge, just for fun?

5. Gods Of Fire: All over the city, firefighters are abandoning their posts, forming circles around buildings, and setting ritual blazes "in honor of the lost Fire God." The city is in a state of near anarchy, and the erstwhile firefighters are receiving the superhuman ability to generate and control fire that increases as they conduct more sacrifices. The heroes must stop them — and then stop the witch doctor/cult leader whose magic triggered this sinister transformation.

6. I Didn't Start The Fire: The city's bars are being incinerated by a ravenous fire monster whom the local press has dubbed "The Pyre." The Pyre is actually the agonized spirit of a drunk driver who killed five kids and three parents when he totaled an SUV in a high-speed freeway collision. The spirit (use the character sheet for Feuermacher in *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*) doesn't realize that he's dead — he's simply consumed with a terrible burning rage. He vents his frustration by attacking places that sell liquor (bars, liquor stores, restaurants...), but vanishes when he's racked up a body count (which calms him down); a few weeks later, he reappears for another rampage. The heroes must find a way to contain or neutralize this threat.

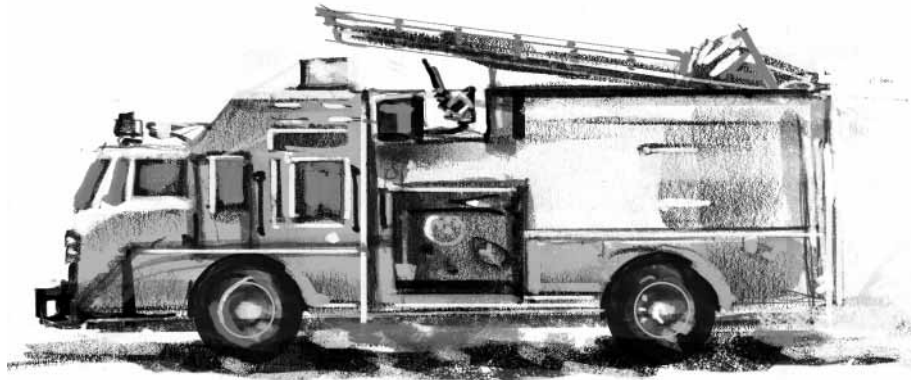
7. I Will Not Allow This: A shady industrialist wants to burn down an historic building to make room for a development — but the fires have snuffed themselves out before they've done any appreciable damage. Undeterred, the industrialist has hired the supervillain Blowtorch to make sure the job's done right (the fact that there's a large number of squatters in the building doesn't seem to matter to anyone, except whatever person or force defends the building).

8. Phoenix Rising: Every ten years, for no apparent cause beyond the name, a building at 44 Phoenix Plaza burns to the ground and everyone inside dies. The anniversary approaches... but the current tenants (prominent city businessmen) refuse to listen to warnings. How can the heroes save these unreasonable people? And why does the building burn to the ground: is it cursed? Or is there a phoenix trapped inside the structure who yearns to be free?

9. Putting Out Fires With Gasoline: Several oil company executives have locked their doors, spread gasoline over their offices, struck a match, and burned everything (including themselves). A villain who calls himself "the Dissembler" claims responsibility; he says that unless the oil companies drop gas prices by at least 40%, industry executives and their offices will burn.

The oil companies are starting to panic and threatening to shut down various subsidiaries, which will cost the city hundreds of jobs. However, there's also a small fringe group cheering on the burnings and trying to turn the Dissembler into a Robin Hood-style hero. Perhaps if the heroes rescued an oil exec before he burns himself alive, they could figure out how the Dissembler's doing this.

10. Somebody Stop Me: A firebug known as "the Weeping Arsonist" has started several spectacular blazes throughout the city. He earned his nickname from his tearful admissions on 911 calls after the fires; he claimed responsibility for the blazes and begged for help, then hung up without telling the cops where he was hiding or who he is. At each of the Weeping Arsonist's fires, firefighters have felt themselves fighting a compulsion to weep, and forensics teams have determined that each burned building has been surrounded by a magic circle made by human tears. What's the significance of an arcane ritual where weeping sparks a blaze? Is the Weeping Arsonist really responsible, or is some cult mixing tears with fiery rage?



Dangerous Ceilings: In Rooms 229-230, there's a chance the ceiling will collapse on top of anyone who passes through them. Again, the specifics are being left to you.

Other Building Features

Other features you should be aware of:

The Nerve Gas: The nerve gas canister is marked by an X. It has 7 DEF and 5 BODY; if it's breached (brought to 0 BODY), it unleashes a deadly toxin in an approximately one kilometer radius. (It's left to the GM to determine its full effect.)

Cell Phones: Dory Allen has left cell phones in metal cases in rooms 227, 239, and any other room you deem appropriate. He'll use these to taunt the heroes.

Sprinkler System: Although Allen smashed the sprinklers, he didn't leave them beyond repair. By accessing a service panel in a closet next to the elevator and succeeding with a Mechanics roll at a -1 penalty (this should take at least ½d6+1 Phases), the heroes can activate the sprinklers. The sprinklers Drain 1 BODY from each hex of fire and 100 END from its reserve each Phase (they have SPD 3 for these purposes).

Trapped People

Several people are desperately in need of rescue:

Jim Strong: The aptly named Jim Strong, a local volunteer firefighter, noticed the fire and called it in. He went into the heart of the blaze to rescue a girl, but is pinned down under debris in room 233. He's badly hurt, and needs help as soon as possible.

Little Maria: Little Maria Espinoza is trapped in room 239. She's found a corner where the fire hasn't touched (yet), but in seconds, she'll be engulfed by flames. She's staying low to the ground to avoid the smoke, but it's starting to effect her too, and she'll be unconscious in seconds.

Brandt Bramwell: This middle aged man, slumped in the doorway in room 211, has had a heart attack. He needs medical attention badly.

Verna Glenn: Verna is stranded on a small balcony outside room 323 (directly above room 223). She's an acrophobe, and is paralyzed with fear at the thought of trying to climb down the fire escape.

Hebrew Jones: As the fire rages, Hebrew Jones and a few of the boys will be trying to escape from the building with a lot of semi-automatic weapons and a few grenades. They'll leave the ammunition — and the nerve gas canister — behind.

COMPLETING THE ADVENTURE

When the heroes have evacuated the victims from the trouble spots and recovered the nerve gas canister, the fire department can arrive on the scene and start dousing the flames (assuming the PCs haven't taken care of this already). Dory Allen will flee as quietly as he can; this would be the most dramatic time to nab him. If he's threatened, he'll run into the burning building to try to shake pursuit.

PLOT OPTIONS

If you'd rather use a superhuman adversary in this adventure, replace Dory Allen with the supervillain Blowtorch from *Conquerors, Killers, And*

Crooks. Blowtorch decided to burn the building just for fun; he didn't know about the nerve gas. Realizing the fire department (or better, local superheroes) are on the way, he's hiding in the building, waiting to ambush them.

If you're employing this option, add a breathing apparatus to Blowtorch's equipment.

AFTERMATH

In the end, the heroes should beat the fire and save the day. If Allen escaped, he'll try to upgrade his abilities to be more of a match for the PCs, and he'll try to set up an elaborate booby trap to lure the PCs into a building and burn them alive.

The Army really wants to recover the nerve gas canister. As soon as it gets wind of what's happening, a HAZMAT team will be on the scene. If the canister's not recovered, a military investigation team will pounce on the scene and the PCs will be under suspicion. The street gang that inadvertently stole the nerve gas will also feel the heat.

ARSON RANDOM SCENARIO GENERATOR

Table 1-1 Fire's Cause

Roll 1d6

- 1-2 Accident (roll on Table 2-1)
- 3-6 Arson (roll on Table 3-1)

Table 2-1 Causes, Accidental Fire

Roll 1d6, then roll on Tables 3-1 and 4-1

- 1 Cigarettes
- 2 Faulty Electrical Wiring
- 3 Fireworks accident
- 4 Lightning strike
- 5 Malfunctioning Appliance
- 6 Accidental use of superpowers

Table 3-1 Location

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 4-1

- 1 Apartment
- 2 Business
- 3 Hotel
- 4 Outdoors
- 5 Residence
- 6 GM Custom

Table 4-1: Fire Size

Roll 1d6, If Fire was arson (Table 1-1), then roll on Table 5-1

- 1 Small Fire (1+½d6" radius)
- 2-3 Medium Fire (4+1d6" radius)
- 4-5 Large Fire (8+1d6" radius)
- 6 Very Large Fire (12+2d6" hex radius)

Table 5-1: Arsonist Identity

Roll 1d6

- 1-3 Amateur (roll on Table 5-2)
- 4-6 Professional Arsonist (roll on Table 5-3)

Table 5-2: Arsonist, Amateur, Motivation (Common)

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 6-1

- 1 Arson was committed as part of an insurance fraud scheme.
- 2 Arson was committed to hide another crime.
- 3 Arson was committed because the arsonist is an out of control pyromaniac.
- 4 Arson was committed for revenge.
- 5 Arson was committed as part of a suicide attempt.
- 6 Other (roll on Table 5-2-1)

Table 5-2-1: Arsonist, Amateur, Motivation (Uncommon)

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 6-1

- 1 Arson was committed by a wacky religious cult seeking "purity."
- 2 Arson was committed by a simpleton who didn't realize the consequences of his actions.
- 3 Arson was committed by someone who thought he'd become a superhero with fire powers.
- 4 Arson was committed by a severely ill schizophrenic who was told to light the fire by "the voices."
- 5 Arson was committed by an "artist" creating a work of "art"
- 6 Arsonist is a fan of a "great" arsonist and is trying to duplicate one of their signature crimes.

Table 5-3: Arsonist, Professional, Motivation

Roll 1d6, then go to Room Hazards Chart

- 1-2 Arsonist has been hired to burn down a building so a developer may grab the property.
- 3-4 Arsonist has been hired to burn down a building so a crime boss can get revenge
- 5 Arsonist has been hired to start a fire to lure a superhero into a trap.
- 6 Arsonist is trying to hone his demolitions skills, so he's practicing in the field.

Table 6-1: Room Hazards

If the room is near the center of the fire (includes a hex that's half the distance from the center to the edge), roll on Table 7-1

If the room is near the edge of the fire, roll on Table 7-2

If the room is just beyond the edge of the fire (within three hexes of the edge of the fire), roll on Table 7-3

Table 7-1 Room Near Center of Fire, Number of Hazards

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 7-1-1

- 1 None
- 2 1
- 3-5 2
- 6 3

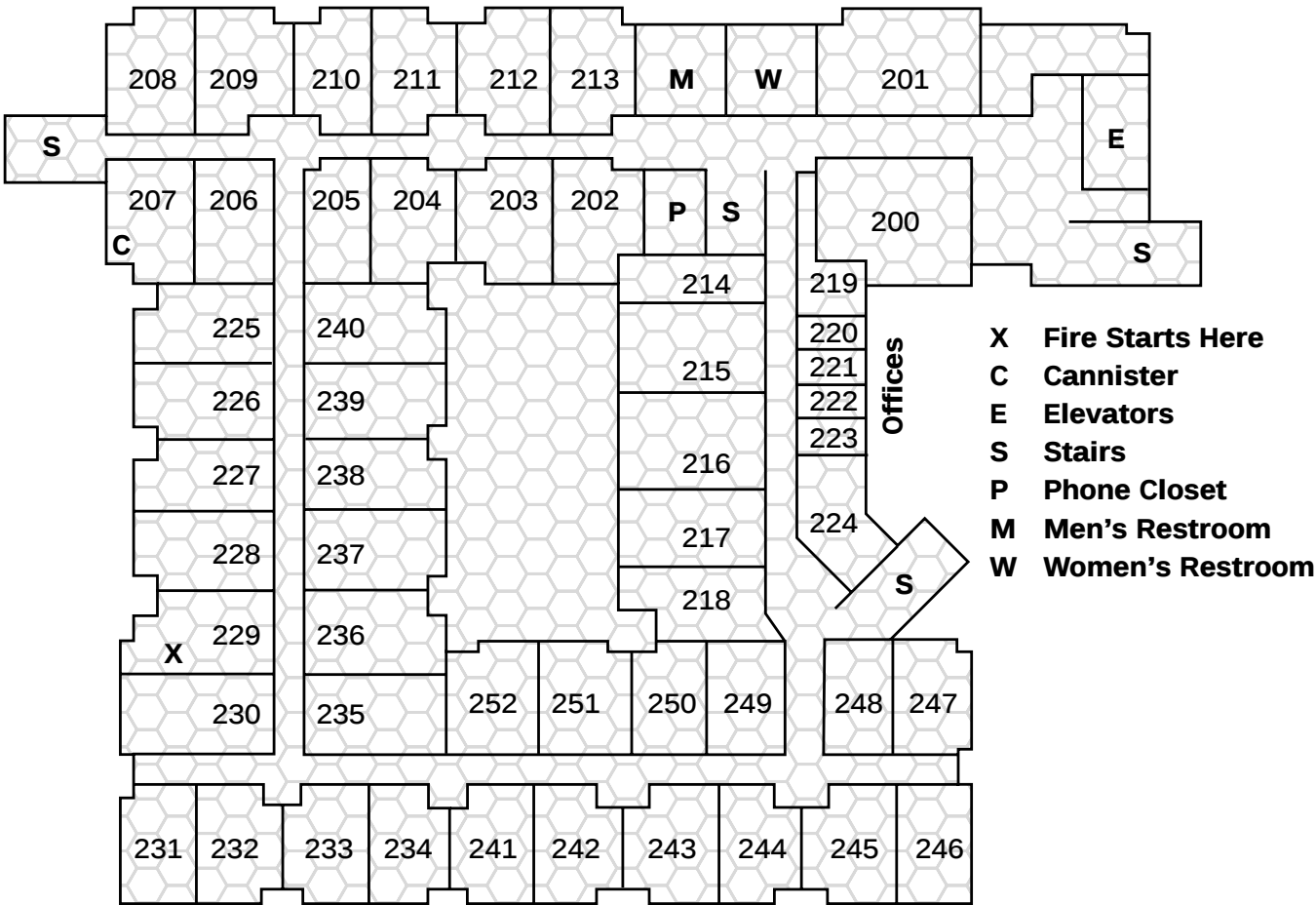


Table 7-1-1 Room Hazards, Near Center of Fire
Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 8-1

- 1 Collapsing ceilings
- 2 Collapsing floorboards
- 3 Explosive Device
- 4 Strong toxic fumes (add +2d6 to Smoke NND)
- 5 Spray of sparks
- 6 Victim, Unconscious

Table 7-2 Room Near Edge of Fire, Number of Hazards

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 7-2-1

- 1-3 None
- 4-5 1
- 6 2

Table 7-2-1 Hazards, Near
Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 8-1

- 1 Collapsing floorboards
- 2 Explosive Device
- 3 Spray of sparks
- 4 Victim, Animal
- 5 Victim, Injured but Conscious
- 6 Victim, Unconscious

Table 7-3 Room Beyond Edge of Fire, Number of Hazards

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 7-3-1

- 1-4 None
- 5 1
- 6 2

Table 7-3-1 Hazards, Near
Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 8-1

- 1 Explosive Device
- 2 Smoldering Area (1 point fire, roll for Combustibility at the same time as the rest of the area)
- 3 Victim, Animal
- 4 Victim, Panicking
- 5 Victim, Smoke-Asphyxiation
- 6 Victim, Trapped

Table 8-1 Additional Complications
Roll 1d6

- 1-3 None
- 4 Explosive device starts another fire in nearby section
- 5 Firefighters arrive on the scene, and get into trouble.
- 6 A supervillain with fire powers decides that a burning building is a perfect place to plunder.

chapter five:



It Came From
The Mad
Scientist's
Lab

SCIENCE!



To violate the laws of God and man. To produce monstrosities from the beyond the lands of human reason. To boldly go where only a brilliant but foolhardy intellect would ever venture. These are the credos of that very special subspecies of supervillain: the mad scientist.

The mad scientist is the heir of the mantle of ancient wizards and medieval alchemists in that he is the one who trafficks in things that should not be touched. When his experiments go well, he works miracles. However, when they fail — as they almost inevitably do — he unleashes pure, unadulterated Hell on Earth. And unadulterated Hell on Earth, of course, is bound to trickle down to the rest of the world and make a superhero's life both interesting and miserable.

This scenario uses the terms “mad scientist” and “mad science” (see text box) to refer to the people who engage in bizarre and dangerous sci-

entific experiments and their means and methods, respectively. The villain doesn't necessarily have to be the wild-eyed, wild-haired, labcoat-wearing technologist the term “mad science” suggests. A mad scientist could just as easily be a cold, calculating, scientifically-oriented master villain like the Champions Universe's Dr. Destroyer, a researcher with a heart of gold whose altruism pushes him too far, or the like.

THE EXPERIMENT

A mad science scenario can encompass a *lot* of situations. The basic elements are:

- the Experiment (the grand design toward which the Mad Scientist is working, and his means of achieving that goal through Science), and
- the Horrible Consequences that inevitably result from his meddling in things Man was not meant to meddle with

All you have to do is get the heroes involved in putting a stop to the Horrible Consequences, which can be as simple as pointing them in the direction of a rampaging monster or robot and telling them to destroy it.

Some mad science experiments are well-intentioned. Others are planned to facilitate megalomaniacal schemes of conquest. But they all go awry sooner or later, producing catastrophes, horrors beyond human imagination, and other adventure fodder. Enter the plucky heroes who have the good sense to be skeptical about “scientific advancements.”

While a mad science experiment can involve nearly anything — any type of monster, device, gadget, or disaster you can imagine — some schemes occur and recur so often they've become classics (beloved or otherwise). Some of the experiments that a mad scientist might unleash in a *Champions* game include:

THE BOMB

This experiment doesn't need a malfunction to scare the capes off of heroes — the idea of creating a weapon “that makes a nuke look like a firecracker” is a scary enough proposition even if it succeeds. Some mad scientists enjoy working on a grand scale, and if they build a weapon capable of destroying a weak spots on a tectonic plate (and sinking an entire continent), that's someone else's problem.

The predicament in “the Bomb” scenario isn't that the mad scientist is actually going to test his experiment. The usual dilemma is that someone

MAD SCIENCE VERSUS REAL SCIENCE

This scenario deals in Mad Science — the science of 1930s pulp serials and 1950s horror movies, reinterpreted in the comic books with their world-threatening devices, death rays, hovercraft, and other technological goodies o' evil. It bears little resemblance to real science, involving as it does processes that can't be justified by conventional scientific principles. It's essentially a plot device — just as you can say “it's magic” and justify nearly anything, you can also say “it's mad science” and explain something.

The basic laws of Mad Science are:

- mad science always works, but there's almost always unforeseen, tragic consequences.
- mad science involves the use of bizarre chemicals or big machines that produce a lot of electricity (and inevitably set laboratories ablaze in the climactic battle).
- animal test subjects are for wimps. Mad science uses human guinea pigs!

Modern comic book mad science involves nanotechnology, speculations on quantum physics, and genetic engineering, which often serves the same “we need to justify the plot” role as chemicals, electricity, and radiation do in pulp mad science.

See *Champions*, page 163, for more on “comic book physics,” which is a slightly more highbrow term for mad science. *Champions*, *VIPER*, *UNTIL*, and especially *Gadgets And Gear* have a plethora of devices suitable for use in mad science scenarios or with characters who are creations of mad science.

— an insane VIPER leader, a supervillain, some madman with a Bond villain fetish, the leader of a rogue nation — steals the weapon and is willing to use it to bring the world to the edge of destruction... and perhaps beyond. But there are some mad scientists who create their super-weapons with a specific purpose in mind.

A common variation on this scenario is when the weapon falls into the hands of someone with good intentions — such as the leader of a Third World nation who tries to use it to blackmail the First World into giving his country the development money and food his people *desperately* need. The leader's methods are very, very wrong, but his heart's in the right place.

THE BRAINWAVE STIMULATOR

You can never be too pretty or too smart — but while plastic surgery can take care of deficient beauty, giving the old cerebral cortex a boost can be a bear. Fortunately, the mad scientist has the brainwave machine to expand the human intellect to the “next level.” Unfortunately, the tragic side effects of this wondrous device include:

Evil Psionic Duplicates: When someone uses the device, it creates a psionic duplicate of him. This duplicate is completely amoral (if not pure Evil), incredibly manipulative, and bent on even madder plans of world domination than the mad scientist.

I'm Surrounded By Idiots!: The device works by usurping the processing ability of the minds around the stimulator. Everyone around the super-genius turns into a drooling moron, animals slump into an addlepatented stupor, and the genius either: (a) revels in his triumph but can't decide what he's going to do with his intellect; or (b) falls into depression because his heightened intelligence hasn't given him wisdom and he can't stop thinking about the fact that everything (including his towering intellect) will eventually come to an end. But if he overcomes these problems, watch out!

Monsters From The Id: The brain stimulator works, but it also triggers dark thoughts from inside the user's psyche, manifesting them as psychokinetic monsters (or makes creatures from his nightmares come alive, complete with dream powers). These creatures wreak havoc, of course, but the scientist remains oblivious to their presence.

My Lackey, The Brain: The experiment appears to fail... but it stimulates the brain of the mad scientist's thug assistant, transforming him into a criminal mastermind who manipulates the mad scientist for his own purposes.

Twists on the Brainwave Stimulator plot include: the Stimulator stimulates everyone in the surrounding countryside, transforming an entire community into amoral geniuses and devious housewives who engage in elaborate games of one-upmanship; the Stimulator sucks dry the mind of the mad scientist and possesses his body, sending him wandering around the countryside in search of new minds to devour.

THE EARTHQUAKE MACHINE

The earthquake machine mimics ones of nature's most destructive forces and turns it into the perfect instrument of blackmail. A mad scientist with an earthquake machine may not be able to put up much of a fight, but the damage caused by the tremors (including the fires and floods that follow in their wake) produce challenges as threatening as any supervillain.

The typical earthquake machine plot is a simple one: find and destroy the machine (or otherwise prevent its use). If the machine takes a long time to build, or a long time to “warm up” after it's turned on, you can run this scenario as a race against time. The PCs must reach the machine before it unleashes a tremor that inflicts terrifying destruction. Defending the machine is an arsenal of deathtraps and automated defenses, and possibly a squad of mercenary supervillains.

Another possibility is the *Revenge Of The Mole People* scenario. The earthquake machine is used, and in the process destroys the ten thousand year-old civilization of the peaceful (peaceful except for the extremely deadly weapons they've built) mole people. Like any right-thinking mole people, they vow revenge on all surface-dwellers and launch an attack with their own super-weapons. Alternatively the earthquake machine may attract (or release) long buried monsters, open accesses to long buried gateways that lead to worlds filled with eldritch horrors, or uncover ancient alien sentries who were lost to the sands but whose systems have now come back online.

See *Champions*, pages 122-23, for an example writeup of an Earthquake Machine (as well as many similar devices).

GIANT ANIMAL JAMBOREE

Somehow it seems like when mad scientists start experimenting on animals — usually small ones like insects, mice, other small rodents, or cats — an accident occurs and the animals become gigantic. Once they're large enough to pose a serious threat to infrastructure integrity and human life, they break free of whatever restraints (if any) the mad scientist has put in place and go on a rampage. Defeating them may mean a Big Fight, but it's more likely the PCs have to solve the mystery of how the gargantuan creatures got that way and find a method to reverse the effect.

IF ANIMALS COULD TALK

Wouldn't it be nice if we could communicate with animals? Ever since Dr. Moreau set up his little island, more than a few mad scientists have certainly thought so. The usual method is to alter animals through surgery, drugs, evolutionizer rays, and other mad scientist methods so they become intelligent and physically capable of speaking.

This scenario has similarities to *It Came From The Jurassic* (see below), and many of that adventure's plot twists apply to both situations. Other plot twists on If Animals Could Talk include:

The Animal Spy/Theft Ring: The hyperintelligent animals are being trained to serve as pets for the

wealthy, famous, and bored. Some are trained to spy on their “masters” and give damaging information to the mad scientist (for use in blackmail); others to steal some of their “master’s” most valuable items and bury them (to be dug up later by the scientist).

A related scheme is the “controlled swarm” plot. The master villain controls huge flocks of birds, packs of wolves, or swarms of wasps and sends them around the city to terrorize people. It’s a surprisingly effective form of blackmail.

Let My People Go!: Intelligent animals manage to get off a message asking superheroes to free them. They don’t identify themselves as animals, which provides a major surprise when the PCs break through the mad scientist’s defenses and discover they’re rescuing a small zoo.

Of course, intelligent animals can form the basis of less action-oriented plots of similar bent. Suppose intelligent animals demand their own sanctuary, away from the deprivation of humans. What if they asked for the right to vote? If they get the franchise, could someone register ten million cats, claiming they were intelligent enough to cast ballots, and then tell them how to vote? What happens when an intelligent dog with superpowers decides it wants to hang around the superhero team?

Animal rights groups, taken to extremes, are a good addition to the mix. Will they make willing agents for a superintelligent dog? Will the First Nations tribe worship a spirit bear with human intelligence, or declare it’s possessed by the spirit of a dead chief and try to kidnap it from those white folks (the researchers who’ve befriended it) and force it to stay in its native habitat because of their tribal traditions?

ELEVATED ANIMAL TEMPLATE

As a quick and easy way of creating an “elevated” animal, you can apply this template to any of the animals in *The HERO System Bestiary*. Since INT measures the ability to perceive, process, and properly react to situations, not sentience, many animals already have reasonably high INTs. What the template does is buy off the *Limited Intellect* Physical Limitation that most mundane animals have (see page 19 of the *Bestiary* for more information).

Abilities

Cost Ability

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 10-20 | Buy off <i>Limited Intellect</i> Physical Limitation (Near-Human, Animal, or Instinctive Intellect) |
| 3 | <i>Alpha Animal</i> : +10 PRE; Only For Presence Attacks And Interaction Skill Rolls Against Members Of Animal’s Own Species (-2) |

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 13-23

Optional Abilities

Cost Ability

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 3 | <i>Smarter Than Your Average Bear</i> : +3 INT |
| 5 | <i>Lots Smarter Than Your Average Bear</i> : +5 INT |
| 8 | <i>Much Smarter Than Your Average Bear</i> : +8 INT |
| 10/15 | <i>Paws As Good As Hands</i> : Buy off <i>Reduced Manipulation</i> Physical Limitation (Limited or Very Limited Manipulation) |
| -20 | Enraged: when feels threatened (Common), go 11-, recover 11- |

IMMORTALITY

Two things are inevitable, and nobody likes either of them. If there’s any advancement that heads most mad scientists’ agendas, it’s the wrestling match with one’s mortal coil and the struggle to fight the effects of aging. As in the real world, issues of life and death in a comic book are an ethical mine field (even if the word “ethics” is not in the vocabulary of a typical mad scientist.)

Mad scientists may achieve some form of immortality, but always at a cost. Tragic side effects of experiments that curb the aging process include:

Repeat The Treatment Or Age Rapidly: Nothing lasts forever, not even immortality. Perhaps the immortal needs to steep in a chemical stew that drives him mad (but bestows some temporary superpowers of a high order of magnitude). Maybe he has to inject himself with a drug to stay young, forcing him to commit crimes to obtain the rare, hard to find ingredients for the drug. Maybe he builds up enough resistance to the immortality process that he feels his age creeping up on him, sending him into a panic. It’s all bad.

Reverse Aging: Mad science is nothing if not rich in irony. In this perverse scenario, the recipient of the treatment hasn’t really stopped aging — instead he’s aging backwards. When he reaches the point where he was born, he ceases to exist. Usually, the mad scientist would like to halt the process sometime before he reaches puberty... and he’ll do anything he has to to achieve that result.

Vampirism: To sustain the aging, the recipient of the immortality must kill. This doesn’t necessarily involve draining a body of all of its blood; it might involve other elements: body moisture (the body becomes freeze-dried); body warmth (the body turns extremely chilly); body salts; brainwaves or nervous system activity (the victim becomes a near vegetable); and plain old fashioned “life force.”

Twists on the immortality plot include: the mad scientist wants to investigate one particular form of immortality for the purpose of negating someone else’s immortality (he has an immortal enemy and wants to get him where it really hurts; or he’s a “natural humanist” alarmed by the prospect that genetic engineering will one day grant immortality, so he’s working on a way to prevent it); the scientist is working on a “revivification protocol” that reconstitutes the bodies of the recently deceased and brings them back to life (usually as zombies).

IT CAME FROM THE JURASSIC

For true Silver Age fun, the mad scientist works on a process that gives birth to dinosaurs from old, damaged dinosaur DNA. A villainous mad scientist wants them for use in an “army” that will overrun the city; a merely amoral one simply wants to see if the process works, and doesn’t care about the possible tragic consequences.

Modern writers might take into account that dinosaur DNA is too badly preserved to replicate, and that the scientist needs something to bridge the gap (toad DNA, crocodile DNA, superhero DNA...),



though a true pulp mad scientist never sweats such details. The mad scientist also needs someplace to grow the dinosaurs to full size (so they're ready to rampage when he needs them). That may mean lurking in some remote Cretaceous-friendly environment (from which terrified natives escape to warn superhumans about "the Thundering Horrors").

Twists on the dinosaur scenario include:

I Want A Pet! The dinosaur is commissioned for a spoiled billionaire's son whose amoral parents will indulge him anything. When it's born, the junior psychotic rides it through the worst part of town, shouting: "C'mon Rex! Let's eat some homeless people. No one will miss them!" A less malevolent (but more tragic) scenario involves the dinosaur recreation process also recreating a disease that's extremely deadly to humans. For the good of humanity, the dinosaur must be destroyed, but the kid has run away with his pet (who bonded with him when he hatched and now views the boy as his only family).

Let's Talk About Intelligence: Suppose, at the very end of the dinosaur era, man-sized dinosaurs had begun to develop near-human levels of intelligence. The dinosaurs that the mad scientist brings back turn out to be Too Intelligent for Anyone's Good. After a bit of time honing their brains, the newly minted dinosaur geniuses decide to take over the operation and treat humans the way they used to treat everything in the good ol' days — as prey!

You can find *HERO System* character sheets for dinosaurs in *The Hero System Bestiary*, pages 152-159.

IT'S A PARALLEL DIMENSION!

In this adventure, the mad scientist learns of the existence of a parallel world, so he feels compelled to build a gateway. Unfortunately the dimension interacts with ours in dangerous ways, opening a path that allows its forces to invade Earth's dimension. Your heroes have to locate the portal, find a way to contain the invaders (probably by tricking them into returning), and then shut the portal down for good.

In the comics, even good scientists build portals to dangerous dimensions. It's just something they like to do. Some possible dimensions for this sort of scenario include:

Evil Hero Earth: This dimension is just like Earth's — except that the Champions are the vilest villains in the world, Dr. Destroyer the greatest hero, VIPER a band of noble, high-tech rebels against an oppressive world order, and everything else of consequence is likewise "opposite." The PCs inevitably end up fighting their "evil twins" at least a couple of times.

Fascist Hero-Earth: In this campaign world, when Dr. Destroyer and Mechanon wiped out every other superhuman and devastated the planet, the PCs survived. They're now the only superhumans on the planet, and they've used their powers to rebuild a fascist world where global destruction "can never happen again." Now, they've made contact with a world before the great cataclysm — Earth. They're determined to take over and impose a fascist system that will prevent the catastrophe from happening here — and the first ones standing in their way are the PCs, whom they'll try to kill and replace.

The Galactic Prison Dimension: In this dimension, Earth is a galactic prison where cultures from

around the Galaxy dump their unwanted superhumans. As a result, Earth has devolved into feudal enclaves run by galactic superhuman criminals and their human lackeys (including that world's version of the PCs). When a portal opens to our world, they immediately see an opportunity to be free.

The character Nebula, from *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*, provides the seed for a similar scenario. If a scientist breaches the dimensional barrier to the plane of Duress, a Galaxy's worth of powerful supervillains will be free to attack Earth!

Great Scott! Super Tibetan Raiders!: Sometime in the thirteenth century, a meteor fell in Mongolia that gave select members of that world's Mongol horde superhuman abilities. Within fifty years, their mutant offspring had conquered the entire world.

Fast forward to the twenty-first century. The superhumans have maintained their bloodline (even if it's led to inbreeding, and all that entails). They never developed the necessary technical expertise to travel to the stars, but now they've been contacted by another world — Earth, of course — and the bored Horde finally has a new place to conquer! To test the strength of this new world, the Kha-Khan chooses a vanguard of six Super-Mongols to serve as the advance party.

A Wolf Among Sheep: The scientist has opened a gateway to Utopia-Earth, a world of advanced technology, no disease, no wars, no weapons... not even bad manners. What a perfect world for an evil genius to plunder!

I WILL CURE YOU, MY BELOVED

One of the most common problems for mad scientists in the source material is a dead or dying loved one. This is a great motivation for sympathetic bad guys, for who can argue with true love? (Except when the true love is a Nazi leader, a serial killer, or an evil sorceress bent on world domination... but mad scientists don't worry about such quibbles.)

The mad scientist's love lies in suspended animation as he works on a way to restore her. He'll steal life-saving medicines and technology from hospitals. He'll make deals with supervillains that put thousands (or millions) of lives in jeopardy. He'll look for a compatible life force donor, find one among the PCs (or a friendly DNPC), kidnap him, and try to kill him to capture his life essence. Whatever it takes, whatever it costs, he'll try it if it offers a possible way to restore his love to life.

Twists on this plot include: the scientist's beloved is faking her illness and has left an imposter behind to distract the obsessed wacko who was destroying her life; the scientist's beloved is already dead but he refuses to accept it; the scientist never had a beloved (he invented her out of whole cloth to make his lonely life bearable).

I WILL WALK AGAIN!

Life's not fair, especially when a really good person suffers a life-altering disability. Unfortunately, superhero comics can be just as cruel to those who try to find a cure as is real life. The

quest to find a miracle cure, or a shortcut for conventional medical procedures, may yield brief triumphs, but the tragedy that ultimately results ends up costing the cripple far more than just a limb or the ability to walk.

Terrible mishaps that can occur when people try to cure a disability through mad science include:

Animal Transmogrification: The cure process involved splicing animal genetic material with the cripple's human DNA. Unfortunately, the animal side of the treatment takes over, turning the researcher into a savage beast who preys on humanity (or plans to replace humanity with a race of sentient animals). The scientist becomes more and more like an animal, horrible things happen to the friends who try to help him, and if he ends up back in his original condition at the end (with occasional relapses), it's a mercy. (See the animal hybrid templates in Chapter Three for some examples of what the scientist might turn into.)

Regrowth Nightmare: This is the "beware what you wish for" principle in overdrive. What happens when you successfully regrow a lost limb — and then another new one appears, and then it's followed by a whole new string of mutations? If the scientist's lucky after his initial rampage, he either (a) reverts to his old, crippled, but normal human self, or (b) gets control of his abilities, regains his sanity, and a shapechanging hero is born (even if his sense of normalcy is lost forever). If he's not lucky, he becomes a monster and dies a tragic death.

When Artificial Limbs Go Bad: The field of neurology can't quite regrow the human nervous system (yet), but in the world of mad science there are cybernetic substitutes. Unfortunately, the strain of controlling cybernetic limbs can be too much for the human brain (overloading the moral centers or reinforcing the pleasure centers so that the user craves acts that demonstrate physical power, leading him down the path of evil). Or the limb's artificial intelligence systems go amok. Or the control system for the limb is overridden from another location, turning the scientist into a plaything for some other psychotic genius.

For campaigns with strong mystic horror themes, the *Evil Hand* scenario is a variation on the Artificial Limb plot: lacking his own limb, the mad scientist substituted the limb from a homicidal maniac — one who practiced black magic and who promised every square inch of his body to the forces of darkness. Now the limb has taken control of the scientist and forces him to commit atrocities. Alternately, the hand might belong to a dead supervillain whose psyche still resides within it somehow, a demon or other monster, or the like.

More unusual twists on this plot include: the limbs rejecting the host and trying to find a more perfect body; the out of control regrowth produces copies of the scientist's body by fission (the duplicates have the same memories and physical abilities as the original, sans handicap; they scheme and plot against each other, but are capable of collaborating when it fits into their

agendas); or the scientist becomes so enamored with the replacement that he decides to replace his entire body (and kidnaps other biologists and cyberneticists to facilitate the process).

LIMITLESS ENERGY! ALL INSIDE THIS TINY BLACK HOLE!

One of humanity's greatest long-term problems is the need to find an energy source that's sustainable, clean, and cheap. While a comic book universe probably has more advanced energy technology than the real world, the mad scientist will still go to dangerous lengths to make a breakthrough in this field.

The Energy Source Cannot Be Contained: This is the most common complication. Maybe it's a process that produces a byproduct that can eat through anything (though it coagulates slowly enough that it doesn't immediately bore a hole into the center of the Earth). Maybe it's a white hole or some experimental nuclear source that increases its output beyond expectations and can't be shut down. The challenge of this scenario is dealing with the disasters the unstoppable source causes and figuring out a way to turn it off without destroying the surrounding landscape.

The Energy Source Is Evil: Imagine someone tapping into the fires of Hell as an energy source....

The Energy Source Is Sentient: Suppose the scientist accidentally taps into an ultra-powerful alien who exists in energy form. In time the alien notices what's going on and seizes control of the mad scientist's complex. The energy source could manipulate the technology in many harmful ways; it might drain the local power grid and black out the area as it searches for more energy to siphon, or it might try to lure superheroes into the complex to suck their life energies.

ROBOT SLAVES

As much as they might deny it, most people have a deep desire to be served by other people. The invention of uncomplaining robot servants is a logical step in the evolution of human laziness.

In comics and in cinema, the robot slaves never work out. Inevitably the story turns into a metaphor about either (a) how dangerous it is for humans to depend on machines (in which case the robots get out of control and go on a rampage), or (b) mankind's inhumanity to man (in which case the robots demand to be treated as humanity's equals and sue for societal rights).

Potential complications include: the scientist transfers his brain (or brain patterns) into a "perfect" robot body (and then either deliberately goes on a rampage of conquest and destruction, or loses control over the robot); the robot slaves are taken over by someone else (in the Champions Universe, Mechanon, Interface, Cybermind, and the Engineer are good candidates); the robots decide that to really help society, they have to take complete control and make sure no one ever gets hurt again.

THE NEXT STEP IN HUMAN EVOLUTION

Since Darwin's *Origin Of The Species* was published, science has been obsessed with the idea of evolving humanity to the next stage of development. The effects of a mad science process or device that does this can range from giving people superhuman abilities, to crossing them with animals "capable of surviving the coming global cataclysm," to transforming people into entities composed of raw energy or mental force. But of course, the experiment suffers spectacular disaster as the unstable (or downright psychotic) offspring of the experiment go on a rampage. Innocent, trusting creations inevitably fall under the influence of criminals, villains, or bullies who beat them until they respond with uncontrollable violence. Arrogant creations who think of themselves as gods enter society and destroy anything that offends them (which is usually pretty much everything).

Unusual twists on this plot include: the evolution that takes place quickly undoes itself, and the panicking subject vainly struggles against his reversal of fortune; the evolved person begins to experience hallucinations where he sees himself as the only human left alive and everyone else is "devolved" (e.g., Neanderthals); the evolved person continues to evolve (and panics because he doesn't realize what's really going on — will he evolve out of existence?).

THIS IS CERTAIN TO CURE MENTAL ILLNESS!

Never say "certain" or "never" in a game involving mad science. Mental illness is a curse that afflicts many people. The mad scientist's treatment promises to transform tormented schizophrenics and drooling psychotics into useful citizens, either by relaxing them and turning them into near-zombies (who are unfortunately prone to violent rages at unexpected moments), or by draining their capacity for Evil (infecting the machine's control system, which randomly shoots out evil impulses at innocent bystanders and transforms mild-mannered citizens into deadly criminals).

THE TIME MACHINE

Few things fascinate people as much as the idea that you can step into history. From H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* to the present day, stories of time travel have found a wide audience. Many of those stories have been told in the comics.

Mad scientists usually create time portals for one of three reasons: for the sheer scientific triumph of piercing the time barrier (regardless of the potential consequences); for noble purposes ("I'll go forward in time and bring back a cure for cancer!"); or for evil reasons ("If I go back to 1920, with my scientific knowledge and resources I can easily conquer the world!"). Some of the adventures you can spin out from the basic premise of mad science-enabled time travel include:

Altering The Timestream: After the mad scientist (or someone else) goes back in time, things go wrong. Whether the time traveler intended it or not, something he did altered the course of history, resulting in significant changes to the modern world as he

knew it. Some of the most frequently-used changes include: the South won the Civil War; Nazi Germany won World War II and now rules the world; the Soviet Union won the Cold War and crushed the West; President Kennedy wasn't killed. The heroes' job, once they realize what's happened, is to restore the proper timestream. That can have tragic results if life for one or more heroes is "better" in the alternate timestream ("I don't want to leave you honey... but I have to put things back the way they're supposed to be").

Fractured Time: Meddling with the timestream has caused time to become fractured. Fragments of the past and future are now entering the present: while a horde of Viking raiders rampages down main street, a Venusian is threatening the president and a tyrannosaur's trampling everything in the park! The heroes have to first stop all these mini-crises, then put the timestream to rights.

Unwelcome Visitors: The time portal allows some great historical evil to enter the world: brutal warriors; dictators like Hitler; serial killers like Jack the Ripper. Usually when someone evil pops through the portal, the scientist becomes the first one to die, but sometimes evil mad scientists remain in charge and order the historical personages to do their bidding ("Jesse James, I want you to rob this bank! Manfred Von Richtofen, take this rocket pack and shoot planes out of the sky! Mata Hari, seduce that billionaire!"). For some reason (at least in the Silver Age), being a famous person out of history automatically makes someone a worthy foe for a superhero, despite vast differences in power level.

You Young Whippersnapper: A supervillain's "future self" comes through the time portal and tells his younger self how to avoid the mistakes he made — giving him a powerful edge against the heroes. One way to do this in your campaign is to run a scenario, then run it again with the hero's most clever actions effectively neutralized or countered. The heroes have to find a way to send their own now-future selves back to their past selves to tell them how to counter the future villain's advice....

WEATHER CONTROL

Everyone talks about the weather, but only a mad scientist actually tries to do anything about it. Weather is the most awesome destructive force most people see in their lifetimes, and he who harnesses this terrifying force of nature commands power undreamt. No mad scientist worthy of his Jacob's ladder can pass up the opportunity to control the weather, usually for the purpose of blackmailing world governments — what better way to extort money than to threaten food crop with unrelenting hailstorms, or cities with blizzards of epic proportions or a plague of tornadoes?

The typical weather control device is a satellite (or series of satellites), which gives the PCs the additional challenge of having to get into, and surviving in, outer space. Some sort of super-weapon or combat robot may guard the thing, providing yet another obstacle. If a satellite isn't appropriate, the weather control device tends to be a large, ground-

based system contained in an "abandoned" factory or secret base.

Other possible complications include: the mad scientist, distraught over the death of his wife, decides the sun will never shine on the city again (in other words, his motivations for changing the weather are no longer as simple as "make lots of money"); the mad scientist loses control over the weather, which rages uncontrolled over half the world; the weather that the mad scientist creates becomes sentient and wants to merge with other storm systems and remain alive for as long as possible.

WE'LL NEVER GO HUNGRY AGAIN!

A lot of scientific research goes toward improving horticulture and animal husbandry. The mad scientist takes this to extremes by breeding giant animals and huge plants in the hopes that bigger livestock equals more efficient farm production. Of course these creations invariably turn into monsters: giant killer hogs; huge (vicious) honey bees; killer sheep that can turn the most heroic sheepdog into puppy chow. Plant monsters are even worse: walking bushes that impale people on razor-sharp thorns; giant Venus fly traps that mistake people for horseflies; mobile weeping willows that strangle people with branches as strong as steel cables.

More unusual twists on this plot include: the scientist breeds an extremely nutritious new game animal, but it's also at a near-human level of intelligence (and needs superheroic protection); the scientist breeds an almost irresistibly delicious food animal, but its meat has no nutrient value (those who consume it can't metabolize it, and eventually starve.)

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMPUTER

Last but not least of the mad scientist's special projects, the World's Greatest Computer is the ultimate triumph of technology. It can run everything in an entire military complex... or space habitat... or aircraft carrier... or the world. People can sit back and spend their lives in blissful luxury while the computer takes care of everything.

Well, not quite. First there's the threat of malfunction. All it takes is two electrons bumping together the wrong way, and suddenly the computer's ready to unleash a nuclear arsenal against some other nuclear power. Second, there's the possibility of deliberate tampering — hacking or sabotage — to accomplish the same or similar ends. Third, and perhaps worst of all, the computer can evolve sentience. It seems like the best-case scenario is that the sentient computer simply decides it's better than humanity and should rule the world; the worst is that it becomes outright evil: resenting its "slavery," it decides to eradicate humans and establish an empire of machines on Earth. Regardless of how the scenario plays out, the World's Greatest Computer embodies mankind's fear of the automated society he's created.

More unusual twists on this plot include: the scientist invents a computer that loves to play chess, but is so good it can't be beaten... and so frustrated

at not having a worthy opponent that it takes over the world's nuclear arsenals and threatens to launch them unless someone gives it a good game; the computer decides to honor its creator by sending out a viral program that spams every computer connected to the Internet with a message which says how great its creator is — and erases every other piece of software in the system except for those required to display the spam.

The Mad Scientist's Lab

Confrontations with mad scientists typically involve a trip to a mad scientist's laboratory, lair, headquarters, or secret base at some point. A mad scientist's laboratory is even more cluttered with strange scientific devices than a gamer's room is with gamebooks, but there are a few genre staples.

Brain In A Jar! While not appropriate for all mad scientist labs, the Brain In A Jar may be the real brains behind the operation. Either it's using the mad scientist and other minions to do the work it can no longer do, or it's the last vestige of a notoriously evil man (Hitler, Dracula, Satan's bastard son...) and the mad scientist is enacting his evil scheme to pay homage to his memory (or trying to get him a new body).

See page 202 of *The HERO System Bestiary* for a character sheet for one type of Brain In A Jar.

Jacob's Ladder: A device for producing large sparks, the Jacob's Ladder is an electrical apparatus hooked up to two nearly vertical wires. Sparks form at the bottom of these wires, rise to the top, and then dissipate. Then a new spark forms at the bottom, repeating the process.

In the real world, Jacob's Ladders are used as circuit breakers and as regulators in high voltage switches — but in a world where science has gone mad, they're a lot more fun. Casual contact with an operating Jacob's Ladder in the real world would be painful but not fatal. In a mad scientist's lab, however, the electrical current running through a Jacob's Ladder could be lethal... or it could short-circuit the victim's brain, transfer his intelligence into an albino gorilla, or suck his life force into a dying man or a replicant who's lying naked on an adjacent table.

In a more "modern" mad scientist's lab, you can replace the Jacob's Ladder with high-tech power conduits that have glowing lights or panels on the outside to show the flow of the electricity, a large "energy column" that channels plasma with magnetic fields, or the like. The point is, touching it can have strange, if not deadly, consequences!

Self-Destruct Buttons: This is one of those staples of comic books and horror movies that make many GMs cringe. Why the heck would anyone in his right mind have a device in his installation that allows it to be blown up by anyone with first grade reading skills? Because it's dramatic, that's why! Though one of these days, some evil overlord is going to hook a "self-destruct button" to a high voltage cable and laugh maniacally when a PC pushes it.

Tesla Coils: Nikola Tesla was one of the most eccentric geniuses the world has ever seen. Tesla coils are a transformer that shoots a shower of sparks from the top of the coil. It looks dangerous, cool, and perfect for a mad scientist's lab.

One popular toy derived from Tesla coils is an ionized sphere suspended in an insulated glass case. When someone touches the sphere, electricity shoots to the place that's being contacted (though it doesn't shock the person who touches it). Some special effect technicians use this harmless toy to portray a futuristic alien control systems and similar devices; there's no reason your mad scientists can't build working devices that resemble these things.

Test Tubes: Racks of test tubes containing fantastic serums and formulae are standard items in mad scientist laboratories (so is larger glassware filled with bubbling, oddly-colored liquids being heated by bunsen burners). See Chapter Three for some of the compounds that might be in those test tubes.

Van de Graaff Generators: This is a large, hollow metal globe that uses a moving belt to build up an electrical charge, which often discharges to a second, smaller globe. In the real world, they build up current for X-Ray tubes, but in mad science, they can have a lot of other purposes (though like Jacob's Ladders, they're often just used to look cool and electrocute anyone who's unfortunate to be knocked into them, or to cause instant conflagrations that "no one could survive" if they're toppled).

INTRODUCING THE SCENARIO

A mad science adventure should begin as a character study: it all starts with the mad scientist. The heroes need to either encounter the mad scientist and get to know him — or at least hear about him and learn of his reputation. This means, of course, that you need to have the mad scientist's personality and abilities well-established in your own mind before you start running the scenario. You don't necessarily have to prepare a full character sheet, but you should at least know exactly what the scientist's motivations and plans are.

Within the first half-hour of the scenario, the heroes should know the identity of the scientist and the nature of his experiment. They'll probably know what the mad scientist's intentions are, too: is the experiment meant to be a breakthrough that will help mankind, a project being done for money, or an evil scheme? If it's meant to benefit mankind, the PCs should be slightly suspicious of what it would do "if the technology falls into the wrong hands"; in the other situations, their opposition to it should be absolute.

Good introductions for this scenario include:

"And On A Lighter Note, A Discredited Researcher Was Laughed Off The Stage At A Scientific Conference...": During the nineteenth century, the battle over scientific reputations in the real world was so commonplace that backbiting and discrediting

"THE FIRST ONE WAS TOUGH, BUT WE'RE CARVING THROUGH THE OTHERS LIKE A HOT KNIFE THROUGH BUTTER!"

Champions gamers love their genre, but sometimes comic books test that love with moments of extreme stupidity. One such moment is when we see the heroes have a nearly impossible time coping with a single enemy, and then later (without any obvious explanation) wade through armies of advanced versions of that same enemy with little difficulty.

While it's probably best not to duplicate this genre convention to such an absurd degree, you can justify this effect by making their tough first encounter a powerful prototype, while later encounters involve an "assembly line" model that had to sacrifice features for cost effectiveness. These "assembly line armies" could have fewer points of BODY and/or DEF, fewer Active Points in their attacks, or the like — the point is, you provide a quasi-plausible explanation why the threat that was so terrifying by itself in Act I needs the force of numbers to provide a similar threat in Act III.

The other way to make the final battle against an "unbeatable" creation plausible is to give the creation a fatal weakness. Perhaps by the time of the final battle, the heroes have learned how to neutralize the force-field that protected the creation in the first battle, or have deduced that it's Vulnerable to Ice/Cold attacks and Susceptible to gorgonzola cheese.

"kooks" became one of the clichés that eventually settled into the canon of pulp literature. It's remained a genre staple ever since. In this introduction, the mad scientist has been scorned by the scientific community and turned into a laughingstock (he was laughed out of a conference, published a bizarre theory that was discredited, or had his legitimate work stolen by a member of the scientific establishment). Now he's going to show them! By engineering something bizarre and evil, he can get his revenge. The very scientists and institutions that scorned him may be his targets.

Escape From Mad Scientist Island: The PCs come across a man who's fleeing from inhuman horrors. Maybe he's a servant from the mad scientist's castle, or one of the residents of a nearby town whom the scientist's used as guinea pigs for his experiments (or as food or "playthings" for the result of the experiment...). In any event, the PCs need to investigate.

Invitation To An Old Friend's Lair: Okay, one of the PCs knew the scientist back in college. He was a little eccentric back then, but the PC still thought he was a great guy. Imagine his surprise when the former nerdy college science whiz has grown up to be a ruthless overlord who rules his own island with an iron fist, where genetically engineered animals fight to the death for his amusement, and whose servants endure bizarre tortures when they displease him. The heroes realize they're trapped in a confined space with a madman, and when said madman realizes they're planning to report him to the authorities, they'll never leave his lair alive!

The Mysterious Death: What happens when bodies are found suffocated in a wheat field, chaff stuffed down their throats and their bodies covered in pricking wounds and scratches that could only have been made by grain stalks as stiff and strong as wood? The authorities bring in the heroes to investigate, of course. But c'mon, grain fields don't come to life and attack people, do they?

The Public Demonstration: Someone — the mad scientist, a colleague, a public official — invites the PCs to a demonstration of a new technological breakthrough. At the demonstration, one of the following events usually occurs: a mishap foreshadows what will happen when a truly catastrophic failure occurs; someone attempts to steal the device; or a disastrous mishap occurs that hurts bystanders, destroys the experiment and ruins the scientist's reputation (which forces him to turn to crime to complete his work).

A View From Orbit: The phenomena or device created by the mad scientist is so big it shows up in an orbital view, and various intelligence agencies wonder what's going on down there. They send the heroes to investigate the situation, determine whether it's a problem, and deal with it.

DEVELOPING THE SCENARIO

Once you've come up with your scientist, his device/experiment, the basic situation, and a way to get the heroes involved, you have to decide how the scenario will unfold... or at least how you'd *like* it to unfold, keeping in mind the fact that players never do entirely what you expect.

Typically this sort of adventure has a fairly simple two-act structure. In Act I, the heroes learn about the situation and determine the nature and location of the threat. In Act II, they squash it and smile for the cameras. If you want to make the scenario longer or more complex, you need some plot twists, which usually appear at the end of the investigation in Act I or the conclusion of the fight in Act II, in either case precipitating an Act III. Here are some typical plot twists:

A Previously Benign Invention Turns Out To Be Extremely Dangerous: So the mad scientist thought his robot servants would change the world, his super-cattle would feed the world, and his super-medicine would cure all the world's diseases? Now the robots have enslaved humanity, the supercattle are running loose and demolishing everything in their path, and the anti-virus has shut down most people's immune systems and is mutating into a deadly plague. Time for some heroes!

The Mad Scientist The Heroes Captured In Act II Was A Fraud: The mad scientist took credit for someone else's work (such as an alien overlord who commissioned him to weaken Earth's defenses). Since his catspaw is no longer in play, the real mastermind has to take a more direct hand in events.

The Device The Heroes Disabled In Act II Was A Fake: The mad scientist played a misdirection game. The heroes unearthed the prototype and destroyed it, then captured its creator. But that prototype was only a toy, and the mad scientist they captured either (a) had the real invention programmed to start working without any further input from him, or (b) turned out to be one of his assistants. The threatening invention is still out there (and perhaps the mad scientist as well), and everyone's in even greater danger now...

The Device The Heroes Disabled In Act II Was Only A Prototype: This plot twist is particularly appropriate for experiments that create war machines, deathbots, and clone troopers. The mad scientist didn't build just one of his creations — he built several of them, or even a small army. The PCs may have had problems with one enemy — now they've got to engage in a rematch, or face even more of them!

The Invention Falls In Love: This one isn't appropriate under all circumstances — the weather control machine probably won't be infatuated with anything except a passing storm. But a robot, plant creature, or mutated pet is a very good candidate to receive the love bug. Falling in love, particularly with a PC or a DNPC, threatens the mad scientist's control over his creation.



Like a homicidal parent, he wants to destroy the object of the creation's affection (or turn his creation against the one he loves).

The Mad Scientist's Goal Turns Out to Be Bigger Than Anyone Expected: This is a fairly common, if grandiose, revelation. For example, maybe a scientist who's invented a shrinking ray believes he can shrink the poorer, less fortunate specimens of humanity down to a manageable size so wise giants can rule over them and rein in their destructive tendencies. Perhaps he plans to shrink criminals to doll-size, and build penal worlds for them. There's no plan so grandiose that you can't make it grander.

The Mad Scientist Loses Control Of The Invention: This one's at least as old as Shelley (if not Marlowe): the mad scientist created something, but it evolved to a point where it's rebelled against him (or the creator unleashed a force he couldn't control). The heroes must figure out how to destroy or regain control of the creation. If it's a creature, sometimes it murders someone the mad scientist loves, sending the grief-stricken scientist on a quest for vengeance.

THE FINAL CONFRONTATION

A mad scientist adventure entails so many possibilities that it's hard to give definitive advice for every single one of them. However, here are some good climaxes for a few of the most common scenarios.

If the scenario involves the creation of a horrific monster, the conclusion should be a final climactic confrontation with the monster. The monster usually has some ultimate goal that Must Be

Stopped. If its creator is still alive, then he should be involved in the scenario, though his allegiance may depend on earlier events: sometimes he's a grieving parent in denial ("just let me talk to it, I'll make it understand that it's wrong to be a mass murderer!"); in other scenarios, the creation does something so horrible to the scientist's loved ones that he becomes obsessed with destroying it.

If the scenario involves the creation of a phenomenon that's gotten out of control, the final confrontation typically involves turning off the device that triggered it, though the heroes may have to take further action to neutralize the phenomenon ("we need to pilot the flying base into the heart of the probability tempest and activate the Probability Negator!"). If you're using the scenario to showcase Skill-oriented characters, you may need to find a secondary, but important, task for powers-oriented characters.

If the scenario involves the building of a gateway between time periods and/or dimensions, the conclusion probably features a battle against someone from the other side, a rescue mission to retrieve someone who's imprisoned on the other side, or (when fighting to prevent an invading horde from entering our world) a fight against an enemy advance guard. It's also probably a good idea to shut down the gate.

One staple of final confrontation scenes in mad scientist scenarios is the "things just got out of control" moment. Frequently this happens shortly after a moment of triumph. The heroes have beaten the villain, but either: the phenomenon has gotten out of control (and requires a quick, smart use of powers to fix); or an auto-

SELF-DESTRUCT DEVICES AREN'T SUBTLE

Fictional characters usually know when they need to use their skills and when they need to run, but PCs don't always see the distinction. If you need to give them a hint, don't be subtle. Don't just have the NPC yell, "We've done all we can, time's running out!" — flat-out tell the heroes time is running out and if they don't leave, they'll die. If they really need to feel like they've achieved something besides thwarting the mad scientist, have some minor plot item or NPC lying near the doorway that they can pick up as they leave.

destruct in the complex has been armed, everything is about to blow, and they don't have time to disarm it (in which case the PCs need to get out of the complex as quickly as possible).

Another genre staple is the fire. When characters smash up a mad scientist's lab, electrical devices get knocked over, volatile test tubes smash on the ground, and strange energies are unleashed. Before you can say "No one could have survived that," the place is an inferno. This allows the scientist to escape (though often he's burnt so badly that he makes an unmasked Dr. Destroyer look like Brad Pitt).

AFTERMATH

In keeping with its pulp roots, the mad science adventure is usually a one-shot scenario, unless the mad scientist happens to escape at the end so he can launch another scheme. Most mad scientist scenarios don't have long-term complications.

You can link a mad scientist scenario into a character's origin, particularly if a character is running a "tabula rasa" or a "my background's a mystery to myself" character. A mad scientist might turn out to be a PC's creator, or may have a vital clue to the character's origin ("you were my favorite") which he'll cryptically mutter right after the character's dealt him a mortal wound.

Mad scientist adventures also provide you with a way to introduce new villains into your campaign: "We shut down the Portal to the Lands of Thirteen Curses, and Dr. Dundee is dead, but not before he brought forth the Prince of Madness to walk the Earth!". It's great when you give the PCs a chance to see a villain's origin and wonder if they could have worked harder to stop it.

CHARACTERS

Here are a few stock characters (and related resources) for use in your mad science scenarios.

THE MAD SCIENTIST

The star of the show is the mad scientist, but there are lots of different ways to approach this character.

The Absent-Minded Eccentric: More benign than any of the other scientist types is that lovable rascal, the Absent-Minded Eccentric. This professor, while seemingly forgetful and lacking in common sense, is almost as dedicated to science as the High Priest (see below), but he does know right from wrong and will usually take some precautions to prevent his work from falling into the wrong hands. Unfortunately, his precautions are never good enough.

The Amoral Egotist: This guy's not actively evil, but his sense of right and wrong is so atrophied (particularly when it's inconvenient to his work) that to get him to recognize an ethical problem the heroes have to rub his nose in it. He's usually so enthralled by his work that he can't consider (or willfully ignores) any negative applications. He's different from the Bad Science Bastard because the BSB understands that his work is Evil and enjoys it; the Amoral Egotist doesn't care.

The Bad Science Bastard: Some people are just rotten. They didn't have unhappy childhoods, no one's ever abused them, and people understand them perfectly — they're just evil. These vicious maniacs do whatever they want to do and cultivate the most annoying laugh on the planet to celebrate their misdeeds. These scientists make giant killer robots and let them loose around the city for fun, run around transforming little old ladies into mice, and unleash plagues just to see what happens. They're bad people.

Dr. Vengeance: You know the guy who was mocked when one of his bizarre theories was discredited? This is him. Dr. Vengeance's whole purpose in life is to destroy everyone and everything that's ever hurt him, and if anyone gets in his way, that's their problem. The only thing that will make him join the PC's side is if his creation destroys the last thing he loves (which usually seals his tragic fate).

The High Priest Of The New Scientific Age: Perhaps the most dangerous of all mad scientists, this guy treats science like a religion. He feels nothing should stop progress (*i.e.*, the advancement of scientific knowledge), that anything is justified in the name of progress, and that life is a cheap, easily-expended commodity. He'll perform the cruelest experiments without hesitation because morality is for superstitious fools who need to be dragged into the Age of Science.

The Sidekick Scientist: Less benign than the Absent-Minded Eccentric (but a little easier to get along with), the Sidekick Scientist's curiosity and slightly callous attitude toward people get the heroes into trouble when he thinks the PCs know too much (if he's secretly building a spaceship and the PCs drop by for a casual visit, he might kidnap them and force them aboard his rocket so they won't divulge his secret). But once the PCs work past his paranoia, he becomes as loyal, as faithful, and as competent a comrade as any red-blooded hero could ask for (if still a little prone to indulging in dangerous scientific experiments). Flash Gordon's Dr. Zarkhov is a fine example of the Sidekick Scientist.

MAD SCIENTIST PACKAGE DEAL

Every mad scientist is a distinct individual, but they all tend to have certain abilities in common. This Package Deal represents those abilities.

Abilities

Cost Ability

- 10 *I'm A Genius!*: +10 INT
- 3 Analyze Technology
- 3 Computer Programming
- 5 Cramming
- 3 Cryptography
- 3 Electronics
- 3 Inventor
- 3 KS: The Scientific World (INT-based)
- 3 Systems Operation 14-
- 20 20 points' worth of Science Skills appropriate to mad scientist's specialty (see optional templates below)

Total Cost Of Package Abilities: 56

Disadvantages

Value Disadvantage

- 5 Distinctive Features: Choose one (both Easily Concealed; Noticed and Recognizable): Technobabbler (always uses words that annoy lay-people) or Stone-Cold Manner (never shows emotion)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Choose one (all Common, Strong): Pursues Scientific Advancement At Any Price; Vendetta Against Those Who Mock Him; Loves To Break The Laws Of Nature
- 5 Rivalry: Professional (other mad scientists)

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 25

SIDEKICKS

Where there's a mad scientist, there's often a sidekick or an assistant waiting in the wings to assist his mad scheme. Henchmen typically come in the following flavors:

The Beautiful Daughter: This lovely, well-educated (though somewhat dim about all other matters) woman has an unwavering admiration for her father, at least until she falls for a hunky hero. If the father's a good guy, the romance goes as smoothly as true romance usually goes. However, if her father's evil, betrayal and tragedy will mar it.

The Hunchback: The hunchback combines absolute fawning loyalty to his master with great strength and sneakiness. He does a lot of the master's dirty work, and is a complete sycophant even though his master usually treats him like dirt. Typically the

OPTIONAL SCIENCE TEMPLATES

Each Optional Template Costs 20 Points

Cost Mad Dimensional Physicist Sciences Package

- 3 KS: Alien Technology (INT-based)
- 4 KS: Extra-Dimensional Worlds (INT-based +1)
- 3 Scientist
- 2 1) SS: Computer Science (INT-based)
- 3 2) SS: Dimensional Engineering (INT-based +1)
- 3 3) SS: Mathematics (INT-based +1)
- 2 4) SS: Physics (INT-based)

Cost Mad Geneticist Sciences Package

- 3 KS: Genetically Engineered Creatures (INT-based)
- 3 KS: The Superhuman World (INT-based)
- 3 Scientist
- 3 1) SS: Biology (INT-based +1)
- 1 2) SS: Computer Science 11-
- 4 3) SS: Genetics (INT-based +2)
- 1 4) SS: Mathematics 11-
- 2 5) SS: Zoology (INT-based)

Cost Mad Geologist Sciences Package

- 4 KS: Earthquakes (INT-based +1)
- 4 KS: Plate Tectonics (INT-based +1)
- 3 Scientist
- 1 1) SS: Computer Science 11-
- 4 2) SS: Geology (INT-based +2)
- 2 3) SS: Mathematics (INT-based)
- 2 4) SS: Mineralogy (INT-based)

Cost Mad Roboticist Sciences Package

- 3 Mechanics
- 3 KS: Anatomy (INT-based)
- 3 Scientist
- 2 1) SS: Computer Science (INT-based)
- 2 2) SS: Material Science (INT-based)
- 2 3) SS: Mathematics (INT-based)
- 1 4) SS: Physics 11-
- 4 5) SS: Robotics (INT-based +2)

heroes would like to see him reform, overthrow his master, and join the good guys... but alas, this rarely happens.

The Robot: Nothing beats a trusty robot assistant. Typically helpful and polite, able to provide useful data on request and serve the best Manhattan you've ever tasted, it seems like the perfect servant. If the master's a good guy, the robot is overprotective but usually turn out to be on the heroes' side (even if he gets treated like a speed-bump by the enemy, or sometimes gets reprogrammed into a killing machine). But if the mad scientist is evil, the robot can trigger its "kill, maim, destroy" programming at a moment's notice.

TEN UNUSUAL MAD SCIENTIST SCENARIOS

1. A Million Monkeys, On A Million Typewriters...:

...would eventually write the work of William Shakespeare. But what else could they write? Perhaps a mad scientist who's exploring the scientific underpinnings of the arcane limits the randomly-produced vocabulary to mystical phrases, then feeds the results into his ultimate computer and sets it to transcribe every conceivable permutation, hoping to create a mystic tome of incredible malign power....

2. A True Chamber Of Horrors: A very eccentric scientist who believes all marital problems can be traced to dishonesty has devised a way to circumvent spousal deception. He calls his invention a Truth Room, a place where everyone has to answer any question posed to them as completely and honestly as possible (in game terms, a very powerful Mind Control effect). But now a villainous organization has gained control of the Truth Room. The organization kidnaps wealthy businessmen and puts them in the room, forcing them to reveal their secrets. Worse, they've kidnapped a friendly NPC and plan to extract the PCs' secrets from him. To rescue him, the heroes have to fight the villains in the Truth Room, which is itself a dangerous proposition.

3. Bomb's Away: A mad scientist has done a very special and disturbing mass mailing: because an armed society is a polite society, he plans to ensure that society becomes as polite as possible. To this end, he's offering to send a one-kiloton nuclear device to any citizen who wants one, free of charge. Is this some crank, or could he possibly be serious?

4. I'll Make A Monkey Out of You: Some of the most prominent local academics are turning into chimpanzees. How? A mad scientist's transmutation ray. Why? The scientist's targeting researchers who've dismissed his past work, as well as other people in the academic and publishing world who annoy him.

5. I'm A Big Man Now! You come across a mob of panic-stricken people — eight inches tall. A short mad scientist with an inferiority complex about his height has invented a shrinking ray and is shrinking everyone in sight. When he's confronted with his misdeeds, he willfully breaks his weapon and refuses to work on reversing the process. Unfortunately, the human metabolism isn't meant to operate at an eight-inch height. The victims of the shrinking ray can't properly digest enough food to survive; they have only days to live before they die of starvation.

See page 112 for a Shrinking Ray, if you need game information about the device.

6. In Remembrance Of You — I Unleash Chaos: The embittered mad scientist has begun a plot to unleash

killer mutant animals on the city. Unfortunately for the scientist, most of the mutants will be harmless, crippled, or dying. It turns out that (because of his shattered reputation) he committed suicide three years ago — it's actually the mad scientist's grief-stricken assistant Igor who's trying (albeit clumsily) to pose as his fallen master and fulfill what he thinks were his master's final wishes.

7. Myrmidon: Realizing no one spends money like the military, a mad scientist decides to create the ultimate soldier and get the Army to fund the experiment. Because situational awareness and discipline are the keys to being a good soldier, the scientist has created a "Myrmidon Box" that attaches to the human brain to help it process sensory information. The Myrmidon Box enables soldiers to analyze threats, key themselves to body language reactions, and administer a drug to jolt a soldier's attention when his concentration strays from an assigned task. Unfortunately, the soldiers being used as guinea pigs can't stop thinking about conducting military operations, even when they're on leave. Now they're identifying people who most resemble their military enemy, razing homes, taking prisoners, and interrogating them.

8. My Son Deserves The Very Best: A mad scientist has created an offspring, an artificial superhuman son. To make his son as powerful as possible, he wants to lure a team of superhumans to his lair, capture them, and transfer their powers into young Perfecto. Guess which superhero team he's trying to "recruit"?

9. Think Of The Children: Snake-men have been seen in the area, and the authorities have found the skins of several high school students who've been flayed alive. It seems to be the work of an ex-VIPER mad scientist, but he claims to have reformed — he's raising a family of teenagers in an average suburban home. It turns out that the scientist's children are both the snake-men *and* the murder victims. Products of genetic experimentation, the kids go through a metamorphic cycle where they shed their skin to go into reptile form, become human over the course of the day, then shed their skins. They're committing robberies for the scientist, but nothing more horrific than that is going on.

10. What's Your Sign... Of Death! A mad scientist has invented a machine that tells people when and how they're going to die. Most people treat this as a cheap, tasteless gimmick, but one supervillain has a different plan — put his enemies in the Fate Booth, keep them locked up until shortly before the moment they're destined to die, then release them into the world.

SCENARIO: THE BLACK HOLE BLUES

Six months ago, Dr. Arthur Graves gained some unusual powers (see text box) during what the press called “another freak scientific accident” that occurred while he was studying the singularity drive of an alien starship. Whatever sympathy Graves initially gained faded quickly when the authorities discovered he was using his new abilities to dispose of people who scorned, mocked, or otherwise annoyed him.

Your heroes are pursuing Dr. Graves. They recently discovered that the government had confiscated and was studying more than one singularity drive. Eager to increase his power, the scheming physicist has stolen the second singularity drive and taken it to a hidden lab. He plans to merge the two black holes together and increase his power. He believes that if he harmonizes the power of the black holes, he can increase his own power by an order of magnitude and become a truly unstoppable force. But to do that, he needs time to compute the proper alignment of the two singularities inside a zero-gravity environment, then perform the merger.

Once the heroes realized this, a quick check of available science facilities revealed the presence of a nearby installation that once worked for NASA. It was abandoned when the company moved to India a few months ago, leaving an experimental “gravitics dome” in storage. The dome would be too big to transport easily, so Graves probably has to perform the operation on site.

Indeed, Graves has gone to that installation. Behind a solid force shield, he’s frantically working to merge the two black holes. He’s engineered some gravitic anomalies (essentially automatons that can perform NND attacks on intruders) to attack the PCs and slow them down. The clock is ticking....

LOCATION

Dr. Graves is headquartered in an abandoned base that belonged to SkyHab, a firm that once subcontracted for NASA. It’s a single story building with a high domed ceiling over the main lab. The electricity has been turned on, but only a few lights are lit. The building has an independent power source (the modified Van de Graaff generators in the Particle Lab).

The windows are darkened glass, though anyone who gets right up next to them and looks inside can see into the darkened offices. Panels of fluorescent lights in the ceiling (DEF 1, BODY 1) provide illumination when turned on.

Ceiling heights, unless otherwise noted, are 18 feet (3”); there are no hung ceilings. The building interior is nondescript with reinforced concrete walls (DEF 6, BODY 5). The walls of the Particle Lab are specially reinforced (DEF 8, BODY 6).

Map Key

St: Represents an empty “storage” room.

Of: Represents an empty “office.”

THE POWERS OF DR. GRAVES

The merging of Dr. Graves’s body with the singularity energy source of the alien spacedrive he was studying has given him several unusual powers:

Cost	Power
167	<i>Black Hole In My Body:</i> Telekinesis (100 STR), Area Of Effect (23” Radius; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (375 Active Points); No Range (-½), Affects Whole Object (-¼), Only To Pull Objects Directly To Character (-½)
50	<i>Through The Black Hole:</i> Extra-Dimensional Movement (to a single location in the dimension on the “other side” of the black hole), Usable As Attack (defense is Extra-Dimensional Movement, Power Defense, or Teleportation; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
45	<i>X-Ray Pulse:</i> RKA 3d6
87	<i>Gravitic Stabilization Field:</i> Force Field (25 PD/25 ED), Hardened (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
7	Power: Gravitic Power Tricks 15-

THE POWERS OF THE GRAVITIC ANOMALIES

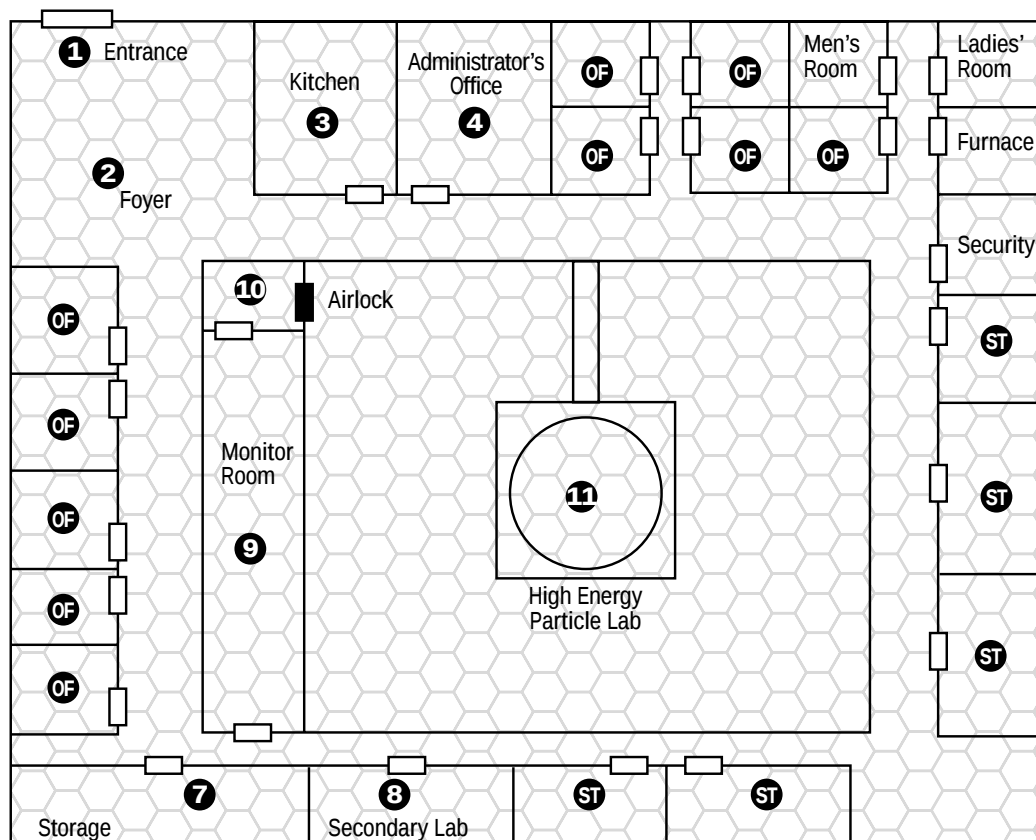
For Dr. Graves’s gravitic anomaly servitors, use any appropriate robot character sheet (such as the ones from *The HERO System Bestiary*, *Star Hero*, or the Free Stuff page on the Hero Games website), but give it 30 points’ worth of Inherent Shrinking and replace its powers (if any) with the following:

Cost	Power
103	<i>Gravity Warp:</i> RKA 3d6, Affects Physical World (+2), Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Requires Multiple Users (3; -½), Limited Range (10; -¼)
37	<i>Pass Through An Object And Hurt It:</i> Energy Blast 2d6, Affects Physical World (+2), NND (defense is Desolidification or electricity, gravity, or magnetism powers; +1), Does BODY (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Range (-½)
60	<i>Pure Gravity Form:</i> Desolidification (affected by electricity, gravity, or magnetism powers), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½), Inherent (+¼); Always On (-½)
72	<i>Gravitic Protection:</i> Armor (8 PD/8 ED)
24	<i>Anti-Gravity Field:</i> Flight 8,” Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)
10	<i>Mental Link:</i> Mind Link with Dr. Graves, Psychic Bond

M and L: Mens’ and Ladies’ rooms. They’re dirty, but fully stocked.

1. **Entrance.** The entrance is a sealed set of heavy reinforced glass double doors (DEF 3, BODY 4) with an electronic lock (Lockpicking roll at -3 to bypass). There’s a working security camera in the corner (Security Systems roll at -4 to bypass... assuming the PCs have a way to reach it without getting seen in the first place).

2. **Foyer.** This large space is mostly empty. There’s a 25 foot (4”) high ceiling, with a large “SkyHab” logo suspended from it by wires. The only other things left in the foyer is an abandoned metal desk and small lamps set in the ceiling for emergency lighting.



3. Kitchen. This small kitchen has a microwave oven and a small fridge. There's no table, just a couple of chairs.

4. Administrator's Office. This has been turned into a communications center, though it's currently unoccupied. There's a desk with a phone and a computer to take messages.

5. Furnace Room. This room has a small staircase leading down to a 4" x 4" basement area that contains the heating plant is located.

6. Security Office. This is where the feed from the cameras that monitor rooms 1, 9, and 11 go. Graves has stationed eight gravitic anomalies here; if security is tripped, they attempt to intercept and deal with the intruder(s).

7. Storage. In this storage room there's a box marked "Emergency Control Rods/Radiation Dampeners." These devices absorb excess radiation. They can be set up in a triangle to form a zone (maximum 4" per side), anyone inside of which effectively has Life Support (Safe Environment: High Radiation) and +3 rED versus ranged attacks with a "radiation" special effect. Placing one or more control rods on Dr. Graves's force barrier lowers its defense from 18 to 13.

There's also an odd looking alien device that came with the second (stolen) singularity. It resembles a curved silver rod. This is an emergency ejection system — it'll eject matter that's been sucked into the singularity (such as teammates). Using it requires a Systems Operation roll at a -5 penalty (unless the PC has a KS of alien technology, or some other Skill that you believe would negate or reduce that penalty).

8. Secondary Laboratory. This is a secondary installation that contains equipment to analyze experiments. There's a computer that contains some of Graves's notes, including the following from his personal journal:

"I believe when the two singularities are harmonized, not only will the strength of the gravitic pull increase tenfold, I'll be able to tap into the energy fields within the collapsed stars and manipulate fantastic forms of radiation, the likes of which have not been seen since the Big Bang, when energy ruled the universe, and matter wasn't even an afterthought of creation. With such energies at my command, I may move beyond simple acts of vengeance and become a Force, a Thing of Nature, able to stand above the petty laws of Man, a Natural God."

(They're called mad scientists for a reason.)

9. Monitor Room. SkyHab personnel used this room to monitor experiments taking place in the Particle Lab. A large window of 3-inch thick glass (DEF 5, BODY 7) looks into the Particle Lab. Eight gravitic anomalies stand guard here while Graves completes his experiment (they'll use their Desolidification to enter the Particle Lab if necessary). Graves has a small computer here to monitor the experiment; there's a lab technician (Steve Hamm, a physics grad student Graves kidnapped) who's making sure nothing disturbs the process.

10. **Airlock.** This room serves as a safety precaution for anyone entering the Particle Lab. Each door is reinforced steel (DEF 10, BODY 8); a Lockpicking roll at -1 will open them (as will Steve Hamm's keycard).

11. **High-Energy Particle Lab.** This is the main room of the complex. Black tile walls line the wall from the floor to the 65 foot (10") high dome ceiling. There's a raised dais in the center of the chamber where four Van De Graaff generators (DEF 5, BODY 6) stand. They're issuing streams of electricity (RKA 5d6 if anyone touches them). The generators feed off x-rays produced by the black hole and use them to power the complex; they're also using them to form a Force Wall around themselves and Dr. Graves (DEF 18, Affects Desolidified, Cannot Be Escaped With Teleportation, Hardened x3; and Lack Of Weakness [-5]). Physical contact with the Force Wall inflict an RKA 5d6. Aside from the generators, a few cables, and some computer systems, the room's empty.

ENTER... THE HEROES!

The heroes arrive in the lab to find Dr. Graves working on harmonizing the two black holes. He will succeed in twelve Segments unless they stop him. He's laughing maniacally as he works.

Inside the Force Wall is a zero-gravity environment. As soon as the Force Wall is destroyed, the gravity normalizes, a yellow light flashes and warning message plays over the loudspeaker: "Warning, containment field breached." Even if this happens, Graves can still maintain the harmonization process, but this requires a Half Phase Action on each of his Phases (he's SPD 3) and a successful Gravitic Power Tricks roll. Every Van de Graaff generator that's destroyed inflicts a cumulative -2 penalty on his rolls. If he fails a roll, thereafter he must spend a Full Phase in each of his Phases working on the harmonization process (if he fails a roll badly, you can inflict whatever other hazard or problem you consider appropriate).

If the heroes Knock Graves Out, the victims of his *Through The Black Hole* power are ejected back into the room and the *Catastrophe!* sequence begins (see below).

If Graves remains conscious through all twelve Segments, at the end of the twelfth Segment he gets to make a Gravitic Power Tricks roll to see if he's harmonized the singularities. Again, there's a -2 penalty for each Van de Graaff generator that's destroyed. If he succeeds, he becomes more powerful:

- The strength of his Telekinesis increases to 120
- His X-Ray Pulse improves to an RKA 4d6, Area Of Effect (Radius) Selective
- His Force Field strengthens to 40 PD/40 ED (Hardened)

Eventually, Dr. Singularity (his new villain name) will evolve other gravity- and black hole-based powers.

If he fails his Skill Roll...

CATASTROPHE!

If Graves is Knocked Out or fails his final Gravitic Power Tricks roll, the following events occur. The heroes can interrupt the sequence if they repair all damaged Van De Graaff generators, or if someone puts at Force Wall of least a 12 PD/12 ED strength around the singularity.

Segment One: Red lights flash, and the warning message "Warning: gravitic instability detected" starts playing over loudspeakers.

Segment Two: Everyone who was inside Graves's black hole (*i.e.*, on whom he used his *Through The Black Hole* power) is ejected into the room. Depending on how you've foreshadowed this adventure, the crowd could include superheroes (or villains) in addition to scientists and reporters who annoyed Graves.

Segment Three: Dr. Graves's black hole and the other singularity devour each other, leaving one singularity (and no Dr. Graves). There's a discharge of high energy particles throughout the entire lab (RKA 1d6, NND [defense is Life Support (Safe Environment: High Radiation)], Does BODY).

Segment Four: A warning plays on the loudspeaker: "Danger. Major gravitic instability. The containment field must be re-established." If Steve Hamm is still conscious, he'll scream through the loudspeakers: "My God! You've got to repair the generators and contain the singularities, or we're all dead!" A countdown starts.

Segment Six: There is a momentary heavy gravity discharge that inflicts an Energy Blast 3d6 NND (defense is gravity powers, Desolidification, or Density Increase). Everyone in the room must succeed with a CON Roll or be overcome by nausea (the equivalent of being Stunned, but much messier).

Segment Nine: Gravitic instabilities begin to form in the room. From that point onward, anyone who moves (including with Teleportation) must succeed with a DEX Roll at -3 or suffer the same NND 3d6 as in Segment 6.

Segment Twelve: Anyone within 3" of the singularity takes the NND 3d6 (see Segment 6) every Segment. Anyone Knocked Out gets sucked into the black hole.

Segment Eighteen: First, there's another high energy particle burst (see Segment 3). Next, everything collapses. All matter within 10 kilometers (including the PCs) gets sucked into a black hole and transported to a strange alternate dimension — with no obvious way home. You may have to improvise an adventure to get the PCs home... perhaps after a series of escapades in the other dimension.

Repairing The Generators

Characters can reactivate inactive Van de Graaf generators with an Electronics roll (impose a -1 penalty for every 2 BODY damage the generator's taken). Damaged (but not destroyed) generators can be repaired by a Mechanics roll (use the same penalty).

Holding The Wall

If a hero contains the implosion with a Force Wall, he takes 24d6 Normal Damage (physical) on Segment 18, -1d6 per point of PD the Force Wall provides. If the character's still conscious, the black hole collapses and seals itself, trapping Graves inside it.

AFTERMATH

The aftermath depends on how the heroes handled the scenario. The PCs may end up in a gloomy alternate dimension located inside the convergence of two black holes — but Graves will probably be there too, and (maybe) Hamm, so the PCs will have some physics experts at their disposal to help them escape.

Otherwise, it's a big victory. The mad scientist is gone, the threat is ended, the missing people have been rescued, and the city need never know how close it came to a fate that truly sucked. This will not, of course, dissuade future mad scientists, but where'd the fun be if that happened?

**RANDOM MAD SCIENCE
SCENARIO GENERATOR**

Table 1-1: Scientist Personality Type

Roll 1d6, then roll on any indicated sub-table

- 1 Raving lunatic (roll on Table 2-1)
- 2 Outwardly charming but actually a sadist (roll on Table 2-1)
- 3 “Progressive” genius who’ll do anything to advance science (roll on Table 2-1)
- 4 Cold, amoral man who treats everyone and everything as lab animals (roll on Table 2-1)
- 5 Lovable but absent-minded professor (roll on Table 3-1)
- 6 Elderly curmudgeon with a kind heart (roll on Table 3-1)

Table 2-1 Scientific Specialty

Roll 1d6, then roll on any indicated sub-table

- 1-2 Biologist (roll on Table 2-2)
- 3-4 Robotist/Engineer (roll on Table 2-3)
- 5-6 Physicist (roll on Table 2-4)

Table 2-2 Biologist Master Plan

Roll 1d6, then roll on all indicated sub-tables

- 1 Give an animal Human levels of intelligence (roll on Table 2-2-1)
- 2 Breed customized disease (roll on Table 2-2-2)
- 3 Breed giant monster (roll on Table 2-2-3)
- 4 Create an artificial humanoid “son” (roll on Table 2-2-4)
- 5 Recreate an extinct species (roll on Table 2-2-5)
- 6 Discover the secret of immortality (roll on 2-2-6)

Table 2-2-1 Animal Type

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-2-1-1

- 1 Simian (monkey, gorilla, baboon)
- 2 Dog (large dog, wolf)
- 3 Large Carnivore (tiger, bear)
- 4 Dexterous Scavenger (raccoon, lemur, otter)
- 5 Cetacean (dolphin, whale)
- 6 Cephalopod (octopus, squid)

Table 2-2-1-1 Animal Human Intelligence Plot Complications

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3-7

- 1 Animal drains intelligence from those around him.
- 2 Animal develops psionic abilities.
- 3 Animal tries to escape from the lab.
- 4 Animal becomes a supergenius and takes over the mad scientist’s facilities to breed a race of intelligent animals.
- 5 Animal goes on a psychotic killing spree.
- 6 Roll twice (reroll identical results)

Table 2-2-2 Disease Engineering Plot Complications

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3-7

- 1-2 Disease gets out of control and spreads a pandemic around the city.
- 3 Disease turns people into psychotic madmen.
- 4 Disease gives people temporary random (and uncontrollable) superpowers.
- 5 Disease transforms people into zombies after they die.
- 6 Roll twice (reroll identical results).

Table 2-2-3 Giant Monster Type

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-2-3-1

- 1 Reptile (turtle, iguana, snake)
- 2 Insect (ant, spider, dragonfly, moth)
- 3 Giant Simian
- 4 Environmental (smog cloud, living tornado)
- 5 Human Shaped Energy Creature
- 6 The Scientist, who's been turned into a radio-active giant

Table 2-2-3-1 Giant Monster Plot Complications

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3-7

- 1-2 Giant monster goes on a destructive rampage.
- 3 Giant monster looks for a bride or mom — from the city's human population.
- 4 Giant monster tries to build a nest in a prominent place in the city.
- 5 Giant monster befriends a small child, much to its creator's chagrin.
- 6 Roll twice (reroll identical results).

Table 2-2-5 Resurrected Species

Roll 1d6, roll on Table 2-2-5-1

- 1 Dinosaur
- 2 Sabertooth Tiger
- 3 Mastodon/Mammoth
- 4 Giant Ice Age Era Mammal
- 5 Unknown animal/plant with horrible destructive properties
- 6 Neanderthal Man

Table 2-2-5-1 Resurrected Species Complications

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-2-7

- 1-2 Resurrected species creature goes on a rampage
- 3 Resurrected species spreads a long-dormant plague
- 4 Resurrected species begins to mutate and acquire superpowers
- 5 Resurrected species is pregnant
- 6 Roll twice (reroll identical results)

Table 2-2-6 Immortality Complications

Roll 1d6, then roll on indicated subtable, then table 2-2-7

- 1-2 Vampirism (roll on Table 2-2-6-1)
- 3 Reverse aging
- 4 Accelerated aging unless a serum is administered
- 5 Increased sense of invincibility and megalomania
- 6 Increased psychosis, immortal enjoys ending life

Table 2-2-6-1 Vampirism Substance Dependency

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-2-7

- 1 Human blood
- 2 Human longevity (touch ages people)
- 3 Human metabolic warmth (touch freezes people)
- 4 Human mental energy (touch puts people in a coma)
- 5 Human moisture (touch freeze dries people)
- 6 Human intelligence (touch turns people into idiots)

Table 2-2-7 Mad Scientist Tragic Fate (Subject to PC Intervention) Table

Roll 1d6

- 1 Mad scientist is killed by his creation.
- 2 Mad scientist is captured by his creation and horribly mutated.
- 3 Mad scientist dies in the final battle trying to protect his "baby."
- 4 Mad scientist realizes the error of his ways and helps the PCs.
- 5 Mad scientist is rejected by his creation and has a nervous breakdown.
- 6 Mad scientist turns against his creation and dies horribly.

Table 2-3 Roboticist/Engineer Master Plan

Roll 1d6, roll on all indicated sub-tables

- 1 Build a giant robot (roll on Table 2-3-1)
- 2 Build a teleportation machine (roll on Table 2-3-2)
- 3 Build a temporal gate (roll on Table 2-3-3)
- 4 Build a dimensional portal (roll on Table 2-3-4)
- 5 Build a nature control machine (roll on Table 2-3-5)
- 6 Build an exoskeleton (roll on 2-3-6)

Table 2-3-1 Giant Robot Type

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3-1-1

- 1-3 Human
- 4 Insectoid
- 5 Predatory Mammal (lion, wolf)
- 6 Mythical Animal (dragon, unicorn, griffin)

Table 2-3-1-1 Giant Robot Complications

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3-7

- 1 Giant robot goes on a destructive rampage.
- 2 Giant robot attacks electrical plants and drains them of their energy.
- 3 Giant robot begins assimilating large quantities of metal to trigger his growth program.
- 4 Giant robot is attracted to sources of radio and microwave emissions.
- 5 Giant robot befriends a small child, much to its creator's chagrin.
- 6 Roll twice (reroll identical results).

Table 2-3-2 Teleportation Machine Complications

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3-7

- 1 Device doesn't quite work — the subject ends up in a parallel dimension, and his alternate dimensional counterpart comes back in his place (with slightly altered memories and personality traits).
- 2 Device slowly drains the life force of the people who use it.
- 3 Device transposes the subject's DNA with another creature, and slowly transmorphs him into a hybrid monster.
- 4 Device transports the body, but the mind is replaced by an alien criminal from an extra-dimensional prison dimension.
- 5 Device causes cell damage, those who use it get "transporter cancer" with repeated use.
- 6 Something else transports along with the user.

Table 2-3-3 Temporal Gate Destination

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3-3-1

- 1 Ancient Egypt
- 2 Ancient Rome
- 3 The Middle Ages
- 4 World War II
- 5 The Future
- 6 Random, variable, and/or unpredictable

Table 2-3-3-1 Temporal Gate Complications

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3-7

- 1 A historical horde enters the present day, with destructive intent.
- 2 Ghosts from history break through the barrier, haunting nearby houses.
- 3 Nearby folk have their minds interchanged with those from that time period.
- 4 A criminal comes from the time period and takes refuge in the present
- 5 Supervillains enter the gateway, change the past, and alter the time stream except for the time portal.
- 6 The area around the gate is replaced by architecture from the time period, and the two time periods begin to merge.

Table 2-3-4 Dimensional Gateway Destination

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3-4-1

- 1 The gateway is the home dimension of the Lords of Aram, creatures of brutal chaos who would guzzle reality like cheap wine and spit it out. They want to enter our world.
- 2 The gateway leads to a galactic prison dimension — and the prisoners want free!
- 3 The gateway leads to a dimension where good is evil, and evil is good (and when you step through, your counterpart steps over to this side).
- 4 The gateway leads to a dimension where people are hunted by their nightmares.
- 5 Gateway goes to a world where history was altered (Rome never fell).
- 6 Gateway goes to a dystopian future a year ahead in time — where you died tragic deaths and the world suffered a major cataclysm.

Table 2-3-4-1 Dimensional Gateway Complications

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3-7

- 1 Someone from beyond escapes into our dimension.
- 2 Exposure to voices from beyond drives men mad (reroll if inappropriate)
- 3 People in the surrounding area hear a strange siren call and begin to march into the gate.
- 4 Some supervillain seizes control of the gateway and plans to conquer and subjugate its people.
- 5 The mad scientist enslaves people from beyond the gateway and uses them as the nucleus of an army.
- 6 Roll twice (reroll identical results).

Table 2-3-5 Natural Disaster Machine

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3-5-1

- 1-2 Weather Control
- 3 Earthquake
- 4 Pull Meteor to Earth Machine
- 5 Volcano Maker/Drill to Earth's Core
- 6 Spontaneous Combustion Machine

Table 2-3-5-1 Natural Disaster Machine**Complications**

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3-7

- 1 The machine goes out of control, spontaneously causing disasters.
- 2 The machine goes out of control, and the disasters are more intense than the creator intended.
- 3 The machine falls under the control of someone who'd use it for apocalyptic purposes.
- 4 At the end of the scenario, the military tries to confiscate the device.
- 5 The mad scientist has built multiple machines, and stopping one machine won't slow down his scheme.
- 6 Roll twice (reroll identical results)

Table 2-3-6-1 Exoskeleton Complications

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-3-7

- 1-2 The exoskeleton drives the mad scientist completely insane.
- 3-4 The exoskeleton comes alive and starts to build a robotic army of conquest.
- 5 The exoskeleton gains independence, detaches itself from the mad scientist and goes on a rampage.
- 6 The exoskeleton begins to incorporate metal and circuitry to transform itself into a giant robot.

Table 2-3-7 Mad Scientist Tragic Fate (Subject to PC Intervention) Table

Roll 1d6

- 1 Mad scientist refuses to acknowledge his wrongdoing and vows revenge against those who plotted against his creation.
- 2 Mad scientist is captured by his creation and horribly mutated.
- 3 Mad scientist dies in the final battle trying to protect his “baby.”
- 4 Mad scientist realizes the error of his ways and helps the PCs.
- 5 Mad scientist is rejected by his creation and has a nervous breakdown.
- 6 Mad scientist turns against his creation and dies horribly.

Table 3-1 Benign Scientific Experiments

Roll 1d6, then roll on all indicated sub-tables

- 1 Develop a “weapon of peace” (roll on Table 3-2)
- 2 Build the Ultimate Computer (roll on Table 3-3)
- 3 Grow Gigantic Plants (roll on Table 3-4)
- 4 Make Humans Incapable of Violent Behavior (roll on Table 3-5)
- 5 Miracle Cure For One’s Beloved (roll on Table 3-6)
- 6 Roll on Table 2-1 and adjust the motivation for the experiment

Table 3-2 “Weapon Of Peace” Type

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 3-2-1

- 1 Neural Freeze Gun (AVLD 6d6 versus Power Defense)
- 2 De-Enervation Ray (Drain END and REC 5d6, Ranged)
- 3 Confusion Ray (Drain INT 6d6, Ranged)
- 4 Sense-Bombardment Ray (Sight and Hearing Group Flash 4d6)
- 5 Pacifism Ray (Mind Control 14d6, Set Effect [don’t commit acts of violence])
- 6 A big bomb (intended as a deterrent)

Table 3-2-1 Weapon of Peace Plot Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 Weapon is stolen by some punk who doesn’t realize what he’s stolen.
- 2 Weapon is stolen by a criminal who uses it to commit heinous robberies or blackmail the city.
- 3 Weapon is unstable, and likely to have a catastrophic explosion the next time it’s used.
- 4 The weapon is more powerful than its creator intended/
- 5 The weapon emits dangerous radiation or energy waves that threatens the health of anyone who has it for long periods of time.
- 6 Roll twice (reroll identical results)

Table 3-3 Ultimate Computer Plot Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 The computer goes out of control and takes control of the Internet and as many machines as it can get its program into.
- 2 The computer is stolen by a criminal who uses it for some extremely complex calculation (code-breaking or mystical formula, or by a machine empath (such as the Engineer) to add to his forces.
- 3 The computer tries to bond with a living host and become human — and chooses a criminal.
- 4 To get its creator a suitable birthday present, the computer becomes a criminal mastermind.
- 5 The bored computer takes over a nuclear arsenal or the world stock exchange system to play a game.
- 6 Roll twice (reroll identical results)

Table 3-4 Gigantic Plants Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 It releases a cloud of spores that mutate the surrounding plants into monstrous vegetation that devours animal life.
- 2 The plant becomes ambulatory and begins attacking people.
- 3 The plant uses mind control spores to influence and control the people around it into becoming its slave.
- 4 The plant develops crude telepathic powers. Realizing it’s about to be harvested — but being unable to communicate with anyone except a powerful telepath (which doesn’t include the scientist), the plant sends out a crude distress signal.
- 5 The plant continues to grow until, like a bad weed, it overruns the city.
- 6 Roll twice (reroll identical results).

Table 3-5 “Make Humans Incapable Of Violence” Experiment Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 The experiment produces psychotic telekinetic “monsters from the darkest subconscious” that attack people.
- 2 The experiment transfers the subjects’ violent impulses into other nearby individuals.
- 3 The subject of the experiment evolves into an easily dominated mental slave — and a criminal takes control of the device is stolen by a criminal/supervillain.
- 4 The machine malfunctions — after a few days the subjects turn into out of control psychotics.
- 5 The subjects stumble into dangerous situations but can’t defend themselves, forcing the superheroes to intervene.
- 6 Roll twice (reroll identical results).



Table 3-6 “Cure My Beloved” Experiment Complications

Roll 1d6

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 The beloved was in a coma. The beloved drains the mental energy of everyone around her, except for the scientist.</p> <p>2 The beloved was kept in cryo-electric storage. Someone tragically disrupts the experiment, and the disrupter and the scientist both gain electrical and cold powers.</p> | <p>3 The experiment requires rare materials, and the scientist is forced to perform criminal acts in exchange for the materials.</p> <p>4 The beloved awakens from the coma — with superhuman abilities — and goes on a destructive rampage.</p> <p>5 The beloved dies, and the scientist decides to commit suicide — with a real bang.</p> <p>6 Roll twice (reroll identical results).</p> |
|--|---|

chapter six:



Honey, They
Shrink The
Superheroes

LET'S GET SMALL



The average superhero is big, strong, and physically impressive, even when he's not a brick... and then some brainiac figures out a way to make a shrinking gun. All of a sudden this macho PC gets transformed into one of the smallest of the small. He coughs when hit with a small cloud of insecticide, he's hunted by his once beloved pet cat, and gets trapped in a micro-world that's as surreal as it is dangerous.

Shrinking is the ultimate degradation of powerful superheroes, but sometimes it's an evil a hero must endure to save someone. Maybe his android teammate develops robot cancer and only someone who's shrunk down to microscopic size can cure the problem. Or there's a mystery that can only be solved by children, so your friendly neighborhood super-mage casts a spell on the heroes that transforms them into the world's finest team of eight-year-olds.

The microscopic adventure scenario deals with issues of power reduction and survival. It takes a familiar environment (the everyday world) and puts it into a new perspective. It can be frustrating, but as a change of pace, it's a great challenge to throw at your heroes at least once in their career. It's especially appropriate if you're running a Silver Age-style game.

Although *Villainy Amok* uses the term "microscopic adventure" for this type of scenario, the heroes don't necessarily have to become that small. Sometimes they're only shrunk to the size of children, or to, say, one inch (2.5 cm) tall. It's just a good term for the concept as a whole, one that focuses on the most common and fantastic form of the scenario.

BECOMING SMALL

If you need to reduce the PCs to microscopic size for some scenario, that's easily accomplished — you're the GM, and you can do whatever you want as a plot device to get a scenario going. However, some GMs prefer to explain everything in game terms, just in case they need to adjudicate something related to an effect.

In *HERO System* terms, the power characters use to become smaller is Shrinking. However, it may or may not present some problems for purposes of a microscopic adventure scenario. First, extrapolating the Shrinking Table (page 218 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* rulebook) to the point where it makes the characters as small as you want them to may not be worth the effort. An electron is 2.9×10^{-19} meters long, which requires

about 630 points of Shrinking. In this situation, it's simpler to define "Shrinking" as Extra-Dimensional Movement (send the heroes to the Microverse), since in effect that's what's happening — they're entering another world, one where they can't affect the normal-sized world and the laws of "reality" that they're used to may not function exactly the same.

Second, Shrinking doesn't reduce characters' physical capabilities at all. They remain just as strong, their Energy Blasts just as powerful, their Flight just as fast. This isn't appropriate for most microscopic adventure scenarios, which portray shrunk heroes as significantly weaker than they are when full-sized. Insects don't present much of a threat to a half-inch tall hero if his Energy Blast still does a full 12d6 damage — the insect's only a threat if a hero's powers are proportionately reduced. Once again, Extra-Dimensional Movement presents a possible solution. You simply define the "Microverse" dimension that the heroes enter as operating under a physical law in which their powers are reduced proportionately to their size (see *Proportional Reduction Of Powers*, below).

To assist you, here are three size reduction resources you can use: an expanded table for the *Shrinking Power* (all the way down to characters 1 nanometer tall!); a Shrinking Ray reprinted from *Gadgets And Gear*; and an Extra-Dimensional Movement power for entering the Microverse reprinted from *The UNTIL Superpowers Database*.

SHRINKING RAY

Effect:	Shrinking, Usable As Attack plus related Linked powers
Target/Area Affected:	One character
Duration:	Uncontrolled
Range:	50"
Charges:	4 Charges
Breakability:	105 DEF

Description: This insidious device projects a beam that shrinks a human being down to the size of an insect! It also reduces a normal human victim's STR and Running to insect-like levels (persons stronger and faster than normal suffer the same effect, but retain more overall STR and Running because they had more than normal to begin with). The victim returns to normal size after a month, or if he's exposed to the Shrinking Ray a second time.

Game Information:

Cost Power

83 *Shrinking Ray:* Shrinking (.032 m tall [about 1 inch], .0004 kg mass, -12 to PER Rolls to perceive character, +12 DCV, takes +18" KB),

EXPANDED SHRINKING TABLE

Points of Shrinking	Height (meters)	Height (other)	Mass	PER Rolls Against	DCV	KB	Example
0	2 m	200 cm (6 feet)	100 kg	0	+0	+0	Normal human size
10	1.9-1 m	100 cm (3 feet)	99-12.5 kg	-2	+2	+3	Human child, halfling
20	.9-.5 m	50 cm (20 inches)	12.4-1.6 kg	-4	+4	+6	Housecat, small dog
30	.4-.25 m	25 cm (1 foot)	1.5-.2 kg	-6	+6	+9	Average rat or frog
40	.24-.125 m	12.5 cm (.5 foot)	.19-.025 kg	-8	+8	+12	Dragonfly
50	.124-.064 m	6.4 cm	.024-.0032 kg	-10	+10	+15	Average mouse or shrew
60	.063-.032 m	3.2 cm (1 inch)	.0031-.0004 kg	-12	+12	+18	American cockroach, small shrew
70	.031-.016 m	1.6 cm (.5 inch)	.00005 kg	-14	+14	+21	Wasp, diameter of a penny
80	.015-.008 m	8 millimeters	.0000064 kg	-16	+16	+24	Ant, housefly
90	.007-.004 m	4 millimeters (.5 cm)	.0000008 kg	-18	+18	+27	
100	.003-.002 m	2 millimeters	100 nanograms	-20	+20	+30	Head of a pin
110	.00199-.001 m	1 millimeter (mm)	12.5 nanograms	-22	+22	+33	
120	.00099-.0005 m	.5 millimeters	1.6 nanograms	-24	+24	+36	
130	.0004-.00025 m	250 micrometers	.2 nanograms	-26	+26	+39	
140	.00024-.000125 m	125 micrometers	25 picograms	-28	+28	+42	Plant cell, human unaided viewing limit, width of an artery
150	.000124-.000064 m	64 micrometers	3 picograms	-30	+30	+45	Width of an average human hair
160	.000063-.000032 m	32 micrometers	400 femtograms	-32	+32	+48	
170	.000031-.000016 m	16 micrometers	50 femtograms	-34	+34	+51	Width of an animal cell, length of a salt grain
180	.000015-.000008 m	8 micrometers	6 femtograms	-36	+36	+54	
190	.000007-.000004 m	4 micrometers	800 attograms	-38	+38	+57	Width of shag-carpet fiber
200	.000003-.000002 m	2 micrometers	100 attograms	-40	+40	+60	
210	.000001 m	1 micrometer (μm)	12.5 attograms	-42	+42	+63	Width of a bacterium, 1 micron
220	.0000005 m	500 nanometers	1.6 attograms	-44	+44	+66	Viewing limit of a light microscope
230	.00000025 m	250 nanometers	.2 attograms	-46	+46	+69	Width of an average virus
240	.000000125 m	125 nanometers	25 zeptograms	-48	+48	+72	Width of a nanomachine
250	.000000064 m	64 nanometers	3 zeptograms	-50	+50	+75	Width of a small molecule
260	.000000032 m	32 nanometers	400 yoctograms	-52	+52	+78	
270	.000000016 m	16 nanometers	50 yoctograms	-54	+54	+81	Viewing limit of an electron microscope, the smallest viri
280	.000000008 m	8 nanometers	6 yoctograms	-56	+56	+84	
290	.000000004 m	4 nanometers	Negligible	-58	+58	+87	
300	.000000002 m	2 nanometers	Negligible	-60	+60	+90	
310	.000000001 m	1 nanometer (nm)	Negligible	-62	+62	+93	

Usable As Attack (does not work against characters who have Density Increase, Desolidification, Growth, or Shrinking; +1), Ranged (+½), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Uncontrolled (effects wear off after a month, or if the victim is exposed to the Shrinking Ray while shrunk; +½) (270 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Limited Range (50"; -¼)

- 150 *Shrinking Ray*: Drain STR 15d6 (standard effect: -45 STR), Ranged (+½), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Uncontrolled (effects wear off after a month, or if the victim is exposed to the Shrinking Ray while shrunk; +½) (525 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Limited Range (50"; -¼), Linked (to Shrinking; -¼), Victim Always Has Minimum Of 0 STR (-0)
- 37 *Shrinking Ray*: Drain Running 4d6 (standard effect: -5"), Ranged (+½), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Uncontrolled (effects wear off after a month, or if the victim is exposed to the Shrinking Ray while shrunk; +½) (140 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Limited Range (50"; -¼), Linked (to Shrinking; -½), Victim Always Retains Minimum Of 1" Running (-0)

Total cost: 270 points.

Options:

1) **Attached Shrinking Ray**: This form of the Ray is more difficult to take from the character. Change OAF (-1) to OIF (-½) throughout. Total cost 98 + 175 + 43 = 316 points.

2) **Variant Shrinking Ray**: GMs who prefer a more predictable effect for this weapon, and who don't mind bending the rule about substituting Transform for other Powers, can build the Shrinking Ray this way instead: Major Transform 10d6 (normal-sized person or object to person or object one inch tall with STR -35 [but no less than 0 STR], Running 1", and other relevant abilities appropriately reduced; heals back after one month or when exposed to Shrinking Ray a second time), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (375 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Limited Range (50"; -¼). Total cost: 115 points.

ENTER THE MICROVERSE!

Effect:	Extra-Dimensional Movement (to the Microverse)
Target/Area Affected:	Self
Duration:	Constant
Range:	Self
END Cost:	2

Description: The character can shrink down to such tiny sizes that he enters the Microverse — the atomic and sub-atomic level of reality, where a single molecule can be an island, or even a solar system! This effectively means the character is in another reality altogether, since normal-size persons cannot perceive or interact with him in any way. However, he needs special powers (Transdimensional attacks) to affect normal-sized reality, and also a special sense (Spatial Correspondence Detection) to keep himself oriented with regard to normal-sized space.

See *The UNTIL Superpowers Database* for examples of other size reduction powers.

Game Information: *Extra-Dimensional Movement* (any location in the Microverse, corresponding to the point character is at in this dimension). Total cost: 22 points.

Options:

1) **Come See The Microverse:** The character can shrink some of his comrades down and bring them into the Microverse with him. Add x8 Increased Mass. Total cost: 37 points.

Proportional Reduction Of Powers

In most cases, you'll want your teeny-tiny heroes to have a proportionately lesser effect on the normal-sized world, as described above. Here are rules for that situation. These rules apply only in microscopic adventure scenarios; they're not intended for general use for characters who have the *Shrinking Power* (since they would unfairly penalize and restrict such characters).

ATTACKS

The first thing most PCs are going to want to know is how well their attacks work when they're tiny.

Damage

Against a target who's his size or smaller, a character's attacks do their normal damage. For targets larger than the character, reduce the damage done using the following method:

1. Use the Expanded Shrinking Table to determine how many points' worth of Shrinking it takes to reduce the character and his target to their respective sizes (if the target is normal human size or larger, it of course takes 0 points to "Shrink" him). If you're using Extra-Dimensional Movement or some other method to simulate becoming microscopic size, use the Expanded Shrinking Table to estimate the cost. If a character has Shrinking

as a power, don't worry about Active Points or Advantages on it; just look at the pointed needed to reduce someone to that size on the table.

2. Subtract the target's "points in Shrinking" from the character's "points in Shrinking."

3. Divide the remainder by 50.

4. Divide the Active Points in the character's attack by $(1 + (\text{result of Step 3}))$. That tells you the "Active Points" in his attack for purposes of damaging that target; if the attack has Advantages, you'll have to recalculate it to determine how many dice of damage are involved.

Regardless of the characters' respective sizes, the GM may establish a minimum amount of damage a microscopic character's attack does (such as $\frac{1}{2}$ d6 Normal Damage), or otherwise adjust the results of this process as he sees fit.

Example: *Shrinker uses her Enter The Microverse! power to become microscopic size. The GM decides she's as small as a virus when she does this. While small, she's attacked by a bacterium. Becoming virus-sized would require 230 points' worth of Shrinking; becoming bacterium-sized requires 210 points' worth. Shrinker has an Energy Blast 12d6. Per Step 2, $230 - 210 = 20$; per Step 3, $20/50 = 0.4$. Therefore Shrinker's EB has $60/(1 + .4) = 43$ Active Points. So, Shrinker's EB only does $8\frac{1}{2}$ d6 damage to the bacterium.*

Later Shrinker encounters an ant (80 points' worth of Shrinking). Against the ant, her Energy Blast only does 15 Active Points' worth of damage $(60/(1 + ((230-80)/50)))$, or 3d6 damage. Against a normal-sized human, she only does EB 2d6 $(60/(1 + ((230-0)/50))) = 11$ Active Points).

Attack Rolls

Tiny characters have improved DCVs, as indicated in the Expanded Shrinking Table. (Again, if you're using Extra-Dimensional Movement or some other method, use the Table to extrapolate a DCV modifier for characters.) If two smaller than normal characters fight each other, the rules on pages 126-27 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* apply to alter their respective DCV modifiers toward each other.

At the GM's option, a tiny character may have an OCV bonus to hit someone larger than himself, on the grounds that the larger character presents a much bigger target. Subtract the larger character's DCV bonus from Shrinking (which is +0 for normal human-sized characters, of course) from the character's DCV bonus, then apply the remainder as an OCV bonus. (Don't forget that characters using Growth, or who are otherwise larger than human normal, suffer DCV penalties as well.)

Range

Being smaller than normal affects the range of a power, and the calculation of the Range Modifier, the same way it does movement (see below): the length of each hex (1") is reduced to match the size of the character.



Example: Shrinker is 4 mm tall (90 points' worth of Shrinking). Her Energy Blast 12d6 has a Range of (5" x 60 Active Points =) 300". Normally that means 600 meters (1,950 feet). However, since she's 4 mm tall, each hex (1") is only 4 mm long, not 2 meters as usual. Therefore her 300" attack has a maximum range of 1,200 mm — only 1.2 meters! For the first 4" (16 mm), she suffers no Range Modifier; for 5-8" (20-32 mm), she suffers a -2 Range Modifier; and so forth.

DEFENSES

Being smaller than normal does not decrease or increase the defenses of a character or his target, regardless of relative size. However, to make small animals (housecats, insects, and the like) a threat, you should "increase" the damage done by their attacks to compensate. When a cat's claws seem as large as greatswords to the tiny heroes, they should be afraid of getting hit by them no matter how tough their personal defenses are.

MOVEMENT

Becoming small affects Movement Powers in sort of the opposite way as MegaScaling does: decreasing in size reduces the length of each "inch" a character travels. The size of 1" equals the size that the character's shrunk to. For example, if a character becomes child-size (half human size, or roughly 1 meter tall), then 1" = 1 meter (instead of the 2 meters it normally equals). If he becomes 1 inch (2.5 cm) tall, then 1" = 1 inch (2.5 cm). If he becomes 1 millimeter tall, then 1" = 1 mm.

Example: Ironclad contracts a mysterious Per-seid virus that's not susceptible to Human medicines. To save the life of their friend, the rest of the Champions have to shrink down to microscopic size, enter his blood vessels, and fight the viri! A virus is approximately .0000002 m in size, so when they use their Movement Powers, each 1" equals .0000002 m. Hopefully they won't have to go very far!

SENSES

Typically, being smaller than normal does not affect a character's senses or PER Rolls (though it does make it harder for others to see him when he's hiding, as indicated by the PER Roll modifier in the Expanded Shrinking Table).

At the GM's option, a tiny character has a better than normal chance to perceive something that's larger than him. The difference in size makes what he's trying to perceive seem "bigger" to him, and thus easier to perceive. For example, to a normal-sized human, a dime is pretty small, but to a character using 60-70 points' worth of Shrinking (or the equivalent), it seems nearly human-sized! To determine the PER Roll bonus, subtract the larger character's PER Roll modifier from Shrinking (which is +0 for normal human-sized characters, of course) from the character's PER Roll modifier, then apply the remainder as a PER Roll bonus. (Don't forget that characters using Growth, or who are otherwise larger than human normal, provide other characters with additional bonuses to perceive them.)

Example: *Shrinker is 2 mm tall (100 points' worth of Shrinking), which imposes a -20 PER Roll modifier on other characters' PER Rolls when she tries to hide. She tries to see something that's only 3.2 cm tall (normally a -12 PER Roll modifier). She receives a +8 PER Roll bonus (20-12) because it's so much larger than she is.*

Similarly, a tiny character has an easier time perceiving things smaller than him — again, they're relatively “larger” to him compared to how a normal-sized human perceives them. Subtract the smaller object's PER Roll modifier from the character's own PER Roll modifier; that's the character's PER Roll modifier to see that object. Remember that the PER Roll penalty only applies if the character's trying to hide or the like; it doesn't always make the character harder to see or act as the equivalent of Invisibility.

Example: *Shrinker is 2 mm tall (100 points' worth of Shrinking), which imposes a -20 PER Roll modifier on other characters' PER Rolls when she tries to hide. She tries to see something that's only 64 micrometers tall (normally a -30 PER Roll modifier). She only suffers a -10 PER Roll modifier (30-20) because she herself is so small.*

ORGANIZING THE SCENARIO

Before running a microscopic adventure scenario, you should decide on the type of scenario (*i.e.*, how small they're going to get); how they get shrunk; how they can (or will) become normal-sized again; what the PCs need to accomplish while they're tiny; and how you'll hook the heroes into the adventure.

HOW SMALL ARE THEY?

The microscopic adventure scenario comes in three basic subtypes, each defined by how small the characters get:

- normal characters shrunk down to mouse- or doll-sized versions of themselves
- characters transformed into small animals or kids
- characters shrunk to microscopic size and using a shrunken ship to navigate the world of cells or molecules to perform surgery or retrieve data

Once you determine how small the PCs are going to get, you can determine the effect this has on their powers, as outlined above.

HOW THE HEROES GET SHRUNK

Next, determine how the characters were shrunk. Is it alien technology, magic, strange mutations, a lab accident, or something else? Is it a gradual shrinking or an instantaneous reduction? If it's a gradual effect, is there a lower limit, or will the person continue to shrink until he pops out of existence? Does the scenario set-up involve a *deus ex machina* (that is, do you rule that the PCs were shrunk before the scenario begins), or do the heroes have a chance to prevent themselves from being shrunk?

HOW THE HEROES RETURN TO NORMAL SIZE

Unless you plan to run an entire micro-adventures campaign, you need to decide how the PCs can reverse the effects of being shrunk. Do they automatically revert to normal size after a certain period of time? Or do they need to grab a shrinking gun, set it to “reverse,” and shoot themselves? Or must they satisfy the conditions of a magical curse to reverse the effect?

THE TASK

Next, determine what tasks the heroes need to accomplish while they're shrunk, especially their primary task. The simplest goal is “find a way to reverse the shrinking effect”; it's the objective in a microscopic adventure where they've been shrunk against their will and have to survive being tiny long enough to regain their full size. The opposition consists of normal-sized animals and pets, people who might accidentally step on them, and so on.

Alternately, the characters were shrunk to enable them to perform a task they can't accomplish at normal size: performing microsurgery on someone (or having other adventures inside the human body); sneaking into an impregnable installation; physically entering cyberspace to obtain data. In addition to the types of opposition listed above, the heroes might encounter viri and antibodies, shrunken villains, and the like.

GETTING THE HEROES INVOLVED

Finally, figure out how you're going to get the heroes hooked into the scenario. Are you going to pull a *deus ex machina*, or will a situation occur that requires the PCs to volunteer their services?

You're All Small

The *deus ex machina* approach is this: at the start of the game session, you inform the characters that they're shrunk. They may or may not know what happened; the point is, they can't stop it from occurring. This is a good way to force the PCs into the adventure, or to establish a mystery, but it has one major drawback: most players hate it with a passion. Their attitude is: “I spent all those points on my character sheet to avoid this arbitrary crap, and I wasn't even given a chance to defend myself!” The more pains they've taken to avoid exotic attacks like this (*e.g.*, buying Power Defense), the more likely it is that they're going to get *really* upset. This attitude is understandable, though it tends to ignore the dramatic/storytelling nature of roleplaying in favor of the tactical/simulation aspects.

If possible, try to take the character's abilities into account as part of the *deus ex machina*. If it's a gradual shrinking scenario, heroes with Power Defense should shrink a little slower than the others. Also, inform the players at the start of the campaign that you may occasionally spring arbitrary scenarios on them so you can challenge them; that gives them fair warning. But ultimately, if the group still gets so upset that they spending the session in a sulk and everyone has a miserable time, take the hint and find other ways to challenge the heroes.

Tiny Volunteers

The other approach is to present the PCs with a problem that they can only solve by becoming micro-sized. But what if the heroes balk at this? A good way to hook the heroes is to make sure the mission involves something that interests them. A PC who received his powers through accidental exposure to nanotechnology may want a close look at nanotech machines in person; a hero whose family has a predisposition to a certain genetic condition may agree to assist a researcher who wants to get a good look at the genetic markers for the disease. A scientist to whom a PC owes a favor may ask that he participate in a micro-experiment. If all else fails, make it a DNPC or a relative who's fallen victim to something the heroes can only deal with while shrunk.

A Small Showcase

You can run a microscopic adventure as a showcase for a particular PC. Instead of shrinking all the heroes, shrink only one of them. The other characters have to save him (by, for example, developing a counteragent, getting the shrinking gun and setting it to "reverse," or discovering the counterspell) before he shrinks out of existence; or they have to assist him somehow. In the former type of adventure, make sure the shrunk character gets a couple of opportunities to take advantage of being micro-sized.

MICRO-ADVENTURES

The microscopic adventure concept has one basic scenario ("Small Things in a Big World") and a few related scenarios that feature many of the same situations (such as scenarios where heroes are transformed into animals or kids).

Small Things In A Big World

The most common microscopic adventure scenario is the "small supers threatened by everyday objects" adventure. The heroes are themselves — just much, much smaller — and have to cope with the dangers that being so tiny entails.

HOW TO SHRINK A SUPERHERO

In comic books, there are essentially four methods used to shrink characters down to size.

Advanced Technology: The most common way to shrink people in the comics is with alien (or otherwise advanced) technology, particularly in the Silver Age when shrinking guns were considered cool and about the only way you could hurt the major superheroes was by transmogrifying them or shrinking them. These scenarios often bear a strange resemblance to the childhood fable of Jack and the Beanstalk, particularly when the frightened but plucky superheroes try to sneak past giant supervillains, get the shrinking device, set it to "reverse," and restore themselves to their normal, ass-kicking size.

Shrinking rays are the most common way to shrink people in the comics, but they're not the only method. Machines (especially teleportation devices) can have accidents and reconstitute people in a shrunk size; mad scientists can build vehicles designed to shrink themselves and their occupants down so they can enter someone's blood stream or explore the Microverse. The typical adventure gives the heroes a limited amount of time in a shrunk state, making it a race against time to save the subject (who presumably dies a messy death if they fail).

Magic: Sometimes a character runs afoul of a powerful sorcerer who has the power to shrink him. "Good" sorcerers might do this to teach a character humility; evil ones have the same motivations as villains with shrinking rays or other methods.

Radiation!: Back in the 1950s and 1960s, people thought radiation could do anything. As a result, in Silver Age games you can expose a hero to "shrinking radiation" and shrink him down to the size of a titmouse. It's not just a scientific explanation, it's good Science!

The Shrinking Character: Some PCs shrink naturally, and it's possible that a shrinker can share his powers (either normally, or with the help of a plot device gadget you provide for this scenario). That way the other PCs can have adventures alongside the shrunk hero on his home turf. Alternately, a strange virus may "copy" the shrinking character's mutant genes and temporarily infect others with them, making them micro-sized.



THE METABOLIC PROBLEM

If you'd like to introduce some "real-world" biology into your game (or at least a pseudo-science comic book-friendly interpolation of it), don't forget that small mammals have much higher metabolic rates than human beings. Characters shrunk down to the size of mice and birds might have to spend more time eating than normal-size humans, and less time resting. Shrunk characters may find it difficult to maintain their body heat or get to sleep.

THINGS TO DO WHEN YOU'RE TINY

A microscopic adventure scenario shouldn't just be a vehicle for short jokes — it should provide the opportunity for characters to do interesting things they can't (or don't have to) do when they're normal-sized. Some of the tasks and challenges shrunk characters must take on include:

Getting Noticed: When you're the size of a house fly and your voice sounds like a mosquito trying to imitate a pro wrestler, getting normal-size folks to notice you becomes a major problem. Giving the heroes access to PA systems (which they have to strain to operate) is one solution to this problem, as is whispering into a team telepath's ear. This situation is often played for slapstick comedy (a hero mistakes a shrunk teammate for a housefly and uses his powers to singe him, or someone smashes the tiny hero with a flyswatter, Stunning but not seriously hurting him).

Putting Together Big Objects: Another task that commonly falls upon the slim backs of shrunk characters is cobbling together a machine. Perhaps the shrinking gun fell to pieces during a fight and they need to put the pieces together (and find a few replacement spare parts) before they can return to full size. Maybe they're trying to rig a robot's control systems so a hero can enter the droid and work it manually (thereby allowing the team to battle a larger villain). Perhaps they've discovered that a mad bomber's set explosives in a dangerous location and they're trying to defuse the bomb and/or create a jamming device.

Sabotage: A shrunk character might have to sneak around and break things. He should use his newfound size to sneak past guards, get into delicate equipment, plant tiny explosives as diversions, and rewire machines. This can be especially interesting if the shrunk hero doesn't normally employ a stealthy approach; usually the PC either embraces his newfound role, or much comedy commences.

When Ordinary House Pets Become Monsters: Okay, so the heroes are now the size of shrews. What happens when that tabby cat they adore suddenly starts trying to eat them (see *Defenses*, above, for more information)? Or when lawnmower blades loom over their heads like a cross between the sword of Damocles and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*? Or when ordinary pesticides become as toxic as mustard gas?

Oh Yeah? Try This: At some point in the adventure, the shrunk characters should get a chance to fight someone who's normal size. This shouldn't be a major villain (tiny heroes beating up a serious bad guy isn't very good for the villain's reputation), but the image of a mouse-sized flying brick knocking around agents or villains like Bulldozer is irresistible.

We Didn't Get Small — The World Got Big: Sometimes in comics, the most surreal moments place the superhero in gigantic environments. One of the hallmarks of the cheesy 1960s *Batman* comics was the use of huge props: Batman fighting the Joker on titan-sized pianos, roulette wheels, pinball machines, typewriters.... Periodically comic book writers dig up this old chestnut and use it again.

The use of oversized props is a good “cheat” if you want to bring shrinking into a more “realistic” campaign. Shrinking is one of the more fantastic and physics-bending Powers, and if you want to ground your campaign in “reality,” you might prefer to avoid it. But a villain who enjoys playing mind games with the heroes (and has a lot of cash to burn) might try to hypnotize or brainwash them into thinking they’ve been shrunk to the size of mice... even though they’re actually being pursued by giant robots in an oversized simulation of the environment. In this sort of scenario, the trick is to provide the heroes with enough clues that they can figure out what’s really going on, but not ones that are so obvious they tumble to it quickly. Typically, once the heroes realize what’s going on, they have to find a secret exit that leads out of the simulation and into the villain’s lair.

This scenario doesn’t necessarily have to involve deception. A riddle- or trap-oriented villain could kidnap a DNPC, place him inside a giant version of a human body, and force the heroes to fight robot anti-bodies until they reach the heart. Another possibility is to send the heroes to a dimension where everything is so much larger than human-sized that they seem tiny. In short, it’s a sort of superheroic variation on Jack and the Beanstalk.

Wonders Of The Microverse: Some comic books posit entire universes or “dimensions” existing inside atoms and molecules — the Microverse, as it’s sometimes called. Characters with enough Shrinking (or appropriate Extra-Dimensional Movement powers) can entire this “alternate” reality, where they might have all sorts of adventures. They can explore microversal planets and cities, interact with civilizations of intelligent microbes, and repel invasions of viri. At a larger scale, they might help the kindly red ants fight off the armies of the evil black ants, or get inside a “bottled city” that’s been shrunk down and imprisoned by alien science or magic.

ALONE AGAINST THE ANTIBODIES!

One of the most common shrinking adventures is the microscopic journey into a human body to deliver a medicine or repair an injury. The characters voluntarily allow themselves to be shrunk to cell size, then enter a human body to affect repairs, often racing the clock to save someone’s life (usually a teammate or an important person like the President of the United States). Here are some things to consider and ideas for adventures:

Going With The Flow: Blood travels very quickly in the body, about 6.4 cm/second under normal circumstances. Because someone in the bloodstream gets swept along at this velocity, movement in the bloodstream at microscopic scale becomes problematic. The easiest solution is to rule that

the characters’ micro-vehicle and/or powers allow them to counteract this flow without worrying about the exact speeds involved. Alternately, establish a rate of bloodflow that suits your adventure for dramatic purposes: “OK, every second that you’re in Ironclad’s bloodstream and not stopping to do something, you’ll be swept along at the rate of 1 centimeter per minute. At that rate, assuming no interruptions or distractions it will take you one hour to reach his heart. He’ll die in one hour, twenty minutes. Ready, set, go!

If you want to be more “realistic,” add (if they go in the direction of the flow) or subtract (if they go against it) the velocity of blood to the characters’ velocity when they move, or define it as their “base velocity” if they simply “stand” still and let themselves get carried along.

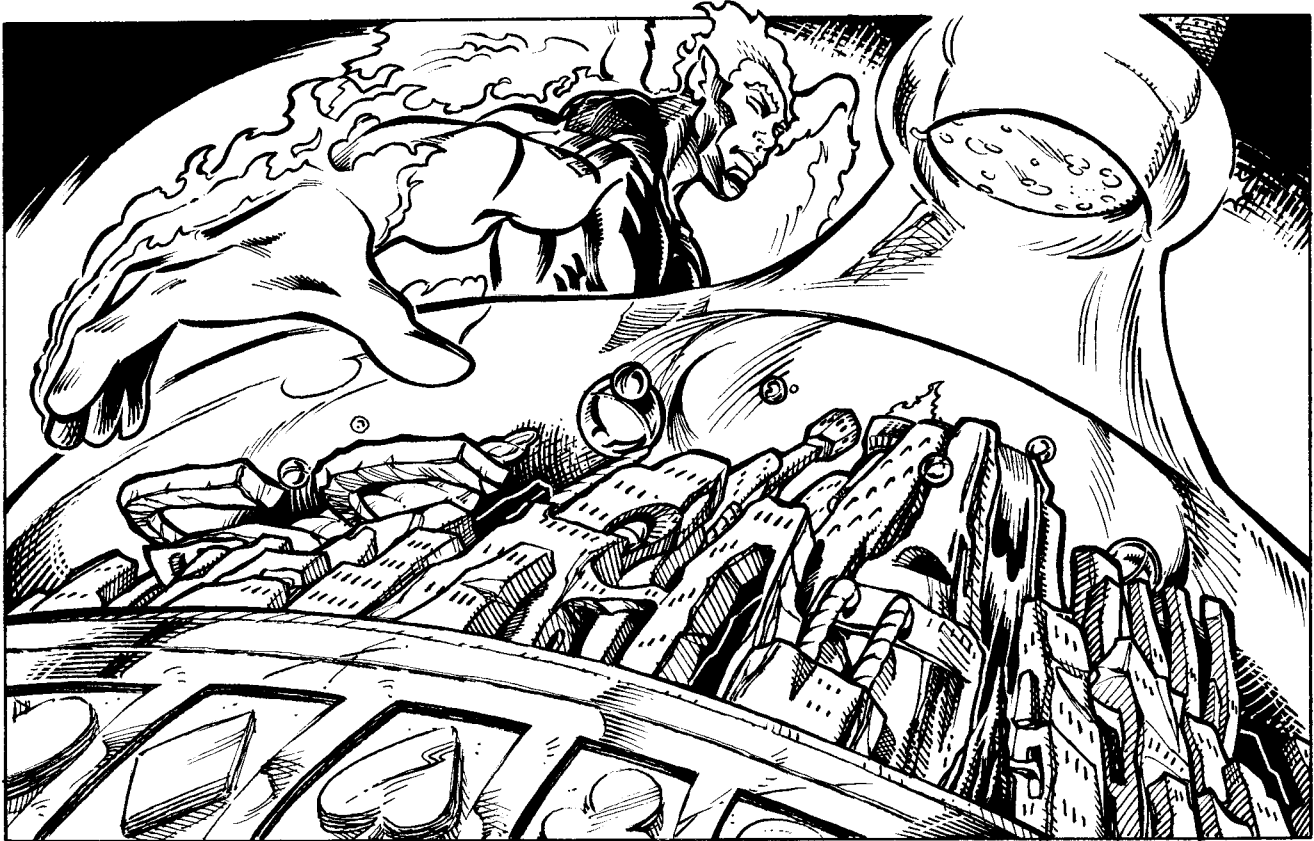
Blood is a liquid, so characters need appropriate Life Support powers or miniaturized SCUBA gear to breathe in it. Characters move by Swimming, and anyone without Environmental Movement: Aquatic Movement suffers a -2 DCV and -2 DCs to all attacks.

Things To Do Inside A Body: Modern medicine is increasingly making it harder to come up with something that’s so hard to do you’d need a miniature surgeon to fix it (especially if nanotechnology is widespread in the campaign). The story that was the original inspiration for this subgenre, *Fantastic Voyage*, involved surgery on a blood clot in the brain — something full-sized surgeons can do as of 2005. Some possible missions include:

Save The President’s Brain: *Someone’s put a mind control device inside the brain of the President. The Secret Service doesn’t want the villain who implanted it to know that his plan’s been discovered, so it hopes that by shrinking the heroes down to microscopic size and sneaking them into the President’s body, they can cure the problem without raising the culprits’ suspicions.*

Monitor An Experiment: *A scientist has developed a way to fight cancer at a cellular level, but the treatment is extremely risky: it’s an experimental antigen that could mutate at any moment into a deadly pathogen. A world leader — a peacemaker who’s the only person capable of preventing a volatile conflict from degenerating into anarchy — has volunteered for the treatment (his terminal cancer leaves him with no other option). Because of the man’s extreme importance, the heroes are being shrunk down to monitor the experiment on a cellular level.*

For the potential obstacles that can be found inside a human body, see the sample scenario later in this chapter.



Other Micro-Adventures

If making the characters micro-sized isn't quite what you want to do, there are other versions of this type of scenario you can use.

REVENGE OF THE SMALL ANIMALS

This scenario places the PCs in a role that's even more humbling than being a shrunk human: small animal (whether anthropomorphic, or just possessing their natural human intelligence). Transforming a hero into a mouse, cat, rabbit, squirrel, piglet, or frog is a nod toward fairy tales and childhood fables, where heroic small animals battle against bullying larger animals (and the environmental deprivations of callous humans).

Magic is usually the culprit behind this sort of transformation. Sorcerers and witches love casting hexes that turn their enemies into (much easier to handle) animals. But there are other options, such as evil mutant shapechangers and matter-alterers.

If the PCs volunteered for the transformation, you can proceed with the adventure as planned. But if they didn't (which is likely), their first instinct will be to find a way to reverse the transformation: break the curse; set the Transformo-Ray to "reverse"; convince the mutant to change them back. If you want to run an adventure with the PCs in small animal form, you have to give them a reason to stay in that form until the job's done, and let them know what's expected as soon as possible.

Before you run this type of scenario, consider what happens to the characters' powers when they get turned into animals. Do they lose their powers but gain appropriate animal abilities? Retain their

powers (adjusted for being small, of course) *and* get animal abilities? Something else?

The standard formula for this adventure is straightforward. The transformed superheroes meet with small animals of the same species, talk to them (in the sub-genre, NPC animals usually possess human intelligence levels and have identifiable human personality types), discover they've arrived in the animals' time of need, and help them in their struggles. Typical conflicts involve battles against larger predators (cats versus mice, rabbits versus everyone), humans who want to eat them, or other human practices (setting free lab animals, finding cures for escaped plague dogs, or helping migrating salmon avoid pollutants from fish farms).

KID HERO

Another relative of the shrinking scenario is the "transformed into a kid" scenario. This adventure involves the overcoming of a handicap, but also gives the characters an opportunity to experience flashbacks to childhood and (in some cases) to act in a kid-like manner, which can be fun to roleplay.

Like most scenarios involving character transmogrifications, the two most common plot devices are magic and alien science. One of the most common reasons for the transformation is a magical curse: perhaps the heroes meet a witch who likes to turn people into kids, then bake the kids in pies for her supper. It's also possible that situations may arise where the PCs would volunteer for a youth spell — for instance, if they have to face an enemy who's impervious to anything except for attacks by children, or they have to visit the Land of

THE BOTTLED CITY OF NALDAR

Naldar was a Malvan colony on the world Omiton. Two hundred years ago, superhuman gladiators led by a legendary warrior named Ironshod (born Dev Arktrayne) overthrew the Malvan governor and declared independence.

It was an interstellar disgrace. Malva attempted to retake the planet, but because of incompetence among the commanders, the gladiators infiltrated the fleet and destroyed it. To discourage Malva from sending more fleets, Ironshod planted rumors that the rebels had used an alien superweapon to defeat the Malvan battle group. He believed the Phazor wouldn't risk another fleet invading a minor planet. He was right... but unfortunately for him, the Phazor had other ways to attack.

The Phazor hired Thane mercenary sorcerers, perhaps the most loathed creatures in the Galaxy, to deal with the rebels. He told the Thane Captain he wanted the gladiators humbled "as no creature had ever been humbled before," and the sorcerers followed his instructions to the letter. Wearing the guise of common smugglers and thieves, the Thane traveled to Omiton, snuck their way into the courts of the gladiator-princes, and offered to make a deal. The Thane claimed they had stolen the Phazor's ring, and they'd sell it to Ironshod in exchange for a blood contract: a deal guaranteed by the blood of the signatory.

Ironshod replied that his blood had been spilled so frequently that it was cheaper than wine, so he was obviously getting the better end of a bargain. He gave the Thane his blood (and the blood of his champions) to seal the contract. Using the blood as a magical focus, the Thane cast a spell that shrunk Naldar down to nearly microscopic size, then sealed it in a bottle of unbreakable Malvan glass.

The Phazor kept the bottle among his most prized treasures. But after decades passed, everyone except the gladiators of Malva forgot about it. The gladiators secretly honored the memory of Dev Arktrayne. In a daring raid, the champion of the arena snuck into the treasury, stole the bottled city, and fled. But nothing on Malva, not even the Wisdom Stones themselves, could find a way to reverse the binding-spell of the Thane.

Naldar remained in the possession of Malva's champion gladiators, who treated it as a trophy. Eventually it came into the possession of Ariax Thone, who took Naldar with him to Earth. He recruited the Demonologist to try to break the spell, but the Justice Squadron, misconstruing the ritual as an attempt by Firewing to increase his power, interrupted. In the ensuing battle, the bottle was lost. Both Firewing and the Squadron assumed it had been destroyed.

Months later a seven year-old kid found it on the seashore. Presently, it's in a curio shop in Millennium City, on sale for \$15. It's been sitting on the shelf for several months.

The bottle is one and a half feet tall and virtually unbreakable (BODY 12, DEF 30, Hardened [x4], Lack of Weakness [15 points], Power Defense [40 points]). Thanic runes on the bottom edge of the bottle say in Thanic, "I pay the fool's blood price." Anyone who's below half his normal BODY rating due to wounds or the like who recites this mantra (he doesn't have to know what the Thanic words say, only pronounce them properly) shrinks down to microbe size and is transported into the city. Flying to the top of the bottle and repeating the mantra returns the visitor to the real world (natives cannot do this).

Firewing never translated the runes — even the Wisdom Stones don't understand Thanic — so no one from the outside world has entered Naldar since it became a bottled city. Firewing misses his trophy, but it's a minor priority in his life (if he discovers it survived, he won't tenaciously hunt down its possessor, but he would like it returned).

Inside the bottle, Naldar still lives. It looks like a high-tech fusion of volcanic stone pillars and steel. The current rulers of the city are three gladiator-princes: the retired master Yhul Talon; the male champion Valt Dezlion; and the female champion Goa Tamtorn. (Goa is Valt's estranged wife, though she can't legally divorce her husband until a man wins that right for her by serving as her champion and beating Valt in an arena combat. She's been looking for a worthy opponent for him for years.)

There are other powerbrokers in the city. One of the most noteworthy is the Scythe, a group of Malvan wizards who constantly research ways to undo the Thane spell. An unpleasant schemer named Kor Adaman leads the Scythe. Then there are the Philosophers, a pack of demagogues led by Nyru the Fool, a mad but charismatic rabble-rouser who's constantly trying to organize the overthrow of the gladiator-princes. The leaders tolerate his sedition because he was the boyhood best friend of Yhul Talon, who still feels a grudging, brotherly affection for him. There's also a disguised Thane in the city, a victim of the spell and the treachery of his Thanic brethren who saw an ideal opportunity to be rid of him.

The spell that affected Naldar doesn't protect it from the normal effects of living inside a bottle. Any time someone shakes the bottle, there are earthquakes. When the bottle rolls or gets turned upside down, all but the most stable structures in the city are destroyed and people die. This has occurred several times in the city's history, so the natives have developed an especially bitter attitude toward the outside world even though the legal codes of the city still stress Malvan warrior ideals of honor, justice, and responsibility.

Children (where only kids can go) to rescue a missing DNPC boy or girl.

Non-magical explanations for “kid supers” scenarios include: alien science inventing “rejuvenation rays”; malfunctioning teleportation machines; and a strange “regression virus” that makes people younger (eventually killing them when they return to infancy). More bizarre reasons might include mental transference to the cloned bodies of kid versions of themselves, or super-hypnosis (a therapist makes a hero revert to childhood so he can remember something buried in his subconscious — only to have an evil telepath take advantage of the situation and trap the hero in the delusion that he’s really reverted to childhood).

As kids, the heroes shouldn’t possess their full powers (any more than ordinary children possess full adult strength, dexterity, or wisdom). Use the rules earlier in this chapter to reduce the kids’ powers appropriately; at a minimum, you might want to decrease their abilities to half normal effect.

CHARACTERS

Here are a few stock characters for use in your micro-adventure scenarios.

ANTIBODY CELL				
Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 [3]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
10	CON	0	11-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
0	EGO	0	9-	ECV: 0
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
0	PD	-2		Total: 9 PD (9 rPD)
1	ED	0		Total: 9 ED (9 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	REC	0		
0	END	0		
—	STUN	—		Total Characteristic Cost: 58

Movement: Running: 0”/0”
Swimming: 17”/136”

Cost	Powers	END
60	<i>Antibody Cell Form:</i> Takes No STUN	0
15	<i>Antibody Cell Form:</i> Does Not Bleed	0
15	<i>Antibody Cell Form:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) for STR 30	0
40	<i>Absorb And Neutralize Intruders:</i> RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Range (-½)	0
81	<i>Antibody Cell Form:</i> Armor (9 PD/9 ED)	0
15	<i>Antibody Sense:</i> Detect Intruders In The Body 11- (Sight Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees)	0
25	<i>Bloodborne Cell:</i> Swimming +15” (17” total), x8 Noncombat	0
13	<i>Bloodborne Cell:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) for Swimming 17”	0
-12	<i>Bloodborne Cell:</i> Running -6” (0” total)	

Skills
20 +4 HTH

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 272
Total Cost: 330

75+ Disadvantages
20 Physical Limitation: Instinctive Intelligence (All The Time, Greatly Impairing)
235 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 330

Description: When heroes take a microscopic excursion through the human body, these voracious, xenophobic, single-minded protectors become the ultimate enemy. If necessary, increase the power of the cells’ attacks and defenses so they represent a serious threat.

NANOMACHINE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6400 kg; 8d6 [4]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
10	CON	0	11-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll 12-
0	EGO	0	9-	ECV: 0
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
2	COM	-4	9-	
0	PD	-3		Total: 11 PD (11 rPD)
1	ED	0		Total: 11 ED (11 rED)
4	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
8	REC	0		
0	END	0		
—	STUN	—		Total Characteristic Cost: 75

Movement: Running: 0"/0"
Swimming: 17"/272"

Cost	Powers	END
60	<i>Nanomachine Form:</i> Takes No STUN	0
15	<i>Nanomachine Form:</i> Does Not Bleed	0
20	<i>Nanomachine Form:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) for STR 40	0
20	<i>Plaque-Cleaning Blades:</i> RKA 1d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Range (-½)	0
99	<i>Nanomachine Form:</i> Armor (11 PD/11 ED)	
30	<i>Bloodborne Nanomachine:</i> Swimming +15" (17" total), x16 Noncombat	0
16	<i>Bloodborne Nanomachine:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) for Swimming 17"	0
-12	<i>Bloodborne Nanomachine:</i> Running -6" (0" total)	

Skills

20 +4 with HTH Combat

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 268

Total Cost: 343

75+ Disadvantages

- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Cyberkinetic attacks (Uncommon)
258 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 343

Description: A nanomachine is a device created at the microscopic level by advanced science. While nanomachines are only experimental in real life as of 2005, they offer great promise for many industrial, medical, and military uses. This one, for example, is injected into the circulatory system of a person with clogged arteries so it can use tiny, whirling blades to clear out the plaque and keep the subject from having a heart attack. Unfortunately for shrunk heroes, those blades are dangerous! (If the nanomachine's attack isn't strong enough to hurt your heroes, increase its DCs until it can.)

SCENARIO: WITH A SONG IN HIS HEART AND A BOMB IN HIS HEAD

Someone's injected nanomachines into the bloodstream of a prominent NPC hero (an old friend of the PCs). The nanomachines have lodged themselves in his brain and are forming themselves into an explosive device. In four hours, when they have finished their task, the bomb will detonate, instantly killing the victim.

The nanomachines have a central control protocol that governs the bomb-building process. It can't be stopped from the outside — and the nanomachines would destroy any drug sent to destroy them internally — but it might be stopped if someone was shrunk to microscopic size, entered the body, and located and disabled the control center in the partly-built bomb. Once that's been accomplished, the team could exit the body and return to normal size.

For whatever reason you prefer, the scientists in charge of the project contact the PCs. The scenario presumes the PCs willingly go along; if not, you may have to find some way to force them to submit to shrinking.

THE MICROSCOPIC VENTURER

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
5	Size	25	3.2"x1.6"; 3.2 tons; -5 KB; -3 DCV
35	STR	0	Lift 3,200 kg; 6d6 HTH [0]
18	DEX	24	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
25	BODY	10	
12	DEF	30	
4	SPD	12	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
Total Characteristic Cost: 101			

Movement: Ground: 0"/0"
Swimming: 20"/160"

Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
16	<i>Propellers:</i> Swimming +18" (20" total), x8 Noncombat; 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily-obtained fuel; 1 Day; -0), Side Effects (propeller does KA 2d6 to anyone coming in contact with bottom stern of vehicle, occurs automatically, only affects environment around vehicle; -¾) [1cc]	
-12	<i>Blood Vehicle:</i> Ground Movement -6" (0" total)	
60	<i>Laser:</i> RKA 2d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Armor Piercing (+½)	0
16	<i>Deception Field:</i> Change Environment 4" radius, -6 to Sight Group Perception Rolls, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Easily Removed (-½), Extra Time (3 Turns to activate; -¾), Only Works Against Antibody Cells (-½), No Range (-½), Self Only (-½)	0
9	<i>Communications Systems:</i> HRRP (Radio Group), Discriminatory, Analyze; OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	
10	<i>Sonar:</i> Active Sonar (Hearing Group),	

OPTIONS

Here are a few twists you can add to the final battle.

The Nanomachine With The Villain's Face: The central core is guarded by a cluster of nanomachines that's actually a composite representation of the face of the supervillain who's behind the murder attempt. This cluster has all the powers of the original villain. It mocks the PCs, tells them they're doomed to failure, explains additional intricacies of the master plan, and then attacks.

The Traitor: The PCs aren't the only ones aboard the *Microscopic Venturer*. Since few superheroes have TF: Submarines, it requires its own pilot and crew... and one of them's a traitor. Perhaps he's working for the villain to sabotage the heroes' efforts, or he's the villain in disguise, or he's the agent of a third party (such as an evil government conspiracy to control superhumans that sees an opportunity to gain leverage over a prominent superhero). The traitor will try to prevent the PCs from destroying the core.

Attack Of The Giant Bloodworms!: When the PCs are restored to normal size, they're not the only creatures who come back — the process also transforms normally harmless bloodstream parasites to giant size. The giant bloodworms attack the scientists (this is a good opportunity to demonstrate that the NPC hero's recovered by having him wake up, step on the last remaining bloodworm, and say "thanks").

	Discriminatory, Analyze, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Telescopic (+12 versus Range Modifier); OIF Bulky (-1), Only Usable In Bloodstream (-1), Affected As Sight Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
9	<i>IR Sensors:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Telescopic (+18 versus Range Modifier); OIF Bulky (-1)	0

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 108

Total Vehicle Cost: 209

Value Disadvantages

None

Total Disadvantage Points: 0

Total Cost: 209/5 = 42

Description: Crafted by the finest hands in mad science, the *Microscopic Venturer* is custom-built to be shrunk down until it's small enough to travel through blood vessels like a submarine. Anyone with TF: Submarines can steer it, though usually the crew lets it drift in the bloodstream until it reaches its destination.

While the *Venturer* is tough, perhaps its most important defense is a Deception Field that fools antibody cells into thinking it's a natural part of the subject's body chemistry. The field only has enough power to work for one hour, however. (In more combat-oriented games, remove the Deception Field, or damage it during the scenario.)

TRIALS ALONG THE WAY

The characters are placed inside the *Microscopic Venturer*, shrunk down along with it, and injected into a vein in the subject's left arm. First they must activate their defense systems (*i.e.*, the Deception Field), then perform tests to determine whether the voyage is sustainable. When the tests are completed, the *Microscopic Venturer* proceeds toward the subject's heart, then travels up his arteries into his brain. Once they're in the brain, the PCs must locate the nanomachine bomb and neutralize it. Once they complete their task, the PCs head to the subject's nose, where they'll be (literally) extracted.

The *Venturer's* effective speed while travelling in the bloodstream is 3 centimeters per minute. If everything goes well, the trip to the brain will take 40 minutes, and the return trip to the nose 5 minutes.

But this being an adventure, it's highly unlikely things will go well. Here are some of the obstacles the PCs will face:

Antibody Attacks

The *Venturer's* Deception Field should shield it from most antibodies, though you might want to roll periodically to see if one happens to get lucky with a PER Roll. It takes 30 seconds to turn the Field on, and it can only be activated once the vessel's injected into the bloodstream, so the scenario's definitely going to begin with a fight against some antibody cells. Whenever the Field isn't on (*i.e.*, before it's fully active, if the PCs take so long that it runs out of fuel, or if they voluntarily turn it off for some reason), two

antibody cells per PC will attack every 5 minutes until they leave the body, or are destroyed.

The scientists in charge of the experiment equip the *Venturer* with a set of special SCUBA gear for every hero who can't breathe water. The PCs can exit the vehicle whenever it's not moving and remain shrunken, but in doing so they lose the benefit of the Deception Field and draw antibody cells down on themselves as described above. For the sake of drama, you can assume that when the PCs are outside the *Venturer*, they remain near it; the bloodstream doesn't sweep them away. (In other words, treat the blood as a calm, unmoving body of water, not like a fast-flowing river.)

Getting Trapped In Clotting Tissue

As it approaches the shoulder, the ship's sensors identify what looks like a lesion on the edge of the artery. Several nanomachines are trapped in the lesion. This is actually clotting tissue — platelets held together by fibrin. Treat the clotting tissue as an Entangle (7d6, DEF 7). When the *Venturer* approaches within 10", the cell tries to ensnare the ship in a fibrin thread and pull it toward the wound to clot it. If they don't destroy the clotting tissue, the PCs remain trapped here forever. If they destroy it, the two trapped nanomachines break free and attack the *Venturer*.

The Heart

The heart is the biggest obstacle that the PCs have to overcome along the way. This huge, beating monolith can crush any object that passes through it, and the *Venturer* team has to make a Combat Piloting roll to avoid this unpleasant fate. (If none of the PCs has this Skill, send along an NPC pilot who can help them out.) The ship automatically takes ½d6 NND, Does BODY of crushing damage. If the pilot fails his Combat Piloting roll, increase the damage by +1 DC per point by which he failed.

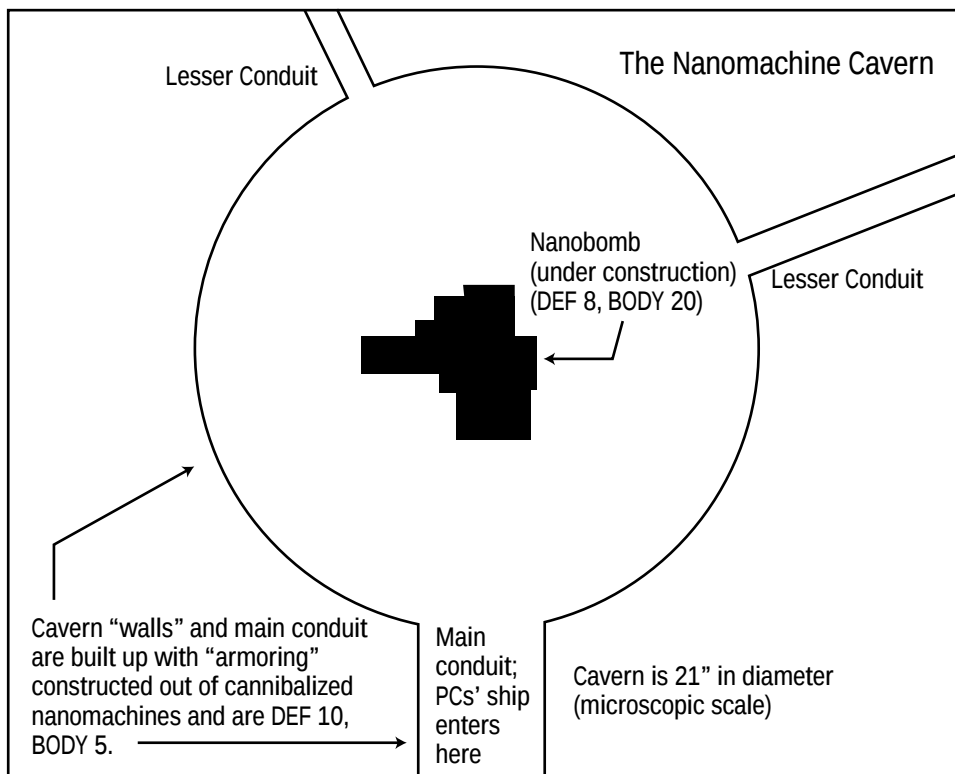
Furthermore, the PCs must make a Navigation (Marine) roll to find the correct artery to the brain (again, the help of an NPC pilot may be needed). Skills such as SS: Anatomy or SS: Biology serve as Complementary Skills. For every point by which the pilot failed his Combat Piloting roll, impose a -2 penalty on the Navigation roll. If the crew succeeds with the Navigation roll, it's on the way to the brain. If it fails, the ship gets sent to the lungs and has to travel back to a vein to get back on course (see *The Pulmonary Maze*).

The Alveolar Sac

After being damaged by the excursion through the heart, the ship begins to lose oxygen. It can resupply by opening an alveolar sac and siphoning its air supply... but the *Venturer* isn't equipped to do this, so the PCs have need to use their powers (which means going outside the ship and almost certainly drawing an antibody attack).

The Pulmonary Maze

If they accidentally got sent to the lungs, the crew must make a Navigation roll at -2. If they fail, traversing the vast network of alveoli delays the journey for 1d6+2 minutes. They get to make another Navigation roll every five minutes thereafter until they succeed, at which point they're headed back up to the brain.



Journey Into The Brain

When the ship reaches the brain, any PC with Telepathy must make an EGO Roll (or a relevant *Power Skill* roll, if preferred). If the roll fails, the character is exposed to an uncontrollable flood of random memories. As long as the *Venturer* remains in the brain, every Phase that character has to succeed with another roll to ignore the “telepathic scream.” If he fails, he suffers a -3 penalty on all Skill, Characteristic, and Attack Rolls. If he succeeds, he can screen out the “scream” and suffer no penalty... but if he ever uses Telepathy while in the brain, he has to make another EGO (or Power) Roll or experience the “scream’s” effects.

The Nanoscape Conduit

Once the *Microscopic Venturer* arrives in the brain, the characters need to find the conduit to the explosive core. This requires a Systems Operations roll with the sensors. If the roll succeeds, the PCs can home in on the conduit right away; if it fails, or the PCs don’t have that Skill, it takes 2d6+2 minutes to find the conduit.

Located near the Basilar artery, the conduit is an artery 100” long by 6” wide (microscopic scale, of course!). The nanomachines have cleaned it out and partly transformed it into a techno-organic environment by cannibalizing their bodies for parts to line the walls. One nanomachine per PC is present as a guard. The cells lining the wall of the conduit are DEF 10, BODY 5; if breached, they explode, doing an Energy Blast 8d6 Explosion throughout the area.

If the PCs make it all the way through the 100” long conduit, they enter the Nanomachine Core — in other words, the bomb-in-progress.

Lesser Conduits

There are also two smaller conduits leading into the nanomachine core. Neither is large enough for the *Venturer*, but individual characters could swim through them. But first the PCs have to think to look for them. Searching them out requires 2d6+2 minutes and a successful Concealment roll; during this time the PCs will attract antibody cells and possibly nanomachines.

THE NANOMACHINE CORE

The nanomachines have carved this “cavern” out of the brain so they have room to assemble themselves into the bomb. The walls of the cavern are identical to those in the conduit. The bomb-in-progress in the center has DEF 8, BODY 20 and is nearly finished! Nanomachines — as many as you want, but definitely enough to present a major threat to the PCs and the *Venturer* — swarm all over the place.

The PCs’ mission: destroy the bomb before the nanomachines finish it and detonate it. Detonation takes place on Segment 2 of the third Turn after combat begins unless the PCs’ actions change that time table. If they destroy the bomb, they also disrupt the remaining nanomachines’ programming, causing them to cease moving and drift away along the bloodstream.

CONCLUSION

Once the PCs destroy the bomb, the *Microscopic Venturer* can proceed to the nose. When they reach the extraction point, the scientists induce a mild nosebleed, then remove the PCs and the vehicle from the bloodstream and restore them to normal size.

TEN UNUSUAL SHRINKING SCENARIOS

1. This Ancient Heart: According to the Greek physician Galen, the heart was the seat of the soul, which drank spirits from the blood that pumped through it. An immortal is having health problems — when he reached the point where he would normally die, his physiology changed his systems from a natural to a quasi-Galenist model. Magic and spirits that are produced by the liver and carried through his bloodstream to the heart have sustained him for centuries (a side effect of this is that his blood is worthless for transfusions, and for vampires). His blood has been the secret of his immortality — and now it threatens to be the source of his undoing. A sorcerer who discovered the secret of his immortality has placed a curse on his liver so that it now produces evil spirits. External magic cannot lift the curse, but an enchantment placed directly inside the liver might. Therefore, the heroes have to shrink down to micro-size, travel down the immortal's bloodstream (slaying spirits as they go), reach the liver, and cast the counterspell.

2. The Best Defense: When a powerful sorcerer gets deliriously ill, a spell of protection goes haywire. To protect himself from further disease, the spell has extracted the sorcerer's antibodies, grow them to giant size, given them telekinetic-based movement abilities, and sent them out to battle disease by destroying other disease carriers in the real world! The heroes need to protect the innocents (and themselves) from this invasion from the Microverse by going inside his body to correct the spell of protection at its source.

3. Dollhouse Of Death: A group of demonic action figures has been on a killing spree. The PCs track them to a dollhouse museum. Unfortunately, when they touch the dolls' house, they transform to action figure versions of themselves. Now they have to fight the dolls of death on their home turf.

4. The Indestructible Hive: Formula X is the most powerful mutagen ever created by mankind — and the only surviving sample was taken back to a hive by a worker bee. The only way to retrieve Formula X is for the heroes to shrink down to the size of bees, infiltrate the hive, and steal the mutagen from the queen bee.

5. Notaro Strikes Again: Notaro the Magic Boy (page 85), a nearly omnipotent (and rather sadistic) little kid from another dimension, thinks superhero versus supervillain battles are boring, drawn out affairs that you need a degree in calculus to understand. He decides to make them simpler: he trans-

forms the heroes into mice, and their archenemies into cats. Can the PCs survive a superheroic game of cat and mouse long enough to get back to normal size?

6. Oh Heck, It's Nanotech: Nanotech devices have infiltrated America's nuclear arsenal with the intention of destroying it. They'll activate when they receive a neutrino signal from a nanotech installation. The installation can't be destroyed... but it can be infiltrated. If the PCs can be shrunk to micro-size, get into the installation, and reach its central processing core, they might be able to reprogram the neutrino signaler and take all of the nanomachines off-line simultaneously, thus saving the nukes.

7. Ooops...: The PCs get involved in a battle alongside an NPC superhero who's a mutant shapechanger and matter-transformer. When the battle goes badly, the NPC changes the PC heroes into rabbits to help them escape — then gets killed. Without the mutant's power, how do can the PCs regain their normal forms?

8. That Shrunk Feeling: During a battle against some other villains, the heroes get hit with a strange ray that apparently has no effect. But it turns out it was a gradual shrinking ray. They all shrink 1 cm the first day, 2 cm the next, 4 cm the third, and so on. The indications are that when they reach molecular size, they'll die. Who's responsible for the heroes' conditions, and how can they be saved?

9. We Are Here, We Are Here, We Are Here!: A psychologically troubled little boy says that he's heard one of his toy action figures screaming for help. Everyone says he's crazy — but the boy has superhumanly sharp hearing. Is he actually hearing a cry for help from a microscopic world? And can the heroes save the microscopians from a bully who's stolen the action figure and is planning to blow it up with firecrackers?

10. Yellow Flag, White Flag: In the midst of a deadly, incurable pandemic, a scientist brings a message to the world — from the plague itself! The plague is an intelligent colony creature that wants to negotiate directly with humanity to stop the pandemic. The heroes are asked to shrink down to microscopic size to accompany one of the world's top diplomats to the negotiations. But what happens when the price of stopping the pandemic is the cessation of all of the world's antibiotic research?

RANDOM MICROSCOPIC ADVENTURE SCENARIO GENERATOR

Table 1-1 Shrinking Initiator

Roll 1d6, then roll on indicated sub-table

- 1-2 Shrinking is deliberate, initiated by PCs (roll on Table 1-2)
- 3 Shrinking is accidental, caused by some unforeseen circumstance (roll on Table 1-3)
- 4-6 Shrinking is caused by a third party (roll on Table 1-4)

Table 1-2 Deliberate Shrinking

Roll 1d6, then roll on indicated sub-table

- 1 Characters need to change into the form of a small animal size to solve a problem in the animal world. (roll on Table 1-2-1)
- 2 Characters need to change themselves to kid form (roll on Table 1-2-2)
- 3 Characters need to enter a mystical land of giants (a la Jack and the Beanstalk) (roll on Table 1-2-3)
- 4 Characters need to shrink to microscopic size to enter a microscopic dimension (roll on Table 1-2-4)
- 5-6 Characters need to shrink to microscopic size to heal someone from inside the subject's body (roll on Table 1-2-5)

Table 1-2-1 Animal World Problem

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 1-2-1-1

- 1 Animal supervillain is attempting to gather an army of animals to attack humanity.
- 2 Dog/catnapping ring.
- 3 First-hand investigation of animal abuses.
- 4 Intelligent animal asks for help in solving mysterious disappearances.
- 5 Superpowered animal pack/swarm is running amok; only the superanimals of the same species can wrest control of the pack from an evil alpha male/queen bee.
- 6 Someone's poisoning the city's water supply, and only the animals know who's doing it. The heroes become animals to gain their trust.

Table 1-2-1-1 Animal Transmogrification Method

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 1-2-1-2

- 1-4 Magic
- 5 Animal powers mutant
- 6 Experimental DNA resequencing machine

Table 1-2-1-2 Scenario Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 An unexpected villain (GM option) is behind the plot.
- 2 Someone who initially comes across as the PCs' friend is actually behind the plot.
- 3 The plot is actually part of a more ambitious scheme.
- 4 The plot is a ruse; someone wanted to put the PCs in animal form
- 5 A PC gets stuck in bestial form after the others have been reversed.

- 6 PCs retain animal characteristics and behavior patterns even after being restored to human form.

Table 1-2-2 Kid Form Problem

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 1-2-2-1

- 1-2 A villain who's under a spell that "no grown man or woman can harm him" is wreaking havoc.
- 3 A child villain gains control of an artifact and banishes all adults to limbo. The heroes are forced to become children to take the fight to him.
- 4 A superhero needs to confront some childhood trauma that's driving him insane or preventing him from using his powers — and reverting to childhood is a necessary part of the process.
- 5 A mysterious plague is causing massive genetic damage — but children are resistant to it. The PCs go into kid form to protect themselves while they search for a cure.
- 6 Superheroes are changed to kid form to help make a dying child's wish come true — he wants to adventure alongside his favorite heroes, but feel like their equal.

Table 1-2-2-1 Kid Form Transmogrification Method

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 1-2-2-2

- 1-4 Magic
- 5 Youth Powers Mutant
- 6 Experimental DNA resequencing machine

Table 1-2-2-2 Scenario Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 An unexpected villain (GM option) is behind the plot.
- 2 The PC loses most (or all) of their powers in kids' form.
- 3 The plot is actually part of a more ambitious scheme.
- 4 The plot is a ruse; someone wanted to put the PCs in kid form
- 5 A PC gets stuck in child form after the others have been reversed.
- 6 A child gets transmogrified to adult form when the PCs return to normal.

Table 1-2-3 Land Of The Giants Problem

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 1-2-3-1

- 1 An insane, impish villain wants the PCs to replay the plot of "Jack and the Beanstalk" (preferably with a better fed, less dead, giant at the end of the story).
- 2-3 PCs are fighting an invasion from a mythical giant realm (such as the Norse Jotenheim)
- 4 The PCs were about to attack a villain lair when the villains transformed themselves (and their base) to giant size.
- 5 A supervillain lures the PCs into a deathtrap filled with giant props (roll on Table 1-2-3-2 instead of 1-2-3-1).
- 6 A supervillain brings old television shows to life — and his base is inside an episode of the 1970s "Land of the Giants" television program.

Table 1-2-3-1 Land Of The Giants Scenario Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 An unexpected villain (GM option) is behind the plot.
- 2 The giant world is unstable, and the natives need help to stabilize it, or it'll collapse.
- 3 Pieces of the PCs' world are being sucked into the Giant Realm, or (if on our world) the Giant Realm is expanding.
- 4 The giants are invading our world — and have an unusual weapon.
- 5 The PCs discover a second "Giant Realm" whose natives make the first giants look small.
- 6 No complications.

Table 1-2-3-2 Giant Props

Roll 1d6

- 1 PCs fight in a giant toy factory
- 2 PCs fight in a giant orchestra pit
- 3 PCs fight on a giant chessboard that zaps pieces that don't move correctly.
- 4 PCs fight in a giant version of the human body.
- 5-6 PCs are fooled into thinking they've been shrunk, but are actually fighting in a giant-sized environment.

Table 1-2-4 Microscopic Dimension Problems

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 1-2-4-1

- 1 People in the normal-sized world think the microscopic dimension is some idiot's idle fantasy. To prove the idiot wrong, they're going to destroy the object on which the dimension rests, which will kill everyone who lives there.
- 2 A warlord in the microscopic dimension kidnaps a PC or DNPC bride.
- 3 Scientists in the microscopic dimension are trying to change the laws of physics, which will result in the destruction of our world.
- 4 The microscopic world is dying, and scientists want to bring their inhabitants into our world.
- 5 The world is an alien bottle city desperately trying to get back to full size.
- 6 A warlord in the microscopic world sees our dimension as a place to be conquered!

Table 1-2-4-1 Microscopic Dimension Complications

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 1-2-4-1

- 1 The situation is being secretly manipulated by one of the PCs' archenemies.
- 2 A PC will be forced into a gladiatorial duel against a champion from the dimension.
- 3 Dimensional instabilities threaten both worlds.
- 4 Someone in the other world is an exact look-alike of a PC.
- 5-6 While the PCs are in the microscopic dimension, a hostile force enters our world from the microscopic dimension.

Table 1-2-5 Shrinking Problem

Roll 1d6, roll on Table 1-2-5-1

- 1 Data needs to be directly removed from the person's brain.
- 2 Delicate experimental surgery needs to be directly monitored.
- 3-4 Intruders in the person's brain (nanomachines, artificially-created blood clots) need to be fought directly.
- 5 Someone else has entered an extremely powerful superhero's body and taken control of his actions from the inside. This is the only way to beat him.
- 6 Someone else has entered an otherwise invincible superhero's body, and is trying to kill him from the inside. This is the only way to save him.

Table 1-2-5-1 Shrinking Scenario Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 The host has only an hour to live.
- 2 The shrinkers can only be protected from the person's antibodies for an hour.
- 3 There's a spy among the PCs who'll sabotage their efforts.
- 4 There's an unexpected intruder inside the host body.
- 5 The host dies while the PCs are inside, and the PCs have to revive him.
- 6 The ship is destroyed halfway during the mission, and the PCs have to proceed in SCUBA gear.

Table 1-3 Accidental Shrinking Cause

Roll 1d6, then roll on indicated subtable

- 1-2 The heroes falls prey to a curse that shrinks them (roll on Table 1-3-1)
- 3-4 The console that a hero smashes controls an experimental shrinking ray, which discharges just before it's destroyed (oops!) (roll on Table 1-3-2).
- 5-6 A shrinker character's powers get out of control, and shrink the people around him (roll on Table 1-3-3).

Table 1-3-1 Magical Shrinking Curse Problem

Roll 1d6, then roll on indicated subtable

- 1-2 The curse shrinks someone to doll size (roll on Table 1-3-1-1).
- 3-4 The curse shrinks someone to insect size (roll on Table 1-3-1-1).
- 5 The curse shrinks someone to a microscopic dimension (roll on Table 1-2-4)
- 6 The curse gradually shrinks someone, but when they reach molecular size, poof! No more PC (roll on Table 1-3-1-1).



Table 1-3-1-1 Magical Shrinking Curse Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1-2 Curse requires a specific deed to be done (GM Option) to break the spell.
- 3-4 There is no known way to reverse the curse — the PCs have to discover a cure.
- 5 The curse can be spread from one person to another by a certain act (being kissed by one's true love, or the like)
- 6 The hero's enemies find out about the curse and decide to kill him in his weakened state.

Table 1-3-2 Shrinking Ray Accident

Roll 1d6, then roll on indicated subtable

- 1-2 The accident shrinks someone to doll size (roll on Table 1-3-2-1).
- 3-4 The accident shrinks someone to insect size (roll on Table 1-3-2-1)
- 5 The accident causes a person to randomly switch back and forth between varying sizes whenever they use their powers (to be determined by the GM) until the effects are reversed
- 6 The accident gradually shrinks someone, but when they reach molecular size, poof! No more PC (roll on Table 1-3-2-1)

Table 1-3-2-1 Shrinking Ray Accident Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1-2 The shrinking ray must be repaired to restore someone back to full size.
- 3 The shrinking ray may be reversed at any time by a supervillain — but the PC doesn't know this. The first time he's in an enclosed space, the villain will pull the switch.
- 4 The shrunken character must be restored within 48 hours or the shrinking effect becomes permanent.
- 5 The shrinking ray requires an exotic material as a power source — which is only possessed by a powerful supervillain.
- 6 The hero's enemies find out about the accident and decide to kill him in his weakened state.

Table 1-3-3 Out of Control Shrinking Powers Accident Size

Roll 1d6, roll again on indicated subtable

- 1-5 The mishap shrinks everyone to the hero's smallest size (roll on Table 1-3-3-1)
- 6 The mishap shrinks everyone to halfway between normal size and the shrinking character's smallest size (roll on Table 1-3-3-1).

**Table 1-3-3-1 Out of Control Shrinking Powers
Accident Complications**

Roll 1d6

- 1 The shrinking hero remains at normal human size (or reverts to normal if they're always shrunken) and cannot use his powers.
- 2 The shrinking hero automatically shrinks anyone who gets within 50 meters of him — and the area covered by the shrinkage effect doubles on a daily basis.
- 3 The cure to the condition is known only to a rival shrinking villain — who will share it for a very high price.
- 4 The shrinking effect can only be reversed by exposure to an extremely dangerous form of radiation.
- 5 The shrunken characters lose most of their superhuman abilities.
- 6 For some reason (to be determined by the GM) the shrinking effect shrinks only the PC's friends — but causes enemies to grow.

Table 1-4 Shrinking Caused By Someone Else

Roll 1d6, then roll on indicated subtable

- 1-2 Magical spell (roll on Table 1-4-1)
- 3-5 Alien/exotic technology (shrinking ray gun, or the like) (roll on Table 1-4-2)
- 6 Mutant powers (roll on Table 1-4-3)

Table 1-4-1 Magical Shrinking Spell Motivation

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 1-4-1-1

- 1-3 The mage had a shrinking spell ready, and cast it to defend himself.
- 4 The mage agreed to help an ally (a PC enemy or rival) shrink a PC or was hired to do so.
- 5 The mage shrunk the PC to blackmail the PC or his friends.
- 6 The mage deliberately shrunk the PC to teach the character a lesson in humility.

**Table 1-4-1-1 Magical Shrinking Spell
Complication**

Roll 1d6

- 1 Only an act of humility or contrition will reverse the spell.
- 2 The mage who cast the spell apparently dies before the spell can be reversed.
- 3 The spell is reversible — but only in the blood of an innocent sacrificed to an eldritch horror.
- 4 The PC must betray his friends to reverse the spell.
- 5-6 The PC has 48 hours to reverse the spell, or it becomes permanent.

Table 1-4-2 Alien Technology Shrinking**Motivation**

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 1-4-2-1

- 1-3 PC was shrunk solely to diminish his combat abilities.
- 4 PC was shrunk to become an exhibit for an alien zoo.
- 5 PC was shrunk to humiliate the PC (possibly as part of a plan to shrink all of Earth's heroes as a way to cripple the planet's morale).
- 6 PC was shrunk to be a mate/companion for another tiny humanoid.

**Table 1-4-2-1 Alien Technology Shrinking
Complications**

Roll 1d6

- 1-2 The shrinking can only be reversed by the same technology that was used to shrink the character.
- 3-4 The shrinking ray also places the PC in a miniaturized prison (with shrunken criminal aliens).
- 5 The shrinking ray robs the PC of all of their powers — just in time for common house pets to hunt them.
- 6 The shrinking ray requires the character to greatly increase his food intake and activity level.

Table 1-4-3 Mutant Powers Shrinking Motivation

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 1-4-2-1

- 1-2 PC was shrunk solely to diminish his combat abilities.
- 3 PC was shrunk to diminish his combat abilities — for a fight with a different archenemy.
- 4-5 The PC was shrunk to humiliate the PC.
- 6 The PC was shrunk to display the mutant's great power before a hapless populace!

**Table 1-4-3-1 Mutant Powers Shrinking
Complications**

Roll 1d6

- 1-2 The shrinking effect can only be reversed by the mutant who caused it.
- 3-4 Even after the shrinkings reversed, the PC will occasionally experience relapses (such as when under stress or when humiliated or depressed — exact conditions will be determined by the GM).
- 5 To prevent the mutant from reversing the effect, someone kidnaps him.
- 6 The mutant blackmails the PC into committing crimes in exchange for (temporarily) reversing the process.

chapter seven:



My Big, Fat Caped Wedding

WEDDING BELLS



SOAP'S UP!

The soap opera element is strong in many modern comic books. This scenario embraces that young and restless heritage with a vengeance. So get ready for intense, lingering close-ups, less than Oscar-worthy performances, outbreaks of amnesia, and evil twin action!

INVITATIONS TO AN INVITATION

If you feel artistically inclined, design invitations and hand them out to the players at the appropriate moment in the campaign. There are many wedding invitation templates on the Internet that can serve as inspiration.

It may only happen once in a campaign, but sooner or later a handsome superhero and beautiful superheroine fall in love and decide to get married. Naturally, there's going to be a big ceremony, since they've got a lot of friends. And just as naturally, their many enemies are going to see it as a chance to inflict a bad case of the wedding bell blues.

When superheroes get married, you should look at the scenario from two angles: first, in terms of the relationship drama (*a.k.a.* the "soap opera"); second, the staging of a big fight. Every superhero wedding doesn't *have* to turn into a slugfest, but nearly all of them do, and nobody forgets a brawl at a wedding.

ORGANIZING THE WEDDING SCENARIO

Planning a wedding scenario is a six-step process. First, you need to know who's getting married and the specifics of the marriage. Are the bride and groom both heroes? Is one of them a superhuman and the other a normal human, or are both superhumans (or possibly normals with some connection to the Superhuman World)? Will they get married in their heroic identities (possibly in tux and gown patterned after their costumes!), in their normal identities, or without costumes but not revealing their real names? Is the union voluntary, or is somebody using mind control on one or both of the participants? Are they marrying for love, politics, pregnancy, family obligation?

Second, decide where the wedding takes place, which also forces you to determine the scale of the wedding. A small ceremony featuring just a few family members requires nothing more than a small chapel (or maybe just a justice of the peace's office). A big one, on the other hand, may need the largest church in the city, an outdoor ceremony at a park, or some other major venue. And while a small wedding can take place with little or no planning, a big one needs lots of lead time (you have to book the location, arrange for the decorations, send out invitations...).

Third, plan the guest list. Who would the bride and groom want at their wedding? More importantly from a gaming perspective, who do you need there for maximum drama and excitement? Presumably the guest list includes the PCs; if not, how can you get them involved?

Fourth, plan the pre-wedding events. The scenario doesn't have to focus just on the wedding ceremony; there are lots of roleplaying possibilities

in the events that lead up to it. For example, will someone hold a bridal shower, bachelor party, or bachelorette party?

Fifth, consider what will occur during the ceremony. Who will preside over the ceremony? Who's the best man and the maid of honor? Will the principles actually go through with their vows? And most importantly, what villains (if any) will try to ruin the event, and how?

Finally, decide whether you want to include the reception (if any) and/or the honeymoon as events you describe in-game. A reception might be fun for just about any campaign, but roleplaying the (PG) events of a honeymoon vacation probably only makes sense for a two-player campaign.

PLAYER CHARACTER VERSUS NON-PLAYER CHARACTER WEDDINGS

There are serious differences between weddings involving two PCs, and weddings between an NPC and a PC, and a wedding involving two NPCs. If it's between two PCs, you only need to officiate over the PCs' plans; you should let the players plan their own characters' wedding (assuming they want to, of course). You can even relegate the description and layout of the wedding ceremony itself to the players. All you need to know is what's going to go wrong and/or who's going to attack. On the other hand, if a wedding involves only NPCs, you have to do all the work. Therefore, the smart GM encourages PC weddings.

WEDDINGS FROM AROUND THE COSMOS

While the typical comic book wedding is a Christian ceremony, many other possibilities exist: Jewish; Islamic; Hindu; Shinto; you name it. You can find details about such weddings in typical reference books or websites.

But in the comics, pair-bonding isn't limited to earthly creatures! Alien wedding customs can provide interesting experiences for the PCs. Consider the values of the alien culture, then tailor the wedding rituals to them. Just as Islamic weddings reflect the plainness and lack of ostentation of Muslim society, and Jewish weddings reflect Judaism's rich ritualistic heritage, the length, formality, cost, and customs of a wedding should provide an insight into the nature of the alien society.

There are a few other situations that are staples of alien marriages in the comics:

The Sudden Betrothal: By performing a seemingly mundane act (such as rescuing an alien princess), a PC accidentally finds himself getting (or having gotten) married. And what's worse, the only way to get a divorce involves a physical trial he can't win,

sacrificing one of his friends, or performing an action that would imperil the Earth.

Compatibility Trials: The alien culture has a way to determine whether the bride and groom are compatible. Whether it's a fruit the couple consumes together to give them a temporary telepathic bond, interaction with a computer-generated holo-simulation of their children, or some sort of trial by combat, the bride and groom must undergo a ritual that tests their bond.

The Test: Whether it's cutting one of the three Nova Jewels from the Neutronium Crown of the Galactic Overlord, answering one of the eighteen unanswerable planetary riddles, walking through extremes of earth, wind, and fire, single-handedly defeating a cave monster, or memorizing the family's genealogy for ten generations, the alien culture requires the PC to pass a test that requires skill, patience, and courage before he can get married.

"Love, Honor, Cherish... And Wait On Hand And Foot?!!?!?!!": Theoretically, weddings are supposed to be equal arrangements, but no one said all sentient beings are equal in space. A PC may find himself getting married to his extraterrestrial One True Love, only to find himself battling it out with ninety-nine other husbands in her harem, or getting an unpleasant surprise after the wedding night ("Once the marriage is consummated, it's over and the husband gets sent to the radiation mines. How could you not know that?").

PRE-WEDDING JITTERS

With a few notable exceptions, weddings don't occur spontaneously. They should evolve naturally out of romantic plotlines, and can include any number of soap opera elements to offer them spice.

The Dark Secret: One of the participants in the relationship is hiding a secret. Perhaps it's:

- his secret identity (one of them's a superhero, mutant, half-demon/angel/witch, alien, or the like, and the other doesn't know it... yet)
- one of their fathers is a supervillain!
- one of them is a clone with one-tenth the normal lifespan of a human
- one of them is wanted by the law for a crime they committed as a teenager
- one of them had a relationship with the other person's sibling/best friend/archenemy (which might not be over yet...)
- one of them is a robot

The dark secret may come out at any time. The prospective spouse is usually the last one to know; sometimes friends discover the secret and hide it (adding to the sense of betrayal when it eventually comes to light), or an enemy discovers it and blackmails him. But the secret usually comes out by the time the wedding takes place. (Dark secrets

that are best revealed at the wedding ceremony are discussed in *The Revelation*, page 135.)

Enemies In Love: The PCs are natural enemies. Usually it's a "son of hero"/"daughter of villain" (or vice versa) Romeo and Juliet thing, but the relationship can include other enemies of a PC. Examples include the cantankerous newspaper tycoon who publishes "threat or menace" stories about the hero(es); a businessman, politician, or general who's traditionally opposed to superheroes; or even an old family rival of the PCs who has no connections to the Superhuman World at all. In this scenario, a PC faces utter rejection from everyone he loves, and possibly an attempt to stop the wedding (which can occur through bribery, kidnapping, and blackmail). Will true love triumph over outside pressures?

In Love With Another: A classic dramatic situation for fictional couples is for their relationship to be as star-crossed as possible. Potential complications involve marrying people they don't love ("your stray energy blast crippled my daughter, it's up to you to take care of her..."), pregnancies (real and fake), outrageous lies about the one you love ("I'm marrying Bellwether! At least he didn't sell us out to Dr. Destroyer!") "But the shapechanger sent the message, not me! Honest!"), and surprise siblings coming out of the closet ("I'm not in love with your clone, I'm in love with you, dammit!"). But the more star-crossed the relationship, the smoother the final wedding should be. When the heroes have already dealt with a series of relationship problems, there's no need to add one when they're in the home stretch.

THE PROPOSAL

When the PCs have resolved at least one of the dark secrets, smoothed over a miscommunication or two, and their parents are finally ready to give their blessing, they can proceed to the next stage of the relationship: the proposal. For the most dramatic effect, NPC proposals should occur either in extremely romantic locations (a beautiful starfield in space, forsaken lost world canyons) or in times of extreme stress (they're bunkered down while Dr. Destroyer has ordered his Destroids to hunt them down, they're on Death Row together in an alien prison, or the like). You can generate additional melodrama by the way you share the news with the PCs (particularly when one of them is *also* in love with one of the happy couple, maybe even to the extent he fights against the wedding).

THE KYADR SON RITUAL OF MALVA

On the planet Malva (Firewing's homeworld), weddings are remarkably similar to human bonding rituals, with one most notable exception — the *Kyadr Son*. This ritual takes place when the groom enters the wedding hall; it involves five strong men (typically the bride's brothers and his brawniest friends, or former boyfriends) jumping the groom, beating the living daylights out of him, and leaving him in a bloody mess to crawl to the bride and declare his love. (The groom later beats on the attackers after the wedding ceremony to demonstrate his symbolic growth.)

Many Malvan families don't practice the traditional *Kyadr Son* (or they treat it as an empty ritual, and limit the punches and kicks to one per participant). However, when the groom is a human PC — and the family disapproves of marrying their daughter into a filthy alien bloodline — it's unlikely he'll receive such a merciful treatment. Although it's rare, the ritual has been used as a way for a clan patriarch or angry brother to legally kill someone they don't want as a family member.



THE PREPARATIONS

After the proposal, you (together with any players whose characters are getting married) need to decide on several issues.

QUICK OR FORMAL WEDDING

Quick weddings like elopements serve two story related functions: they demonstrate that the PCs involved are unconventional and informal; and they provide shock value. In the latter case, the shock often comes not from the fact that a wedding took place, but because of *who* got married — in other words, the wedding matters less than the consequences of the union. Hero/villain pairings that took place in a moment of wild passion work really well in this situation.

Other than that, though, a quick wedding has relatively little story value. You'll get a lot more mileage out of a formal ceremony and reception, since that gives you the chance to plan (and exploit for story purposes) the pre-ceremony events, the ceremony, and the aftermath.

VENUE

Weddings can take place in all kinds of places, from stately cathedrals to Las Vegas wedding chapels to the grand showiness of nature. The grander the location, the more appropriate it is for a big fight.

When choosing the location, keep the tactical possibilities in mind. Most superhero weddings involve a battle of some sort, and battles are more fun on interesting battlefields. Try to arrange the location to offer tactical choices (cover, aerial versus

ground combat, and the like) and lots of objects the combatants can destroy, throw, and transform into killer robots.

THE BEST MAN AND THE MAID OF HONOR

The custom of "best man" dates back to second century AD, when a prospective groom from a Goth tribe of ancient Germany would kidnap a bride from a neighboring village and the best fighter he knew ("the best man") would accompany him. At a superhero wedding, the tradition of the best man being a great warrior may find an unexpected revival.

In any event, the selection of a best man or a maid of honor makes for good drama (particularly if a teammate expects to be chosen best man, and isn't). If a PC chooses a completely inappropriate best man (such as the smarmy guy who just happens to remind him of one of his archenemies), it's a sign he might not be entirely in control of his actions (or that a player is really good at roleplaying).

WHAT TO WEAR

Although it may seem old-fashioned or chauvinistic, a major component of weddings is the clothing. Brides obsess over their gowns, maids of honor and bridesmaids obsess over their gowns and the bride's gown, and the groom wants to look sharper than he did at his high school prom.

Given the importance of costumes in the Superhuman World, the question arises of whether the characters will get married in costume, or in clothing patterned after their costumes. Grooms are more likely to do this than brides, but it's perfectly appropriate for super-weddings to eschew tradi-

tional garb in favor of costume-oriented clothing. In any event, a wedding's a great time to debut a new superhero costume, or a spruced-up version of an old costume. ("This is the formalwear version of the Atomic Arsenal battle armor!").

SHOWERS AND BACHELOR PARTIES

Showers and bachelor(ette) parties are the last chance for the guy and gal to go wild and have one horrific fling before settling into the role of husband and wife. In campaign terms, it's an ideal opportunity for the PCs to go into a seedy bar or club and enjoy light-hearted (if embarrassing) hijinks. Of course, it's also an opportunity for the supervillainess who's obsessed with the hero to kidnap him, or for the supervillain who wants to send a femme fatale to seduce the hero and ruin his happiness, or the supervillain who's secretly in love with the bride to kill him, or...

THE CEREMONY

If one or more participants are PCs, the players should plan the wedding ceremony, right down to writing their own vows if you feel like taking the roleplaying that far. But don't expect things to go smoothly: a good superhero wedding should have an interesting plot twist or a big fight (or both) take place at the ceremony. If it's a long relationship between characters that's finally being consummated, you might consider letting things proceed without a hitch (assuming you've given the players enough grief by using the romance subplot in the campaign). Otherwise, let the raucous free-for-all begin. And don't forget plot twists like:

THE REVELATION

Soap operas (and comic books and games inspired by them) thrive on the sudden revelation at the worst possible moment. These revelations are outrageously over the top (and should be reserved for NPCs only — don't use them when two PCs are getting married) and include situations like:

Bigamist!: What happens if one of the participants never told his fiancée about his previous marriage and divorce... the divorce that was never properly filed?

Here's Daddy!: It turns out that one of the participants is the child of the other's arch-enemy! What happens when that dirty little secret comes out just before the wedding (perhaps when daddy arrives bearing gifts)?

He Slept With The Maid Of Honor Before The Wedding?: Here's another revelation that's pure soap opera: the groom and one of the maids of honor sleep together right before the wedding. Maybe the bachelor party got out of hand. Maybe it was mind control. Or maybe he's just a lying, cheating, no-good he-skank.

She's An Imposter!: The groom thought he was marrying a supermodel, but she's actually a member of the shapechanging Hideons from Hideos VII. What now? Can true love see past real appearances and interspecies taboos?

She's Pregnant With Someone Else's Child?: The bride's pregnant, the groom's not the father, and the real father just found out about it. If he's a member of the wedding party, does he interrupt the wedding? If he's not a member of the wedding party, does he crash the ceremony? Which one of them will the bride choose?

THE FIGHT

There doesn't have to be a fight at a superhero wedding... but some genre traditions are meant to be embraced, and The Fight is one of them. Wedding day brawls fit into one of two categories:

The Brawl To End All Brawls: A tremendous fight breaks out because the bride and groom's enemies — usually a really big team of them, or multiple teams working together — decide to take advantage of the special occasion to eliminate them and all of their friends. After all, when else are you going to find so many heroes gathered together in one place? They'll never be able to withstand our combined evil might!!!

At the end of the brawl, the happy couple should still be standing — killing off a hero at his own wedding is a cruel and unusual plot development even by the standards of Iron Age comics. In short, a happy ending (apart from medical bills) should ensue.

We Interrupt This Ceremony Because All Hell Is Breaking Loose: Instead of having villains show up at the wedding and attack, have some other major event occur on the day of the wedding. Usually it's either a catastrophe of such magnitude that the bride, groom, or both have to help deal with it (e.g., an alien invasion, a continent-sized tsunami, a VIPER attack on Europe), or a mega-battle involving one or both of their archenemies. Whatever it is, it's got to be dangerous and deadly foe (if only so the bride can wonder if groom will survive the battle, or vice-versa).

OTHER EVENTS

Revelations and battles aren't the only ways to spice up a superhero wedding. Try these:

Conflict With Relatives: The bride's dad doesn't have to be a supervillain to be a major pain at a wedding. Weddings are great times for personal issues with relatives to come to boil. An oppressive father threatens to cut his daughter out of the will because she's marrying "that bum" he doesn't approve of; bitter crippled siblings lash out at their superpowered siblings for marrying one of "the beautiful people"; mothers frightened about exposing their children to the dangers of the Superhuman World attempt to sabotage the wedding plans (and hone their passive-aggressive combat techniques to an unholy edge).

Guest Appearances By...: Weddings are great opportunities to have guest appearances in the campaign, particularly by old, long-forgotten characters. Do the PCs have old teammates? Find a way to bring them back. What about *dead* teammates? Lower the barrier of death for a session and have old friends from the great beyond

HANDLING HUGE COMBATS

Because superhero weddings are attended by so many superhero guests, and thus get attacked by such large groups of supervillains, it's not uncommon for a wedding combat to have twenty or thirty superhuman participants (if not more). If you play this out Phase-by-Phase and die roll by die roll, it will probably take forever to resolve. For many campaigns, a better approach is to regard the brawl as a lot of separate, little combats that escalate to one climactic battle. Damage to the scenery should carry over to later scenes, but as a "ground rule," certain key props (primarily the wedding cake) can't be used until the climactic battle. The same goes for non-combat NPCs in most cases.

Staging the Fight

Divide the combats into rounds, as defined below. In each round, you need to:

- List all the available villains
- List all the NPC heroes
- Determine the order of actions
- The fight starts on Turn 1, Segment 12

The PC with the highest DEX gets to choose which villain will be his opponent for the fight that round, then other PCs choose in order of DEX, then you choose for the NPC heroes. You can reserve particular villains for later rounds or the climactic battle, if desired — it's not dramatically appropriate for a PC (even the bride or groom) to immediately take on the master villain who's behind the whole attack.

Round One

The first round features solo combats — each hero against his chosen villain. As an option, you can allow each hero to automatically win this round. Instead of rolling dice and so forth, just let each player describe what his character does, including any interesting scenes or "bits" that appeal to him and add color to the battle ("I stand on my hands, grab him around the neck with my ankles, then do a sort of flip so that I fling him into the wall and embed him head-first into it!"). You should definitely handle all the NPC combats via this sort of narration (even if you have an NPC lose).

Typically, the bride and groom should automatically win all their battles until the climactic final round. After all, they have the most righteous fury to draw upon!

In this round, all fights occur simultaneously. Each character must restrict himself to his chosen opponent — interfering in other fights or helping a friend isn't allowed, unless you specifically permit it for reasons of drama. If at any point in the fight, the team leader

shouts "switch opponents," a random opponent appears on the next Phase in the place of the PC's chosen opponent, and the round proceeds as normal from there.

Players must confine their fight to the selected villain — they don't interfere in other fights, and other people don't interfere in their combats. You can use guests and other non-superhuman attendees as hostages, cannon fodder, and the like, if desired.

Round One ends when all of the fights are concluded (either via narration, or because one participant in each fight is Knocked Out or dead).

Round Two

Round Two works more or less like Round One, except that at this stage, heroes may choose to team up to fight a particularly tough opponent (though again, you have the right to reserve particular villains for the climactic final confrontation). Round Two starts on the Segment 12 following the end of Round One, and all PCs (and any NPCs and villains you choose) get one free Recovery. If a hero was Knocked Out in Round One, another hero can choose him as a partner, but the unconscious hero still has to wake up using the normal Recovery rules.

Round Two ends just like Round One. Subsequent rounds (if any) work just like Round Two.

The Final Round

Eventually, you'll realize that it's time for the final confrontation — the battle's gone on for a while, and most (if not all) of the lesser villains (and not a few of the NPC heroes) are out of the fight. It's time to wrap things up by taking on the major opponent you've been saving all this time.

In most cases, you'll want to resolve the final round using the standard *HERO System* combat rules. For maximum drama, you may want to allow any unconscious PC heroes to wake up just in time to take part in the climactic confrontation.

If the wedding fight involves a romantic triangle with a hero and a villain, you should resolve the triangle in the final fight — or you can stage a final fight after this one that only involves the two principles (though the third member of the triangle may intervene at a dramatic moment).

Generally, unless you're playing an Iron Age Champions game, the villains shouldn't kill the heroes at weddings. Wedding massacres only happen in Tarantino films.

attend the wedding. Figuring out a way to get an especially desired guest at the wedding may provide fodder for a pre-wedding adventure. (“Vanguard can attend the ceremony... but only if we first find a way to enter the Land of the Dead and deliver his invitation to him personally!”)

“I Object!”: Okay, it’s corny, but giving a PC a chance to throw open the doors of the church and shout “I object!” at a wedding at just the right moment makes for excellent drama.

LET’S GET MARRIED ALREADY

With all those complications (hopefully) behind them, it’s time for the bride and groom to get on with things.

The Vows

The wedding should end with the happy couple saying their vows (provided something hasn’t happened that’s caused them to reconsider) and the minister declaring them man and wife. Though if you’re feeling particularly fiendish, perhaps the rings are rigged with an electrical charge booby trap that shocks the couple into unconsciousness (and signals someone to attack), or there’s something wrong with the minister (he’s being mentally controlled by a villain; he’s a villain with a grudge in disguise; he’s a robot programmed to explode just as he says “I now declare you man and wife”).

After The Ceremony

Barring such catastrophes, once the bride and groom swear their vows, it’s time for the fun stuff — the reception (possibly including a dinner), and then the honeymoon.

The reception banquet is a great place for the PCs to get to know other people (*i.e.*, to roleplay), swap inter-team super-gossip (see *Ten Bits Of Gossip*, page 167), tell embarrassing stories about the bride and groom, dance, drink, offer toasts, and compete to catch the garter and the bouquet (the latter scene can be especially fun to play out — the other women might have a hard time beating a speedster heroine, teleporting heroine, or time-manipulating heroine to the bouquet!).

In the comics, fights rarely occur at the reception (they’re more likely to happen at the actual wedding). However, at any place where people gather to celebrate, people can drink too much and start a brawl (especially if someone sees an old girlfriend getting close to a rival). For mystic-oriented campaigns, a wedding reception is a great place for a supervillain to show up and place a curse on the happy couple. And since the reception is where the couple receives their wedding gifts, it’s possible that a high-tech or mystical gift may go on a rampage. And you never know when some villain’s put a bomb in the wedding cake (“the first cut of the wedding cake will be their last!”).

As always, don’t overdo things. It’s one thing to have supervillains crash the wedding, another thing to also have the best man turn out to be a shapechanging imposter, the church turn into a rocket ship that heads on a collision course with the sun, the minister turn actually be a robot

bomb, and the wedding cake contain a lethal booby trap. It’s a wedding, not (necessarily) a death duel with Dr. Destroyer.

The Honeymoon

The wedding ends with the couple going on a honeymoon. Normally this is an uneventful (if happy) experience; however, it’s always possible for a married couple to stumble upon a mystery while honeymooning abroad. An alternative is for the happy couple to come back from a honeymoon noticeably changed. Only later will the other PCs figure out that a villain kidnapped the heroes on their honeymoon and replaced them with clones, robots, shapeshifters, or another superheroic imposter. And of course, the honeymoon is a great place for the next stage in the superhero soap opera — superhero offspring — to be conceived.

CHARACTERS

The traditional cast of characters at a wedding (many of them drawn as much from comedy and soap operas as comic books) includes:

THE WEDDING PARTY

Besides the bride, groom, and best man (all previously discussed), you can also use the following in your wedding scenarios.

The Bipolar Dad: Despite the fact that his hairline is retreating faster than an Antarctic glacier in the face of global warming (from the sheer cost of the wedding, if nothing else) and that his attitude toward his future son-in-law is ambivalent at best, he’s still capable of turning into a big teddy bear when he sees his daughter in her wedding dress.

The Drunken Brother/Brother-in-Law: Weddings are solemn, sacred occasions, but you’d never know it from this jerk. He views the wedding as a chance to party, get drunk, hit on girls, and embarrass the groom. He may (or may not be) the Best Man, but he’s always the biggest jerk.

The female equivalent of the Drunken Brother(-in-Law) is the *Party Girl*, a female relative (and often a bridesmaid) who makes suggestive comments to the groom, drinks too much champagne, and otherwise acts in “embarrassing” or “unladylike” ways.

The Gossipy Maid Of Honor: This maid of honor pretends to be the bride’s best friend, but behind her back she insults her make-up and clothes, ridicules the groom, and starts a pool on how long the marriage will last.

The Overly Meddlesome Mother-in-Law: She may be the sweetest creature in the universe most of the time, but as soon as the word “wedding” comes up, she turns into an obsessive control freak. The Meddlesome Mother-in-Law tries to control every detail of the wedding, and it’s no use getting in her way — she’s more of a cosmic force than the Witness.



THE MINISTER

You can't have a wedding without someone to perform the ceremony. Typical dramatic ministers include:

The Eccentric Couple: The eccentric couple are usually found at small wedding chapels across the country. They're odd, and they keep inconvenient hours, but they're deeply romantic and will go out of their way to help "true love."

The Folksy Justice Of The Peace: An old family friend, this deeply religious man is quite friendly to the happy couple, even if they have to put up with his long-winded anecdotes.

The Overly Serious Reverend: A stock character, this very traditional minister's primary role in the scenario is to be shocked and scandalized when someone's terrible secrets come out, and to storm away in a huff when he realizes he's been asked to participate in a sham. He's often an old family friend, which makes things even more embarrassing.

OTHER GATHERINGS

Weddings are a great occasion to bring lots of superheroes under the same roof to have fights and experience plot development, but they're not the only such event. Other types of superhero gatherings you can feature in your campaign include:

Awards Ceremonies: Another gathering that's a good place to unleash the dogs of war is an awards ceremony. People enjoy giving out awards almost as much as they enjoy receiving them, and there's no reason the city can't offer a citation to honor an especially heroic act, or commemorate the anniversary of a beloved hero's first appearance, or even throw a parade on behalf of some heroes (particularly if they're returning from a war against alien invaders or a venal foreign villain group/organization). Awards ceremonies can be even more interesting when they're honoring a rival superhero who doesn't deserve it ("Humanitarian of the year, my ass! Did you see when he just stood there while Blowtorch fried that busload of nuns?") and the PCs have a chance to sabotage it.

Of course, villains are likely to pull the same sorts of stunts at awards ceremonies as at weddings. A clever supervillain might hijack the show to turn it into a production of a lethally twisted game show, while less clever ones simply booby trap the award itself. If the award show's a fundraiser, the villains might rig the tables with paralyzing gas and steal the cash once the heroes are frozen in place.

Funerals: When superheroes fall, their comrades gather to pay their respects. The superhero funeral is a place to mourn, look over past lives, and bury

the dead with full honors. Heroes aren't the only ones who might attend; if it's a public funeral for a respected hero, the entire city will likely be in mourning, public officials will flock to the church to pay their respects, and even a few of the more honorable villains may feel the need to mourn or pay homage to an old enemy.

This doesn't mean the funeral has to be free of conflict. A hero who feels guilty about the deceased's death could have a breakdown, or other heroes who hold him responsible could accuse him in public and start a ruckus. A supervillain could attend the funeral with absolutely no good will whatsoever: he insults the deceased, gloats, or otherwise causes trouble. Truly evil villains might even desecrate the grave, destroy the coffin, steal the body, or raise the hero from the dead as a zombie.

Parties: Unlike more public affairs such as weddings and funerals, parties are usually private things. They may just be for fun ("Hey Speakeasy! — me and the missus are throwing a shindig on Saturday night. C'mon down and let the mask slip off for a bit"), or there may be fundraising for a cause involved.

A party is a good place to exchange gossip, hear the latest rumors (see page 168), flirt, deal with rowdy or obnoxious NPC heroes, stage a robbery of the funds raised for charity, and the like. But in dramatic terms, perhaps the most important use for a party is to hook a PC up with a romantic interest. At a party, a hero can stumble into his one true love by accident, have a "chance" encounter with someone who wants to seduce him and destroy his life, discover that his loved one is cheating on him, or have a place to meet his beloved on a pre-arranged date (and, because he stopped to fight crime, arrive too late and find that she's angry at him).

SCENARIO: "TIL DEATH DO US PART..."

This is a scenario that takes place in the Champions Universe. Two of the world's most prominent superheroes, Electron of the Justice Squadron and Amazing Man (II) of the Sentinels, are getting married!

About three weeks before the wedding, people to receive the following card in the mail:

You are cordially invited to attend the wedding of Peter "Amazing Man" Renton and Viola "Electron" McInness, to take place at the Rose Hill United Church, Queens, New York City, New York, United States of America, planet Earth, Sol System, Orion Arm, Milky Way Galaxy, on February 20, 2005, at 2:00 PM. RSVP

AN UNUSUAL JOB

Later the PCs are visited by the couple themselves. (This scenario assumes they all know one another; if that's not the case, don't run the scenario until you have a chance to establish a friendship between the PCs and the couple.) After the appro-

priate socializing, Amazing Man asks the team for some help.

"In the Sentinels, I'd call this a briefing. Here, I have to call it 'begging for a favor.' Several months ago, the Sentinels and the Justice Squadron discovered that Istvatha V'han was threatening to use a particular world as a staging ground for an attack on Earth. To stop her, we made a promise to help that world's rebels overthrow V'han...."

"You made a promise, dear," Electron interjected. "We made a completely different promise."

"I know," Amazing Man grimaced. "Anyway, we had two teams working in two different places. The Sentinels promised to help the rebels. However, the JS promised V'han Earth wouldn't interfere."

"The situation's a mess," Electron said. "Of course we don't trust V'han to keep her word."

Amazing Man nodded. "The best way to ensure Earth's security is to free that world from V'han's control. For that to happen, the two leading rebel leaders have to set aside their differences and unite. The only people those two trust to broker the alliance is us. Electron and myself. No one else."

"Unfortunately," Electron said, "V'han knows this. She's keeping an eye on us."

"If we're spotted helping the rebels, V'han will attack the Earth. You know how powerful she is; even with all of Earth's heroes working together, we might not be able to fend her off like we did the last time. On the other hand, if we don't help, that world will remain enslaved to V'han and she'll use her power to punish the rebels and kill millions of innocent people — then use it to threaten us. And only we can help that world."

"However..." Electron stated. "If we're seen at a public ceremony where V'han's spies on Earth can see us together, it won't raise suspicion. And what better diversion than a wedding?"

Amazing Man smiled, and his hand touched Electron's shoulder. "What we need," the hero said, "are people to impersonate me and Electron at our wedding while we're away brokering the alliance. V'han has spies everywhere. We know she's keeping an extremely close eye on the Sentinels and the Justice Squadron. But she can't keep an eye on every superhero on earth, and that's where you come in...."

"The fate of two worlds rests on your ability to impersonate us," Electron interrupted her fiancé's remark. "No pressure."

WHY THE SWITCH?

This scenario is set up as an "impersonate the heroes" adventure for several reasons. First, having the PCs impersonate established heroes is an interesting roleplaying challenge. It also (a) lets the PCs be the center of attention (as they should be) even though it's not their big day; and it lets you avoid the need to prepare character sheets for the bride and groom. Of course, if circumstances permit, you can run the scenario as a straightforward wedding between two PCs, or a PC and an NPC.

THE BIG SWITCHEROO

Two PCs (one male and one female) are being asked to take the place of two of the world's greatest heroes. The couple's chosen the PCs because they're of a similar height, build, hair color, and voice register as Amazing Man and Electron. If all of the PCs are male (or female), use a prominent NPC in the other role, or invoke the aid of someone with matter-alteration powers to temporarily switch a PC's gender (talk about your opportunities for GM fiendishness!).

Electron, who's a gadgeteer, gives the PCs a camouflage device (Sight, Sound and Mental Group Images, -12 to PER Rolls) to make the PCs look and sound like herself and Amazing Man. The camouflage field is an uncomfortable harness that has to be worn under the costume at all times during the impersonation. It's based largely on captured supervillain technology, and as she warns the PCs, it's not entirely stable. "If the camouflage starts to blink out, hide your face and hit the recalibration switch."

To make the impersonation seem more authentic, the other members of the Justice Squadron and the Sentinels will not be informed that the switch took place. The PCs' teammates, however, may be safely informed (though if any of them is known to be Hunted by V'han, Amazing Man suggests the PCs keep them out of the loop).

Even though the Chaplain, a winged superhero who's performing the ceremony, can legally preside over a marriage, the PCs won't legally be married. But obviously, the "union" is a good chance for teammates to tease "the couple" about the wedding.

The PCs must find some time about 24 hours before the ceremony to make the switch. Amazing Man suggests doing it at his bachelor party, while Electron suggests doing it at a bridal shower at her mom's place (an apartment in Brooklyn, where she's getting together with her sisters and a few girlfriends to celebrate the wedding). They'll leave how exactly to make the switch up to the PCs (*i.e.*, let your players come up with a plan).

The Bachelor Party

There will be a lot of heroes at the bachelor party, which is held at an Irish pub called The Paddyshack in a middle-class section of the Bronx (or other city of your choice). After the switch takes place, a stripper performs for the heroes; it's actually one of the Engineer's robots — she'll try to coax the hero to sit down in a certain chair. The Engineer has preset the chair with a 1 Charge Teleportation device that transports the hero into a large laboratory complex — where he'll come face to face with the Engineer herself (page 169).

The Engineer is in love with Amazing Man, and has constructed a high-tech lab to assist his scientific research. She'll admit that she loves him, and that love has prompted her to offer him "a scientific utopia beyond anyone's dreams" if he'll only call off the wedding. Five minutes into the conversation, her technological senses finally register that the hero's concealing himself in a camouflage field. She realizes it's not the real Amazing Man and confronts him. If the hero reassures her that he hasn't harmed Amazing Man and that the situation wasn't

a trap meant to smoke her out, she'll snort in disgust and Teleport him back to the bar. On the other hand, if he attacks (or irritates her), she'll respond by attacking him with her arsenal of high-tech resources. If she Knocks him Out, she throws him in a death trap and then retreats back to her main base in disgust.

In addition to the kidnapping, the Bachelor Party features the world's greatest superhero poker game. It's a chance for PCs to show off with the boys and put up some unusual stakes ("It's a real Dr. Destroyer helmet, I swear!")

The Shower

The bridal shower takes place later that same night. It features the McInness sisters (Darla and Debbie) and superheroines such as Blink, Black Rose, Diadem, and Black Mask. During the wedding shower, Foxbat shows up in a blond wig and a pink thong (worn over his normal costume) and proceeds to perform one of the world's most awkward stripteases. No one's quite sure why he's doing this, but Debbie (who's something of a Party Girl) takes advantage of the situation by grabbing Foxbat and dragging him to a bedroom....

JUST BEFORE THE WEDDING

If the PCs thought they were going to get away just with suffering through the bachelor party and shower, they should think again.

The Best Man Brawl

Marus is Amazing Man's best man. Before they step into the chapel, he gives Amazing Man the typical best man advice with a bit of a humorous Atlantean spin ("you can't be a fish out of water anymore, my friend"). Suddenly they're interrupted by Brawler, the leader of the Justice Squadron. He wants to see Amazing Man in private to ask him a big favor: he wants to punch Amazing Man before the wedding.

Brawler admits, almost tearfully, that he's been in love with Electron for years. The only way he can let go of her is if he can land just one punch on the guy who won her heart. The PC's welcome to refuse, of course, and Brawler does realize that he's being an ass. But if the PC succumbs to Brawler's sob story and allows him to land one good punch, the PC must roll at least one "6" on a Luck roll, or Brawler's punch temporarily disables the camouflage field (if the PC has no Luck, it drops automatically). The PC then has to talk his way out of the situation — even if Brawler believes the PC's doing this for a legitimate reason, he's still going to be steamed that the PC allowed him to blather on about his true feelings for Electron.

For Brawler, use the character sheet for Durak in *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*.

An Ominous (?) Visitor

Before the ceremony begins, the PC also receives a visit from Congressman David Sutherland, who used to be the superhero Invictus before being elected to Congress. He shakes "Amazing Man's" hand and wishes him luck. "This has to be the greatest moment of your life. I envy you, I really

do: hero of millions, respected by his peers, and now you get the girl too! You know, though, that happiness is fleeting... so enjoy it while you can.”

Invictus's words should come across as one of those casual conversations with darkly hidden meanings. You can develop an adventure out of this later, if you like.

The Bargain

Meanwhile, in the bride's room, the McInness sisters make it easy to maintain the disguise — they're talking so much that “Electron” doesn't need to do a thing to maintain her façade. But the gathering is interrupted by a woman who appears out of nowhere — dressed in the armor of one of Istvatha V'han's D-soldiers.

The soldier demands that Electron “surrender the disk immediately and fulfill the bargain she made.” (The real Electron secretly promised to give V'han a disk with data on several Earth villains who have dimension-crossing abilities to seal the bargain; she hasn't told anyone about the deal, including Amazing Man.) The D-soldier acts threateningly (“Omnificent V'han will not honor any bargain to spare this insignificant rock until you have fulfilled your promise”), but the PC should find it easy to stall for time. If anyone attacks the D-soldier, she Teleports away, but not before she says that Electron will only have one chance to comply with the Empress's wishes.

The promised data disk is currently in the real Electron's possession. If the PC confronts the heroine about it later, she explains that there's enough data on the disk to mollify V'han, but not enough to put anyone on Earth at risk.

The Letters

Martha McInness, Electron's aunt and surviving parental figure, will quietly hand “her niece” a pair of letters. One is a very old letter from Electron's father, written shortly before his death when Electron was still an infant. It describes how Electron's dad felt when he first held her and watched her play in her crib. “I know he'd want you to read this now. He'd be extraordinarily proud of you, dear.” Martha says.

The other letter is from “Steve” better known as the telekinetic superhero Valance — a member of the Justice Squadron who died four years ago in the line of duty stopping Mechanon from destroying several major cities with neutron bombs. He and Electron were engaged at the time. He gave Martha a letter to be given to Electron in the event he died and Electron went on to marry someone else. Valance gives her his blessing from beyond the grave, telling her that even death can't keep him from wanting her to be happy. (“I hope you're not marrying Brawler, but if you are, please teach him how to use soap and force the guy to take a shower before team meetings. Love, Forever — Steve.”)

THE CEREMONY: ARE YOU SURE THIS ISN'T A FUNERAL?

Presuming the PCs haven't blown their cover, the wedding begins at 1:00 PM in the afternoon; the angelic entity known as the Chaplain presides. The groom's parents, Michael Renton and his wife Patty (formerly the superheroine Siren), are in attendance. The bride will be given away by her aunt Martha. Dr. Silverback will be weeping openly. The ceremony goes on without a hitch until the Chaplain asks if anyone knows a reason to object... and that's when the doors of the chapel burst open, and the long-dead Valance storms into the chapel!

“Get away from my woman!” he growls.

Naturally, this causes a disturbance. Valance claims he was never dead: Mechanon captured him and kept him on ice until he escaped recently. What's worse, the Sentinels *knew* he was alive!

Both the Sentinels and the Justice Squadron are up in arms. At this point, someone should question Valance's identity (if a PC doesn't do it, use the Chaplain in this role), and the “dead hero” laughs and changes shape into the supervillain Masquerade.

“You must be the stupidest man alive to come here! You're outnumbered twenty to one!” Brawler snaps.

“I would be... but I'm not.” Masquerade replies. Suddenly teleportation portals form everywhere in the room and there are supervillains everywhere. “Ladies and gentlemen, I present... the Legion of Vengeance!” (This is when Michael Renton turns to his wife and mutters: “Family tradition.” Patty responds by punching him in the arm and saying “Stop that!”)

The Legion Of Vengeance

The roster of the Legion of Vengeance in the Champions Universe is listed on page 142; you'll have to create your own if you're adapting this scenario to your own campaign.

You should resolve the resulting epic battle using the *Handling Huge Combats* rules on page 136. All the battles should start in the church sanctuary unless a player comes up with a good reason to have his somewhere else. Optionally, during the final fight, the real Amazing Man and Electron return from their extradimensional mission and secretly exchange roles with the PCs.

If, after the heroes win the brawl, the PCs investigate, they will soon learn the villains were mentally controlled into attacking the wedding. The people responsible were a mysterious organization called the Agency (they're Invictus's secret flunkies — he hoped to play on people's sympathies after he “tragically failed to prevent” a few superhero deaths at the wedding and eliminate a few of his rivals at the same time). (Feel free to substitute some other organization from your own campaign, if you prefer.)

The Aftermath

After the wedding, the PCs can enjoy the reception, which takes place at a nearby country club or similar facility. The Captain's Harlots, a band in which Blink's brother is the lead guitarist, plays. Amazing Man and Electron are grateful to the PCs. The reactions of others range from nonchalant (Peter's father has pretty much seen everything), to angry (Brawler feels humiliated and ashamed, and may look to "settle the score" with the PC at some point in the future), to denial (the McInness sisters claim they "totally knew" she was an imposter and were actually playing along).

THE WEDDING CHAPEL

The wedding takes place in the Rose Hill United Church in Queens. The church is a modern facility that was built in the late 1980s; the Chaplain became the rector three years ago.

The church has the following facilities:

1. **Lobby.** Accessible by a large covered walkway, the lobby of Rose Hill is a place for the congregation to get together and talk after the service. There's a small coffee bar near the elder's room, tables with pamphlets and other religious literature, a bulletin board with letters from missionaries and aid workers abroad, and a large screen television playing pre-taped sermons in a far corner.
2. **Sanctuary.** This is a large sanctuary capable of seating over 400 people; the wedding takes place here. The ceiling is a towering 130 feet (20") above the characters' heads; there are small, porthole-like stained glass windows on the side, and a big stained glass window (depicting Christ with a lamb and a lion) on the back wall. The room is decorated with banners, garlands, and candles; a small orchestra on the stage plays the wedding march on strings. The pews are heavy wood (DEF 4, BODY 20) and bolted to the floor (the bolts are DEF 6, BODY 6).
3. **Kitchen.** This is where the church prepares food for events and such. It's not in use during the wedding, since the reception is to be held elsewhere... but is, of course, loaded with sharp kitchen implements and various appliances.
4. **Gymnasium.** This is where church basketball league teams and such play. It's not in use during the wedding.

The Wedding In The Champions Universe

Here's how events "officially" played out in the Champions Universe.

The wedding of Amazing Man and Electron was one of the great events of the year, if not the decade. It was widely seen as bringing the two greatest superhero teams in the world together — a development that wasn't exactly welcomed by the world's supervillain community.

Two nights before the wedding, at Electron's bachelorette party, Foxbat showed up in a blond wig and a pink thong and performed a striptease;

he was allowed to leave unmolested, as that seemed the easiest way to get rid of him. He later tried to steal the wedding cake, but because of a catering mix-up, accidentally stole the cake for the wedding of Joey "Big Boy" Taglienti, one of New York City's leading "made men," instead.

Amazing Man's bachelor party was even more eventful. It was interrupted by Mechanon, who kidnapped the groom. It turned out this Mechanon was actually a fabrication of the Engineer, who's had a crush on Amazing Man for years. She took the hero to a state-of-the-art laboratory she had constructed, and offered to give it to him if he agreed to call off the wedding. Although she was persuasive ("isn't the opportunity to save millions of lives worth the cancellation of a ceremony?"), he refused the offer. After escaping from the scorned supervillainess's deathtrap, Amazing Man returned to New York City.

The wedding was held as scheduled at the Rose Hill United Church in Queens. The Chaplain, a strange superhuman who's rumored to be an angel in exile and has publicly foresworn all acts of violence, presided. Attendees at the wedding included the other members of the Justice Squadron and the Sentinels, the Champions, Victory, Dr. Silverback, Hyperion, Stalwart, Stalnoy Volk, Ogun, and Invictus.

The wedding was covered by Jim Dugan (the only reporter allowed inside the chapel), although many photographers stationed themselves outside the church. An hour before the wedding, the Bomb Squad rushed into the building and disarmed one of the wedding gifts (a collection of bath oils and soaps that was actually high explosives — a "gift" sent by VIPER). The press paid more attention to the fashions and the fact that Brawler was obviously miserable (it's been rumored for years that he and Electron had a "complicated" relationship).

When the time came for the Chaplain to say: "If any one can show just cause why they may not be lawfully joined together, let him speak now or forever hold his peace," the doors of the chapel opened and through them stepped — Electron in a bedraggled wedding dress!

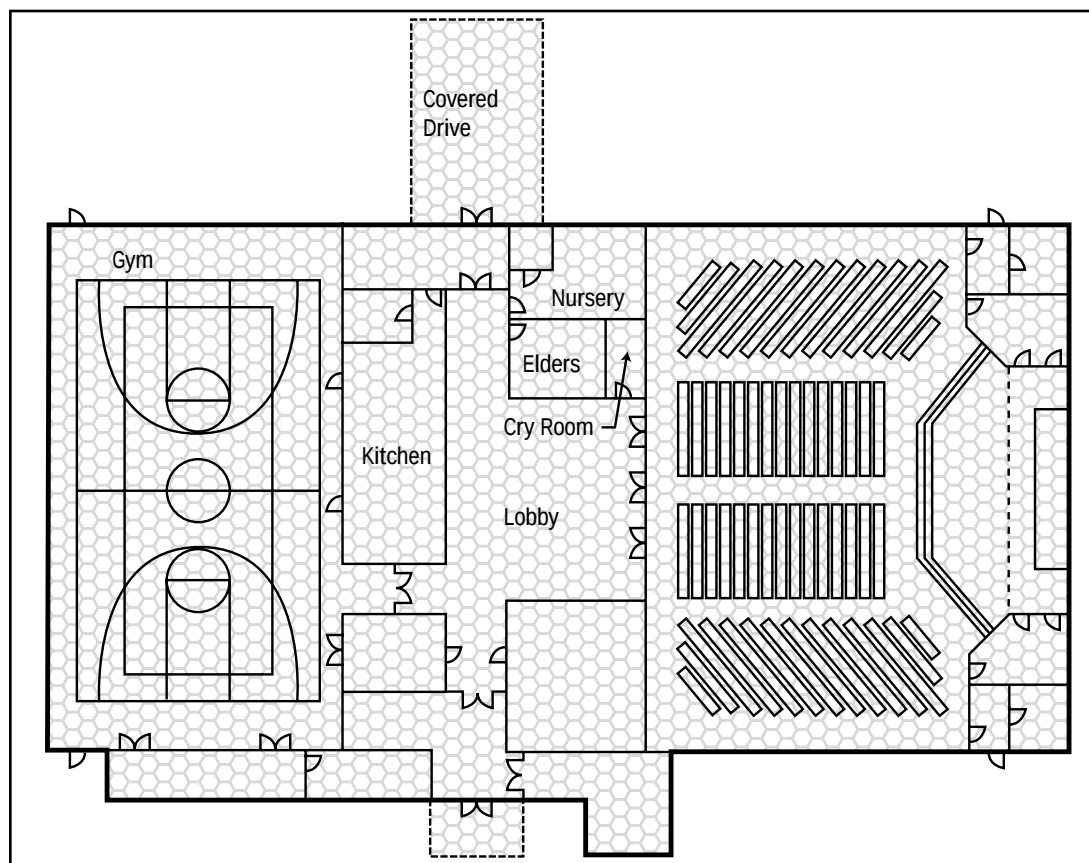
"Imposter!" she shouted. As the collective assembly gasped, "Electron's" visage changed shape, and in her place stood the supervillain Masquerade. "Time for Plan B," he said.

At that point, teleportation portals opened all over the room, and through them stepped a host of supervillains: the Ultimates, the Crimelords, Ankylosaur, Armadillo, Bulldozer, Eclipse, the Engineer, Fenris, Gargantua, Grond, Herculan, Holocaust, Hornet, Leech, Mirage, Morningstar, Photon, Rip-tide, Shadowdragon, Shrinker, Stingray, Stormfront, Tesseract, Thunderbolt II, Utility, Vibron, Zephyr, and ZigZag.

A huge melee ensued, one that nearly destroyed the chapel. At the end of the brawl, only a few heroes were left standing.

Compliments Of The Destroyer

After the battle a familiar figure blasted a hole in the chapel ceiling and descended into the room.



There was a collective groan from the occupants of the chapel. How could any group of heroes, even one as large and powerful as this, hope to face the nearly invincible Dr. Destroyer when they were so badly battered? If the mastermind realized this, he didn't show it — as always, Zerstoiten's gait bespoke his confidence in his power.

"Hold!" the Chaplain said, standing between the couple and the groom.

Destroyer halted his stride. "You're a pacifist," he noted.

"You're an exception," the Chaplain replied.

"Move aside," Destroyer instructed. "For once, your fear is baseless. I did not come to desecrate your ritual."

"No," the Chaplain refused.

"It would be to your advantage to encourage your priest to stand aside — and remain among the ranks of the living," Destroyer said to Amazing Man. The hero sighed.

"We've had enough bloodshed. Please allow him to pass, Father."

Suppressing a defiant urge, the Chaplain hesitantly stepped to the side. When Destroyer passed him, he suddenly leaned over to whisper: "I conducted burials in Detroit."

Destroyer briefly glanced at him, but said nothing, his reaction hidden behind his helmet. He brushed aside the Chaplain's hand and strode forward. The villain's full attention was focused on the groom, who was slouched in a combat crouch, fists balled, ready to strike. Electron, who was still suffering from the repeated impact of Holocaust's plasma bursts, shakily struck a supporting position at his side.

Destroyer chuckled.

"You're amused by this, aren't you, Destroyer?" Amazing Man asked.

"Indeed," Destroyer said. "This entire affair is an exercise in absurdity — an outdated mating ritual, a public declaration that you've allowed your intellect to be overridden by simple biological mechanisms. It is pathetic. I really should kill both of you right now." Then Destroyer reached under his cape, and pulled out a chess set, obviously an antique, with pieces intricately carved from Chinese jade. He placed it carefully at the heroes' feet.

"A wedding gift?" Amazing Man wondered aloud with a scowl. "From you?"

"Chess is an excellent reminder that life is warfare. The idea that all pieces are created with an equal value is insanely stupid, for the stronger pieces almost always dominate the weak. Pawns aspire to greatness but they usually fail, their self-important delusions leading them to their demise. But even the most powerful piece may unexpectedly be removed from the board due to a single error in judgment."

"Perhaps you should take that to heart," Amazing Man said.

"What makes you think I have not?" Destroyer mused. "Life teaches many hard lessons which could be less painfully acquired from playing this game. You will probably fail to learn them, but I offer them to you nonetheless. For even though the game represents war, that ugliest and most painful part of the human condition, this set is also physically beautiful, the work of a long dead craftsman whose skill will never be seen again."

"Did you come here to play?" Electron asked.

Destroyer bowed slightly, just enough to indicate courtesy but not agreement, and took a step backward. The nimbus of light that usually surrounded him intensified, and a beam of light ascended through the breach in the chapel ceiling he had made.

“Until death do us part. It is an interesting choice of words, no?” Zerstoiten asked. Abruptly there was a flash; in an instant the Destroyer had vanished. For five heartbeats, the room remained silent. Then a rose-colored shaft of light shot through the hole Destroyer had made, illuminating the couple in a faint pink light. It was the first glimmer of sunset over New York City — yet it felt (at least to the people in the chapel) like the dawn of a new day.

The Chaplain recognized that this was as good a signal as any to continue the ceremony. With a slight rustle of his wings, he straightened his already excellent posture and surveyed the gathering as he cleared his throat. Even the injured understood this, and a labored hush descended over the proceedings.

“What God hath put together,” the Chaplain recited. “Let no man — or superhuman, alien, destroyer, or any other entity of Heaven, Hell, or Earth — put asunder. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I now pronounce you man and wife. You may kiss...”

The Chaplain never finished his sentence. With passionate tautness, Amazing Man and Electron grabbed each other, falling into a strong embrace and a kiss that seemed to last longer than the previous brawl. The Chaplain merely smiled, sighed happily, then signaled the ushers to tend the wounded and round up the fallen villains.

Aftermath

The assembled heroes soon learned the villains had been mentally controlled. Using Electron's technology, they tracked the telepathic control beams to an abandoned Dr. Destroyer installation (a research center for his 1982 Hypnoray Satellite scheme) that had been taken over by an organization calling itself “the Agency.”

When the heroes confronted the agents in the abandoned complex, the armored goons promptly went into convulsive fits and slumped over dead — victims of a self-released lethal poison that induced a massive cerebral hemorrhage. All of the agents were former members of the Century Corps, the youth action organization founded by the superhero Invictus. Invictus expressed great sorrow that any of his former proteges would turn to a life of crime, and speculated that an old enemy of both groups may have hired a telepath to take control of the agents and direct them to Destroyer's hypnoray center.

The Gift Registry

At Electron and Amazing Man II's wedding, heroes from across the dimensions sent gifts, including:

- a silver serving platter holding a deluxe leather-bound edition of the *Kama Sutra*.

- paintings of the statues of the fallen members of the Justice Squadron and the Sentinels, along with a note: “You have more blessings on this union than you may see. Many joys to you both — Steadfast”

- A sea-green bottle finely blown into the shape of conch shell and containing rare Atlantean ale, over 60 years old

- A DVD player, complete with a universal adaptor (and translator) to play recordings from all dimensions and worlds, of most conventional shapes and sizes

- A blinking box with many buttons; when you press some of them, whirly light things come out of the top and float around

- A Perseid steel etching

- Two large diamonds fused together via super-strength

- Two tickets for a dimensional gateway that provides access to a paradise dimension for a two-week vacation

- A \$10,000 donation to the United Way, made in the heroes' name

- A selection of Martha Stewart linens and towels

- A CD containing detailed files on New York City organized crime as of early 2005

- A card (addressed to the bride) and a five page letter (addressed to the groom) outlining how every supervillain could now blackmail them, and how they're both in much greater danger than they were before

- A Malvan crystal sculpture with the power to bestow a psychic link for seven days between a bonded couple if they meditate for an hour together in its proximity

- An envelope full of coupons giving discounts on city services

- An extremely high-tech toaster

- A year's supply of Nar-Cola (It's Fantastic!)

- A supply of vintage Italian, French, and Australian wines

- A small cloaking field generator

- Two pieces of jade puzzle jewelry that snap together to form a necklace

- A fancy collar and leash, with a note: “So you can keep your male close to you wherever you go”

- A large, homey, bouquet of flowers, with a card that reads “Have a happy occasion — US”

- A racy set of lingerie

- A Moses basket and a copy of the 2008 *Farmer's Almanac*

- A pack of very high-tech toys

- A magical crystal statue of the bride and groom holding hands and looking ahead into the future; it glows or plays soothing music on command

- Twin celestial swords forged by blacksmiths belonging to an order of cosmic protectors

- A beautiful rare African flower that blooms once every fifty years

- The use of *Poetic Justice*, a flying galleon, for a vacation lasting up to a month

- The preserved head of a huge alien animal, tagged “from Cosmic Hunter.”
- A pair of matching dress uniforms, with gold braid
- Two lifetime passes to Disneyland

RANDOM WEDDING SCENARIO GENERATOR

This generator is appropriate for NPC weddings. PC weddings probably should be designed specifically for the situation.

Table 1-1 Participants

Roll 1d6, then roll on indicated subtable

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Two superhuman NPC friends of the heroes (roll on Table 2-1). |
| 2 | One superhuman NPC and one normal NPC (roll on Table 2-1). |
| 3 | Two normal NPCs (roll on Table 2-1). |
| 4 | Two superhuman NPCs who barely know the heroes, but are inviting them anyways (roll on Table 2-1). |
| 5 | One superhero and one supervillain (roll on Table 1-1-1) |
| 6 | Two supervillain enemies of the heroes (roll on Table 1-1-2) |

Table 1-1-1 Hero and Villain Nuptial Motivation

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-1

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1 | The hero and the villain genuinely love each other. |
| 2 | The villain has blackmailed the hero into marriage. |
| 3-4 | The villain has mind controlled the hero into marriage. |
| 5 | The villain and hero are being forced to marry to safeguard someone from a more evil threat. |
| 6 | The hero is marrying the villain as part of some larger plan in the struggle against evil. |

Table 1-1-2 Villain Nuptial Motivation

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2-1

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | The villains kidnap the heroes to kill them as part of the wedding celebration. |
| 2 | The villains aren't planning to hurt the heroes, but they do want to rub their face in the nuptials. |
| 3 | One (or both) of the villains is planning to betray the other villain, and having the heroes there is part of the plan. |
| 4 | The villains want no question about the legitimacy of the marriage, so what better witnesses than their archenemies? |
| 5 | One of the villains is extremely honorable, and invited the heroes as a gesture of respect. |
| 6 | One of the villains is crazy, and having the heroes show up sounded like fun. |

TEN UNUSUAL WEDDING SCENARIOS

1. Attack Of The Wedding Destructor!: An overweight, over-the-hill actress who's never managed even a Hollywood marriage has hired a team of VIPER mercenaries to destroy the weddings of well-known celebrities. The Objectrix's next target is the celebrity friend of a PC, a long-anticipated union that's been interrupted by misfortune on four previous occasions.

2. The Duel: A PC is attacked by someone in alien battledress. After defeating the warrior, the PC discovers it was all an alien mating ritual, and victory means the PC is now betrothed! Worse, a huge alien ship has entered the Earth's atmosphere and will go on a destructive rampage unless the PC goes through with the ceremony.

3. Groom Of Gravitax: While vacationing in Europe, a PC (or a friend of the PCs) falls in love with one of the most powerful villainesses on the planet! He believes he can reform her, and has agreed to marry her (the wedding will take place in a country where she's neither wanted and which is reluctant to risk its security personnel to enforce an extradition treaty against someone who isn't posing an immediate threat). But is “Gravity Brat” really in love, or is this marriage to a PC (or a well-known associate of the PCs) merely her way of luring superheroes into a trap?

4. Robots In Love: A pair of alien servitor robots who turned aside from their programming to help humanity have declared that they've fallen in love and want to merge their code after they've been formally joined. However, people are protesting the planned union, saying that the bond of Earthly marriage is for humans only. The robots want you to intervene and make the marriage happen. But the local judges are adamant, and so are the local politicians (they're feeling the heat after a recent Mechanon attack).

5. Slay It With Flowers: Thorn has “seeded” the bouquets at a wedding with a very special bloom: flowers that shoot spores that cause people to go berserk. The flowers are empathic, so they fire at the moment everyone's the most anxious... which is to say, when the minister's about to declare the bride and groom man and wife.

6. Toast With The Least: The PCs attend the wedding reception for a politician's beautiful daughter. An ugly witch appears, claims that the bride used magic to steal her looks, and places a curse on her and anyone who would help her. Is the hag telling the truth? If so, what do the PCs do? If not, how can they break the unjust curse?

7. White Zombie Wedding: The PCs attend the wedding of a female teammate. When the time comes for someone to object, the teammate's ex-husband arrives on the scene. However, what's even more surprising is that the ex-husband died six years ago! Who's responsible for raising this highly-disgruntled ex from the dead: Dark Seraph? Takofanes? the Demonologist? the distraught, black-magic practicing daughter who disapproves of the marriage?

8. Bride Of Firewing: Some Malvans want to get Firewing back to their world — with him to experiment on, they might discover a way to harvest his genetic material and invest more Malvans with superpowers. The Phazor has sent people after Firewing before, but now he's persuaded the Ekklesti of the Wisdom Stones (the equivalent of the Malvan priesthood) to support Firewing's return. Because of the edict of the Ekklesti, if Firewing refuses the order, he immediately forfeits the one thing that matters to him: his honor.

Warned by secret allies in the Malvan palace of the Phazor's intent, Firewing has concocted a plan. There's one way to circumvent the Ekklesti's orders: if Firewing marries a Human champion, one of unquestioned honor and prowess, the Ekklesti will declare that Firewing's bond is too sacred to break, even on the wishes of a Phazor, and he will be free to go where he chooses. But the only convincing bride for Firewing would be a superheroine — and Firewing wants a PC.

9. Wedding Bandits: There's been a rash of robberies at high-profile wedding receptions — six have been robbed in the last two weeks. The robbers have stripped everyone at each reception of valuables, all of the gifts have been stolen (including two with trackers provided by the police, both of which the thieves circumvented somehow), and no one at any reception remembers how the robbery was accomplished. The police (or perhaps a rich man looking for security for his daughter's wedding) want the PCs to go undercover at another wedding to see if they can intercept whoever's responsible.

10. I Present To You Mr. And Mrs. Planet Earth!: An alien planet suddenly materializes in orbit around the Earth, wreaking large amounts of havoc. An ambassador from that world travels to the United Nations to announce that his planet is formally announcing its intentions to marry... planet Earth! Once the marriage ceremony is complete, their world will retreat to a safe distance, but until then, it will remain in a close orbit around Terra. Who can perform a ceremony to marry two planets (and what sort of ceremony would it be)? And with the worldwide implications of the new planet in orbit, how do you keep supervillains from both worlds from trying to use this new arrangement to their advantage? Suppose that “marriage” involves an attempt to destroy the two worlds and reshape their combined mass into a new planet?

Table 2-1 Proposal Situation

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 3-1

- 1 Both participants were adventuring in an extremely exotic location.
- 2 Both participants were in mortal danger.
- 3 Both participants were in a highly romantic situation (someone else was getting married, Valentine's Day, or the like).
- 4 One of the participants was rebounding from a bad relationship.
- 5-6 No extraordinary situations.

Table 3-1 Pre-Wedding Complications

Roll 1d6, then roll on indicated table

- 1 One of the participants is hiding a criminal past (roll on Table 3-1-1).
- 2 One of the participants is secretly in love with someone else (roll on Table 3-1-2).
- 3-4 One of the participants has a dark secret (roll on Table 3-1-3).
- 5-6 None (roll on Table 4-1).

Table 3-1-1 Criminal Past

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 4-1

- 1-2 The person committed a crime as a child that still traumatizes him.
- 3-4 The person is being blackmailed into providing information and/or assistance to a supervillain.
- 5 The person was once a supervillain.
- 6 The person is secretly a currently active supervillain.

Table 3-1-2 In Love With Someone Else

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 4-1

- 1-2 With one of the PCs.
- 3 With a DNPC of one of the PCs.
- 4 With a hero's/villain's teammate.
- 5 With a hero's/villain's relative.
- 6 They're pining for someone who's dead.

Table 3-1-3 Dark Secrets

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 4-1

- 1 One of the participants' relatives is a supervillain.
- 2 One of the participants is marrying the other person for wealth/prestige, or because of a pregnancy.
- 3 One of the participants has faked details about their origin/past history.
- 4 One of the participants has a major physical disability (reduced lifespan, terminal illness, sterile).
- 5 One of the participants is an imposter.
- 6 One of the participants is gay.

Table 4-1 Bachelor Party Incidents

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 5-1

- 1 Supervillains attack.
- 2 Someone tries to kidnap the groom.
- 3 The groom gets really drunk and will commit an infidelity unless a PC intervenes.
- 4 Someone reveals an embarrassing secret.
- 5-6 No incident.

Table 5-1 Bridal Shower/Bachelorette Party**Incidents**

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 6-1

- 1 Supervillains attack.
- 2 Someone tries to kidnap the bride.
- 3-4 Someone reveals an embarrassing secret
- 5-6 No incident.

Table 6-1 Wedding Venue

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 6-2

- 1-3 A church/chapel.
- 4 Tourist destination.
- 5 Natural surroundings.
- 6 Special (GM Option).

Table 6-2 Wedding Size

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 6-3

- 1-2 Small
- 3-4 Average
- 5-6 Large

Table 6-3 Wedding Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 Major supervillain attack before the wedding.
- 2 Major supervillain attack during the wedding.
- 3 Participant is revealed as having ties to a PC's enemies (son, daughter, godson of a mob boss).
- 4 Marriage is revealed as being a sham.
- 5 Someone objects to the wedding.
- 6 Special (roll on Table 6-4 or 6-5).

Table 6-4 Special Wedding Complications

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 6-5

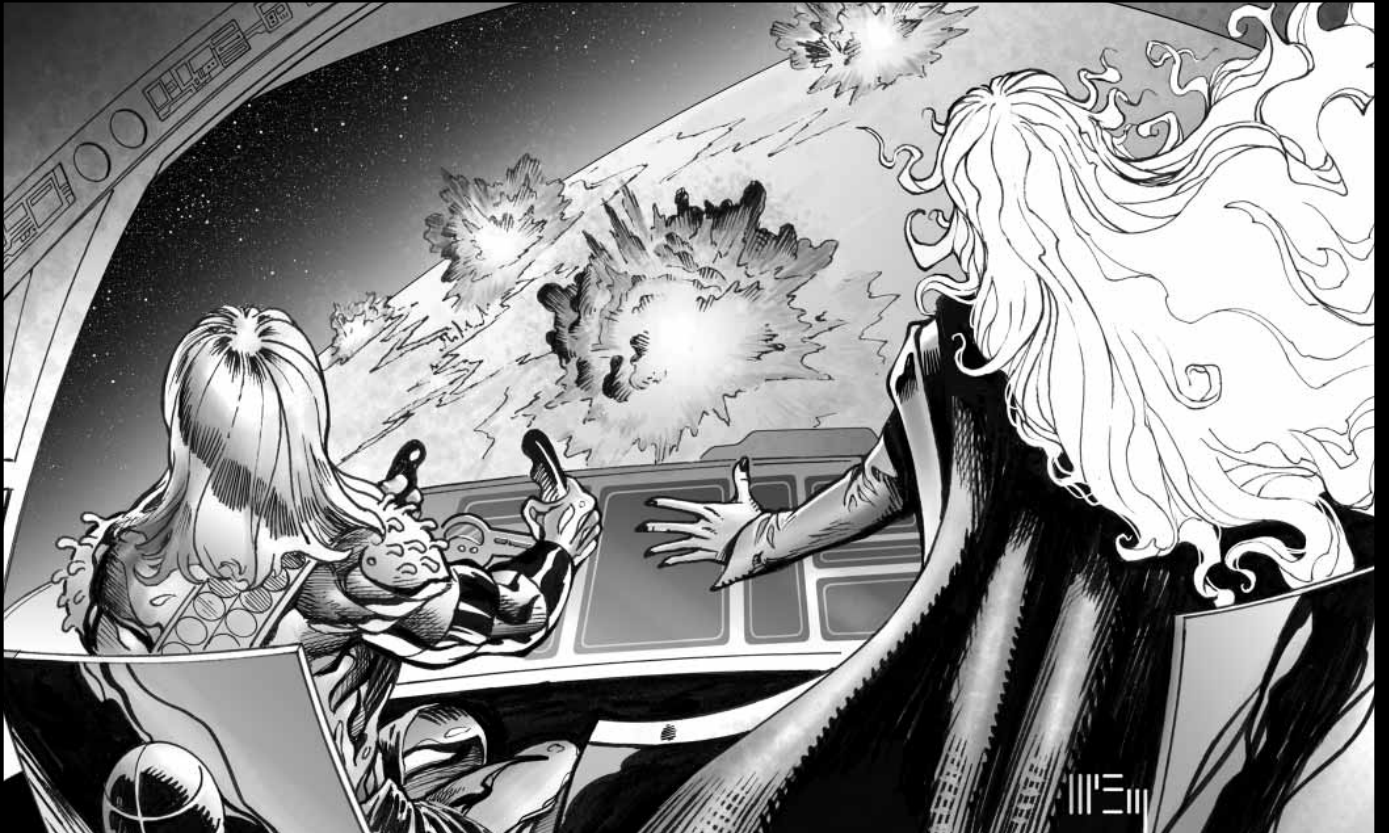
- 1 Participant is revealed to be a clone or imposter.
- 2 The minister, maid of honor, or groom turns out to be an enemy, and tries to kill the bride or groom.
- 3 The bride and groom are teleported away just before they're declared husband and wife.
- 4 One of the participants is already married.
- 5 Someone who was thought to be dead appears at the wedding.
- 6 A villain turns the church into a death trap.

Table 6-5 Reception Complications

Roll 1d6

- 1 Someone kidnaps the bride or groom.
- 2 A drunken brawl starts.
- 3 A villain shows up to place a curse on the couple.
- 4 The wedding cake has a bomb.
- 5 A wedding present comes to life and attacks.
- 6 Bad food (possibly poisoned)

chapter eight:



Plot Gallery

THE PLOT GALLERY



The scenarios described in this book are great for running traditional comic book plots, but they don't necessarily come with good hooks for a given team of PCs. There are many adventures a GM can craft around a specific group of characters to test them on a more personal level.

Champions supplements such as *Conquerors*, *Killers*, *And Crooks* and *DEMON* include many plot hooks, but those are designed to fit the plans of the villains and their organizations. Sometimes, a GM needs generic scenario seeds that fit a wider variety of situations. The seeds in this chapter are designed to address areas that go beyond other adventure seeds, hook into your player characters' backgrounds and Disadvantages, and involve them more heavily in the scenario.

CAMPAIGN SET-UP SCENARIOS

Most GMs have a good idea on how to start a *Champions* game, but occasionally a playing group wants to use a different approach or experiment with an unusual premise. Here are a few campaign set-up scenarios to consider.

1. The Ambassadors: To compensate for the many "misunderstandings" committed by Malvan gladiators who came to Earth, the Phazor of Malva has made a formal request to Earth's governments to send a team of "diplomatic paranormals" to Malva to help mediate future disputes. After carefully considering the options, the world has chosen the PCs as the representatives of Humanity. The campaign begins when their ship arrives on Malva.

Complications: *Do the ambassadors get enslaved into the Malvan gladiatorial arena, get rescued by the anti-Phazor Resistance Movement, or fight desperate battles against Malvan slavers while trying to find ways to return to Earth? Of course they do!*

2. Capes: The Reality: Six superheroes are brought together by commercial sponsors to form a superhero team. A film crew will follow them for the first ninety days, and the television viewing public gets to vote on which hero deserves to get a million dollars.

Complications: *Four times during the ninety day period (on Days 20, 40, 55, and 70), the players have to vote to kick one of the PCs off the team. The character that's voted off becomes*

a bitter NPC character. No player may have more than one PC voted out of the game, and any player whose PC is voted off must create a new character.

3. The Emissaries: "We are most uncertain about the character of this race of Humans — every time they achieve an unexpected moment of greatness, they follow it with a hundred moments of savagery. Every time they reach for the mantle of civilization, the barbarians grab them and drag them down into the pit.

"Fortunately, our physical appearance is not dissimilar to theirs, so your presence on this planet will not be remarkable. And with all these superhumans swarming around the globe, your special gifts will not arouse suspicion.

"So live among them, play the role of heroes for two of their years, and get to know them. At the end of that time, we will return, and if you say they meet the standard of civilized beings, we will embrace them. If they do not, this planet will burn before we allow them to infest the rest of the Galaxy."

Complications: *When the time comes for judgment, another superhero team discovers the alien ship approaching Earth, intercepts it, and accidentally destroys it. Now the judges don't care about their representatives' verdict — they're going to incinerate the wretched little place. Do the PCs take a stand to defend Humanity against their own people?*

4. Generations: The Legacy of Heroes: The PCs are second generation superheroes, sons and daughters of a team of extraordinarily tight-knit superheroes who were the champions of the city in the Sixties and Seventies. Urged by their parents to take up the cape, the band of "legacy heroes" have come together to relive history. But what happens if the PCs don't want to follow in their parents' footsteps?

Complications: *As a wise man once said, "old heroes bring about old villains." There's no reason why the new generation wouldn't be plagued by the enemies of their fathers.*

5. Meteor At The Family Reunion: The PCs are a clan of chronic overachievers: athletes, scholars, successful businessmen, scientists. At a family reunion held in a remote location, they see a meteor crash on Earth. When they investigate, the meteor's radiation gives all of them strange powers. The PCs begin the campaign as a family of newly-emerged superhumans.

Complications: *When the family members are being treated for the radiation effects at County General, one of the PCs wakes up for a couple of seconds. He discovers that instead of being treated in a hospital bed by a friendly family doctor, they're in a strange lab being worked on by mysterious men in pink surgical gowns who talk about "protocols," and "Pandora's Box." When he wakes up again, he's in typical hospital surroundings. Another PC, a telepath, experiences "flashbacks" where he's living in another person's body. A third hero, who possesses microscopic vision, finds traces of fine scar tissue down each of their spines. What happened?*

6. Out Of The Pages...: Last week, the world was "the normal world," a world without superhumans. Then someone cast a magic spell on a comic book fan's collection, and it worked, bringing the heroes and villains of the comics to life. The PCs are characters from those comic books who now have to cope with living in a "real world" (where the ex-comic book characters and a few mystics are the world's only superhumans).

Complications: *There was more than one comic book company in the collection, so the characters of Stellar Comics, Champion Comics, and SB Publishing have been transmogrified and brought into the world together. They quickly discover that they have a deep, instinctual prejudice against each other that's almost as strong as the traditional division between hero and villain.*

And what happens when the PCs come face-to-face with... the more powerful pre-"Chaos In The Cosmic Continuum" versions of themselves? These characters (from an alternate continuity) have decided they don't like "these little Iron Age pretenders" and are determined to let everyone know who the real heroes are.

7. Reform School Blues: The PCs, all superpowered minors, have gotten into big trouble. A judge sentences them to an impromptu foster home for mutants. A retired superhero and superheroine serve as their legal guardians, and the couple's idealistic teenaged superhuman son (who can be a PC if a player doesn't mind playing the odd man out in a campaign) joins their "team." The reform school heroes have to learn how to be productive members of society and turn away from the tragic, villainous path they've started down.

Complications: *Early in the campaign, the foster parents are murdered and replaced by the shapechanging villains who killed them. They intend to lead the PCs down the path of villainy — but what happens when their "son" discovers the truth?*

8. Someone's Killing The City's Heroes: The PCs are heroes in a city full of superheroes... none of whom get along very well. Joining forces is unthinkable — until the day a mysterious new villain arrives in

town and starts killing off NPC heroes (even ones with impenetrable secret identities). The PCs suddenly realize they've got to hang together or they'll hang separately.

Complications: *The murderer is actually a PC from the future. For some reason, he's gone insane or has a Machiavellian scheme to alter history. The PCs need to figure the killer's identity, travel to the future, defeat him, and hope the timeline stabilizes.*

9. Throw Out The Clones: The heroes wake up naked, in vats, with very hazy memories of their past lives as the greatest superheroes the world has ever seen. When they get out of the vats and change into their costumes, they receive a briefing from some government officials and learn the shocking truth — they're clones of the members of the world's greatest superhero team. The original heroes are dead, killed in battle with Takofanes (or another archvillain). The world cannot afford to know they're dead, so they've been cloned to take the place of the original heroes. Unfortunately, the gene therapy process used to create the heroes isn't quite perfect — instead of being born as world-beaters, they've got the power level of novice heroes and their memories and skills are only crude reproductions of the originals. If the public knew their greatest protectors were dead, there'd be a widespread panic. It's the PCs' job to keep the secret for as long as possible.

Complications: *The gene therapy process that made sure the clones were born with superhuman abilities also makes them susceptible to malignant forms of cancer. In a couple of years, the cloned heroes will all die horrible, painful deaths... unless they discover a cure.*

10. The Ordained: In a universe where there is a supreme being commonly identified as Yahweh (or whatever deity meets with your sensitivity), the Lord God Almighty sends down his angels in the form of superheroes to help humanity and guide them to a better path. The heroes wear many guises — mutant, battlesuit, and even supreme sorcerers — but their actual origin is angelic. The angels are not permitted to speak of Him directly; instead, they're to guide mankind to Grace by example ("the task of evangelism has been given to others").

Complications: *To better understand the human condition, God has given these angels the identities of normal humans... and human frailties to go with them. Furthermore, because God has made superheroes, the laws of cosmic balance permit His Adversary to send servants to Earth as supervillains.*

11. Last Men Standing: The PCs join a coalition of superheroes waging a desperate battle in low Earth orbit against an alien invasion. While the battle rages, there's a blinding explosion below, and suddenly Earth is gone. Six billion dead in one shot, including every superhuman except for your group



and a few scattered allies — and twenty of the world's nastiest villains in an orbital supervillain containment facility.

Because it's a superhero world, it's more technologically advanced than the real world: there are ten colonies with about 20,000 survivors in Earth orbit or on nearby planets. These people are the seed of future generations of Humanity (provided the PCs can save the colonies from destruction in the few minutes after the destruction of Earth).

Complications: *The alien invaders insist they weren't responsible for the destruction of Earth (and that seems to comport with their modus operandi; they're quasi-honorable conquerors, not killers and destroyers). If they didn't obliterate the planet, who did?*

12. Holy \$#!%! I'm A Character In A Superhero Role-playing Game!: Every Friday, a gaming group meets to play *Champions*. One session, after Dr. Destroyer knocks out all the PCs, the players' perception of reality changes, and the members of the gaming group suddenly find themselves possessing the bodies of their *Champions* characters in an honest-to-god superhero universe!

Complications: *Meanwhile, back in the "real" world, the superheroes the players created suddenly find themselves living in the players' bodies! (Be warned that this might be a contentious scenario to roleplay, since coming up with game versions of yourselves may lead to bruised egos and unjustified claims of physical and mental capabilities.)*

VILLAINOUS MASTER PLANS

Nothing is more ubiquitously comic book than "the master plan." Here are twenty plots you can expand into scenarios involving your campaign's master villains:

1. All Hail King Bulldozer?: The world's most incompetent villain is the last living descendant of the previous king of a small troubled Eastern European country! Bulldozer learns that all he needs to do is "obtain" three royal relics and he can return home and press his claim to the throne. He's gotten a lot of eager, low-powered villains to help him by promising to grant them diplomatic immunity when he attains the throne.

2. Body Transfer: There's one small problem with being a master villain who tinkers around too many machines that emit lethal levels of radiation: terminal cancer. However, a master villain can find a way to survive no matter how many people have to die during his search. He plans to find a "physically perfect specimen" and transfer his mind into a new body.

3. The Days Of Our Lives: There are ten million people in the big city, and if a mystic master villain were to reduce their lifespan by one day apiece — and add those stolen days to his own life expectancy — he'd have nearly 4000 more years to live without running any of the usual risk of backlash from longevity spells. Does the spell work as the master villain thinks? If it goes awry when the PCs show up, who gets the stolen days?

4. **DNA Dilemma:** The master villain plans to take samples of the genetic material of every superhero in the city and auction them off to the highest bidder.

5. **The Emotion Bomb:** A master villain deploys an “emotion bomb” that makes any emotion a person experiences at the time of detonation five times more intense. After his first bomb — at a globalization protest — sparks a massively destructive riot, the villain announces that unless he’s paid \$50 billion, he’ll use the emotion bomb on a much more explosive target. What does he have in mind (the Super Bowl? Congress? a military hardware expo?)?

6. **The Lost World:** An archvillain kidnaps a discredited archeologist whose research speculates that a lost world under the Caucasus Mountains, Dheghasi, is the birthplace of modern Western civilization. The archvillain begins stealing artifacts bearing ancient Sanskrit and Hittite inscriptions to look for clues to the “lost land of the gods.” The PCs need to prevent him from putting together enough pieces of the puzzle to locate his target... not only to protect a priceless archaeological find, but because Dheghasi contains hidden super-weapons of vast mystic power....

7. **The Pardon:** A supervillain who’s tired of being a wanted criminal has come up with a wild scheme to get a pardon. First, he’ll publicly break from a supervillain gang in the middle of a robbery, declaring he doesn’t want to be a bad guy anymore. Then he’ll turn over evidence on several villains’ criminal activities to the district attorney’s office. Next he’ll hire a hit man and stage a phony assassination attempt against himself (in public); he’ll also commission a hit on one of the PCs, but warn the hero ahead of time so the heroes can easily foil the assassination. Finally, if all of this doesn’t win a pardon, he’ll hire a robotics genius to build an army of “alien robots” to invade the city so he can use a radio control device to shut down the invaders in the nick of time. He figures that if saving mankind from an alien horde doesn’t win a pardon, nothing will.

8. **The Perfect Mate:** A master villain wants an heir — but wants to be sure that the mother of his child is the most capable mate he can find. To this end, he’s staging a “Best Supervillainess” contest in the city. Whatever supervillainess commits the most spectacular crime (and nets the biggest profits) wins a very special prize... the right to become his bride!

9. **Lottery:** There are people out there who can manipulate probability fields in impossible ways. There are precognitives who can see the future. There are lotteries. If a master villain were to use his powers to win a few big lotteries, he’d have financing for all sorts of major schemes. How can anyone stop him?

10. **Stop Or This Brainwashed Boob Will Shoot!:** A villain with mental illusion powers plans to manipulate police officers so they shoot innocent bystanders in the (mistaken) belief they’re defending themselves from armed robbers. He believes that if enough people are killed, there’ll be an anti-police backlash and the cops will become so

hesitant to use lethal force that the city will become easy pickings for criminals. His first target is a veteran police officer who’s an old friend of the PCs.

11. **The Dark Time:** A master villain fires a rocket filled with a substance called albedeon into the upper atmosphere. It forms an “albedo cloud” over a two hundred-mile radius, dimming sunlight over the area to create a zone of nearly perpetual night. Four days later, the cloud dissipates, but the villain declares that this was only a test run — the next launch contains enough albedeon that the cloud will last for months, not days. He’s demanding a billion dollars within seven days, or he’ll fire the rocket.

12. **The South Shall Rise Again:** A master villain who’s a direct descendent of a Confederate general is determined to overturn the result of the War Between the States. He plans to steal America’s most precious historical artifacts and hold them for ransom until the United States government overturns the Confederate surrender, declares the result of the American Civil War null and void, and lets the war resume. This time, he’ll ensure a different outcome. (In other countries, substitute the War of the Roses, Louis Riel’s rebellion, or some similar historic event.)

13. **Power To The Person:** A scientist demonstrates a device that can remove a superhuman’s powers. But what happens when a master villain’s powers are the only thing keeping a terminal disease at bay? Furthermore, what if the device actually strips the superhuman of his powers... and transfers them to another person? The scientist might use the device to boost a villain’s power level so he rivals Dr. Destroyer.

14. **The Robin Hood Riots:** Tired of watching pensioners’ bank accounts dwindle from the price of prescription drugs, Lady Blue (or some other supervillain with a “Robin Hood” complex) steals several shipments of prescription drugs and distributes them — for free — to the elderly. The situation turns into a near-riot as anxious pensioners try to get free meds, but the media labels anyone who tries to restore order a “fascist.” The popular radical left-wing superheroine goes on to commit many other high-profile Robin Hood-style crimes. The heroes have to find a way to deal with the situation, and put the smackdown on Lady Blue, without causing massive social unrest.

15. **My Monument:** A master villain steals a huge block of rare marble, large quantities of precious metals, and lots of gems, then kidnaps one of the world’s leading sculptors. The plan? To carve a masterpiece to his greatness, of course. (A more grandiose villain might even “steal” an entire mountain to create a Mt. Rushmore-style sculpture of himself.)

16. **The Sonic Squeezeplay:** A gadgeteer villain blankets the city with white noise generators that compare unfavorably with fingernails on a chalkboard. The devices use the city’s existing infrastructure (pipes and wiring) as resonance chambers, so they aren’t easy to remove. No one can get any peace, day or night, and the city’s grinding to an effective standstill. The villain’s price for shutting

them down and giving everyone the gift of restful silence is \$1 million per day for the rest of his life.

17. Defeat Be Not Proud: Suppose Defeat is a cosmic entity... and just as one can stave off Death by imprisoning him, one can also make it impossible to lose by striking a bargain with Defeat. Suddenly some minor or trivial supervillain (such as, say, Armadillo, Green Dragon, or Hornet in the Champions Universe) vaults into the ranks of master villains not because of his vast power, but simply because anyone who confronts him loses the battle....

18. The Larceny Plague: During “Civic Virtue” week, an ingenuous master villain develops a “immorality virus” that attacks the centers of the human brain that regulate moral conduct. Now people lie, cheat, and steal with reckless abandon. How do the heroes cope? What happens if they become affected?

19. Burn All The Lawyers: A supervillain who blames an incompetent attorney for a previous conviction plans to take his revenge — not just against his lawyer, but against every lawyer. First he plants a bomb in one lawyer’s office, then he plants a bomb in two offices, then in four, in eight, and so on, until every law office in the city is destroyed. Stop his crime spree.

20. Night Of The Mule: Disturbed by the possibility that telepaths will take over society (when it’s rightfully his!), a master villain develops a weapon that reflects telepathic attacks inward. Anyone who uses telepathic powers in proximity to the weapon suffers from internal bleeding, and eventually experiences a cerebral hemorrhage and dies. He offers it for sale to the authorities in exchange for a pardon and a lot of money.

PERSONAL DILEMMAS

Personal dilemma scenarios force PCs to make hard choices. An important element of drama is the Big Decision... but Big Decisions can raise the emotional stakes of a scenario to a level that makes the players uncomfortable, so be sure you know what your players will tolerate.

1. Jumping To Conclusions: The heroes encounter a psychotic-looking man in a supervillain costume drinking the blood of twenty brutally murdered pre-schoolers and laughing maniacally. A camera news crew films the horrid spectacle. What do the heroes do?

2. My Enemy, Myself?: There’s a knock on the door of the heroes’ headquarters. They open it and find themselves staring at their exact duplicates. What do they do?

3. Peace, Order, And Good Government?: The Administrator, a superhuman who claims his powers allow him to organize super-efficient structures, takes over the government of Mexico. Within two years, he transforms Mexico into a highly prosperous and influential nation. Meanwhile, the United States experiences a serious decline. Then the Administrator privately contacts the PCs — he

plans to head a coup to take over the U.S. and lead it back to prosperity. He wants their support, and as much other superhuman support as they can muster. What do they do?

4. The NPC With A Big Mouth: An NPC superhero who’s known the heroes for years (and whom they consider a friend) spends a large portion of a recent magazine interview trashing one of them. He accuses the PC of being a glory-hungry sham who has to be carried by his teammates in combat. He even says the PC would have trouble beating up Bulldozer in a fight! Now the press wants to hear the PC’s reaction. Does he respond in kind, challenge the NPC to a fight, figure that he’s entitled to his opinion and let the matter slide, or decide something’s happened to the NPC hero and start investigating?

5. Evil Twin, Or Just Plain Evil?: A PC meets a masked villain whose powers are identical to those of a famous superhero. He escapes, but the PC observed him long enough to notice that his height, build, and body language are exact matches for the extremely respected NPC. Does the PC share his suspicions with his teammates? Does he try to contact the superhero and accuse him of being a criminal? Does he inform the police? Does he secretly investigate the famous hero’s background? Or does he say and do nothing?

6. Rest In Peace?: A PC walks in on his lover/wife/betrothed in bed with one of his best friends on the team. Locked in the throes of passion, neither of them notice him you. Does he ignore the incident, assume someone’s manipulating them and try to investigate, or get angry and try to beat the tar out of his (former) best friend?

7. Running With The Devil: A PC superhero who’s a scientist in his secret identity receives an extremely generous job offer from a major industrial corporation. However, he knows that corporation has ties to a major criminal organization; furthermore, the job contract gives the company the right to get its hands on all the PC’s private research. On the other hand, if he’s inside the corporation, he might be able to stop its criminal activities....

8. Is It All A Lie?: A PC comes across odd anomalies in his background — no one recognizes him at his high school reunion, his medical records contain discrepancies, his recollections of childhood places don’t match photographs taken at the time he lived there. Has someone been messing with his memories? If so, why... and what does the hero do?

9. Heaven Or Hell?: The PCs have just returned from a harrowing adventure into a dimension that resembles the classical version of Hell. Shortly afterward, one of them makes an appearance at a charity function where some religious leaders ask him to describe his trip to Hell, and how seeing the “genuine” Biblical Hell and facing Biblical demons has affected your faith and spirituality. The details of the adventure aren’t public knowledge. How does the hero respond?

10. Fight! Fight! Fight!: One of the most powerful (NPC) heroes on Earth has recently suffered some unexpected defeats. He approaches the best combat-oriented PC with some disturbing news and a request for a personal favor. The NPC has terminal cancer (which explains the recent power loss). If his enemies find out, they'll redouble their efforts to kill him before he dies of natural causes. The hero wants to keep up the charade of being at full strength for as long as possible. He'd like to challenge the PC to a charity sparring match — which the PC will throw, so it appears the NPC's still operating at full strength. Does the PC accept the challenge and throw the fight? And what happens if the PC agrees, takes a dive, then discovers the hero doesn't have cancer, but was bolstering his sagging reputation at the PC's expense?

11. It's Your Choice: "One from your planet shall rise from the herd and touch the heavens — and you shall choose that one." A cosmic entity approaches the PCs and tells them he can bestow extremely powerful superhuman abilities on one Earthly creature. He wants them to decide who the recipient should be. He warns them that the powers have the potential to be extremely corrupting ("Mighty his sinews will become, but mightier still his heart must be to remain on a virtuous path"). The power itself will conform itself to the wearer (hence he can't tell you what the powers will be), he won't give them to someone who already has superpowers, and he's only able to bestow them sometime within the next forty-eight hours. Do the heroes choose someone, and if so, who?

12. Special Delivery: A supervillain with a social conscience has stolen food supplies and wants to transport them to a region in Africa or Southeast Asia that's suffering from a severe famine. Due to numerous human rights abuses (and a hostile political system), that country's the subject of an embargo by the United States government. The villain says there's an urgent need to alleviate the famine, and claims that only someone as respected as the heroes can force their way through the bureaucracy to deliver them. But if word gets out the heroes are collaborating with supervillains and breaking an embargo, it will irreparably damage their reputations. Do they help?

13. One Flew Over The Nest: The PCs lose a fight... and when they wake up, they find themselves as powerless inmates of an asylum whose doctors are desperately trying to cure them of the collective delusion that they're superheroes, since this is "the real world" and superheroes only exist in comic books. A couple of the PCs' old enemies are also inmates, and they want to start a riot and escape. The guards are extremely sadistic and brutal. The heroes seem to have skills, gifted human-level stats, but no superhuman abilities, Perks, or Talents. What do the heroes do?

14. And Now, A Bribe From Our Sponsor: The PCs get an extremely generous offer from one of the country's major corporations: it will sponsor the team, get the heroes an office staff, public relations

personnel, and a cool headquarters and vehicles. However, the PCs have to wear their sponsor's logo on their costumes, sign a non-disclosure agreement, and agree to a "morals clause" that gives the sponsor control over the team's roster and allows it to fire any hero who becomes "a public embarrassment." Do the heroes agree to work with the corporation or reject the offer?

15. Mad Dog: The PCs have tracked down a supervillain who, a few years ago, helped found a free country in formerly Communist eastern Europe. Once he was a national hero — now he's reduced to holding a pair of hostages and threatening to blow their heads off. The heroes possess a weapon that will overload his energy form and probably kill him. They know that he used to be an extremely noble human being. No one knows why he became a villain, and his death will break the hearts of millions in Europe... yet it seems like lethal force is the only thing that will save the hostages. Do they pull the trigger?

16. Justice, I Mock You!: At a sensational trial of a major (and extremely rich) supervillain, the villain uses the following defense: "I'm prepared to give each member of the jury ten million dollars, placed in untraceable offshore accounts, provided I'm cleared of all charges." At the end of the trial, the jury comes back with a "not guilty" verdict. Worse, the judge doesn't set aside the verdict. What do the heroes do?

17. He's Got A Big Red "S" On His Chest And Everything!: The heroes are on patrol when an energy portal opens and out pops a team of superheroes they recognize from comic books. As soon as they spot the PCs, they cry: "Murderers! This time you will not destroy our world! This time you will fall!" and attack. If these guys are anything like they're portrayed in the comics, the PCs' chances of winning a fight with them are slim and none. How do the PCs handle the situation?

18. Vim And Vigor: A PC wakes up one day and he's old! He has the appearance of a man in his nineties, and his physical capabilities are correspondingly reduced. Some villain has "given" his youth to a brilliant but aged scientific genius ("the Albert Einstein of his field"), hoping that youth and vitality will allow him to make a major scientific breakthrough. Does the PC let the scientist keep his youth for the good of all mankind?

19. Collateral Damage: The heroes battle a villain with a powerful sonic attack in the downtown core of a major city. He's just stolen several million dollars in gems from a nearby jewelry store. Every time he uses his attack, windows shatter and innocent bystanders get seriously hurt by the shards. He's tough enough to fight the PCs for at least a few Turns (which may endanger dozens of lives), but if the heroes give him a chance, he'll transform himself into a soundwave and escape. Do you let him go?

20. The Invitation: The PCs receive an invitation to a meeting of superheroes. At this gathering, the acknowledged "greatest superhero on Earth"



proposes an agenda — that every hero on Earth unites to change the world. Not only will the heroes eliminate every major supervillain, they'll destroy every weapon of mass destruction, remove any world leader who initiates a war, and eliminate every terrorist or paramilitary leader on the planet. Beyond those limits, they won't interfere in any nation's internal politics, though they'll intervene in the event of natural disasters, genocide, or other mass crimes. Is a Pax Superhumanis feasible... or even desirable? Where do the PCs stand when the NPC heroes draw a line in the sand with the rest of the world?

21. Forgive Me: The first lieutenant of a VIPER Nest suffers critical injuries in a fight with the PCs. He's not expected to live. He asks the heroes to visit him at the hospital and honor one request — to accept his apology for his involvement in VIPER's crimes and let him die in peace. But the PCs remember seeing innocent bystanders being mowed down by the lieutenant's squad, and the look of glee on the VIPER agents' faces. Yet his regret and his pleas for forgiveness sound completely genuine. Do they grant his request?

22. Louie, Louie: A few years ago, a laid-off city librarian named "Loco Louie" developed superpowers, went berserk, killed some cops, and then died in a hail of bullets in front of City Hall. Despite his crime, he became something of an outlaw folk hero. Now one of the most controversial (and talented) documentary directors in the country is making a movie about Loco Louie, and he's coming to the city to take location shots. Outraged, the families of the slain policemen want the PCs to help shut

down the production. But the heroes know the director is a master at spinning adverse publicity to his advantage... and then there's that whole First Amendment "freedom of speech and the press" thing. What do the heroes do?

23. Hey, That's Not Me! Dozens of witnesses have seen one of the PCs committing all sorts of robberies and similar crimes around the city. Is one of the heroes' old enemies impersonating them to smear their reputations and get revenge? Is the PC somehow leading a multiple life, or creating an "evil twin" out of psychic energy as he sleeps?

TWENTY PLOT KICKERS

Here are some unusual situations you can develop into scenarios.

1. Here Kitty, Kitty: A little old lady contacts the heroes and asks them to rescue her cat from a tree. She says the police are always rude to her ("and the fire department is so busy these days"). It turns out "Lily" is a rambunctious eight-month-old saber-tooth tiger.

Complications: *Lily isn't the only Pleistocene animal in the area. Somewhere, there's a hole in the timestream, and it's leaking. Of course, such a phenomenon is sure to be of interest to naturalists... and supervillains.*

2. Spare The Rod: A school official has asked the heroes to address a grade school assembly to boost the kids' morale after a recent superbattle demolished several homes in the neighborhood. They

talk with the kids and everyone's having fun... until they're interrupted by five superpowered seven year-olds who insult them, taunt them, and challenge them to a fight. How do the PCs respond to these pint-sized terrors?

Complications: The kids are all being raised by a totalitarian father who has the power to bestow superhuman abilities on anyone who hasn't reached puberty — and who's using them to commit crimes. And he's got a lot more kids than the ones who attacked the PCs.

3. Guns Don't Kill People: A massacre's taking place. In gun stores across the city, unseen forces animate weapons, making them fly off the racks, load themselves, and start shooting.

A gun control advocate is behind this: he performed an arcane ritual to rid gun stores of customers. But this wasn't what he had in mind, and the demon gun that's commanding the legions of firearms needs to be sent back to Hell to break the spell. The only way to do that is to shoot and kill the summoner with the demon gun.

4. The Century Robot: A hundred year old robot, a man-sized android of impeccable manners, crawls out of the foundation of a destroyed building and says: "My word! What an absolutely splendid nap!" Unfortunately, anyone who touches the jolly robot falls asleep and doesn't awaken. Three weeks earlier, there was a battle near the area where the robot was resting. The villain had nanotech abilities; when the villain was hurt, some of the nanites came loose and eventually found the robot and repaired him. Unfortunately, the nanites' programming was altered by abnormalities in the robot's sleep program, and anyone who touches the robot goes into their own "sleep mode." The heroes have to capture the robot and the original villain so a friendly but eccentric NPC scientist can reprogram the nanites and awaken the sleepers.

5. A Robbery Gone Wrong: A gang of robbers flee from a museum and call for help. They tried to rob the museum, but were attacked when an Egyptian mummy came to life. When the heroes enter the museum, the Egyptian exhibit's gone — along with many other treasures. The mummy is a spirit summoned by Egyptian patriots who, tired of having their treasures looted by museums around the world, have decided to return the favor. They've sent Egyptian exhibits to many of the world's great museums, and each exhibit has a mummy "programmed" to come to life, rob the museum, and place the stolen treasures in its sarcophagus (which then magically teleports back to the patriots in Egypt).

6. Shadowplay: A PC hears a scream for help. A woman is being held at gunpoint — by her shadow. The shadow points in the hero's direction, and that's when his shadow suddenly comes to life and attacks. The heroes can't attack the shadows through normal means, though they're susceptible to bright light or pitch darkness, and anyone with shadow or darkness powers can affect them. The

shadows are invaders from "the shadow realm," and the PCs have to find a way to enter that realm to stop them at their source.

7. Crash Landing: A famous archaeologist invites the PCs to accompany him on a visit to what he calls "ruins of a sub-continent once inhabited by ancient superhumans." But as the plane heads over the island where the ruins are, its engines abruptly shut down, every superhuman loses his powers, and the plane begins to plummet.

This, of course, is a classic "lost world" scenario. The underground world is ruled by the Angry Sun, last of the ancient superhumans, who is a god to the tribes of proto-humans who live with him. He has access to an alien machine that drains every superhuman except himself of their powers. The PCs have to neutralize the machine's effects and defeat the tyrant to escape. Oh, and there are giant monsters here, too....

8. Jump!: A PC comes across a crowd of people looking up at a costumed figure standing next to a burning smokestack, telling people he's going to commit suicide. The crowd's yelling at him to jump. It's a supervillain. Recently, the villain accidentally crippled an innocent bystander in a fight. He's always been a "gentleman villain" who took great pride that he never hurt "non-combatants"; now he can't live with himself. The supervillain's loved one stands nearby, pleading with him not to go through with it, but the loved one's protests are only agitating the villain. Anyone with Mental Awareness can sense that someone's using psionic powers on the villain. A vigilante telepath has been haunting him with illusions of his crippled victim, who's taunting him to take the plunge.

9. Who Are You?: A PC's patrolling the city and hears a man's voice screaming for help from a nearby alley. As the hero approaches, a young punk comes running out of the alley carrying some sort of high-tech device. The PC easily subdues him, but when he enters the alley, he spots a supervillain, one of his oldest and most hated enemies, huddled by a dumpster and sobbing. The stolen device is one of his weapons. "Help me," the archenemy says. "I can't remember a thing."

The villain *does* have amnesia — telepathically-induced amnesia. He joined forces with a psionic villain, and discovered the mentalist was planning to do something so horrible he (the amnesiac villain) couldn't tolerate it. The psionic villain couldn't kill him, but could induce amnesia before he could warn the authorities. The PCs need to help their old enemy regain his memories and stop the plot.

10. Trick or Treat: It's Halloween. The city always goes nuts on Halloween. While the PCs are battling teenage vandals and summoned demons, supervillains dressed as the PCs with similar (though not identical) powers take over the team's headquarters and decide to leave behind their own version of "trick or treat" (bombs, lots of bombs: they've even booby trapped the toilets).



11. We Have A Problem: An astronaut invites the PCs to watch the launch of a space probe. The shuttle lifts off... when suddenly the consoles short circuit and one of the technicians rises to his feet, gives an exaggerated salute, and shouts “VIPER Victorious!”. The shuttle veers wildly off course as a VIPER aerial attack squad converges on the base. It looks like an overall attack (perhaps to steal technology), but the real target is the astronaut, a NASA veteran. VIPER wants to capture him, brainwash him, and use him to train their next generation of VIPER spacefarers.

12. “That Came From The Oil Storage Facility!”: The explosion the PCs see in the distance is part of a spree of terrorist attacks against oil and petroleum installations. They’ve been conducted in several states and have caused the price of oil to skyrocket. Later, a mysterious figure contacts a PC and leaves evidence the petroleum industry is responsible — it’s staging the terrorist attacks to manipulate the market. The oil industry blames local superheroes for not providing appropriate protection.

Complications: Neither the oil industry nor international terrorists are guilty. A local anarchist group that wants to discredit the oil companies and increase political unrest is responsible.

13. Save My Baby!: A PC is on patrol and spots a baby carriage barreling down the road at a nearly impossible speed. Grabbing the baby carriage (or

the baby), the hero finds himself stuck to it, and unable to move the carriage away from its collision course. The baby is actually a doll that opens its eyes and says: “All the superpowers in the universe won’t save you when I have complete control over inertia. Good-bye, hero.” And he finds himself barreling toward a huge truck marked “Danger, High Explosives.” Who’s behind this deadly toy?

14. Voice Of The City: A PC receives a phone call from an unlikely source: the city’s most obnoxious talk radio show host. He recently insulted the fashion sense of one of the city’s most dangerous supervillains... and has received a death threat. Now this man, who in the past has questioned everything about the PCs from their courage to their sexual prowess, begs for their protection. If the PCs agree to help him, not only will he be an obnoxious pain in the ass, he’ll record everything the heroes say, slice it up, and play out of context snippets on the air to belittle them.

15. Retirement: A veteran superhero has formally announced his retirement. The PCs receive invitations to attend a social function to honor him and say good-bye. At the retirement dinner, the hero unexpectedly unmask, revealing that he’s a former police detective. Then he hands the mask to someone he claims is his protégé. But soon after the newcomer assume the mantle of the hero, the PC spots him in a back alley making deals with drug pushers. If cornered, he claims he’s doing “a little undercover work,” but soon the PCs amass evidence that he leads a major narcotics ring.

16. A Cry For Help: While on patrol, a PC hears a cry for help. When he arrives at the spot, no one’s there. Later he hears another call. Again, no one’s there. Finally, he spots someone calling out for help — and then fading out of existence before he gets there. A sorcerer who says he’s tired of hearing “losers who keep whining and crying for help” has cast a spell that exiles anyone who complains or calls for help to another dimension. It’s a dangerous dimension, so the victims need heroes to protect them while other heroes confront the sorcerer and get him to lift the spell.

17. Not Only A Dream: A team of villains invades the PCs’ headquarters. They’ve faced these villains before, but this time, they’re really tough: their attacks are at +4 DCs, their defenses at +15, and Desolidification-, Invisibility-, and Teleportation-based powers don’t work near them. The villains beat the PCs one by one, but when the last hero’s about to fall, a “fallen” PC stands up, and a villain tells him: “Your plan worked perfectly, master.” Then the PC wakes up. All the other PCs had the same dream, but each one saw himself as the traitor. Is this some telepathic warning, or is a mentalist trying to sow the seeds of discontent on the team?

18. What’s In The Box?: A giant Chinese puzzle box appears in the middle of the street, with a note in Chinese attached: “Open this box to live the heroic life. One wrong move and die the heroic death.” The box is an authentic (if oversized) Chinese puzzlebox. A person needs great Strength (20+) to

manipulate the pieces as they slide to form a coherent picture. He must also succeed with a roll with KS: Puzzles, KS: Games, or SS: Logic. If the roll fails, the box blows up (RKA 4d6 Explosion).

Inside the box is the mayor, dressed like a Chinese mandarin and chained to a bomb. The chains are themselves a puzzle (KS: Puzzles or KS: Games at -2 to solve) involving six key links that the person attempting to safely free the mayor must identify and break. Any attempt to tamper with the chains or move the mayor before the puzzle is solved triggers the bomb. Who's behind this, and what's the motive?

19. The Blackout: Some villains gain control of the region's power network and shut it down. Two of them, a speedster and an electricity controller, foil attempts to reroute the lines. They won't permit the region to have any electrical power until the authorities pay them a \$500 million dollar ransom.

The villains have rerouted the grid controls to a remote location no one's been able to trace. But every hour they permit the power to flow for a few seconds so the authorities may receive instructions. The PC might find some way to track the villains down (or force their hand) during this small window of opportunity.

20. The Contest: The PCs hear an explosion from the downtown area. When they arrive on the scene, a billboard's been destroyed and a scoreboard erected in its place. It reads: "Olympics Of Crime: Team 1, 1,200 points; Team 2, 940 points; Team 3; 0 points, Team 4, 0 points." Yesterday, there were two bank robberies, and the first two teams on the list each escaped with large sums of money. The other two teams haven't been seen in the city yet, but if someone's staging a "Crime Olympics," that'll change really fast.

Complications: The competitors can earn big points by eliminating the PCs, but one team might try to use the PCs to eliminate the competition. Thus, the PCs might end up caught between being a target and being used as a weapon. The sponsor of the Olympics is a crazed local businessman with criminal ties who wants to wreak havoc in the city.

DISADVANTAGE PLOT SEEDS

Sometimes when a roll indicates that a Disadvantage should play a part in a scenario, or you just decide you want to make use of one, you may want to find a more subtle way to involve the Disadvantage in the campaign than just having it show up or occur. Here are some ideas:

Twenty DNPC Scenario Hooks

Few scenarios are more straightforward than a DNPC story: the DNPC's in trouble and the hero must rescue him. While it can be argued that what worked so well in the Max Fleischer Superman cartoons still works today, rescues and hostage situations aren't the only scenarios involving DNPCs.

Many of these scenario seeds assume that the DNPC is a spouse or "significant other." You should make appropriate alterations if the DNPC is a friend, relative, enemy, pet, or offspring.

1. Plague! The DNPC is near a superfight when terrorists release an Ebola-like biological weapon. The PCs prevented the weapon from infecting the city, but the DNPC and about fifty others will die unless the heroes obtain the antidote and administer it to him fast.

Complications: Samples of the weapon and the antidote are being sold to the highest bidder at a terrorist auction. Bidders include representatives of VIPER, DEMON, ARGENT, conventional terrorists, Dr. Destroyer, and various governments. The PCs have to infiltrate the auction to grab the weapon and return with it in time.

2. The Affair: A PC catches his DNPC lover/spouse having an affair...

Complications: ...with a supervillain.

3. "And I'm Going To Find Out What It Is!": A DNPC who doesn't know his PC is a superhero is convinced the PC's hiding a secret... and is determined to discover what it is.

Complications: The DNPC finds trophies the PC collected from old battles with a supervillain — and becomes convinced he's the villain. He reports the PC to the police, but a corrupt cop keeps the information from reaching his superiors. He contacts a local mob boss (or VIPER Nest Leader), who threatens the hero while he's in his secret identity ("work for me or I'll let the world know your secret!").

4. Jumping The Loan Shark: A friend of a DNPC is heavily in debt to a loan shark. The DNPC decides to handle the situation himself and quickly gets in over his head. As mob enforcers take the DNPC "out for a ride," the PC encounters the DNPC's less than loyal "friend" as he's committing a petty robbery (and getting ready to flee the city.)

Complications: *The DNPC is a known associate of the PC, and the situation's a trap. If the hero shows up, the enforcers have orders to immediately kill the DNPC. If the hero disguises himself (or goes in his secret identity), he might get a chance to save his DNPC from the bad guys.*

5. A Small Favor: The DNPC thought he was doing a friend a favor, but he inadvertently got involved in a drug smuggling ring and saw Someone Who Did Not Want to Be Seen With Criminals. Now he's being pursued by a drug ring and a professional hitman, but since he didn't attach any importance to what he saw, he's not sure why.

Complications: *If the DNPC is a known associate of a PC, the hitman dresses up as the hero and shoots the DNPC (but not fatally). The hitman had to flee before he could finish the job, but now the DNPC is telling everyone the PC tried to kill him.*

6. Conversion: After experiencing a recent tragedy and a spiritual crisis, a hero's DNPC joins the Church of Celestial Unity. At first the church seems like it's helping the DNPC recover from tragedy and become a better person, but it soon becomes apparent it's a cult with very sinister designs on its acolytes' souls.

Complications: *The cult is run by Menton. Or it worships Takofanes. Or both....*

7. The Ol' Switcheroo: Thanks to some strange cosmic anomaly (or a mad scientist's experiment), the hero's powers get transferred to the DNPC. While the DNPC enjoys the new rush of power, the PC has to struggle with having no superpowers — and many enemies.

Complications: *An archenemy figures out the PC's powers were switched, and would like to arrange it so the PC's powers transfer from the DNPC into himself. If the PC can find out about it and play his cards right, he might be able to turn the tables on the villain and get his powers back.*

8. The Event: The DNPC chairs the organizing committee for a charity event. Unfortunately, his efforts may go for naught when a supervillain attacks the event.

Complications: *Another member of the organizing committee has embezzled the funds and framed the DNPC. The attack is just a cover for the embezzler's activities.*

9. The Relative: A long lost relative of the DNPC appears out of nowhere for a joyful reunion. Unfortunately, the relative turns out to be an impossible freeloader. At the DNPC's invitation, he moves into the PC's apartment, eats all the PC's cereal, doesn't pick up after himself, erases the videotape archive of the PC's fights by recording his soap operas over them, and so forth. How can the PC get this annoying moocher out of the picture?

Complications: *When the PC finally persuades the DNPC to get rid of the freeloader, he falls down the stairs, fakes an injury, and sues.*

10. Hit — And Run As Far Away As You Can Get, You Bastard!: While walking down the street one night, the DNPC was hit by a drunk driver who promptly drove away. The DNPC is now in a coma in ICU. The person who mowed him down was never caught and the police have no leads to his identity.

Complications: *The drunk driver's a very influential businessman. If he ever gets tried, his skilled lawyers will make it appear the accident was the DNPC's fault.*

11. Stalker: A deranged maniac is “romancing” (stalking) the PC's friend/beloved DNPC — committing robberies to bring her gifts, kidnapping her, dragging her to a wedding chapel, forcing a preacher to marry her, and then killing the DNPC on the honeymoon after they “consummate their passion.”

Complications: *The stalker is an insane but extremely tricky supervillain. Either he's got illusionary powers to mislead the heroes, mental abilities (including the ability to dominate thugs and low-end supervillains and throw them in the PCs' path), or Desolidification and/or invisibility powers.*

12. Reincarnation?: A supervillain with an ancient past (Black Paladin, Cataran, or the like) sees a hero's DNPC and recognizes him/her as the reincarnation of a long-lost lover. The supervillain becomes obsessed with the DNPC and determined to win him/her over.

Complications: *The villain performs a mystic ritual that makes the DNPC begin to take on the traits of his/her “counterpart” and experience strange flashbacks. Not only does the hero have to stop a villain from romancing his DNPC, he has to prevent the DNPC from being taken over by a dark spirit.*

13. Pet Of Evil: The DNPC's got a new pet — who's taken an immediate dislike to the PC. The pet follows the PC around, and wherever he goes, there's a sudden spree of accidents that seem to amuse the pet. But as far as the DNPC's concerned, “Precious” can do no wrong. “Precious” is actually a shapechanging villain who's impersonating an animal to lay low while the heat's off. Unfortunately, he also enjoys jerking people's chains, and he's decided to pick on the DNPC's dour friend, the PC. (This scenario works even better if “Precious” picks on a hero in his secret identity.)

14. Birthday: It's a DNPC's birthday, and the PC has to get her a nice present and attend her birthday party.

Complications: *Wouldn't you know it? Today's the day when twenty supervillains break out of jail and descend on the city! To make matters worse (provided you have mastery of the language of passive-aggressiveness), the DNPC*

sends signals that her relationship with the PC will be in serious trouble if he disappoints her.

15. Daddy?: A DNPC sees someone who looks like his dad — who died years ago in a plane crash. He becomes obsessed with finding out whether his father is actually alive.

Complications: The DNPC soon meets his father — but the person is actually an actor. Criminals hired him to get close to the DNPC, who has something (an old item, a secret) the criminals want. The actor's story is that the father faked his death to save himself from mobsters (and of course, a few thugs attack him to reinforce the story). The PC has to uncover the truth — and hope the DNPC's heart doesn't break in the process.

16. Shop 'Til You Drop: A mentalist with a nasty sense of humor has been implanting random commands in people — and he's told the DNPC to shop! Not only are his credit cards maxed out buying useless crap, he's stealing credit cards (including the PC's) to facilitate the addiction.

Complications: Perhaps you think it's a relief when the DNPC gets thrown in jail. But what happens when he starts compulsively buying stuff from his cellmates?

17. Ultimatum!: The DNPC receives a tape — from Dr. Destroyer! Unless he surrenders to Destroyer at 7:00 PM in the ballroom of a popular hotel, Destroyer will unleash such devastation upon the city that it will make the destruction of Detroit look like a firecracker. “And tell no one!” The DNPC was frightened enough by the tape that he showed it to a reporter, who thinks it's authentic. But why would Destroyer want to harass a lowly DNPC?

Complications: The tape isn't from Destroyer, it's actually a clever forgery made by co-workers to lure the DNPC to a surprise party that's going to take place in the ballroom. Unfortunately, a supervillain who's spying on the journalist saw the tape and figures that anyone whom Destroyer wants so badly must be worth big bucks, so he decides to kidnap the DNPC!

18. Hey! Cut That Out!: After a car accident, the DNPC acts strangely around the PC. He's very forgetful, he's prone to outbursts and surprisingly (if it's appropriate for the PC and DNPC) shuns intimacy. Then one day, when the PC's back is turned, the DNPC tries to stab him.

It's not the DNPC — it's an imposter who's taken the DNPC's place. The reason for the imposture will depend on the DNPC's role in the campaign, but the real DNPC is being held somewhere against his will.



19. The Prophecy: During a battle against some villains, one of the bad guys — an oracle/precognitive type — proclaims that within twenty-four hours, someone will murder the DNPC. Is it a genuine prophecy, and if so, how can the PCs stop it?

Complications: The prophecy doesn't actually refer to the DNPC, but to someone else with the same name. While the PC rescues the DNPC from a number of comical near-brushes with death, someone kills the actual victim as the first step in a larger supervillain plan.

20. Threat Or Menace?: Following a nasty incident where one of the other PCs was caught (or framed) committing an atrocity, an outraged DNPC joins a movement to protest that hero's presence in the city and drive him out of town — and he wants the PC to join. The PC is caught between loyalty to his teammate and the respect of the DNPC.

Complications: In an ugly incident following a battle in the downtown core, an angry mob (including the DNPC) starts throwing rocks and rotten fruit at the hated PC.

Twenty Hunted Scenarios

Most Hunted scenarios involve one of these situations: (a) the enemy shows up at a battlefield and interferes with an ongoing combat; (b) the enemy attacks the PC (either by himself, or through a proxy) when he least expects it, (c) the enemy harasses, stalks, taunts, or otherwise annoys the PC, and/or (d) the enemy lures the PC into a trap. These are all lots of fun, but there are lots of other things you can do with Hunteds. Here are twenty suggestions.

1. The Great Hero Hunt: While Hunting a hero with a secret identity, a villain with a lot of resources hides cameras in the areas where a PC has frequently been seen. He's trying to discover who the PC actually is by catching him on camera changing into costume, analyzing which civilians always appear in the same area before or after the PC's seen, and so on. Agents in a sophisticated rig disguised as a TV repair van patrol the area and monitor the cameras.

Complications: Unfortunately, the villain comes to the conclusion that a homeless man who collapsed under a dumpster three times shortly before the hero showed up is the PC. Despite his rough appearance, the man matches the hero's height and build, so the villain kidnaps the homeless man and threatens to kill him on live television unless the city pays a \$5 million ransom.

2. The Challenge: A hero's Hunter, backed by a pack of agents, invades a television studio, takes hostages, and shows everyone a remote control detonator that he's rigged to blow up bombs scattered around the city. He challenges the PC to come to the studio and meet him in single combat. If the hero wins, he gets the detonator and the Hunter surrenders. If he loses, the villain has publicly humiliated him. If the television signal is interrupted, or more than one hero shows up, the bombs will detonate.

Complications: The PC's been hit with a long-term Drain that severely weakens him during the fight (if you don't want to use a Drain, you can give the PC the flu or some other illness.) Or maybe the villain has set up a vat of acid into which he'll hurl the defeated hero, and either the Hunted ends up falling/getting thrown into the vat himself, or an innocent bystander takes the bath and becomes a villain who blames both the hero and his Hunter for his disfigurement.

3. Mercenary Ambush: The Hunted sets up a situation where he's endangering an innocent bystander. When the PC shows up, the bystander turns out to be a mercenary villain in disguise. Together (possibly in coordination with agents lurking in ambush) they attack.

Complications: After the PC's captured, the mercenary turns on the Hunted and captures him too. Both the PC and his Hunted have a

mutual enemy who'll pay a large sum of money for them, so they must join forces to escape.

4. The Imposter: The Hunted either dresses up as the hero or hires a mercenary villain to impersonate him, lures the PC to an isolated location (such as a mine shaft), traps the hero there, and then goes on a crime spree and smears the PC's reputation.

Complications: For Iron Age campaigns, the "hero" appears in public in the presence of a beautiful woman. A few months later, the woman shows up pregnant and says the hero is the father. Unfortunately, she was impregnated with genetic material taken from the hero, and all tests show that he is the father.

5. Old Haunts: The Hunter doesn't attack the PC directly. Instead, he goes on a spree of violence against known associates of the PC. A reporter who wrote a favorable feature story on the hero is found beaten, with the story taped to his chest. The head of a charity the PC endorsed is also found beaten unconscious, wearing a copy of the hero's costume, and the offices of the charity are destroyed. A section of a nearby sports/superhero bar dedicated to the hero is leveled. The place where a hero made his first public appearance is similarly defiled. If the hero is a second-generation hero, family memorabilia is vandalized or destroyed.

Complications: As the "passive-aggressive" crime spree continues, the press follows it with a fascination that borders on the ghoulish. Reporters harass friends and associates of the PCs, and photographers stake out places that are allegedly "favorite haunts" of the PC. On the Internet, morbid jerks form a "dead pool" to predict the time and place where the villain will strike next.

6. The Sidekick: While involved in a fight, the hero receives unexpected aid from a young woman or a teenaged boy wearing a costume that employs the hero's motif. The helper claims the hero inspired him to join the hero's crimefighting crusade — but he's actually a plant, hired by the Hunter to get close to the hero, learn his deepest secrets, and betray him.

Complications: The would-be sidekick learns to respect the hero, and is torn between the employer and his target. He gives the villain some damaging information — but ultimately sides with the hero and becomes the target of a bloody revenge scheme.

7. Before I Kill You, I Want To Destroy You Slowly: At the site of every major PC battle, the Hunter shows up, fires a power drain rifle at the PC, weakens his defenses, and then teleports away. Worse, whenever the PC captures villains, the Hunted promptly arranges for their release or escape. As a result, the PC experiences an unrelenting series of battles and gets weaker and weaker.

Complications: *The Hunter supplies the villains the PC encounters with devices that make them (the villains) stronger and stronger, thus escalating the threats the weakening PC must face.*

8. My Hunted — My Ally?: The PC's involved in a battle where he's badly outnumbered — when suddenly he's rescued by his Hunter (who's wearing a slightly different version of his normal costume). The Hunter claims he's actually the PC's best friend from another dimension (from a world where the PCs' enemies are their friends, and vice versa). He also brings bad news: a second superhuman — one the PC would normally consider a friend and helper — has also entered this dimension. He wears a variant costume and commits acts of villainy.

Complications: *The whole situation is a set-up for an elaborate betrayal — there was no extra-dimensional transport. The Hunter only pretends to be his "Backworld" counterpart; likewise, the "Backworld" hero is actually the PC's friend, who's been captured and brainwashed to play his part. The villain wants to get close to the hero, become his best friend, and then betray him when he can hurt him the most.*

9. The Request: The Hunted declares that his long feud with the PC is over. He's willing to surrender, but only to his enemy.

Complications: *The Hunted has terminal cancer. He asks his former enemy to do him one favor: deliver a package to the son that he abandoned years ago. When the son (who's already a delinquent with powers) receives the package, he decides to take up the father's mantle and perpetuate the feud.*

Alternatively, the Hunted could ask the PC to deliver a package to someone who looks just like the PC. The dying Hunted found the PC's long-lost illegitimate child (or clone), brainwashed him, and secretly raised him as his son. The next iteration of the Hunted will be family.

10. Frame Job!: A drug dealer publicly testifies that a superhero supplied him with drugs, and produces corroborating photographs. When the hero tries to defend himself and strike back at the drug suppliers, they react to him like he's just another buyer — and then the police burst in. The Hunter, of course, has manipulated things behind the scenes.

Complications: *The Hunter isn't acting alone. He's got crooked cops, a federal agent, and police informants on his payroll, all ready to present forged evidence and planted drugs. If the phony sidekick plot is also in play, the sidekick can testify that the PC dealt him drugs and got him addicted to heroin.*

11. While You're Busy Over There...: As the PC races to the scene of an urgent operation, he receives a taunting message from his Hunter, announcing that he's going to rob a bank on the other side of the city while the hero's busy.

Complications: *The Hunter completes his robbery, but leaves behind an especially nasty surprise for the hero — hostages attached to bombs rigged to cameras with facial recognition software. The cameras trigger a three-second timer when they spot the PC.*

12. Help Me: While out on patrol, a PC receives a distress call from his Hunter. He claims he's stumbled on a master plan from someone who poses an even greater threat to humanity (DEMON, Black Paladin, Tyrannon, Istvatha V'han, Takofanes, and Dark Seraph are all good candidates) that must be stopped at all costs. He says he's willing to put aside his differences to deal with a mutual enemy. Will the PC ignore the threat posed by the greater evil, or come to the Hunter's aid and risk falling into a trap?

Complications: *The offer is legitimate — but during the middle of the fight, the archvillain enemy offers to help one enemy destroy the other, and the Hunter turns on the PC.*

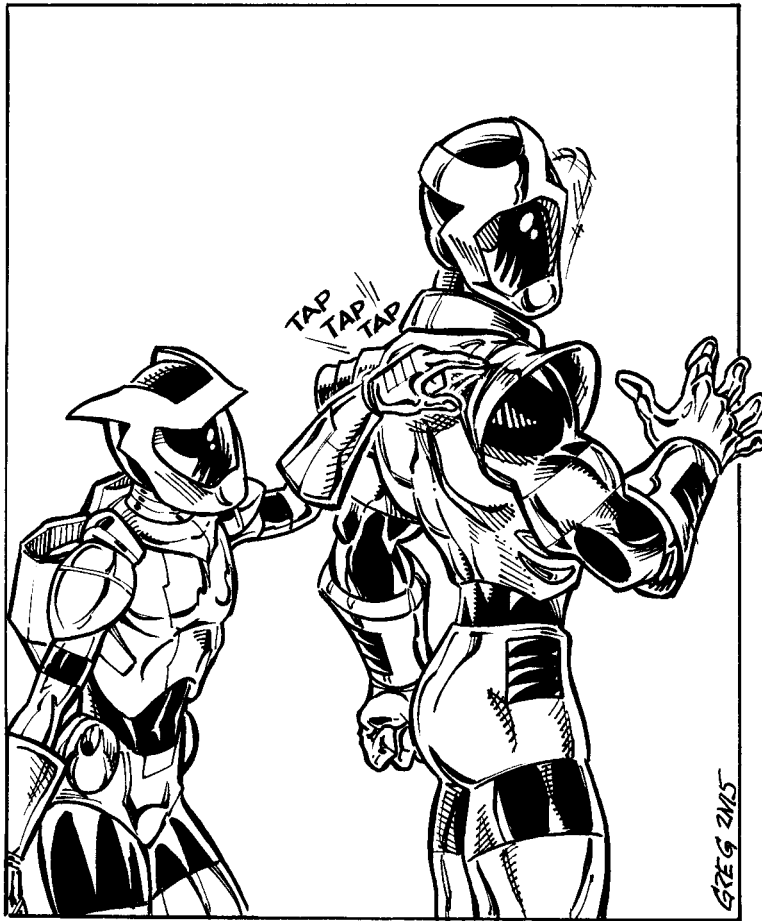
13. The Favor: During the middle of a fight, a PC's Hunter appears out of nowhere — and Knocks Out someone who's about to blast the hero from behind with a huge weapon. Then he declares the PC owes him a favor and vanishes. Later, the villain contacts the PC and asks him to repay the debt by delivering a videotape to a journalist for him. The tape has some rather innocuous footage taken at a convention. Will the PC deliver it?

Complications: *One of the people on the tape is actually the journalist's wife, who's seen being very friendly (but not unfaithful) toward a colleague. The tape is part of a blackmail scheme — the colleague's having a discreet affair with the journalist's wife. The villain wants to raise doubts about his wife's fidelity without completely revealing the secret (a person who's worried about a dark secret can be manipulated to the villain's advantage, but a person who's had his secrets revealed can't). Involving the heroes is merely icing on the cake.*

14. My Enemy, My Salvation: Someone at a crime scene's been badly hurt, and it turns out he has an extremely rare blood type. The only person known to have the same blood type is the PC's Hunter. The PCs need to track the bad guy down and force him to give blood... one way or another.

Complications: *The person who needs the blood actually is the Hunter in his secret identity after he used cosmetic surgery to change his appearance from the time he was last captured. The dying but still vengeful Hunter may try to use the situation to lure the PC into a trap.*

15. This Hero, This Embezzler!: The members of the local chamber of commerce approach the heroes. They claim a PC came to them to raise money for charity and they gave several hundred thousand dollars to his foundation... but when an accountant checked, the charity was a fraud and someone had transferred the money to an offshore account. They're



certain it was the hero (he demonstrated his powers). Of course, this is an elaborate scam played by the Hunter to get rich at the hero's expense. The hero now has a lawsuit and some really bad publicity (and possibly a criminal investigation) on his hands.

Complications: *The money was embezzled from a charitable foundation sponsored by one of the PC's teammates. The PC didn't just steal money from charity, he robbed one of his teammates as well!*

16. The Rival: While a PC was busy elsewhere, a rival hero faces the Hunter and easily defeats him. The press (or the rival himself) points out the PC has always had trouble fighting against the Hunter, and suggests the rival should replace the PC on their team.

Complications: *The rival and the Hunter are in cahoots. Over the next few weeks, other*

old enemies of the PC "take a dive," leading to increasingly loud calls for the rival to take the hero's place on the PC's team. (Of course, the defeated Hunter almost immediately escapes from custody.)

17. Riddle Me This: The Hunter leaves a videotape at a television studio containing riddling clues to his next crime. But the Hunter's never used riddles before and the PC knows he hates that sort of thing. Embedded in the riddle is a clue to the identity of the real villain of the scenario, someone who's forcing the Hunter to do his dirty work.

18. You Want Me To Do What?: The PC's Hunter is out on probation — and the authorities want the PC to serve as his probation officer. The Hunter claims to be extremely unhappy with the arrangement, but it's a set-up. An over ambitious prosecutor believes the PC is excessively violent, and has conspired with the Hunter to trap him. The Hunter's wearing a GPS legband that also contains a tiny recording device. If the Hunter can goad the PC into an otherwise unprovoked attack, the prosecutor will charge the PC with assault.

19. Stop Haunting Me! Okay, the Hunter's dead. You saw him die. So why are there so many reports that his ghost has terrorized people in various locations around the city? Did he make some unholy pact that allows him to live beyond the grave?

Complications: *What better way to lure someone into a trap than to make it look like an old enemy is still around? The ghost is actually the work of a special effects artist who's been hired to capture the PC. On the other hand, the reappearance has given some ideas to a supervillain mystic whose plans the PCs recently foiled.*

20. Tag Team: An alien species kidnaps a PC and his Hunter, then offers them a chance to fight as a team against two alien gladiators. If they win, the person who most impresses the judges receives a cosmic power boost. If they lose or refuse to cooperate, the aliens will invade Earth. Will the PC risk having his archenemy receive cosmic power to stave off the invasion?

Complications: *Just before the fight, the PC's weakened by an alien poison. Who's responsible — the Hunter, an alien gladiator they'll be fighting against, an alien gambler who bet heavily against the PC?*

Twenty Secret Identity Scenario Hooks

The classic secret identity schtick is to put the character into a situation where he needs to change into his superhuman identity without anyone noticing. However, even in this situation, there's room for variety, as illustrated below. Many of these seeds assume a "zero tolerance" for outsiders knowing the superhero's secret identity. If some people know his identity, or he's willing to have it exposed, you may have to adjust them.

1. Blind Date: A hero's friends have set him up on a blind date in his secret identity — and from the other person's height, voice, and demeanor, he's sure he's dating one of his most hated enemies in her secret identity. But before the PC realized this, they were hitting it off really well! She wants to go out with the PC again. Does he agree?

Complications: The supervillainess thinks there's something familiar about the PC and starts snooping into his background.

2. Deadline: At the office Christmas party, VIPER agents dressed up as Santa Claus take everyone hostage. They don't seem to be interested in stealing money, presents, jewelry, industrial secrets, or kidnapping anyone. (The head of the office used to be involved with VIPER, then sold the organization out. VIPER's Council Of Thirty has ordered that "he will not live to see another Christmas," so the agents have instructions to gun him down at 11:59 PM on Christmas Eve, in front of witnesses.) How can the PC stop them when he's been taken hostage, too?

3. Rent: The PC arrives at his apartment to discover that all of his belongings are gone. The landlord claims he hasn't received a rent check from the PC in three months and thus he's entitled to kick him out. But the PC knows he's made the payments, and the checks have been cashed. The landlord's made a deal with a developer to sell the property. He needs to get the tenants to leave, and (being an unintelligent sort) thinks the best way to accomplish this is through lies and strong-arm tactics.

4. The Scam: While driving his car on a dark, miserable night, the PC accidentally hits a man who seemed to come out of nowhere. The man is now suing the PC for over a million dollars for medical expenses, pain, and emotional suffering. This is actually part of an insurance scam engineered by a pair of superhumans. One is a teleporter, the other has bio-alteration powers. The teleporter teleports his partner into the middle of the road, the bio-specialist lets himself get hit, but heals the injuries as soon as they're credibly documented. The villains have made millions of dollars using their powers like this to commit insurance fraud.

5. You're In The Army Now: In college, after a wild party where he was goaded by his girlfriend, the hero signed up for ROTC. He attended a few meetings, decided it wasn't for him, and dropped out.

Now the Army activates a little known clause in the old agreement — the PC's been drafted and has to leave for boot camp next week!

A VIPER recruiting team has infiltrated the boot camp and concocted the whole ROTC scam. Instead of getting ready to fight his country's enemies, the PC's being indoctrinated to assist in his nation's destruction!

6. Hero Of The Day: No good deed goes unpunished. A hero in his secret identity saves an old man who's about to be hit by a car and gets his picture in the paper. It turns out the person he saved was a retired mobster. When the mobster dies two months later (from an unrelated medical condition), he leaves everything to the PC. Of course, buried in his estate are secrets that current underworld bosses had hoped would stay buried forever....

Complications: The character's not just richer — he's inherited a criminal empire. This doesn't annoy just the underworld and the cops: the costumed vigilante who drove the old mob boss into retirement believes the PC staged the rescue to grab the mobster's criminal empire. He's determined to make sure the new "mastermind" doesn't live long enough to get comfortable on his throne.

7. Takeover: The company a PC's working for in his secret identity has been acquired in a takeover bid, and he's sure that many of his co-workers are passing secret VIPER code-signs at their meetings. Is the PC now working for a VIPER front company?

Complications: The company is giving its new employees (and up to three friends) a free two-week vacation at a luxurious resort in the Caribbean. Of course, the resort's really one of VIPER's brainwashing centers.

8. My Secret Identity Is... Public Enemy Number One! Thanks to identity theft and hacking, a PC in his secret identity is now the leading suspect in the FBI investigation of a terrorist bombing that killed twelve people. Unfortunately, the PC was in his costumed identity at the time and has no alibi. There's a nationwide search underway; if the PC shows up anywhere in his secret identity again, he's toast. His only hope is to find the real culprit and prove his innocence.

Complications: When the PC finally corners the imposter, a sniper kills the man just as he's about to confess and flees. It becomes clear this wasn't done by a ragtag band of terrorists, but a new, dangerous organization... one that apparently knows the PC's secret!

9. Bully For You: At the neighborhood barbecue, one of the new neighbors, a noisy lout, gets drunk, eats all the food, drinks all the beer, insults all the women, and picks a fight with one of the smaller, more milquetoast individuals. Does a PC intervene and teach him a lesson?

Complications: *If the bully's humiliated in a fight, he goes back to his house, grabs a gun, and begins firing it at random. His family is in danger (not to mention the rest of the neighbors!) — he needs to be stopped.*

10. The Unmasking: While in his secret identity (which he's never shared with the other PCs) the PC's at his job when he suddenly sees someone in his own costumed identity fighting a major villain. At the end of the fight, when the "hero" stands triumphant over him, the PC's doppelganger unmasks, revealing someone the PC's never seen before. Immediately, this "Jack Waring" takes over the PC's costumed identity: he's more charismatic than the PC, more virtuous, and a lot more powerful.

Waring is actually the PC's protégé from twenty years in the future. The PC sent Waring back in time to goad his past self into revealing his secret identity to at least a few of his teammates — because if he doesn't, at some point in the future, trust issues will pollute his relationship with them. Jack Waring can only visit the present for two weeks before the timestream snaps him back to his place of origin, and he's going to do whatever it takes to shake the PC out of his mistrust.

11. Welcome To Splitsville, Population You: Tired of the PC spending so much time away from home, his spouse/significant other files for divorce/leaves him.

Complications: *The spouse/SO knows the PC's hiding a secret, and desperately wants him to come clean. This is actually an attempt to shock him, not a real threat. But if the hero overreacts, the relationship's over. (This is a good time to give the PCs an encounter with a happily married villain couple, just to rub it in. Remember the Joss Whedon Rule — when you have a chance to stage an action scene that parallels or contrasts with the events going on in the PC's life, go for it!)*

12. The Host With The Most: Someone (a spouse, family member, or boss) assigns an exchange student/foreign worker/intern to live with the PC. For the next three weeks, he'll be hosting this person at his home, and is expected to show him a good time. The visitor's going to stick to the PC like mowed grass to a laborer's back on a hot summer day, giving him very few opportunities to switch into his costumed identity.

Complications: *The visitor is actually a spy. He'll give the sponsor a few opportunities to get away, but only in places where he can access sensitive files and make contact with foreign agents.*

13. The Fundraiser: A PC's boss insists he attend a charity fundraiser... one he's already promised to attend in his costumed identity. His boss practically drags him by the arm, and isn't giving him any opportunity to duck out of the party and change into his costume. How can the PC be in two places

at once... or, more accurately, in the same place as two people?

Complications: *To make matters worse, a villain interrupts the fundraiser, points a weapon at the PC (while he's in his secret identity). He demands the hero come out and fight him, or he'll blow his hostage away!*

14. The Most Feared Hunter Of Them All: Someone sends a PC a message saying that he knows the hero's secret, and in two minutes they're going to destroy him. Two minutes later, the PC receives a visit from the IRS. According to its records, the PC has a two million dollar back tax bill (raise the bill if the character's wealthy — it should be so shockingly large he hasn't a hope of paying it). Beat a supervillain? Sure, no problem. But how does a superhero beat the taxman?

Complications: *The character discovers the government's frozen all of his accounts.*

15. Witness: While out performing errands in his secret identity, a PC spots a minor league mob boss barking orders to his enforcers. The enforcers gun down a rival gangster in a restaurant before the PC can intervene. Then he's spotted by police, who immediately put him into protective custody so he can testify at the mobster's trial. How can anyone live in protective custody and still function as an active superhero?

Complications: *The PC is turned over to the FBI, who are suspicious about how he happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. Investigators begin scrutinizing his life to an uncomfortable degree.*

16. The Great Race: The PC enters a 10 kilometer (or 10 mile) footrace in his secret identity to raise money for charity. Unfortunately, a really obnoxious NPC superhero shows up for the race. He uses his superior running ability to show everyone up and acts like a complete jackass (running circles around the contestants, shouting "good natured" taunts at everyone while he's running by them). Can the PC show up this jerk without endangering his secret identity?

Complications: *Villains take the opportunity to attack the NPC hero. However, they don't care if innocent bystanders get in the way — and the "heroic" showoff doesn't seem all that concerned either.*

17. Fortuneteller: The PC accompanies a loved one to a performance by a stage magician. The magician goes into a trance and announces that someone in the audience is "more than human." Then he describes someone who looks like the PC, and finally points in his direction. What does the PC do? (The stage magician is actually setting it up to invite the PC onstage, where he'll use his illusions to make it look like he's a superhuman. He isn't aware of the PC's true nature — it's just part of the act.)

18. Hyde Park — No Jeckyls Allowed: At a “Speaker’s Corner” promotion for a local television station, a PC in his secret identity and his date/spouse pass by a “rant booth” when a man walks up and starts insulting the PC’s costumed identity on camera.

When the next person goes up to the booth, he also launches into a tirade against the PC; and when the PC’s date/spouse tries to defend him, she finds herself going into an uncontrollable rant against him too. If the PC goes in front of the camera, he’ll do it too (provided he fails to resist Mind Control 13d6). No mental powers are visible, but clearly a mentalist is slandering the PC.

19. They Did What?: While a PC was busy elsewhere, someone stole his car.

Complications: And the PC left a spare costume under one of the cushions! If the thieves get the car to a chop shop, they’re almost certain to discover the incriminating tights.

20. Power To The People: When the PC’s in a situation where he calls upon his powers, something strange happens — instead of activating them, he transfers them to someone else in the vicinity. The PC also creates a mind link with the person who receives the power, and may offer advice, but doesn’t have direct control. A near-omnipotent trickster being, or perhaps the being who gave the PC his powers, wants to teach the PC a “lesson” in how to play well with others. If the PC demonstrates humility and improved social skills, his powers return; otherwise, they stay away until his attitude improves.

TEN PLOTS FOR WHEN A SECRET IDENTITY IS BLOWN

One of the most interesting (and disturbing) situations in a *Champions* game is when a hero’s secret identity is exposed (whether due to his own stupidity, an enemy’s machinations, an accident, or the like). In this situation, four things can happen.

First, you can run a scenario that allows the PC to cover up the mistake and get back to the status quo. The number of comic books in the Sixties in which someone concluded “Superman is Clark Kent” but which ended with everyone believing he wasn’t Clark, not to mention similar situations involving nearly every other major costumed hero, offer a near-endless stream of inspiration.

Second, the PC can develop a new identity (and possibly a new costumed persona), often by faking his death.

Third, the PC’s life blows up, people take advantage of the revelation, and the player has to deal with it.

Fourth, the one person who learned the PC’s secret develops amnesia, dies, or otherwise becomes unable to reveal the secret... for now.

Here are some scenario ideas involving this situation:

1. The Seventh Circle of Litigation Hell: People who’ve had property destroyed in battles involving the PC band together to launch a class action suit against the hero. They’re showing no mercy — he’s

even being forced out of his home, with the house attached to pay for preliminary damages.

Complications: Depending on the popularity of the hero, when word of the lawsuit gets out, the general public rises up to support him. Unfortunately, someone takes a shot at the lawyer who’s championing the class action suit, and some of the plaintiffs receive death threats. Can the hero calm down an ugly situation? After being forced from his home, is he in any mood to do so?

2. Face Off: Citing his past service to the nation, the FBI, PRIMUS, or UNTIL offers to help the exposed hero regain control of his life. They’ll relocate the hero’s family to another part of the city and use state-of-the-art plastic surgery to alter their appearances. Furthermore, not only will they change the hero’s looks, they’ll provide the hero with a gadget that alters the visual effect of his powers, allowing him to resume a superhero career under a new identity.

Complications: A tabloid reporter named Parker Jamison finds out about the new identity and agrees not to expose the hero... but only if the hero agrees to give him a head’s up on his activities so he can take exclusive pictures. Can the hero really trust this twitchy reporter?

3. Thicker Than Water?: Angry at being excluded from the PC’s secret, one of the hero’s closest relatives lashes out at him in the press, claiming that not only is the hero a secretive jerk, he physically abused him when they were growing up. He’s lying, but that’s not stopping him from writing a “tell-all” book to cash in on the revelation.

Complications: Shortly after the treacherous relative announces the tell-all book, the PC receives a desperate call from the relative claiming he’s been kidnapped. Does the hero bother to rescue this annoying leech? And has he really been kidnapped, or is this an elaborate set-up?

4. The Gang’s All Here: After a PC’s been exposed as a superhero, a gang of youths who are amped on Metatron (see Chapter Three) commit crimes while dressed in variations of the hero’s costume — and then drop off the proceeds at the PC’s home and other known haunts. People aren’t sure whether someone’s trying to frame the hero, or whether he’s so angry about having his secret identity blown that he’s turned to crime.

Complications: The robbers are actually fan-boys. They think their hero is so cool that it’s wrong for society to treat him this way. Now that they know how to reach him, they can actually give him cool stuff and repay him for all the good he’s done for the city.

5. Kidnap: Here’s an obvious one — when a supervillain learns his archenemy has used a secret identity to protect his loved ones, the loved ones become obvious targets. Besides kidnapping or kill-



ing them, a villain could have people stalk the loved ones, take lots of pictures of them, and so forth. How can the hero protect the ones he loves the most from harm?

Complications: *The hero's archenemy is behind the legion of stalkers, but he's not planning to kidnap his family... not yet. He's hired a telepath to mentally transform the character so that he periodically experiences hallucinations of his family being stalked. Gradually the illusions go beyond mere stalking: he see his enemies appearing out of nowhere, snatching his kids, and teleporting away, or he receives phone calls from his kids screaming for help in the middle of the night. Sure the archenemy could kidnap the PCs' kids, but it's more fun to torture the hero first!*

6. Litigation Hell, Part 2: A lawyer approaches the superhero and points out that two superheroes (one in a foreign country) have the exact same name as the exposed PC hero. Now that he no longer has a secret identity, it's a lot easier to file a lawsuit against the other two heroes, gain exclusive rights to the name, and get some damages too!

Complications: *It turns out a now-forgotten supervillain filed for the trademark years ago, and now everyone's being sued. And whatever sympathy the hero received for having his secret exposed has been wiped out by the belief that he's a litigious jerk.*

7. The Imposter: The secret's out, right? However, who's that guy in the hero's old costume who says he's actually the hero, and the unmasked hero is a fraud?

Complications: *The guy's a fanboy playing a really dangerous game. Maybe he thinks he's doing the hero a favor, or maybe he's a slimy opportunist who wants to piggyback himself on the PC's hard-earned reputation. It's awkward to expose him — though ultimately the imposter might provide the means of restoring an exposed secret identity.*

8. Awakening: The PC wakes up in a vat, and there's a computer displaying the following message: "Ability levels: 99.6%; Memory levels: 98.2%. Duplication procedure successful." A scientist comes over to the hero: "Don't do this again," he says. "This is the third time you've blown your secret, and every time you do that, you make a mess. Now just sit back. We'll insert in a few transitional memories to make it easier to assume your new secret identity, and this will all feel like a bad dream."

"I'm a clone?!!" (And what happened to the earlier counterparts?)

9. The Cult Of You: Now that the hero's identity and whereabouts are publicly known, the people whose lives he's saved know where to go to thank him... and to find pieces of his clothing, assorted knick-knacks, and other merchandisable bits of his life. No good deed goes unpunished — especially when gratitude mixes with hero worship and threatens to put the PC at the center of a full-fledged cult.

Complications: *What happens when the public turns against a rival superhero who's bad-mouthed the hero in the past? Or when they find out one of the PC's parents was cold and cruel to him in his childhood years, and decide the old man or woman needs to be punished?*

10. Death Of A Squealerman: This scenario depends on how the secret was exposed. A person involved in exposing the hero's secret identity — a news crew director who covered the battle where the hero's identity was exposed had the fight on a five second delay and chose not to bleep the hero's name; a tabloid editor published exclusive pictures of a hero's face after a villain unmasked him — has been found dead. Guess who the prime suspect is?

Complications: *There's actually a secret pact between a few superheroes — because exposing a hero's secret identity puts all superheroes (and their families) at risk, anyone who deliberately exposes a secret identity must die. Even a few superheroes who are known to have a Code Versus Killing participate. What happens when the hero finds out about the so-called protectors of the "superhero community"?*

TEN BITS OF GOSSIP TO SPREAD AROUND AT A SUPERHERO PARTY

Here are some rumors you can circulate among the PCs when they go to superhero parties or weddings, meet up with their colleagues on patrol, or otherwise interact with the Superhuman World. Ideally, a gossip story should start with an unusual hook, develop with two or three unexpected complications, and end with a good punch line. The names of the superheroes involved are left to you to fill (for maximum embarrassment or humor, of course!).

1. Absence And Malice: A particular superhero has missed a lot of team meetings and his teammates have gotten fed up. One of them's quietly leaked word to other superhero teams that the offending hero's willing to switch to a new group. No one's sure why he's screwing up: rumors range from alcoholism to being caught in periodic time loop as an aftereffect of a battle with a chronomanipulating villain.

2. Be Vigilant: The psychotic vigilante who's recently shown up in town has been acting on information from the DA's office. The DA's become so concerned about leaks and/or vigilante employees that he's ordered psychiatric counseling and mutagenic testing for everyone in the office.

3. Scavenging The Globe: An NPC superhero team's sponsor is about to pull the plug on his team because of fears of financial liability due to the team's penchant for causing property damage. The team's on the verge of bankruptcy. One of the heroes has become so desperate about the team's financial situation that he's taken memorabilia from battle sites and sold it on Internet auction sites.

4. Therapy: An NPC superhero is on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He saw a counselor to deal with the problem, but the psychiatrist turned out to be an evil mentalist! His teammates rescued him, but not before the hero became an emotional wreck. Now the team's members are desperately trying to cover up the incident and their teammate's mental state.

5. Ditch The Codpiece: An extremely homophobic supervillain has been desperately trying to come up with a traditional superhuman costume that doesn't make him look "gay." Meanwhile, one of his cohorts *is* gay, but the villain hasn't realized it yet. One of these days, someone's got to tell him.

6. The Pain: A retired superhero has bone cancer and is dying an extremely painful and protracted death. Out of respect, a retired illusionist supervillain (one of his old archenemies) has offered to put him in an illusory state where he can ignore the pain for the remainder of his days, but the hero stubbornly refuses to be coddled, especially by a former enemy.

7. The Egg And I: A superhero has returned to his team after taking a three-year sabbatical. He offers an unusual explanation for his absence — he was on a visionquest in the only place on Earth that's so inhospitable that it might allow a superhero to experience visions — Antarctica. He's remained closed-mouthed about his experiences, but did bring one object back from his quest — a huge snow-white penguin egg. He's turned part of the team headquarters into a nursery (including a state of the art incubator). He hasn't explained much about the egg, but made an offhand comment about "a God-Emperor Penguin." No one's sure if he was joking or not.

8. My Pet: An alien creature bonds with a well-known superhero. The hero loves the pet, but it's noisy, dirty, and territorial, and the other members of his team can't stand it. One of them "accidentally" ejected it out of the team vehicle over the Mojave Desert, but it found its way back to the team headquarters. Later the teammate "accidentally" ran over it with the team vehicle; the animal survived but ran away from the team headquarters and hid somewhere in the city. Naturally, the pet's owner is incensed at his teammates and desperately looking for his beloved animal. Unfortunately, so is a supervillain "collector" of alien species.

9. The King Of All Fighters: A superhero team has impounded a time machine, but a pair of scrappy heroes (both trained normals) are using it to stage an unusual contest. They've been going back in time to compete in historical martial arts competitions (they've fought in the Pankration at the ancient Greek Olympics, raced chariots in ancient Rome, and fought bare-knuckle matches against John L. Sullivan in the 1880s). They're trying to see who can be the "King of Historical Fighters." The timestream is flexible enough that there haven't been any noticeable alterations in the timeline, but no one should be using a time machine like a third-rate videogame.

10. Making An ASS Out Of Ourselves: The American Superhero Society, a longstanding but little respected organization, is having its "Superhero of the Year" awards. The awards have always been something of a joke, but this year things have really gone downhill. The ASS Board of Directors were voted out of office (despite the revelation that a cybernetic superhero tapped into the former directors' computer network and may have used privileged information to elect the new board). The new directors have declared that the awards process isn't working properly because it wasn't designed to benefit "Full Voting Members" of the ASS. The new board wants to use the awards as a publicity tool first, and as a way to honor the best and bravest heroes second (if at all). Although the awards are little more than a joke, many superheroes still jockey for position in the awards and campaign fiercely to win one.

TEN RUMORS FOR THE HEROES TO INVESTIGATE

Here are some rumors you can spin off into traditional crime-oriented adventures. The PCs can learn about them from stoolies, law enforcement officials, or other superheroes. It's up to you to add complications and develop these into full-blown scenarios.

1. Dead Bodies: There's a serial killer in town. Typically, the killer expertly kills the victim with a hunting knife that he inserts with surgical precision into the vital organs; then he brands a number on the cheeks of his victims. The numbers are sequential for the killing spree — the first victim was "1," the second victim was "2," and the last victim was "5."

2. Weird Lights: People have seen strange blue globes of light in the hills on the outskirts of town. They circle over the hills for about five minutes every evening between 9:00 PM and 2:00 AM, then vanish. The Air Force sent a patrol to the area and found nothing. A police search of the area hasn't turned up anything.

3. Backsliding?: A cat burglar supervillain is paroled after nearly thirty years in prison. He had a penchant for stealing sapphires — and three large sapphires were stolen from a jewelry store last night. His parole officer vouches for his whereabouts at the time of the robbery, but that's an awfully convenient excuse....

4. The Eye Of The Storm: An artifact devoted to the Hittite weather-god, known as the Eye of the Storm, is about to be shown at a local museum. Bad weather (and a big increase in robberies) has occurred in every city that has hosted the Eye Exhibit, and there are reports that a supervillainous thief (possibly one of the members of GRAB) has been seen in town.

5. Feral Callings: A pair of wildcats have been frightening people in an upscale neighborhood and killing dogs and cats. They may have super"human" powers; they tore apart a pack of Dobermans without getting scratched. No human has been hurt... yet.

6. The Con Artist: Pensioners have reported receiving phone calls from a mysterious caller. They feel compelled not to hang up, and within five minutes, they've given away their life savings to the voice on the phone, then they forget what they've done. Over two dozen people have been victimized by this telepathic leech. Even the most hardened members of the local fraud squad would give their eyeteeth to put this creep away. One voice recording of the culprit exists, but attempts to trace it have turned up nothing.

7. Day Of The Scorpion: People at a low-rent apartment complex are getting sick with a serious flu-like illness. Dozens of people have been hospitalized, and two of the victims were found with scorpion stings on their bodies (scorpions aren't native to the region).

8. Rally Round The Scumbag: At the trial of a supervillain, people stage large and violent protests demand his release. They're getting bigger every day. No one's sure why people are defending the villain, but the police fear a riot will break out if the trial lasts much longer.

9. Gang War: There's been a lot of gang violence lately in the downtown area. Word has it one of the gangs plans "to make a statement" in the next couple of days. Given that the gang's leader's brother is currently in ICU with three bullet holes in his chest, the statement is expected to be loud.

10. Boo: Ghosts have been chasing people out of a local graveyard for the last three nights. A vagrant claimed that the ghost of a Vietnam-era Marine shot him last night, but no one believes him. The rumors have spread to the point where local funeral homes that use the cemetery are losing business.

NEW CHARACTERS



THE ENGINEER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100.0 kg; 2d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
30	CON	40	15-	
16	BODY	12	12-	
35	INT	25	16-	PER Roll 16-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
10	COM	0	11-	
16	PD	14		Total: 36 PD (20 rPD)
16	ED	10		Total: 36 ED (20 rED)
5	SPD	22		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
14	REC	12		
60	END	0		
55	STUN	19		Total Characteristic Cost: 213

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
117	<i>Craft Technological Object From Loose Metal:</i> Variable Power Pool, 70 base + 35 control cost, Powers Can Be Changed As A Zero-Phase Action (+1); Requires Appropriate Amount Of Loose Or Scrap Metal (-½)	var
140	<i>Machine Control Powers:</i> Multipower, 140-point reserve	
14m	1) <i>Cyberoverride:</i> Mind Control 11d6 (Machine and Human classes of minds), Telepathic (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only To Override Battlesuit Or Cyborg Systems Controls (-½)	0
22m	2) <i>Cybercontrol:</i> Mind Control (Machine class of minds) 9d6, Area Of Effect (16" Radius; +1¼), Selective (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Has No Effect Against Mechanon Or His Direct Creations (-¼)	0
22m	3) <i>Destroy Machines:</i> RKA 2½d6, NND (defense is Power Defense or not being a machine; +1), Does BODY (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Has No Effect Against Mechanon Or His Direct Creations (-¼)	0
11m	4) <i>Machine Manipulation:</i> Telekinesis (20 STR), Fine Manipulation, Area Of Effect (14" Radius; +1¼), Selective (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only To Control Machines And Machine Parts (-1), Has No Effect Against Mechanon Or His Direct Creations (-¼)	0
17m	5) <i>Sap Powers:</i> Suppress Electrical Devices 5d6, all Electrical Device powers simultaneously (+2), Area Of Effect (18" Radius; +1¼), Selective (+¼), Reduced	

	Endurance (0 END; +½); Limited Range (20"; -¼), Has No Effect Against Mechanon Or His Direct Creations (-¼)	0
7u	6) <i>Cobble Together Robots From Spare Parts:</i> Summon 2 430-point creatures, Loyal (+½); Requires The Appropriate Amount Of Loose Or Scrap Metal (-½), Extra Time (Full Phase, -½)	14
8u	7) <i>Repair Damage To A Machine And Refuel It:</i> Healing BODY And END 6d6, two Characteristics simultaneously (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only Usable On Mechanical Devices (-½)	0
8u	8) <i>Communicate With Machines:</i> Telepathy 14d6 (Machine class of minds), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
37	<i>Innate Defense Against Technology:</i> Armor (20 PD/20 ED), Hardened (+¼); Only Versus Ranged Technological Attacks (-1)	0
19	<i>Machine/Organic Hybrid Body:</i> Armor (8 PD/8 ED); Activation Roll 15- (-¼)	0
12	<i>Part-Human, Part-Machine Mind:</i> Mental Defense (16 points total)	0
8	<i>Ear Coverings:</i> Hearing Group Flash Defense (12 points); OIF (-½)	0
8	<i>Eye Shields:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (12 points); OIF (-½)	0
17	<i>Cameravision:</i> Clairsentience (Sight And Hearing Groups); Only Through Cameras And Listening Devices (-½), Attack Roll Required (-¼)	3
10	<i>Cyberlink:</i> Mind Link, any one willing machine; No Range (-½)	0
40	<i>Read A Computer's Memory At A Glance:</i> Detect Data In A Computer 16- (Radio Group), Discriminatory, Rapid (x10,000,000,000)	0
53	<i>Sense Machine:</i> Detect Machines 16- (Radio Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Microscopic (x1,000,000), Targeting	0
15	<i>Electronic Concealment:</i> Invisibility to Sight Group, No Fringe; Only Versus Machines (-1)	3
18	<i>Mechanon Interrogation Protocol:</i> Healing 2d6 (Regeneration, 2 BODY per Turn), Can Heal Limbs, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Self Only (-½)	0
	Perks	
10	Money: Wealthy	

THE ENGINEER PLOT SEEDS

Having stolen experimental gravitics technology, the Engineer decides to showcase it by removing one of the largest office buildings in the city from its foundations and lifting it 100 meters into the sky. For some reason, the people in the office building at the time don't appreciate this. When people panic and begin leaping out of the building to their deaths, the Engineer doesn't seem to care. And if the heroes interfere with yet another of her plans, she won't hesitate to drop the building in a fit of pique.

Determined to destroy Mechanon once and for all, the Engineer gathers together a dozen supervillains and heroes, all of whom are sworn enemies of the metal tyrant, and persuades them to put aside their differences and perform a coordinated strike ("...otherwise we'll be dealing with Mechanon in the year 3000!") The PCs receive an invitation to take part. But can they work with homicidal maniacs, even in a good cause?

A particularly rowdy pack of engineering students from the local university decide to invite the Engineer to their Engineering Week festival as their guest of honor. The villainess agrees — if they'll do her a favor for first. So why does the Engineer want them to suspend a Volkswagen on the roof of the superteam's headquarters?

Talents

- 3 Absolute Range Sense
- 3 Absolute Time Sense
- 5 Eidetic Memory

Skills

- 10 +1 Overall
- 3 Computer Programming 16-
- 3 Deduction 16-
- 3 Electronics 16-
- 15 Inventor 22-
- 3 KS: The Superhuman World 16-
- 3 Lockpicking 13-
- 3 Mechanics 16-
- 15 Power: Cyberkinesis Tricks 19-
- 3 Security Systems 16-
- 3 Systems Operation 16-
- 6 TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Small Motorized Boats, Small Planes, Snowmobiles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles
- 4 Weaponsmith (Energy Weapons, Firearms, Missiles & Rockets) 16-
- 3 Scientist
- 2 1) SS: Civil Engineering 16-
- 2 2) SS: Electrical Engineering 16-
- 2 3) SS: Mathematics 16-
- 2 4) SS: Metallurgy 16-
- 2 5) SS: Robotics 16-
- 2 6) SS: Structural Engineering 16-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 713

Total Cost: 926

200+ Disadvantages

- 10 Enraged: When Someone Mentions Mechanon's Name (Uncommon), go 8-, recover 11-
- 15 Hunted: Mechanon 8- (Mo Pow, Harshly Punish)
- 15 Hunted: VIPER 8- (As Pow, NCI, Harshly Punish)
- 5 Physical Limitation: affected by Mental Powers that affect either the Human or Machine class of minds (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Easily Infatuated With Male Battlesuit Heroes (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Seeks To Create Benevolent Machine World (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Grandiose, Loves To Do Things On A Huge Scale (Common, Moderate)
- 15 Susceptibility: to telepathic scans of her subconscious, takes 3d6 damage instantly (Uncommon)
- 626 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 926

Background/History: Grace Gallowglass was an engineering student from Killarney, Ireland, who came to Millennium City University to study robotics. A studious woman, quiet but ambitious, she hoped one day to be involved in "the engineering project of the new century." One of the fields that she studied was robotics, and she was especially interested in superhero and supervillain robots... particularly Mechanon. It was only natural: he might be a homicidal monster, but he's also the greatest achievement in the history of robotics.

She wanted to examine the Mechanon technology up close and personal, and ironically, it turned out that one of Mechanon's hidden bases was beneath the campus robotics workshop. She snuck into it minutes after a battle between the Champions and Mechanon, but her excitement turned to horror when she was trapped by the machines and imprisoned in a net of steel tentacles and silicon probes. She'd activated the auto-repair systems, but there was no Mechanon for the system to repair.

Repair the afflicted system.
Repair.

The systems started "repairing" Grace. In agony, the engineering student desperately reached for the controls, and accidentally triggered the biological interrogation sequence. This program tortured people for information, but to ensure the organics didn't die before the information was obtained, it also regenerated any physical damage (something Mechanon viewed as a necessary evil).

Heal the organic. Heal.
Repair damaged system. Repair.
Heal.
Repair.
Heal.

So Grace found herself being transformed into a machine — and having her biological damage healed simultaneously. Six hours later, the authorities who found her unhooked what she'd become from the machine.

And what had Grace become? Part human, part machine? No, it was more complicated than that. Both the auto-repair and the bio-repair protocols were still working inside her — the system decided she needed to have both of them "installed" — as was a cybernetic link to the complex. The machine was alive inside Grace, and it danced for her. The code was in her, too. She discovered Mechanon's code was surprisingly compatible with other systems; almost immediately, she figured out how to exert control over any machine.

Grace was hospitalized at a secret high-security facility in Maryland for people victimized by supervillain technology. The staff had experienced more than their fair share of experiments run amok, but Grace was in a completely different league. She easily escaped the facility, leaving behind a smoking pile of rubble.

Grace's initial impulse was to track down Mechanon and offer herself to him as his consort. Mechanon, never the romantic type, responded by trying to kill her. Heartbroken (but not *that* heartbroken), Grace deactivated Mechanon and escaped. (Mechanon's control circuitry took note of the defeat and insulated all future Mechanons against her cyberkinetic powers.)

Grace now faced an identity crisis of epic proportions. Mechanon's programming was strong, but not overwhelming. She didn't want to purge the world of organic creatures, but she appreciated the beauty of the Machine, and the wonders the Machine could produce. She decided to dedicate herself to creating a new world — a machine paradise where the engines of order, ruling over the lesser organic sprawl, would bring harmony to the world. Efficiency would replace misery and sweep away poverty. There would be such marvels: beanstalks that rose above the clouds to carry men into space; lakes of glass that would drink the sun and empower the world. A world of beauty and wonder, and she would be its engineer.

Ever since the day of her epiphany, the Engineer has used her powers to expand her resources in the hopes of bringing about her vision. Her plans are methodical and overwhelming in scope. Of course superheroes have opposed her schemes, and three of her most cherished projects have been destroyed by their noxious interference. Still, the Engineer endures, looking for better materials, more efficient energy sources, and ways to craft her masterpieces and display the glory of her vision to a world that refuses to see.

Personality/Motivation: Suffering from physical pain that's as great as her ambitions, the Engineer has withdrawn into a callous, cruel persona. She rarely expresses herself emotionally, though she allows herself a wry, ironic dig from time to time. She likes to live in high style, with lots of small servitor robots waiting on the "queen bee" of her technological hive/wonderland.

The Engineer says she's above "petty emotions" like revenge. You'd never know it from the tenacity she demonstrates when someone's spoiled one of her plans, or her complete and utter hatred of Mechanon. While she claims she thinks she's "better" than the petty masses of humanity, she often clings to battlesuit-clad heroes. She believes they might be kindred spirits, someone else who's experienced the merging of the machine and human worlds (invariably she gets disappointed, but she's still desperate for companionship).

The Engineer claims to be protective of human life, and isn't a casual killer. But she's never had any qualms about taking a life when someone becomes a serious impediment to her plans.

Quote: "The Machine. The next step in the paradigm of the universal aesthetic. You breathed life into us, human, but the father is rarely happy when his son learns to stand on his own two feet."

Powers/Tactics: The Engineer is a cyberkineticist of great power and ability. Although the Mechanon process boosted her basic human abilities, she's less



of a combatant than most master villains. When it comes down to conflict, she relies on robotic minions (like the Enginoids described below) to do the fighting for her. If forced to fight, she'll evaluate the technological expertise of the opposition, quickly try to turn one of the heroes against his team (if they have Foci she can control), then sit back and cobble together robots (she always has a few spare junk piles at her bases for just such an emergency).

For the Engineer's "Enginoid" robots, you can use the ones in *The HERO System Bestiary*, *Star Hero*, or other Hero Games publications if you prefer not to create your own. If you want more "specialized" creations, you can take character sheets from *Conquerors*, *Killers*, and *Crooks* and add the appropriate Automaton Powers.

Campaign Use: The Engineer fits the "master villainess who shows up on rare occasions" niche. She's tough, but her plans are so complicated it takes a lot of time and energy to implement them. Her schemes aren't always evil; more often than not, she builds a project with the best of intentions, but doesn't consider the side effects ("I've rerouted the earth's magnetic field so it creates a natural space elevator at this spot..." "But it's the earth's magnetic field! You've just disrupted everything from radio to cell phones to traditional navigation!" "So what? — space elevator!").

Although she's extremely powerful, she's not active enough to replace Cybermind as the premier cyberkineticist of the Champions Uni-

verse, nor is she as directly effective in combat. She shouldn't be able to hold her own against most hero teams without her robots (and at least one battlesuit-clad NPC hero or villain under her control). Groups that use a lot of technology will find her to be a nastier foe than those who rely on natural talent, magic, and mutation. Even against technological heroes, her power suite relies on broad area of effect powers that will be less effective against single PC opponents.

To adjust the Engineer for a lower-powered campaign, reduce her SPD to 4, her EGO to 18, her Cyberoverride to 12d6, her NND KA to 2d6, and remove her Overall Level. To make her more powerful, boost her Variable Pool to an 80-point Pool, give her two more Overall Levels, boost her Cybercontrol power to 14d6, her Cyberoverride to 16d6, her Destroy Machines power to 3½d6, her Machine Manipulation to 35 STR, her Sap Powers to 8d6, and her Create Robot From Spare Parts to four robots at a time.

If the Engineer Hunts someone, he probably has something she wants, has some connection to Mechanon, is an anti-technological fanatic, or is a hunky guy in a battlesuit that she has the hots for. Otherwise she generally can't be bothered. As a Hunter, she usually prefers to ambush her quarry, capturing him alive so she can have a "chat" with him or dispose of him how she pleases.

Appearance: Prior to her transformation, Grace was a tall Caucasian female, 5'10" and 140 pounds, with dark brown hair and brown eyes. Now she's a constantly changing hybrid of flesh, metal, and circuitry draped over a once-human frame (her attractiveness varies depending on what parts of her are being "repaired," the process tends to run the course over her entire body in about ten minutes). As the Engineer, Grace wears a bodysuit, gold with blue trim; her cape and hood are gold with a blue lining. Her voice has a slightly echoed, mechanical edge.

INVICTUS

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
65	STR	55	22-	Lift 200 tons; 13d6 [6]
29	DEX	57	15-	OCV: 10/DCV: 10
35	CON	50	16-	
25	BODY	30	14-	
25	INT	15	14-	PER Roll 14-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
30	PRE	20	15-	PRE Attack: 6d6
22	COM	6	13-	
28	PD	15		Total: 28 PD (20 rPD)
33	ED	26		Total: 33 ED (30 rED)
6	SPD	21		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
20	REC	0		
70	END	0		
76	STUN	0		Total Characteristic Cost: 315

Movement: Running: 11"/22"
Leaping: 13"/26"
Swimming: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
140	<i>Solar Blast:</i> Multipower, 140-point reserve	
12u	1) <i>Primary Attack: Solar Blast:</i> Energy Blast 16d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) plus Sight Group Flash 6d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Linked (-½)	5
14u	2) <i>Precision Heat Blast:</i> Energy Blast 14d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	5
14u	3) <i>White Flame:</i> Energy Blast 14d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
12u	4) <i>Ignite The Air:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, Affects Desolidified (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
14u	5) <i>Prostration:</i> Drain STR and END 3½d6, two Characteristics simultaneously (+½), Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Minute; +¼), Area Of Effect (10" Radius; +1), Selective (+¼), Ranged (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
25	<i>Solar Toughness:</i> Damage Resistance (20 PD/30 ED)	0
10	<i>Solar Eyes:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points)	
10	<i>Tough Ears:</i> Hearing Group Flash Defense (10 points)	
11	<i>Will Of Iron:</i> Mental Defense (15 points total)	
15	<i>Solar Form:</i> Power Defense (15 points)	
20	<i>Solar Form:</i> Life Support (Immunity to all terrestrial poisons and chemical warfare agents; Longevity: ages at half normal rate; Safe Environments: High Pressure; High Radiation; Intense Cold; Intense Heat; Low Pressure/Vacuum)	0
10	<i>Swift Runner:</i> Running +5" (11" total)	1
4	<i>Swift Swimmer:</i> Swimming +4" (6" total)	1
9	<i>Sharp Perception:</i> +3 PER with all Sense Groups	0

Perks

- 8 Fringe Benefit: Member of Congress
- 63 Well-Connected and 60 points' worth of Contacts in government, politics, law, and the media (including PR firms, other Congressmen, prominent lawyers, and so forth)
- 10 Money: Wealthy

Talents

- 15 Combat Sense 14-
- 3 Simulate Death

Skills

- 8 +1 with All Combat
- 6 +2 with *Solar Blast* Multipower
- 12 Penalty Skill Levels: +4 vs. Range Modifier with All Attacks
- 5 Accurate Sprayfire
- 3 Acrobatics 15-
- 3 Acting 15-
- 3 Breakfall 15-
- 3 Bribery 15-
- 3 Bureaucratics 15-
- 3 Climbing 15-
- 5 Concentrated Sprayfire
- 10 Defense Maneuver I-IV
- 3 Oratory 15-
- 3 Persuasion 15-
- 3 PS: Football 15-
- 4 PS: Politician 15-
- 3 Power: Solar Fire Power Tricks 13-
- 5 Rapid Autofire
- 5 Skipover Sprayfire
- 3 Linguist
- 3 1) Language: Greek (idiomatic; English is Native)
- 3 2) Language: Latin (idiomatic)
- 3 3) Language: Russian (idiomatic)
- 3 4) Language: Spanish (idiomatic)
- 3 Scholar
- 3 1) KS: Classical Poetry 15-
- 2 2) KS: Football 14-
- 3 3) KS: Political Science 15-
- 3 4) KS: Roman History 15-
- 3 5) KS: Roman Literature 15-
- 2 6) KS: The Political World 14-
- 2 7) KS: The Superhuman World 14-

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 545**Total Cost: 860****200+ Disadvantages**

- 5 Enraged: when he sees his own blood (Uncommon), go 8-, recover 14-
- 5 Enraged: when accused of criminal behavior (Uncommon), go 8-, recover 14-
- 20 Hunted: DEMON 8- (Mo Pow, Kill)
- 25 Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Ambitious (Common, Moderate)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Hates Christianity (Common, Moderate)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Ruthless, Fanatical Protector Of His Secrets (Common, Total)
- 15 Susceptibility: from exorcisms performed within 10" of him, takes 3d6 damage instantly (Uncommon)

- 20 Social Limitation: Public Identity (David Sutherland, Jr.) (Frequently, Severe)
- 530 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 860

Background/History: David Sutherland was an All-American boy: great athlete, great looking, a scholar. But his father, David Sutherland, Sr., was the All-American Man: war hero, college football star, Olympic wrestler, retired Senator from Oklahoma. In short, he cast an extraordinarily long and deep shadow over everyone's lives, especially his son's.

David Jr. responded as well as a son could in that situation. He had more than his share of high school and college triumphs, and good grades in law school. He also became involved in a secret society that paid homage to the ancient Syrian deity Sol Invictus ("the unconquered sun"). He thought it was a lark.

After college, David experienced bad breaks for the first time in his life. He became engaged to a congressional page, but she left him after she caught him having an affair. Infidelity was minor compared to the accusations made against him by some of his college classmates, but he always bought them off — all except one, who mysteriously vanished before she could go to the police.

David joined one of the most prestigious law firms in the country. Unfortunately, two months after he was hired it fell apart. One of the senior partners had embezzled tens of millions of dollars from a client and another was convicted of bribing judges. The young Mr. Sutherland had realized they weren't an ethical bunch, but who'd ever have guessed the day would come when ethics violations would actually turn into a serious problem for a law firm?

David ran for the state assembly and relied on his natural charisma to carry him through. Unfortunately, David failed to win support from the party apparatus, which was controlled by old political rivals of his father. Several of them openly supported his opponent. The defeat that followed was public and humiliating. After the election, David called his father for support. Three minutes into the conversation, David began to experience a breakdown.

"I don't support failures," his father coldly replied. "Now stop whining and grow up."

The rejection nearly broke David. He contemplated suicide, but he remembered a pact he'd made in college: when things looked most dire, he'd sacrifice something of great value to Sol Invictus. For some reason, David chose to perform the ritual, using his campaign manager as the sacrifice. To his astonishment, the sun god answered.

The god told David he was destined to be the greatest man on the planet, as dominant on Earth as Sol was in Heaven. Then the alleged divinity asked David to allow him to enter his body so he might work miracles. David agreed to the bargain and — as the cliché goes — he was never the same again.

The "deity" was actually the spirit of Nero Astrolabus, a third century AD outcast priest of Sol

**INVICTUS
PLOT SEEDS**

A website goes up entitled "The Invictus Murder Page." It chronicles a lot of David Sutherland's alleged misdeeds. The webmaster is found dead two days later, and the website has been erased. Invictus claims it's the work of an old enemy, probably VIPER, who's trying to discredit him. What's really going on here?

After a DEMON attack on Invictus, he loses his powers. The anguished superhero figures he can find a mystical way to reverse the effects of DEMON's power-blocking ritual, but he'll be vulnerable during the casting. He wants the PCs to protect him from a second DEMON attack. Actually, the reason that Invictus is powerless is because DEMON cast out the spirit of Nero Astrolabus, the source of his powers. Of course, Sutherland's desperate to get the spirit back.

Representative Sutherland is up for re-election, and his opponent is an old friend of one of the PCs. And while Sutherland has announced that he plans "to run the cleanest campaign in the history of the Republic," you know the dirty tricks machine is going into overdrive. What happens when the PC's old friend is linked to VIPER? And what happens if the old friend is also linked romantically to the PC?



Invictus. Nero had been a counselor to the emperor Constantine, and harbored ambitions of becoming emperor. He was also a sorcerer of great power who took on (some would say stole) many of the powers of his deity. Nero Astrolabus had been a merciless enemy of the rising Christian faith, and the atrocities he committed against early Christians were legion. Eventually his misdeeds were exposed, and the emperor stripped him of his position and put him on trial for treason.

Nero Astrolabus was found guilty and burnt alive... but being a sorcerer of great power, he found a way to keep his soul alive for seventeen centuries in an incorporeal state. He hoped to regain physical form, but needed someone to perform a ritual of restoration. He whispered to the dull, cattle-like humans who walked the world after the Fall of Rome, but none of them paid heed. Even history's magicians ignored him in favor of more tantalizing voices. It wasn't until the late twentieth century, when David Sutherland started summoning spirits for a lark, that Nero Astrolabus finally found the appropriate vessel through which to make his return.

He and David were almost a perfect match. Uniting with a son of politics and privilege appealed to Nero Astrolabus, and David appreciated Nero's raw sorcerous power. Nero was determined to help his host by bringing David's political dreams to a glorious fruition.

Three days after his defeat, David Sutherland emerged from hiding, declaring to the world that he had obtained superpowers. With these magnificent powers at his command, he announced he would retire from law and politics and devote himself full time to "the people." What better way for a politician to become a "real man of the people" than to become their foremost superhuman champion?

As the superhero Invictus ("unconquered" in Latin), David Sutherland did a great deal of good. He battled VIPER and DEMON in the Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia areas, where their leaders learned to hate his glowing presence. Invictus's popularity skyrocketed. Occasionally there was scandal — one tabloid even accused him of bribing supervillains to take a cheap dive so he could look good. David ignored the rumors (*publicly* ignored them — privately the reporters experienced fatal "accidents"). Four years later, Invictus was ready to make his move. He announced that the political ills of the nation had grown so great that they needed a real superhero in Congress to wage the battle against America's "other supervillains." He ran for Congress and won in a landslide.

Now, as a newly elected representative from Maryland in Congress, Invictus is one of the most famous and powerful superheroes-turned-politician in the world. Although it's early in his political career, he's already viewed by many as a potential future president of the United States.

And that's certainly *his* goal. That — and transforming the United States into a second Roman Empire by the time he arrives in the White House.

Personality/Motivation: Invictus is a fusion of two personalities, neither one pleasant. Sneaky, ruthless, self-indulgent, extremely charming, charismatic, and wildly ambitious only begins to describe this most Machiavellian of souls. The guile of Nero Astrolabus controls Invictus's actions, but the anger and hate of David Sutherland is what fuels his passions. It is an extremely dangerous combination.

Invictus's ultimate goal is to obtain the ultimate in political power. However, he doesn't *just* want to be President, he wants people — *his* people — installed in as many major state and city governments, financial centers, and news media outlets as possible. He'd even like to control the entertainment business. He views superheroes as a threat; especially when the public loves certain superheroes more than they love him. He knows that popular hero teams like the Justice Squadron pose the greatest threat to his long-term goals, so he works toward their downfall whenever possible.

Invictus hides that particular part of his master plan as well as he can. While he's never joined any superteams, he's always maintained good relations with other superheroes, and can still be a helpful ally. Of course, any superhero who allies with Invictus is asking for trouble. Several times over the past three years, superheroes have privately revealed embarrassing secrets to Invictus which were later publicly exposed. Typically, Invictus arranges for the press to stumble on an appropriate clue, and the investi-

gator then does the necessary legwork to uncover the truth. Sutherland makes sure he's three steps removed from the investigation.

Invictus may come across as overly slick, a phony, and a manipulator. In part it's because of the natural enmity some people have toward politicians, and partially it's because even Sutherland can't completely hide his true nature.

Because he's both a son of privilege, and a spirit from Roman times, Invictus has a lot of skeletons hiding in his closet. He often engages in decadent practices in his private life, and they've come back to haunt him on numerous occasions.

Quote: "It matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate, I am the Captain of my soul. (pause, aside) I hope the little bastards appreciate the classics."

Powers/Tactics: Invictus is the host for the spirit of a priest of the ancient sun god, Sol Invictus, and that's the heart of his power. He channels the solar energies of the deity (which, to modern eyes, makes him look exactly like a superhero in action); it's telling that most of his tricks are designed to hurt people.

Invictus's standard battle tactic is to stand back at a distance of about thirty meters, blind an opponent, then hit him with an Autofire attack when he can't see what's coming. The sole exception are bricks; he enjoys weakening them with his heat prostration attack, then closing to hand-to-hand range, where he'll outmuscle them (and taunt them as he's beating on them).

Because Invictus is essentially a possessed human, he's Susceptible to exorcism attacks.

Campaign Use: Invictus is a behind-the-scenes villain who appears to be a hero. He also fills the niche of "political villain." He's a quintessential long-term planner — he's only a journeyman in politics and may not make his run for the White House for another twelve years (or more), but he's trying to set things up so that America is ready and willing to be a world empire by the time he reaches the Oval Office.

If anyone ever exposes Invictus's secret, he can go down two possible paths. First, he can become a publicly acknowledged supervillain, despised by the general public and hated by other superheroes. He would devote himself to the destruction of the United States government and the discrediting of all superheroes. Alternatively, however, he can sacrifice Nero Astrolabus, arranging for his spirit to be cast out of Invictus's body. Once it's gone, David will blame the spirit for all of his misdeeds, and (after much public anguish), vow to publicly atone for them. (Nero is confident David would secretly want to reintegrate him back into his body as quickly as possible, and he's right.)

To adjust Invictus to a lower-powered campaign, reduce his SPD to 5, his primary attack to 14d6, and his other attacks to 10d6. You might also remove some of his various Skill Levels. To make him more powerful, his Multipower's reserve to 175 pts; increase his primary attack

to 20d6/8d6 Flash, decrease the END cost on his Autofire to 0 END, raise his other slots to a base of 14d6, and expand his Prostration power so it also drains CON and DEX

Invictus rarely Hunts anyone — it's not worth the risk of being exposed. If he does develop a serious grudge against a character, he'll move against him covertly (*i.e.*, by using his government contacts to get him audited, revoke his sanction, and so forth) unless the quarry makes him so mad he can't resist attacking... but even then, he'll attack when there are no witnesses around.

Appearance: David Sutherland is a Caucasian male in his early 30s, 6'3", 225 pounds with an athletic build. He has reddish-blond hair and green eyes. He dresses in smart business suits. During his superhero career, Invictus wore a costume that resembled stylized Roman centurion's armor crossed with an American flag motif.

THE CENTURY CORPS

Invictus is the founder of the Century Corps, a new movement that identifies America's best and brightest high school students who can't normally afford higher education, and pays for four years of college for them. In exchange, the Century Corps students are taken to a private academy, where they spend a year studying, socializing, and doing volunteer public service work together. About four hundred students each year are inducted into the Century Corps; in the three years since its founding, it's grown into one of the most prestigious foundations in the United States. The Corpsmen do most of their work in the Washington, D.C. area, but will travel anywhere across the country to help areas stricken by a major emergency.

Of course, Invictus has ulterior motives for setting up this organization. First, a good sample of outstanding young men and women is almost certain to turn up a burgeoning young superhuman, whom Invictus can mentor. Second, he can indoctrinate young men and women who are likely to advance into positions of business and political power. He's counting on the Corpsmen's loyalty when he comes to power.

Finally, the Century Corps also learns about Sol Invictus and his ancient cult, and are treated to a few subtle "how ancient cult practices can give you an advantage in today's world" lectures. (Nero Astrolabus is nothing if not devoted to his deity).

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