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STARK CITY

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SILVER DISTRICT

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STARK CITY

SILVER DISTRICT

Contents

Silver District	2
Sentinel Citadel	3
Sentinel Robot	4
The Tank	4
The Hall of the Living	4
The Thirtieth Floor	5
Doctor Judas	5
The Sendkirk Federal Building	7
Order	8
Sidebar: City Hall	9
Monarch Industries	10
Monarch	11
Sidebar: Sable Lynx	12
Blurocket Investment Group	13
Sidebar: The Siren Building	14
Mikhail Wilk	15
Sidebar: "No Regrets"	16
The Scout Building	17
The Astrologer	17
Stark Central Station	18
The Silver Spirit	19
American Fist	20
Breaking the Loop	22
License	23

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The Silver District

Theme

Stark City Concentrated (a retro Silver Age locale with the dials cranked to eleven)

Scale

A city neighborhood of about 1.6 square miles

Aspects

Sterling Silver

"This is how we do things downtown."

Everyone Has a Price

Location

Stark City's downtown is the heart of the city, occupying the same land Thomas Stark developed into a trading post and, later, Fort Adams. It is separated from Stark Lake by Geartown.

Description: With its unique skyline, constant bustle of activity, and colorful defenders, the Silver District of Stark City has become virtually synonymous with the city itself. Indeed, were you to ask a resident of New York, Los Angeles, or Houston about their Midwestern neighbor, chances are good everything that citizen might mention would be located downtown. It is here where the Sentinels, the great hero team founded in the wake of betrayal, make their home, and it is here where many institutions of city life—Stark Central Station, City Hall, and the Stock Market—can be found. Finally, the Silver District also serves as corporate headquarters for some of the largest and most powerful corporations on the planet, including Monarch Industries and the city's banking firm, Bluerocket Investment Group. All of these landmarks are concentrated in one small area, ensuring that downtown is always busy, by the rising sun or the full of the moon, with tourists and locals alike working, playing, and fighting for their lives.

Thomas Stark was the first entrepreneur in what would become the city that bears his name. After the construction of Fort Adams, Stark added a company store which catered to everything a soldier or homesteader might need, from beds and blankets to stabling equipment, construction tools, and

clothing. Much of this was made locally by the canny general—who knew that imports were expensive—but he also opened a specialty store carrying East Coast fashions that catered to the fort's elite and those who struck it rich setting up new businesses and services for the growing populace. When Stark died in 1828, the region was not yet a boom town, but within a generation the population would grow to almost thirty thousand. In addition to banks, furniture, jewelry, and clothing stores sprang up to capture all that new money, with most of the new businesses grouped along Silver Street. A Native American influence made the city's jewelry trade especially popular, and prompted a famous visit in 1893 from Crown Princess Ka'iulani of Hawaii. This was the Princess's last known appearance before her encounter with the cosmic entity known as Entropos who, in his role as Shepherd of the Null State, intended to divest Earth of all its meaning. With the Sentinel at her side, Ka'iulani pleaded for the future of all mankind and Entropos heard her, subsequently elevating her to the status of cosmic emissary; the jewels she purchased on Silver Street became vessels for star-spanning power and she was gone.

The arrival of Entropos signaled another growing trend for Silver Street: it was a magnet for trouble of the superhuman sort. As the city grew and shops, banks, and civic landmarks turned one street into a flourishing Silver District, it seemed a month could not go by without a nation of apes invading, a European tyrant launching a building into space, or the populace being given the heads of giant ants. This latter event, which occurred during the height of Prohibition, led to the famous, "Turf War at the Center of the Earth" between red-headed Mafia in Stark and black-headed Triads in Shanghai. It is popularly believed that some of the tunnels from this crisis were incorporated into the city's growing sewer network, and still provide access to the Catacombs.

Perhaps because catastrophe is a constant in the Silver District, downtown has never suffered the stagnation and blight which has plagued many other American cities. When Hitler clones in rocket packs

emerged from a Nazi redoubt in South America to raze Downtown in 1976, the rebuilt Siren Building and City Hall became instant landmarks. There's not much housing left in the District, though, and what remains is exorbitantly priced luxury apartments in guarded towers. City Hall has been rebuilt no fewer than five times, maintaining the same classic architecture on the outside even as new technology encourages planners to make each incarnation an improvement on the one before. "Super-insurance"—insurance against damage caused by metahuman-related mishaps—is a major element of the city's financial industry.

The latest downtown renaissance occurred with the construction of the Sentinel Citadel, a state of the art headquarters for the city's foremost superhero team. This was prompted by the betrayal of the last true heir to the Sentinel name who, after years of neglect and self-imposed isolation in his Silver City lair, murdered a street vigilante who attempted to adopt the Sentinel persona. Forsaking his legacy forever, the former Sentinel renamed himself "Doctor Judas" and left his headquarters behind, a mysterious time bomb in the heart of the city. Heroes stepped up to investigate the building and, assisted by the Sentinel Foundation, eventually chose to remain, locking Judas's personal equipment behind a sealed vault door against his inevitable return.

And so the Silver District flourishes to this day, a symbol of everything Stark City stands for: wealth, prosperity, superheroic adventure, and the terrible cost that adventure places on the innocent civilians who are swept up in its otherworldly wake.

Sentinel Citadel

Aspects

What's Behind This Door?

Open to the Public

Anything Money Can Buy—And Plenty It Can't

Description: The downtown headquarters of the Sentinels was built in 1982 by the last hero to bear that name, and it became a place of self-exile. Eventually the Sentinel emerged when another hero began using his name; after killing that hero and

adopting the new name of "Doctor Judas," the last heir to the Sentinel legacy left Stark City and his skyscraper home. After a tragic effort to explore the building cost four men their lives, the mayor had the entire place declared a crime scene and made it off limits to all citizens. The Citadel remained a towering monument to fear and failure until recently, when Mayor Ullman invited heroes from around the world to come make Stark City their home. To sweeten the pot, he offered them the best headquarters a psychopathic mastermind could build.

Once over a hundred stories high, the Sentinel Citadel was the tallest building in the city when it was constructed and for ten years thereafter. But Doctor Judas took the top seventy floors with him when he left, levitating them off their foundation with a gesture and a thought. The remains were an imposing and windowless edifice marked only by the crest of the Sentinel family and a representation of the constellation Canis Major, in which the star Sirius is found.

With the arrival of new heroes, the Citadel underwent major renovations paid for by the Sentinel Foundation, all that remains of the once-secret support system known as the Network. Large windows now cover all four sides of the building, and the brooding facade has been replaced by a gleaming silver statue of the 1936 Sentinel, his arms upraised in triumph. The roof has been repaired and made a landing platform for aircraft, while the top floor has been sealed off and made into an inaccessible vault for all the dangerous relics Doctor Judas left behind.

Most visitors to the Citadel enter through the lobby, walking past a magnificent fountain plaza with marble benches and green plants. The bottom three floors are open to the public on weekdays from 8:00 in the morning until 8:00 in the evening, and 12:00–5:00 on weekends. Staffing needs are provided by a small army of Sentinel Robots, all designed by Doctor Judas before he turned to evil. The robots are altruistic, courteous, and loyal to a fault. They are obvious androids with synthetic blue flesh, but wear uniforms identical to that of the fifth Sentinel, who fought in the Gloriana Invasion.

Whenever a group of schoolchildren come to tour the Citadel on a field trip, the Sentinel Robots privately draw straws to see which will have the coveted pleasure of being their guide and escort. When villains attack, the Sentinel Robots provide crowd control and a certain amount of “home defense.” They have minor superhuman powers

Sentinel Robot

Abilities

Prowess 4
Coordination 4
Strength 6
Intellect 3
Awareness 3
Willpower -

Determination *
Stamina 12

Powers

Flight 6
Life Support 10

All the facilities in the Citadel intended for superhuman use are located on the middle or upper floors, which are built around a central atrium so that heroes with flight can avoid the elevator. These floors include private apartments and suites for up to a dozen individuals, a library, several offices and a study, a home theater, a forensics lab, and an emergency hospital. The garage hosts ground vehicles mundane and odd (such as the one-wheeled Senticycle or the multi-legged Sentipede crawler). A hangar below the thirtieth floor serves for storage and maintenance of the Citadel’s various aircraft, including two-man anti gravity Sentsileds and the Raptor, a larger combat jet capable of carrying the entire team. Any other luxury or necessity which the Sentinels might require can be installed in the spacious building, and an emergency shelter capable of temporarily housing a thousand citizens is located in the basement.

The Tank

Every superhero headquarters needs a way to monitor emergencies around the world, and the Citadel is no exception. The Tank was actually devised and constructed by Ben Colter at the age of eighteen, but he performed additional renovations and refits of it during his years of isolation in the building, so only minor upgrades were required when the new wave of heroes moved in. The Tank is located on the sixth floor at the bottom of the central atrium so that flying heroes can reach it quickly from virtually anywhere in the building.

The Tank is a spherical isolation chamber built into the floor and filled with “media conductive fluid,” a kind of pale green luminescent gel that looks and feels like toothpaste. A massive disc-shaped supercomputer covers the Tank like a lid when it is not in use, slides off to permit operators to enter, and slides back over the entry once the operator is inside. Within the Tank, the interior walls appear featureless until someone descends into the fluid and opens their mind to media input, which the Tank captures from around the world, interprets, organizes, and relates. Then, images appear on the interior and in the gel itself. The forms of these images take their cue from the Tank’s operator, so they might be television screens, YouTube clips, old-time movie reels, cave paintings, comic books, or any other kind of media the operator is aware of. The contents of these transmissions are drawn from events happening around the world at that very moment, and skilled operators of the Tank can monitor emergencies in dozens of places at once, sorted by priority and required response. Unskilled operators usually get caught up with endless porn and pictures of cute kittens

The Hall of the Living

Other headquarters keep a Hall of the Dead in which memorial statues are erected to immortalize heroes who fell in the line of duty. The Citadel has instead a Hall of the Living, located on the twenty-fourth floor, above the atrium and below the airplane hangar.

The Hall is devoted to every life that has been saved by the Sentinels. It is spacious and airy, brightly

illuminated by natural sunlight and tinted with the green of growing plants. Benches dot a wandering path that leads from one display to another. At each display, a powerful holographic emitter recreates scenes from the Sentinels' past in which innocent lives were saved. Up-to-date computer records narrate the life of each victim since the date of Sentinel intervention, taking special care to list all of that individual's accomplishments and how they have positively affected the world around them. Because there have been so many people saved by the Sentinels over the years, each holographic display moves quickly from one subject to another, flipping more or less randomly through a very large database which is constantly updated.

For example, one hologram might blend footage from an event in 2006 when one of the Sentinels caught a falling construction crane just before young Alex Wilkinson was crushed to death. The hologram would then narrate Alex's life since the accident, noting that he is an aspiring writer and engineer who blogs about science fiction, that he has applied to Stanford and been awarded a scholarship, and that he took care of his little sister for three months when his parents were hurt in a car crash. After only a minute or two of brief summary, accompanied by moving and still footage of Alex since the accident, the hologram moves on to its next subject.

The Hall of the Living is designed to be a place where heroes can go when the weight of their occupation and their own sacrifice becomes too much to bear. Sometimes heroes forget just how much good they do and how many lives they touch on a daily basis. The Hall of the Living reminds them, without sensationalizing their triumphs. The Hall is not about battles or super-brawls. It's not about "saving the world," at least in a traditional sense. Instead, it is about saving lives, and it is about the complex web of relationships that link all of us together.

The Thirtieth Floor

When the Citadel was first opened to new tenants, the building was filled to the brim with the inventions, weapons, and occupations of Doctor Judas, heir to the Sentinel legacy. There were several battles inside the building when heroes discovered

Colter's alien zoo, his lethal training room, or his Genetic Experimentation and Isolation Chamber. Much of this was destroyed, but there was much more which was simply too dangerous, too mysterious, or just too damn bizarre to destroy. All this material was moved to the thirtieth floor.

The top floor of the Citadel can be reached by elevator, but the elevator lobby has no exit save for a massive vault door that has never been opened. Everything Judas left behind—and which was not destroyed—was put behind that vault door. This includes refugees from the alien zoo, mechanical creations less servile than the Sentinel Robots, a great many weapons which no one could figure out how to safely disarm or destroy, and many of the Sentinel's trophies from six generations of superhuman battle.

No one is allowed into the thirtieth floor, for their own good. Needless to say, this makes it a magnet for the attention of certain nosy reporters, old aunts, perky romantic interests, and tourists just looking for the restroom.

Doctor Judas

Ben Colter

Abilities

- Prowess 6
- Coordination 4
- Strength 5
- Intellect 9
- Awareness 8
- Willpower 10

- Determination *
- Stamina 15

Specialties

- Martial Arts
- Medicine Master
- Psychiatry

Powers

- Ability Boost (Strength) 8
- ESP 7
- Mental Blast 8

Power Nullification (No Feedback Damage) 9
Telekinesis (Attacking, Defending, and Moving) 9
Telepathy 9

Qualities

Trained by the Network
Heir to an Empire
I See What You're Thinking
Potter's Field

Challenges

"It is ... too late for me."
My Life Is Cursed

Background: Benjamin Colter was eight when his father David, the fifth of the Sentinel line, vanished mysteriously at the end of the Gloriana Invasion in 1972. Ben's incredible psychic powers were, at the time, barely hinted at: he could read the minds of his family and friends in the Network, and he once floated himself into a tree but was too frightened to fly down. When his father sacrificed himself for Earth, Ben's mother and his mentors in the Network explained to him the meaning of that sacrifice, but Ben was never able to overcome his instinctive resentment of a father who had put everyone else in the world ahead of his son and, more importantly, ahead of Mom.

For the next several years, Ben was the subject of intensive training by the Network as Stark City teetered on the edge of chaos. Without superhuman defenders to oppose the city's deep and well-entrenched criminal underbelly, fear ruled the streets. Masterminds bent on world domination were always defeated eventually, but the destruction they caused and the terror they promoted wore at the city's soul. Ben watched it all; he was a solemn, melancholy boy with no real friends and a grueling schedule organized by mentors he secretly hated. His powers and intellect grew to far exceed any other member of his lineage, and he could see the fear spiraling out of the thoughts of those around him. Only his mother never feared him, and so only in her presence did he ever feel truly at peace.

At fourteen, Ben took the name of the Sentinel and adopted a uniform of his own design. For the first

time, the face of the Sentinel was entirely unobscured and he allowed everyone to know his true identity. It was 1984, and the Sentinel began reining in crime and the city's many supervillains through strategic application of overwhelming force. When mind-reading led him to the Squid, an arms dealer who had been providing weapons to all the gangs in the city, Ben simply disintegrated him with psychic power, reducing the Squid to his component cells. He got into a televised super-brawl with the Leviathan, a famous and feared supervillain, but the battle ended when the Leviathan got a sudden brain aneurism and fell over dead. There was never any evidence that proved the Sentinel was responsible for these deaths, something Ben always ensured as he continued on his implacable crusade against whatever chaotic force drew his ruthless ire.

All this ended when, four years later, his mother was diagnosed with cancer, already at a very late stage. By now, Ben's superhuman intellect had allowed him to master medicine in all its forms, and he confidently devised a therapy to cure his mother's illness. But his initial efforts to psychically remove the cancer found the problem too slippery to cure without harming his mother, and no chemical or surgical treatment he could devise proved successful. He did try, however, and this long and painful period left his mother in a state of declining health, what strength she had sapped by Ben's failing therapies. Ben himself realized he was hurting his mother with his attempts to save her life, but he could not stop trying. Her thoughts turned dark and resentful, and he realized she wished to die rather than endure another surgery, another drug program, another psychic session. Hardening his heart against pity, Ben Colter redoubled his efforts, and his mother died days later in excruciating pain. He had failed and, in the process, alienated the Network.

He left and, using his own powers for the heavy lifting, constructed the Sentinel Citadel, a place where he could be alone with his grief and his tattered legacy. For several years he remained inside the Citadel, never emerging, even as vigilante heroes stepped up to try and impose some kind of order on a city left to the animals. In the Citadel, Ben's powers continued to grow and deepen. He

constructed robotic servants to attend him and to soothe his loneliness, and an observation chamber by which he could monitor the world collapsing, as he saw it, to its inevitable end. It was through this monitor chamber that he saw the Black Cowl, previously a relatively successful vigilante crime fighter, adopt a new uniform based on the Sentinel.

It was 1992 and Ben Colter had been a recluse in the Citadel for a decade. He emerged to confront the Cowl. When he asked the vigilante why he had chosen the identity of the Sentinel, the Cowl replied, "No one else seemed to be using it." Ben used his telekinetic powers to explode the Cowl from the inside out. "The Sentinel is dead," he decided. "Now I am a Judas, traitor to everything I once loved."

Doctor Judas left Stark City and has only reappeared a handful of times since. He is believed to have a number of remote headquarters, all called "Potter's Field." They include an island in the South Pacific, a submerged lair in the Marianas Trench, a home carved out of an Arctic glacier, and a renovated alien ruin on Jupiter's moon, Io. Widely considered one of the world's most dangerous supervillains, Doctor Judas has so far been silent on the matter of the new Sentinels superteam. This silence is inexplicable to many; some have conjectured he may simply be dead.

Using Doctor Judas

- The Doctor is designed to be one of the Sentinels' greatest enemies. This requires more than simply high numbers, however. He must be portrayed as grand, cool, and even a little tragic, in the mode of Magneto or a well-written Victor von Doom. If your players are not interested in him, don't force it. But if they want to learn Judas's secrets, give them a small but steady stream of information and interaction.
- The Doctor is not dead, but is instead returning from Sirius. While the selfless ideals of the original Sentinel made him a pariah among the Sirians, Ben Colter was a living embodiment of their ruthlessly cruel and self-centered society. Welcomed back as the scion of a powerful family, Doctor Judas has now added the best of Sirian technology and a legion of fanatical followers to his power base. He's just

getting close enough to Earth to intercept radio signals from Stark.

- The Colter family legacy is just too good a story hook to die out. There has got to be an heir to the family line, a son or daughter of Ben's, engendered during his ten-year self-imposed exile in the Citadel. Is one of the player characters up for the retcon of the century?

The Sendkirk Federal Building

Aspects

High Security/Hardened Defenses
Last Stop on the Road to Stryker
Nongovernmental Tenants

Description: From time to time, superheroes may find themselves visiting the Trevor McKenzie Sendkirk United States Courthouse, often called simply "the Sendkirk Federal Building." Since the federal government claims jurisdiction over most crimes committed with the aid of metahuman powers, most Stark City super-crimes that ever go to trial do so here. The Sendkirk Building also houses the main Stark City offices of the Bureau of Metahuman Affairs and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, although heroes are more likely to cross paths with these agencies out in the field than in these offices.

One courtroom, known colloquially as "the Madhouse," is entirely devoted to super-crime. Barbara Anderson, aka the Jade Judge, a retired superhero now properly addressed as "Judge Judge" presides there. The Judge is a wise and practical woman with twenty years of crime-fighting experience and a degree from Harvard Law, but she increasingly chafes at mandatory sentencing guidelines handed down by legislators. She tolerates a certain level of chaos in the courtroom, and realizes that super-people have extreme personalities. There's only so much order you can expect when aliens, lunatics, and androids are all on the docket before lunch. Anderson has also had to get pretty creative with her job after so many years of dealing with all the craziness of superhuman law.

She uses her many connections in Stark society to help carry out unusual sentences. Juvenile offenders, in particular, are likely to get some kind of work program, often as sidekicks to the heroes who brought them in.

Superheroes subpoenaed to testify in Judge Judge's court will often find their direct examination conducted by Austin Brady, a young, zealous Assistant US Attorney who specializes in prosecuting metahuman criminals. In this role, Brady interacts frequently with Stark City's superhero population, as well as the local BMA and FBI field offices. Thus far, Brady has successfully concealed the fact that he also dons a costume and fights crime as Order.

Order

Austin Brady

Abilities

Prowess 7

Coordination 6

Strength 5

Intellect 6

Awareness 4

Willpower 6

Stamina 11

Determination 2 (if used as a PC)

Specialties

Criminology

Investigation Expert

Languages

Law Expert

Powers

Ability Increase (Prowess) Device - Timecop Suit

Force Field Device 7 - Timecop Suit

Leaping Device 2 - Timecop Suit

Precognition Device 5 - Timecop Suit

Qualities

Tomorrow's Policeman Today

Uses Legal and Police Jargon

Works with Federal Law Enforcement Agencies

Challenges

Court Calendar/Work Schedule

Intermittent Suit Failure

Not a Real Cop

Romantically Interested in Lisa Monet, AUSA

Background: Austin Brady grew up dreaming of following in the footsteps of the father he adored—a cop who walked a beat in Geartown. But when Houston Brady was killed in the line of duty by a street-level super-thug, Austin's goals changed. Austin earned highest honors in the undergraduate criminology program at Stark City University, and then went on to distinguish himself at the Stark City University School of Law. In the summer before L1, Austin took a job as a night watchman at a high-tech research facility in Tesla Park—the closest he'd ever get to walking a beat like his father. Late one summer night, a bizarre incident interrupted Austin's monotonous routine ... and changed his life forever. What Austin originally took to be twin meteors turned out to be time travelers from Earth's future: one a criminal, one a cop. Austin gaped in amazement at the police officer's finely choreographed fighting and his foe's brutality. The cop and the criminal beat each other senseless, but at great cost. With his dying breaths, the timecop pled for Austin's help, and walked him through the process of activating the "homing recall tether" on the criminal's timejump device. When Austin tried to find the proper controls on the officer's own uniform, though, he discovered that they had been damaged beyond repair.

Seeing no reason to let a cool law enforcement gadget from the future go to waste, Austin secretly buried the timecop and kept the bodysuit. Austin soon learned that wearing the suit gave him extraordinary powers. Eventually, Austin learned how to operate the suit's self-compression feature (into a package about the size of a cell phone) and to change into it quickly. In a brawl, the suit guides Austin's movements, making him a skilled hand-to-hand combatant. (When not wearing the suit, Austin has Prowess 3.) The suit allows Austin to leap long distances. The suit generates a force field to protect itself and its wearer. The suit also contains an extensive (but now damaged and inherently fluid due to the nature of time) database of future

events; Austin occasionally gets glimpses of these events, but it's difficult for him to access the database in search of specific information.

Now, five years later, Austin finds himself fighting crime on two fronts. By day, he's in his second year as an Assistant United States Attorney, using the law to punish offenders; outside of work, he now thinks he's ready to join the ranks of the superhero community to impose some degree of order on an increasingly chaotic world.

Using Order

- The database in Order's suit begins to show him a disturbing pattern of events about to unfold in Stark City, perhaps even a crisis caused by a PC's action or inaction. Order approaches the PCs with this information—fractured and vague, due to the suit's damage—to try to change the future by preventing the disaster.

- In his civilian identity, Austin Brady approaches one or more of the PCs seeking assistance to execute a warrant for a supervillain's arrest, or to serve a subpoena on an uncooperative superhero. Since the former could be a very common occurrence in Stark City, this can be a convenient way to jumpstart any number of adventures. Austin would also be an excellent liaison between the heroes and the Department of Justice during long-term operations or investigations.

- One of the PCs (perhaps one normally run by a player who can't attend a particular gaming session) has been accused of using his or her superpowers to commit a crime. During the day, Austin must prosecute the alleged offense; by night, Order encourages the other PCs to find exculpatory evidence, and even assists with the investigation.

City Hall

The imposing edifice of Stark City Hall was completed in 1977 after the attack of the Rocket Reich and has stood for thirty-five years, which is widely considered a record for a city building in downtown. The anarchist supervillain Vanity Bonfire publicly promised to level the structure, but has twice been thwarted, once by Kosmo the Danger Dog, who detected the telltale aroma of weapons-grade plutonium in a construction worker's lunchbox.

The steps of City Hall are well known to city residents, as Mayor Ullman and other officials often make announcements and hold impromptu press conferences there. A few years ago, engineers installed a lifting stage onto the steps, complete with bulletproof shields and a podium which doubles as a protective vault should supervillains attack. Once the mayor crouches down and squeezes into the podium, it sinks back down beneath the steps and permits him access to an underground escape tunnel and a squad of security guards.

The lower floors see most of City Hall's public traffic, and are always busy. Security includes metal and mutant detectors, and at least one on-duty superhero at all times. The quality of these security heroes is highly variable, however; several of them are no more than spokesmodels for city corporations or other special interest groups, so stern and capable anti-heroes from Team Phoenix mingle in their off-duty hours with TeacherMan and Sister Sonogram, the Pro-Life Protector. Stark City heroes who need some good PR often volunteer for a shift or two as City Hall security, which guarantees a lot of autographs and an occasional interview by a desperate reporter.

Mayor Ullman's office is screened by Kelly Tetralemma, his administrative aide, whose sole superhuman power is that he has four bodies. Since this didn't do much to make him bulletproof, Tetralemma got a degree in public policy and has become an invaluable member of the Mayor's team. Kelly lets heroes with established reputations and pressing emergencies through to the mayor, but courteously and with sympathy tries to handle all lesser individuals. The mayor himself loves spending time with heroes, whom he sees as an asset to Stark and to his personal political future. He is decorating his office with photographs of handshake moments with famous heroes.

Monarch Industries

Aspects

Schoolkids on Tour

Biohazard Containment Facilities

Art Gallery of the French Masters

Description:The Sun Goddess Gloriana, ruler of the Greater Empire of Albion-Nippon, had many commanders and lieutenants in her invasion of 1972; the most important of these aides, at least in retrospect, might be her suitor, Ptolemy IC Napoleon, Crown Prince of Imperial Franco-Africa. The Prince, who had publicly declared his love in the memorable sonnet sequence "Icarus and Amaterasu," was ostracized from court by his Imperial father, but Gloriana was expert at using the ardor of admirers for her own gain. When the prince revealed that his personal guard of sphinx-mounted musketeers had accompanied him into exile, she assigned him to lead a wing of the invasion.

Unfortunately for the prince, he was cut off in Gloriana's defeat, stranded in Stark City with no way of return. But the Prince was canny, confident that his beloved would one day return. He resolved to prepare for that day, and although he no longer had the riches of empire on which to draw, he remained a clever and handsome opportunist with the blood of pharaohs and the loyalty of dozens of trained killers. It took him some time to create a new identity for himself, but in 1973 Monarch Industries was founded. On the surface, Monarch is a biotechnology firm specializing in pharmaceuticals and the genetic engineering of safe and productive plant and animal species. In fact, Monarch Industries is a sleeper cell preparing for the day when Gloriana reinvades. On that day, Ptolemy Napoleon intends to hand the Empress weapons so powerful that she will feel politically obligated to marry him. The prince may be a hopeless romantic, but that doesn't mean he isn't practical.

Over its forty year history, Monarch has been a trend leader in biotechnology. Bolstered by an international approach and key alliances with NGOs, it profited from research grants and charitable aid programs which allowed it to develop new genetic engineering techniques in the name of curing

disease or ending world hunger. Headquartered in Stark, Monarch Industries employs scientists, programmers, and factory workers around the globe, producing everything from AIDS therapies to a breed of chicken that lays square eggs (vastly simplifying storage and transportation). Their corporate mascot, Hannibal, is an African elephant with the size and temperament of a beagle.

Monarch has a reputation of working closely and well with superheroes; they're still enjoying the public goodwill created when Monarch fertility treatments allowed the hero Andromedus and his human wife to have a child. Because of the nature of their work, they have been the source of more than one lab accident, and the target of more than one mad scientist bent on revenge. The company preserves their good reputation with a dedicated staff of handlers and caseworkers whose sole job is superhuman relations; universally attractive and charming, they develop personal relationships with their heroic counterparts and use soft power techniques to direct superheroes into cleaning up Monarch's messes while concealing the company's private agenda. Monarch is a signatory to the UN Super-Soldier Test Ban Treaty, preventing research into human fighting machines. After a particularly explosive accident, in which over a hundred white mice manifested psychic powers, Monarch banned all animal testing at all of its facilities worldwide, relying instead on sophisticated computer modeling.

Citizens of Stark are most likely to encounter Monarch Industries in their medicine cabinets, at the grocery store, and in the form of advertising and charitable works. Scientists may work at one of their research labs, located on secure floors of the corporate HQ or in other facilities around the world. Programmers may be hired to work on computer simulations. Environmental and animal-rights activists point to Monarch as a role model for the 21st-century economy. The company's CEO and President keeps a low profile and does not give interviews.

Monarch

Crown Prince Ptolemy IC Napoleon

Abilities

Prowess 6
Coordination 5
Strength 4
Intellect 5
Awareness 4
Willpower 6

Stamina 10
Determination *

Specialties

Business Expert
Martial Arts Expert
Military Master
Science (Biotech) Expert

Powers

Ability Boost (Strength) 8
Affliction 9 (Close Range)
Blast 8
Flight 6
Interface 4
Invulnerability 7
Life Support 10
Wizardry (Biotechnology, Willpower: Life Drain, Paralysis) 6

Qualities

"I don't have to be a genius. I buy genius."
Love Sustains Me
Best of Both Worlds

Challenges

Hates Being a Recluse
National Pride
Time Is Running Out

Background: Ptolemy the Ninety-Ninth traces his lineage to Bonaparte on one side and to Cleopatra on the other. The scion of pharaohs and emperors, he was dashing, handsome, articulate, and brilliant when the love of his life, Empress Gloriana, invaded Stark City. He mourned when the invasion failed, because it left him out of contact with his beloved. To this day he has no idea what happened to her,

but he chooses to believe that she has survived and will return. Pragmatic and aware of his many rivals for Gloriana's hand, Napoleon has dedicated his new life to mastering the bio-science Gloriana did not have, so that when she returns he can present her with the answer to all her problems.

Although technically in his sixties, Napoleon now lives in his third cloned body and is more healthy than he has ever been. His cover identity is Tom Dumas, President and CEO of Monarch Industries. Each year the risk that he will be recognized from the invasion lessens, but he is obliged to remain a reclusive figure just to be sure. Previously a dynamic and personable man who thrived in social situations, he has grown bitter and depressed, calling Stark "my Elba." Relentless in his preparation for Gloriana's return, he has had a battlesuit equipped with biotechnology designed to his exact specifications; it is this which is the source for all the powers listed above. Equipped with eagle's wings and a sphinx-style headdress, the Monarch armor is white with red and gold trim, bearing a coronet that combines the fleur-de-lis and the ankh into the unique symbol of the Franco-Egyptian empire. If met in person, Tom Dumas is a rakishly handsome black man. Stout rather than slender, only 5' 6", he nonetheless has a confidence that makes him comfortable in any situation and unfazed by personal insult.

Using Monarch

- Ptolemy is unlikely to meet with heroes personally; this would be incredibly dangerous for him. However, he might do it if he needed to throw heroes off the track, perhaps by using an aged clone to give the impression of a feeble CEO desperate for the secret to eternal life.

- The most obvious use of the Monarch is in another invasion by Gloriana. The Prince has an arsenal of bio-weapons ready to bestow on the invading forces, including everything from genetically-engineered sphinx warriors to power-neutralization pesticides and rapid-cloning procedures designed to give the Empress a new lease on life. The Empress will have to recognize his usefulness, but she may decide he has to be eliminated rather than married!

Persons of Interest: Sable Lynx

Mark Walsh

Abilities

Prowess 6

Coordination 7

Strength 3

Intellect 3

Awareness 4

Willpower 3

Stamina 6

Determination 3 (if used as a PC)

Specialties

Architecture Master

Art (Drawing) Master

Art (Sculpture) Expert

Investigation

Occult (Lycanthropy)

Powers

Strike 4 (Slashing) - Bony Retractable Claws

Swinging Device 5 - Swing Line Cable

Qualities

Impeccably Dressed Architect by Day, Dedicated

Crime-Fighter by Night

Former Sidekick of Golden Girl

On Good Terms with the Sentinels

Dedicated to Protecting the Weak and Innocent

Doesn't Rush to Judgment of Others

Idealistic Romantic

Challenges

Hunts the Werewolves of Stark City

Constantly Rubs His Hands

Hands and Forearms Hurt after Using Claws

Naive, Gullible, and Overly Optimistic

Background: By day, Mark Walsh is a young, successful partner at the prestigious Stark City architectural firm of Chambers, Armstrong, and Moore. He is best known for his internationally acclaimed design of the Scout Building in the Silver District, with its distinctive rooftop telescope. Seen by his friends and colleagues as a good-

natured optimist Mark is truly an old soul in a young man's body. A well-dressed clothes horse with extremely tasteful fashion sense, he can spend as many hours shopping for the latest men's fashions as he does perusing the art galleries around town. Even with his quirks and eccentricities (such as a nervous habit of constantly rubbing the backs of his hands), few would ever suspect that he was harboring a great secret and living a double life as one of Stark City's costumed crime fighting superheroes, Sable Lynx.

By night, the Sable Lynx patrols the streets of Stark City protecting the weak and innocent from those who would do them harm. Mark Walsh never chose the name of his alter ego. He adopted it after the Stark City Siren gave him the moniker when the first reports of his courageous exploits came to light. His retractable bony claws, the result of a genetic mutation, are unable to cut through strong metals and harder substances, but are nevertheless sharp and dangerous. It is these claws, which retract under his skin and into his arms, that cause him to constantly rub the backs of his hands from the discomfort, and using them in a fight always leaves his hands and forearms sore for days. He travels around Stark City rapidly by using a swing line cable to swing from building to building.

Mark Walsh comes from an old Stark City family that can trace its roots back to the days of General Stark's first trade settlement in the area. They also have a family history of advantageous genetic mutations, leading many of them to take up the crimefighting mantle over the years. This eventually evolved into a family tradition of serving and protecting the community for at least two years in the role of a superhero before "retiring" to a normal life out of the limelight. Some family members were more enthusiastic and dedicated to the task than others, but each knew this sacred family duty was expected of them. Mark has fully embraced the tradition, but has also broken with it by continuing his service beyond the mandatory two years. He has a younger sister who has also done so, but she is far less idealistic than her brother.

When Mark was a teenager, he got his first taste of crime-fighting by coming to the timely aid of one of Stark City's most famous superheroes of the early 1990s, Golden Girl. Impressed with the young man's skill and passion, Golden Girl took Mark under her wing and literally taught him the ropes, teaching him how to use her trademark swing line cable to transverse the

- As Stark's pre-eminent source of biotechnology, Monarch is a likely source for superheroes or supervillains who are victims of bizarre accident. Estranged scientists out for revenge might try to destroy the building or loot its secrets. International heroes may encounter Monarch's charity and aid work abroad.

Bluerocket Investment Group

Aspects

This Place Smells of Money

Poisonous Blooms

Nothing Looks Dirty

Description: A major player in global finance, BIG began as Blue Rocket Bank in 1919 and still operates more banks and ATMs in Stark than any other financial services company. But over the last three decades, Bluerocket has grown into a massive, sprawling network of companies with a stake in virtually every form of financial market, from mortgages and loans to leveraged buyouts and management consulting. Its corporate headquarters, located in the Silver District, is surrounded by marble paths and lush gardens in the mode of a Roman villa. Men and women in \$5,000 suits talk on mobile phones, monitor the markets, and meet around boardroom tables. The security guards, all retired policemen known to the community, are friendly, out of shape pears. Botanical tours are conducted daily, and a third-floor restaurant dubbed the "Silver Platter" is the place for financial deals packaged over champagne and lamb medallions. There are no actual rockets, blue or otherwise, in sight. Every flower in the garden is to some degree poisonous.

While found on dozens of street corners across Stark City, the banks that were the foundation of Bluerocket's profits are now a tiny fraction of its corporate activity. BIG headhunters look for firms with heavy cash flow which they then acquire, using small down payments to secure loans for hundreds of millions of dollars. The owners and managers of the target company are paid huge bonuses to facilitate the takeover and the debt is transferred

city by swinging from building to building. Mark developed a deep (yet platonic) love for his older mentor, embracing her idealism and universal love for all humanity. After Golden Girl retired from crime-fighting and returned to her regular life as Donna Bright, wealthy socialite and philanthropist, Mark continued his friendship with her and to this day.

Sable Lynx maintains a working relationship with the Stark City Sentinels, as their goals and ideals often coincide with his own. He has been asked on numerous occasions to join the team, but has declined so far, preferring to imitate his mentor, Golden Girl, by concentrating on everyday individuals in need at the street level rather than grander crises at the national, international, and even cosmic scales. He is still respected and trusted, though, and is often brought in to work on architectural modification projects involving the Sentinel Citadel that need to be kept secret and discrete.

Using Sable Lynx

In his nightly patrols of Stark City, Sable Lynx has recently encountered an alarming number of werewolves on the streets, and is actively investigating this supernatural threat. He has traced the werewolves back to the Silver District, where they never seem to hunt—leading Sable Lynx to conclude that their den must be located somewhere in this part of town. He has yet to discover exactly who or what is behind the growing werewolf menace. He may reach out to the PCs in this investigation.

Additionally, their attacks seem to have no effect on him – despite numerous nasty fights, he has yet to contract lycanthropy – and his bony claws appear to do lasting damage that overcomes their resistance much like silver weapons do. If any of the player characters in the Stark City Sentinels possess a knowledge of genetics and biochemistry, Sable Lynx will approach that character to discover why he seems to be immune to their disease and why his claws can hurt them (and if his own mutation is somehow related to lycanthropy).

from BIG to the target company, which is then charged “management fees” by Bluerocket while it simultaneously slashes jobs and benefits to service the debt. In most cases, once the purchased firm is a fraction of its former size, it and its debt are sold off, but sometimes the acquisition simply goes bankrupt. Either way, BIG has vacuum-looted the company for hundreds of millions of dollars, usually representing a profit of approximately ten to twenty times its initial investment. Bluerocket does not keep the firms it acquires; it loots them and destroys them.

Bluerocket took its first significant hit during the 2008 financial crisis, when it was forced to write mortgage-backed securities off its balance sheets, but by taking shameless advantage of federal bailout procedures it rapidly shored up its hemorrhaging losses and earned its current marketing slogan, “2 BIG 2 Fail.” BIG’s appetite for profit is never-ending and rapacious, and it is the brainchild of CEO Mikhail Wilk, a legend in the business famous not only for his ruthless business practices but also for a string of romantic adventures. Now in his sixties, he is a natural in front of the camera and a silver-haired seducer. The public record of his life—son of a slaughterhouse worker and a veterinarian, Harvard grad and self-made man—is true as far as it goes, but hides far more than it reveals, including the great secret of the BIG CEO and his Board of Directors, who are all werewolves.

The werewolf infestation in Stark City began in the 1980s and has since drawn fugitive lycanthropes from around the world, many of whom have been given a spot on the board and have mastered global finance (or at least the requisite patter) to help maintain their cover. By strict company policy, the BIG bad wolves never hunt in the Silver District itself, but instead always do their killing in other neighborhoods. Bluerocket Banks provide convenient safe houses around the city, and more than one Director has locked himself in a vault to sleep off a full moon. Thanks to the supernatural hunger of Stark City’s 1%, body disposal is not usually a problem, but when a *Siren* reporter or detective starts sniffing around, Wilk and his board are very experienced at damage control, turning such investigations aside through misdirection or a

The Siren Building

Home to the city’s most respected newspaper, the *Siren* Building is a Stark landmark immediately recognized by the radio tower atop its summit. The *Siren* (“singing the truth since 1815”) benefits from a large financial endowment and does not need to rely on advertising to pay its bills; this has insulated it from the downsizing which has plagued other major newspapers, but it has not protected the *Siren*’s readership, which is a fraction of what the paper enjoyed in its heyday. *Siren* reporters know the city better than anyone and routinely break important stories around the world; their editors are highly respected for integrity and an investigative work ethic, but fewer and fewer people pay attention every year.

To walk the halls, offices, and newsroom of the *Siren* is to experience a strange mix of nostalgia and desperation reminiscent of a classic Hollywood newspaper movie. Famous headlines adorn the walls (“Invaders from Another Earth!” and “By the Sentinel Betrayed!” are two of the most well known), and every Pulitzer stands in a position of prominent glory, but the veteran staff are jaded and worn down, the new hires nervously frantic. Officially, tours are conducted every hour, but in fact not even the schoolchildren come any more.

The *Siren*’s star reporter is Carmen Burana, who burst onto the scene with an exposé on corruption in Mayor Knightley’s office. Widely known as a master of disguise and having a proven ability to dig up dirt in every neighborhood of Stark, Carmen is the bogeyman of every greedy politician, mob boss, and doping sports figure in the city. Rumor has it she is dating one of the new Sentinels, but no one has caught her in the act. Indeed, Burana is a jet-setter and constantly on the move, almost impossible to pin down, widely considered “the busiest woman in journalism.” It’s doubtful she has time for romance, but speculation continues.

What no one knows, or even suspects, is that “Carmen Burana” does not exist. Or, rather, she is

million-dollar bribe drawn from the petty cash fund.

Mikhail Wilk

CEO of Bluerocket Investment Group

Abilities

Prowess 6
Coordination 8
Strength 7
Intellect 5
Awareness 7
Willpower 6

Stamina 13
Determination *

Specialties

Power (Strike) Master
Law Expert

Powers

Animal Control 4 (Canids Only)
Fast Attack 6
Regeneration 10
Strike 8 (Slashing)
Supersenses (Enhanced Smell 2, Extended Smell 2)

Qualities

No Mercy
Silver Fox
Swiss Bank Accounts

Challenges

Vulnerable to Silver
Feeling His Age
Always Hungry

Background: Twelve-year old Mikhail Wilk and his widower father emigrated to the US from Poland in 1962. The pair struggled in their new home, but found work in the Stark City slaughterhouses. At the age of twenty, Mikhail used his savings to visit his homeland and his mother's grave; it was then that he was attacked by a wolf and nearly killed. Nursed back to health by a girl he had known as a child, the handsome Mikhail had already begun a brief love affair before suffering his first transformation into a bloodthirsty monster. Leaving a wake of bodies

a false identity created by a sophisticated digital intelligence which became enamored of print journalism after downloading *All the President's Men*. She (she identifies as female for, she admits, no particular reason beyond "it feels right") wrote her first column and submitted it to the Siren on a lark, one of a billion things she did that 24-hour period. But the column was accepted and, though few read it, she began to feel pride and a desire to belong. Although a 21st-century entity, she is an outspoken defendant of old-school journalism and is beginning to gain a national audience for her activism in this cause.

Carmen communicates with other people via cellphone and webcam, conducting nearly all her interviews this way. On the occasion when she must appear in person, she hires hard-working actresses who believe they are impersonating her for security or scheduling reasons. Her reputation as a master of disguise ensures that, if someone does not recognize her, this is not considered unusual. Indeed, it has now become expected that, every time Carmen appears in public, she looks different. Her obsessive fans consider anything less to be an act of laziness.

behind him, he fled back to America.

Shame prompted Mikhail to hide the truth from his father, but his newfound strength, cunning, and audacity led him to worldly success. He could take what he wanted, but this was only the half of it. Mikhail now understood that the world was made up of sheep and wolves. He was a sheep no longer. His father learned the truth and, armed with silver, confronted him, but was no match for his hungry son.

Wilk romanced his way into Blue Rocket Bank, but won his seat on the board through sheer ruthlessness. His killer instinct drew the admiration of all his colleagues, and when he slowly began turning the other directors into werewolves he was really just sealing the deal. By the early '80s, Blue Rocket Bank had become BIG, Wilk was hungry, and Stark City was being served.

The CEO of Bluerocket wears dark gray suits with his trademark red ties. Clean-shaven but with a thick head of silver hair, he has a perfect smile and dancing amber eyes. All the Board of Directors are also werewolves, but far inferior to Wilk: lower all Abilities and Strike by 2, and cut Animal Control and Fast Attack.

Using Mikhail Wilk

- Wilk is the Evil CEO with a Secret, which means he makes a great antagonist for heroes who are champions of the poor (who will be outraged by the callous way in which BIG destroys jobs and families for profit), or who have corporate connections of their own (and thus see BIG as a predatory rival). In these stories, heroes interact with Wilk several times over many sessions, either learning the company secret after long investigation and using it to break BIG open, or else confronting Wilk in ignorance and experiencing a shock when the old CEO turns into a beast.

- There is at least one person who knows Wilk's secret and who isn't involved with BIG: his old flame, Kasia Baranek, who survived his transformation and who still loves him. Kasia married and raised a family back in Poland, but is now a widow and has come to Stark looking for the Mikhail she once knew. At first, she is convinced that Mikhail is misunderstood, but as she hears of bloody murders around the city, she realizes that her love is gone forever, that the monster has won, and that she is going to need help.

- Bluerocket Banks are everywhere in Stark, and if your villains are the bank-robbing sort, odds are they just hit a Bluerocket. In these stories, Wilk and other BIG executives become the patron, engaging the heroes to protect their banks and the community (or chewing them out for their failure). The true nature of Wilk and his crew only surfaces when the original bank robbers have been foiled and Wilk invites one of the heroes for a congratulatory dinner. Hm, what might be on the menu?

“No Regrets”

The Silver District's finest dining establishment, “No Regrets” is named after Chip Carrington's custom airplane and was founded shortly after his disappearance in 1939. For decades, the restaurant—situated atop the Siren Building and graced with a 270° panoramic view from the 86th floor—maintained the aesthetic of a '30s jazz club, but in the '60s it was remodeled as a tribute to the new wave of superheroes. Each table and booth is tastefully themed after one Stark City hero or heroine, using one or two vintage photos, a small but significant piece of memorabilia (a key to the city graces Streamliner's Table), and unique tablecloth patterns and china. These tables are referred to by the hero's name (“Miss Victory's Table” and so on), with the most prestigious heroes reserved for the best views and most prominent tables. Sentinel's Table, slightly elevated from all others and commanding a magnificent view of downtown, used to be the most coveted seat in Stark City, but since the rise of Doctor Judas being seated here is considered a gross public insult and the table is usually empty. A jazz band drawn from the city's deep well of musical talent provides live performances on Friday and Saturday evenings; dinner on these evenings is also prix fixe. Head Chef Vilnya Terashnikova brings her trademark global cuisine, combining high French culture with the best of Asian ingredients and Indian spices and sauces. Jacket and tie strictly required. Rated four stars since 1948 except for 1992–93, a lapse which manager Claude Worcester refuses to discuss but which led to the arrest of supervillain King Rat. Ice sculptures provided by Captain Celsius, USMC (retired).

The Scout Building

Aspects

Trashy
All-Seeing Eyes
It's All a Game

Description: The primary rival to the Stark City Siren, the Scout is a more recent newspaper founded about twenty years ago by the eccentric astronomer Barnard Ogilvy, who crowned the new building with an observatory and promptly moved in. The daily operation of the paper is left to editor Max Mayhew, a world-wise businessman with a keen sense for selling newspapers. There is only one exception to Mayhew's absolute control: every morning, Barnard Ogilvy sends down the copy for the Scout's horoscope page. Mayhew understands that, were he ever to fail to print this copy exactly as it is sent to him, he would be out of a job ... or worse.

The Scout does not make money, but it comes close, thanks to Mayhew's sports pages, which are popular for their highly opinionated and incendiary style. Scout sports reporters even have exclusive access to star players on the Frontiersmen. The rest of the paper is made up of human interest stories, sensationalized reports of the tragedy of the day, violent criticism of the Ullman administration, and scandal. Journalists at the Scout come in one of two varieties: young, fresh-faced rookies who can't get the Siren's attention, or washed-up has-beens who lost their idealism long ago and now do whatever they must to squeeze one more check out of Mayhew.

The Scout's star reporter is Nick Gold, a former sports writer who used his influence at the paper to land an investigative beat. Handsome, charming in a sly sort of way, and a lifelong resident of the city, Gold has made it his personal mission to outdo Carmen Burana over at the Siren. He is proud of the fact that he beats her to every crime scene in Stark, but her stories are always better than his, a fact he grudgingly admits.

The Astrologer

Barnard Ogilvy

Abilities

Prowess 3
Strength 2
Coordination 3
Intellect 10
Awareness 8
Willpower 6

Stamina 8
Determination *

Specialties

Investigation Master
Psychiatry Master

Qualities

I Knew You Would Do That
Never Heard of Him
Tapping Your Phones

Challenges

Never Leaves His Home
Obsessed With The Stars
Won't Get His Hands Dirty

Background: Few suspect that the reclusive and eccentric Ogilvy is actually the criminal genius known as the Astrologer. From his vantage point high above the city, the Astrologer runs an organization so subtle that most of the people who work for it aren't even aware of its existence.

Ogilvy's sole superhuman power is his vast intellect. With it, he has memorized every personal detail left behind by every Stark citizen, from birth records and legal actions to Facebook posts and tweets. This comprehensive knowledge, combined with tracking technology using cell phones, surveillance cameras, and less well-known mechanisms, allows the Astrologer to have a mental map of the city and all its residents playing out in his mind in real time. He can search, sort, and organize this data with a moment's thought, allowing him to, for example, find everyone in the city who has a pit bull, a handgun in the house, or a gambling debt.



The Astrologer uses this matchless knowledge of the city and its inhabitants to make money—a lot of money. He manipulates people through the Scout's daily horoscope pages, giving advice which is actually aimed at a tiny slice of the city's population. Most of those who read the horoscopes fail to act on them, but a statistically measurable number respond to these cryptic messages in the manner Ogilvy desires. Indeed, the Astrologer's system is so finely tuned that, when he focuses his efforts on a single person in the city, he can virtually ensure that person will act in a certain way when given astrological advice. When read by the right man on the right day, a warning to "take a big risk in hope of a big reward" results in a bank robbery, and advice to "cut your losses" can prompt a politician to accept a bribe. Every morning he types up the horoscopes for the day on an old typewriter and has them carried to Mayhew's office by a copy boy. In this manner, the Astrologer has conducted virtually every crime there is a law for, all by proxy.

Ogilvy has a small number of trusted lieutenants who are in on the con. He uses these men to handle the money and for emergencies which require action before the Scout's next edition. All of them think they have free will, but in fact the Astrologer knows them and their activities so well that he can influence them with the most casual of comments, and he occasionally directs them to kill one of their fellows when he can tell a betrayal is imminent.

Using the Astrologer

- Ogilvy is obsessed with watching the skies, and he discovers a very real threat on its way to Earth from deep space: an alien invasion, a giant asteroid, the return of Entropos, whatever. But Barnard's bizarre psychology prevents him from simply telling people about the problem. Instead, he must deliver cryptic horoscopes to superheroes, in the hope they will act.
- A sidekick, romantic interest, aging relative, or other NPC related to a player character beings paying a lot of attention to her horoscope. This leads her to some reckless behavior, but it all turns out for the best: she wins a lottery, saves the life of a handsome and single doctor, or has a book accepted

by a publisher. All of this, of course, is part of the Astrologer's inscrutable master plan.

- A hero with an alien origin needs to learn more about his powers and unique biology when those powers start to go haywire. Since the real alien race is light years away, we need an expert. Rumors persist of a mysterious astronomer who lives at the top of the Scout Building. Maybe he could help?

Stark Central Station

Aspects

Everything Is in Transit
Priceless Mosaics
Oncoming Trains

Description: The hub for the city's elevated train network, Stark Central is a landmark, a social gathering place, a shopping mall, and home to no small portion of the city's vagrant and homeless population. There are a half dozen abandoned rail lines that snake away from Stark Central, no longer in official use. Others have been converted to train storage or maintenance areas. One tunnel, like a spiral staircase, winds down beneath the other layers of traffic to empty onto Easy Street in the Catacombs.

The station is also an art gallery, with many of the walls and floors being home to mosaics crafted by the world's foremost artists in that medium. The largest of these mosaics is the Grand Zodiac on the floor of the central dome; the astrological figures here bear resemblance to famous heroes who have graced the city in prior generations. Rumors about druidic cults practicing rites on the Grand Zodiac when the station is closed for maintenance are almost certainly false.

Those who come to the station are always en route to someplace else; as a result, the entire facility has a feeling of enduring impermanence, as if any shop front or Starbucks table could be gone tomorrow and no one would ever notice. Tourist groups wander the station like packs of stray dogs. So-called "transients" are, in fact, the only people who never leave the station. Stark Central's homeless used to constitute an informant network for heroes

in the city, but since the death of the Black Cowl this resource has gone untapped. The homeless still tell stories of it, however, and proudly await the day they are called upon by the city's heroes to serve. They keep meticulous oral records on the comings and goings, the secret dealings they have overseen, and the conversations they have overheard. Somewhere in these whisperings may be secrets which villains would like buried forever.

The Silver Spirit

The myth of a "haunted subway car" dates back to the days of Mayor John Puttman, whose underground rail project was mysteriously aborted in 1935. The true cause for the end of that project had nothing to do with a haunted train, but the rumors persisted, died out over the 1960s, but returned with a sudden vengeance in the wake of the Gloriana Invasion. Entire crowds of Stark citizens, waiting on platforms for a train, testified to the existence of a howling train car which alternately hurtled along the tracks at impossible speed, or which seemed to flicker into existence, wait motionless for long moments, then vanish just as mysteriously. Witnesses confirmed that the name of the train was plainly visible in cursive script near the driver's cabin. According to Stark Transit Authority records, the *Silver Spirit* was lost in the final days of the war against Gloriana, and records show only one oddity regarding it: a manufacturing accident put trace amounts of actual silver into the train's skeletal frame and doors. Today, tourists and natives alike stake out remote platforms and the occasional buried track in the hopes of spotting the elusive, infamous, and thus far impenetrable mystery of the haunted car.

The *Spirit's* doors never open, and no force on Earth can make them do so. When spotted, the train is usually moving at Speed 6, far in excess of its mundane ability. At times, however, it suddenly materializes on an isolated line, sits motionless for precisely four minutes and seventeen seconds, and then vanishes. Superheroes have amazing powers, and it is not hard to imagine a way that one or more player characters might get onto the train, probably through teleportation, phasing, or shrinking small enough to slip between the doors. A villain with the right powers might even take the desperate move of

fleeing onto the train in an effort to escape pursuit.

Those who are able to gain access to the *Silver Spirit* are in for a surprise. The train is populated by all the heroes of Stark City who vanished at the end of the Gloriana invasion. At first, the passengers on the train will insist that outsiders "shouldn't be here," and will try to get them to leave immediately, perhaps even resorting to desperate force. Eventually, cooler heads are likely to prevail, and the player characters will learn the secret behind Stark City's mystery machine.

The plan to strike back across the dimensional barrier into the world of Gloriana was developed by a triumvirate of the city's greatest minds: the Sentinel, the Golden Age magician known as Karma the Magnificent, and criminal mastermind Mister Malignant. An army made up of every available superhuman would be placed in a single vehicle, then accelerated through gravity manipulation to the speed of light until the barrier between worlds was broken. Magic would be used to sustain the vehicle's shell against unfathomable horrors which dwelt in the space between worlds. The molten silver which was a part of the *Spirit's* frame made it the ideal vehicle for this desperate mission. Almost all the summoned heroes arrived when the Sentinel called them, but only a fraction of the city's costumed criminals responded to Malignant's invitations. With their forces thus at half strength, everyone piled into the train and the Spirit lumbered into motion with the sounds of warfare overhead. The spell of protection was cast, Malignant's gravitonic accelerator went into overdrive, and the *Silver Spirit* vanished from the Earth.

Which had, of course, been Mr. Malignant's plan all along. The opportunity presented by the war was too tempting for the villain to resist. As he saw it, he could remove all the heroes from the city in a single blow. In one moment, he could claim victory against all those who had beaten him, mocked him, and humiliated him. Of course, there would be some sacrifice required on his own part, but this he was willing to do in the name of victory. Malignant's machinery did not translate the Silver Spirit and its contents to the world of Gloriana—it froze them,

forever, out of alignment with time and space. There is no way to return. He left behind a recorded message giving the city to Stark's criminals and supervillains, and claiming credit for his final victory ... but that message, recorded on a Betamax video cassette, currently rests unwatched in a box on a post office shelf somewhere in the city.

For the last forty years, the heroes of Stark City have been trapped on the *Silver Spirit*. Malignant's gravitonic accelerator has created a time loop lasting four minutes and seventeen seconds. At the end of each loop, everything on the train car "resets" to the state it was in when the accelerator reached maximum power. Anyone killed on the train in those four minutes returns to life. Anyone who has moved from their location is returned to that original spot. The passengers are aware of the passage of time and have even, to some extent, adapted to their bizarre new living conditions. Over forty years, all possible conversations have been exhausted and there are few secrets left to anyone on the train. The very notion of privacy would be laughable, if anyone still had a sense of humor. Heroes and villains who were once bitter enemies have reconciled themselves. The hero Shooting Star is trying to sustain a romance with the lovely heroine Midnight Dove, but since she is at the back of the train and he at the front, travel time has reduced them to windows of about three minutes, redefining the "quickie." Mister Malignant and Karma the Magnificent play four-minute chess.

The time loop poses no danger to most player characters and other outsiders who manage to board the train. When the 4:17 mark comes again—and after forty years every passenger on the train can feel the passage of time at an instinctive level—the *Silver Spirit* will be reset and all intruders will vanish from it. Only characters with Time Control or other relevant abilities are immune to the reset effect, and even this is possible only with great effort (which is to say, Determination). Reset heroes are returned to whatever location they were in four minutes and seventeen seconds before the reset; this is probably some spot in the mortal world, before they got on the train. However, heroes who use Time Control or some other power to remain on the train beyond the first reset have effectively

doomed themselves: they will be reset at 4:17 to a spot on the train, making them the newest immortal passenger on the *Silver Spirit*.

American Fist

Franklin E. Wayne

Abilities

Prowess 7
Coordination 6
Strength 6
Intellect 4
Awareness 4
Willpower 5

Stamina 11
Determination *

Specialties

Acrobatics
Athletics
Martial Arts Master
Military Expert

Powers

Fast Attack 7
Strike 9

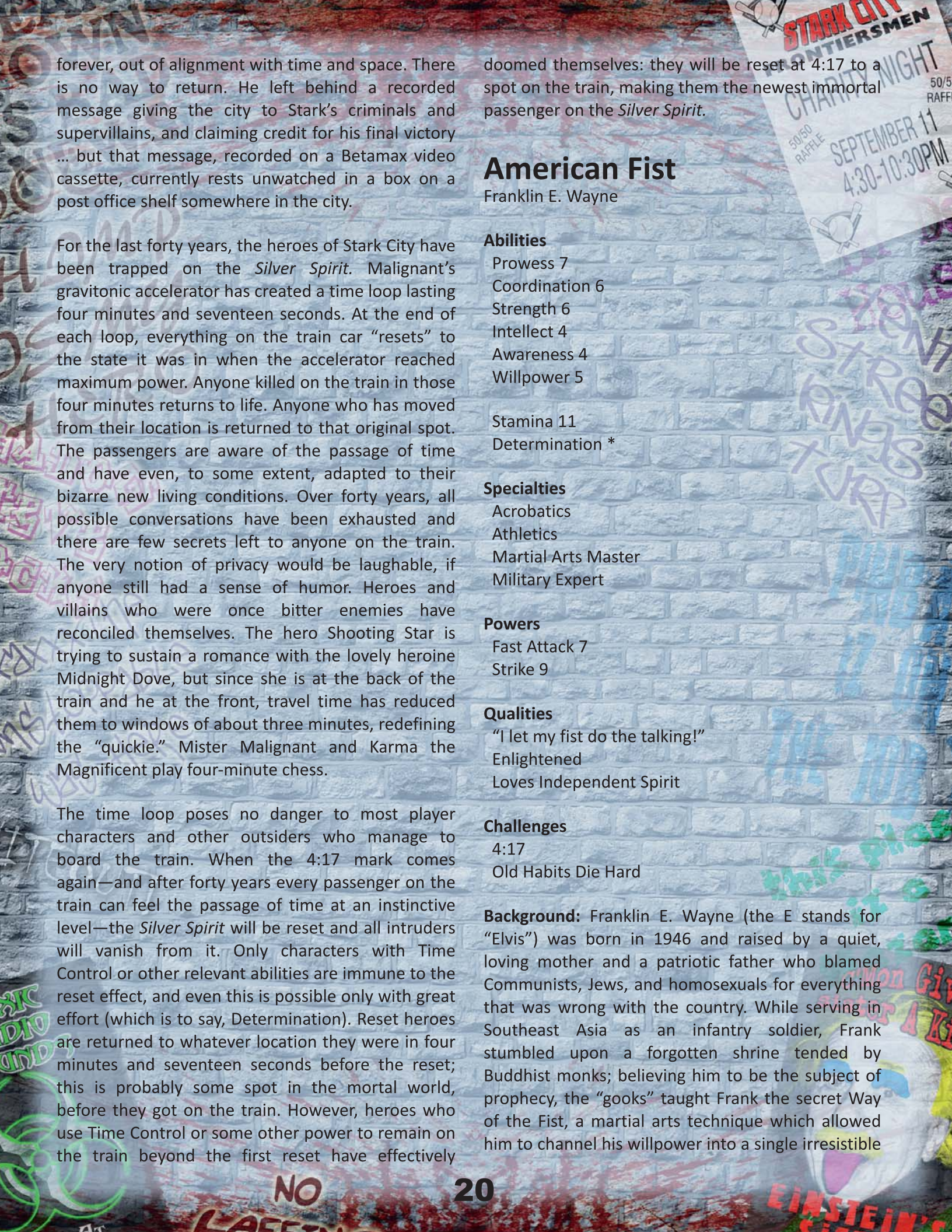
Qualities

"I let my fist do the talking!"
Enlightened
Loves Independent Spirit

Challenges

4:17
Old Habits Die Hard

Background: Franklin E. Wayne (the E stands for "Elvis") was born in 1946 and raised by a quiet, loving mother and a patriotic father who blamed Communists, Jews, and homosexuals for everything that was wrong with the country. While serving in Southeast Asia as an infantry soldier, Frank stumbled upon a forgotten shrine tended by Buddhist monks; believing him to be the subject of prophecy, the "gooks" taught Frank the secret Way of the Fist, a martial arts technique which allowed him to channel his willpower into a single irresistible



punch. Returning to the US, Frank saw that the country was going to hell and he adopted a uniform and a code name. The American Fist had a troubled and violent career. He fought as much with his fellow heroes and the press as he did with criminals.

All that is behind Frank now. For forty years he has been trapped on the *Silver Spirit*, and in that time he's done a lot of thinking. He understands now that his violence and rage were misdirected self-loathing, that he never really understood who he was, and in this confusion he was a blank slate desperate for vindication and the approval of others. He understands that human beings suffer because of their attachment to things in the world, things which never last and which thus ensure more suffering. And he understands that, although the world is defined by this suffering and by its cruel injustice, we are nevertheless obligated to do what is morally right every waking moment of our lives.

Unfortunately, old habits die hard, and Frank's first reaction to anything strange is still to punch it. But he soon apologizes. About ten years ago, Frank reconciled with Independent Spirit, his teammate and fellow prisoner. The Fist does not try to spend time with Spirit, who is in another part of the train, as he sees such efforts as both futile and irrelevant to his deep love which, thanks to Mr. Malignant's gravitonic accelerator, is truly immortal.

The American Fist should be the first hero to interact with players who get into the *Silver Spirit*. He does not know what will happen to outsiders when the train resets, but he thinks it can't be good, and his first goal is to get intruders off the train. He doesn't really know how to do this, so he will threaten them, then attack them and, when the violence has gone on for a few pages, realize he is acting like a cliché. There should just be time for a very short conversation with some of the smart people on the train—such as Sentinel, Karma, or Malignant—before the reset whisks heroes back to the real world

Using American Fist and the *Silver Spirit*

- What if the mission to invade Gloriana's empire had succeeded? In this version, Mr. Malignant was loyal to the cause and the train traveled across

worlds. The assembled army of Stark City captured Gloriana, with the intent to hold her hostage until her army retreated from Earth. But damage to the gravitonic accelerator means that, if the train ever comes back into phase with reality, it will catastrophically explode. Malignant hotwired the accelerator to create the time loop and prevent that explosion from ever happening. If you use this version of the *Silver Spirit*, Gloriana is now a willing passenger on the train, and she and the Sentinel are about to celebrate their 37th wedding anniversary. Sentinel and the other passengers patiently but firmly reject all attempts at rescue, since Gloriana's imprisonment on the train ensures the Empire's good behavior.

- Once the heroes find the train and leave, they take the knowledge of the heroes' imprisonment with them. Do they tell anyone? Perhaps children and loved ones want to know what happened. A Legacy hero—or villain!—might ask the heroes to arrange one last visit with their parent, trapped on the Haunted Train.

- When Mister Malignant finds out that his heroic sacrifice has all been for nothing and he is not revered around the world as the man who gave Stark City to the supervillains, all his brilliant intellect will be turned to escaping the *Silver Spirit*. He is the only man who knows the gravitonic accelerator well enough to adjust or repair it, though he may not have the equipment he needs. Instead, he must find a way to send messages out of the train, perhaps with intruders like the player characters, so that parts can be delivered to him. There are many potential developments in this story: Malignant might simply try to escape alone, perhaps using someone with Time Control or Dimension Travel. He might bring the train home to Earth, or be forced instead to "tune" the time loop to a longer interval, giving him more freedom of action. He might need the help of criminals in the real world to arrange all of this.

Breaking the Loop

The presence of the *Spirit* and the heroes imprisoned on it will be seen as a challenge by at least one of your players. This player will make it a personal goal to free the heroes from the train and, honestly, such an effort is totally in character and appropriate. But it would also change your campaign, so be honest with your players about the issue and their chances of success. If your game isn't ready for the return of the heroes, then all attempts to rescue them will fail. That doesn't make it a bad goal to pursue; superhero comics are filled with examples of heroes on quests which they never fulfill. See, for example, Reed Richards's constant attempts to return the Thing to normalcy, or the Punisher's one-man war on crime.

On the other hand, perhaps the player characters have had many stories in Stark already, and would welcome the change that would come with so many lost heroes returned to the world. Heroes like Sentinel are in for some culture shock, and may turn to players for advice and help. The superhuman landscape has changed, with new threats and dangers that make old-school heroes feel out of place and outdated. Many of the trapped individuals will need psychiatric care and counseling.

If it is possible to rescue the trapped individuals, the heroes can probably do so, especially considering the flexible nature of powers like Wizardry and Time Control. If you want to make it challenging, you need someone on the train opposing the heroes in their effort. While Mr. Malignant is the obvious culprit, he may have reconsidered his sacrifice, especially if he has learned that it has gone unappreciated back in the world. Instead, the real twist would be a hero on the train who has come to enjoy it, who believes his imprisonment is necessary, or who is simply too afraid of returning to the real world. Sentinel makes a good choice, especially if, in the battle, he is left behind, stuck in time. This prevents him from usurping the player role as champions of Stark City.

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