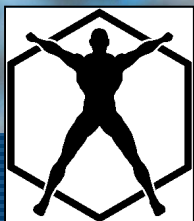


# DIGITAL HERO

# #9

APR 2003



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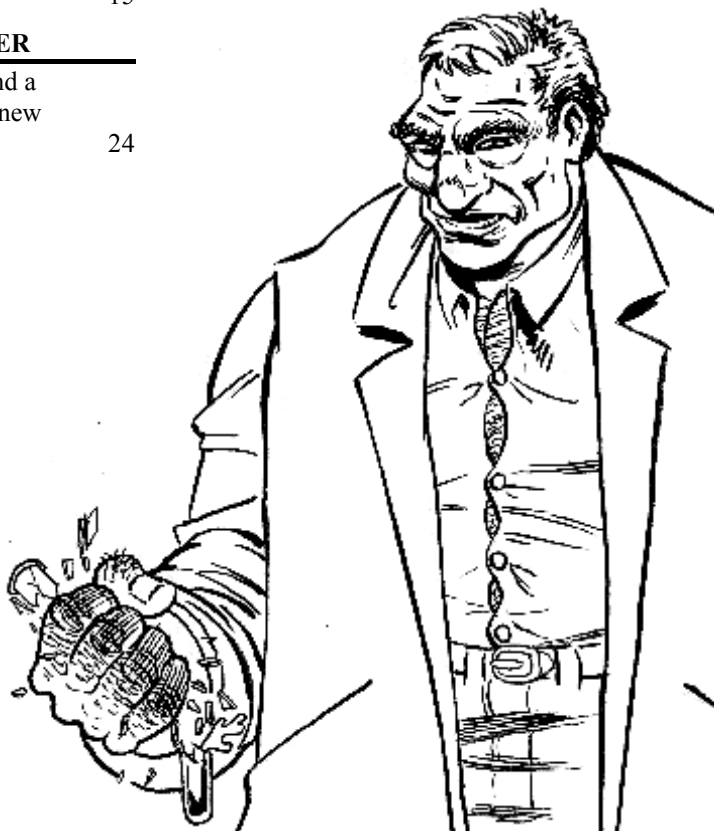
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## CONVENTIONS

Hero Games will be at these conventions. Stop by and visit the booth, and play in some games!

### KublaCon

May 23-26  
San Francisco, CA  
[kublacon.com](http://kublacon.com)

### PortCon

June 13-15  
Portland, ME  
[portconmaine.com](http://portconmaine.com)

### Origins

June 26-29  
Columbus, OH  
[originsgames.com](http://originsgames.com)

### GenCon Indy

July 24-27  
Indianapolis, IN  
[gencon.com](http://gencon.com)

### ConQuest

August 29-Sept 1  
Palo Alto, CA  
[con-quest.com](http://con-quest.com)

### GenCon SoCal

December 11-14  
Anaheim, CA  
[gencon.com](http://gencon.com)

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Issue #9 (April 2003)



# When We Last Left Our Heroes...

by Steven S. Long

This month I'm going to talk briefly about two things: recent conventions, and the *UNTIL Superpowers Database*.

## CONVENTIONS

The annual round of conventions for Hero Games began last month with DunDraCon, in San Ramon, California on President's Day Weekend. DDC is a favorite con for Hero; it takes place right in our backyard (so to speak), which not only saves us money but puts us right in the midst of lots of Hero fans. We do a "What's New At Hero Games?" panel every year that's well-attended, we often throw a small, private party, and we usually even get to play in a game or two.

This year's DunDraCon did not disappoint. We had *The Ultimate Vehicle* at the show, and thanks to it, and strong sales for our other books, we made about half as much money as we did at GenCon 2002 – at a con with one-twentieth of GenCon's attendance. If only our sales-to-attendance ratio were that good at GenCon! Our panel went very well; we spent most of it discussing the newly-announced 2004 schedule and our other plans, as well as answering questions. Darren and I both got to play in Derek Hiemforth's marvelous and hilarious "Challenge Of The Superfriends" game as well.

Right before GTS (see below) I was flown to Portland, Oregon to be a Guest of Honor at GameStorm, a small but active local game convention. I got to participate in a lot of panels, have dinner with a group of Hero fans, and run one of my standard convention games, *Sharper Than A Serpent's Tooth*. I was particularly impressed by the fact that the gaming rooms at GameStorm were filled to capacity *all the time* – there weren't large groups of gamers wandering around wondering what to do next, because everyone was busy having fun playing games. It was a great show, and I definitely encourage any of you in the vicinity to attend it next year.

March brings with it the GAMA Trade Show, the gaming industry's annual trade show in Las Vegas, Nevada. While I'm not a big fan of Vegas personally, I always enjoy GTS because it's a chance to talk to a lot of retailers and distributors about how our products are doing for them, and what we can improve on, without having to maintain a commercial sales booth or run games. This year GTS went *very* well for us, I think. There were as many as 600 retail stores there – about *twice* as many as attended last year. We talked to hundreds of retailers and got a lot of great feedback, like, "Thanks for making me so much money last year!" I think we even talked a few retailers who didn't carry our products yet into picking up the Hero line.

## Origins Award Write-In Campaign

The major disappointment of the GAMA Trade Show is that none of the Hero products we submitted in the nominations round for the Origins Award – the *Fifth Edition*, *Champions*, *Star Hero* for graphics, and *Digital Hero* – received a nomination. That's right, not a single one; we were completely shut out. Since we think this is a disgrace (to put it mildly), we're mounting a write-in campaign. We need *your* help to make this succeed. We need you, your gaming group, your friends, your family, anyone you can get to go to the Origins Award website and vote for us. Please visit the Hero Games website's "Origins Award Write-In Campaign" page for more information, including a link to go vote.

## THE UNTIL SUPERPOWERS DATABASE

The next book in the Hero hit parade is *The UNTIL Superpowers Database*, a book of pregenerated superpowers for *Champions*. The purpose of the book is threefold. First, it saves you time when you need to quickly create a character – just pick the powers you want, tweak to taste, and you're done. Second, it's an idea generator; it can help you think up a character when you're stuck for a cool concept. Third and most importantly, it's a tool for casual *HERO System* players to make the game easier to approach. Rather than having to study the rules and create a character from scratch, a newcomer or occasional player can simply pick and choose what he wants, and thus "ease into" learning the game.

By my quick back-of-the-envelope estimation, the USPD has over 3,300 sample superpowers, organized into 42 special effects categories such as Air Powers, Electricity Powers, Fire Powers, Matter Manipulation Powers, Mental and Psionic Powers, Speedster Powers, Strength and Toughness Powers, Weather Powers, and the ever-popular Miscellaneous Powers. The powers range from the common and obvious (Fire Blast, Super-Punch, Wings) to a bunch of unusual power constructions: the power to merge with and "possess" another character; the ability to steal another character's superpowers with a touch; the ability to remove all of a target's inertia and stop him dead in his tracks; the power to pick up, move, and shape fire and other types of energy; energy beams that follow a character no matter what he does to avoid them; and lots more. I think even experienced *Champions* players will find something in this book they can use – and even if not, they can always use the book as a recruiting tool to get more people to play the game. :)

— Steven S. Long  
HERO System Line Developer

# HEROglyphs by Steven S. Long

## Forward to the Past!

### MANIPULATING TIME IN THE HERO SYSTEM

Last month's *HEROglyphs* column delved into the topic of stopping time. Now let's discuss *manipulating* time – moving it backwards and forwards. While it's always possible to accomplish this, in a sort of crude sense, by properly defining the special effects of various simple powers (see *Captain Chronos in Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks* for some examples), for the purposes of this article I'm trying to build a more literal Time Manipulation power – one that actually allows a character to “rewind” or “fast forward” time like you see in the movies.

### Assumptions

To keep this exercise as simple as possible, I'm going to specify the following assumptions and preconditions, which are the same as the ones for Time Stop:

1. The exact size of the Universe, *a.k.a.* “Reality,” is unknown, and possibly unknowable. However, a MegaArea effect at the +10 Advantage level is big enough to encompass the entire Universe, regardless of where the character happens to be situated within the Universe.

The Time Manipulation power, as designed, assumes there's just one dimension. If there are multiple dimensions and a character wants to affect all of them with this power, he should apply Transdimensional to all parts of it.

(Hereafter, I refer to the various parts of the Time Stop power as “sub-powers.”)

2. Characters can use multiple-Power attacks in the game. A character has to activate the different time-manipulating effects at once – but he doesn't always need every effect. Thus, he must be able to pick and choose the subparts he wants to use, yet use all the sub-powers he selects simultaneously. Using a multiple-Power attack is much easier than figuring out which sub-powers should Link to which other sub-powers, and possibly creating an arrangement that won't fit what some characters want to do.

3. The levels of power chosen for the various sub-powers are, by GM's fiat, sufficient to affect any being and thing in the Universe, from the lowliest microbe to the most powerful super-being or god. I've built with enough points that I suspect well over 90% of the beings and things in the Universe would be affected anyway, but for the sake of game play and having fun just

assume this monstrosity of a power can affect Tyrannon or Zeus.

4. Two hundred doublings of mass (a +50 Advantage) suffices to affect the mass of any single object in the Universe with a Usable As Attack power.

5. The sub-powers are constructed using multiple Areas Of Effect so that it's easy for a character to hit everyone in the Universe. While technically 1 in 216 people should be “missed” (since a roll of 18 always misses), the GM should just ignore such statistical nonsense in favor of good old-fashioned common sense and dramatic sense, and assume everyone gets zapped.

6. Rules clarifications: Be sure to consult the Rules FAQ if a power construct doesn't make sense to you. Creating the Time Stop power led to the addition of several questions-and-answers to the FAQ. You may also want to dig up my original message board post on the subject, which has a section on “Clarifications.”

### Time Manipulation

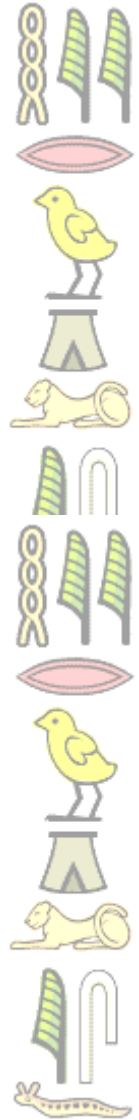
Just like Time Stop, Time Manipulation requires multiple “sub-powers” to create.

#### SUB-POWER 1: WHERE YOU WERE

First, Time Manipulation has to take into account the fact that people move around. If you reverse time to a point twelve seconds ago, in the intervening twelve seconds the people in the Universe may have moved around a great deal. Moving people against their will requires a Movement Power – Teleportation – Usable As Attack. The defense against this would be having time or dimensional manipulation powers of one's own.

*Where You Were, Part I:* Teleportation 500”, Area Of Effect (200” Radius; +1), Selective (+1/4), Area Of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +1/2), Usable As Attack (x200 doublings of mass; +51), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Personal Immunity (+1/4) (54,500 Active Points); Only To Move People To Where They Were/Will Be At A Defined Moment In Time (-1/2). Total cost: 36,333 points.

*Where You Were, Part II:* Teleportation 1”, Area Of Effect (200” Radius; +1), Selective (+1/4), Area Of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +1/2), MegaArea (1” = the entire Universe, can scale down to 1” = 1 km; +101/4), Usable As Attack (x200 doublings of mass; +51), Reduced



Endurance (0 END; +½), Personal Immunity (+¼) (129 Active Points); Only To Move People To Where They Were/Will Be At A Defined Moment In Time (-½). Total cost: 86 points.

This particularly part of Time Manipulation requires a bit of rules fudging on the GM's part. Technically, an Area Of Effect Movement Power Usable As Attack has to affect all targets the same way – Teleport them all 5” to the left, or make them all fly 15” straight up, or what have you. Obviously, that makes no sense for Time Manipulation; in this case, just define “affect all targets the same way” as moving all targets back to where they were at X point in time. Each experiences the same effect, even if it makes him move in a different direction from everyone else.

### **SUB-POWER 2: WHAT YOU WERE LIKE (REMOVING INJURIES)**

Next, Time Manipulation has to account for what has happened (will happen) to the targets between the current point in time, and the point in time the character wants to rewind/fast forward to. That means the power has to repair (or cause) damage to or loss of any Characteristic, Power, or other game element. Let's start with the repairs:

*What You Were Like I:* Healing All Characteristics 100d6 (standard effect: 300 points), all Characteristics simultaneously (+2), Area Of Effect (+1), Selective (+¼), Area Of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +½), MegaArea (1” = the entire Universe, can scale down to 1” = 1 km; +10¼), Usable As Attack (x200 doublings of mass; +51), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Personal Immunity (+¼) (66,750 Active Points); Only To Restore Lost Characteristics To Where They Were/Will Be At A Defined Moment In Time (-½) (total cost: 44,500 points) **plus** Can Heal Limbs and Resurrection options for Healing BODY (total cost: 25 points). Total cost: 44,525 points.

*What You Were Like II:* Flash Healing 100d6, Area Of Effect (+1), Selective (+¼), Area Of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +½), MegaArea (1” = the entire Universe, can scale down to 1” = 1 km; +10¼), Usable As Attack (x200 doublings of mass; +51), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Personal Immunity (+¼). Total cost: 64,750 Active Points.

*What You Were Like III:* As I, but for all Powers simultaneously. Total cost: 44,500 points.

*What You Were Like IV:* As I, but for all Skills simultaneously. Total cost: 44,500 points.

*What You Were Like V:* As I, but for all Perks simultaneously. Total cost: 44,500 points.

*What You Were Like VI:* As I, but for all Talents simultaneously. Total cost: 44,500 points.

*What You Were Like VII:* RKA 100d6 (standard effect: 300 points), Area Of Effect (+1), Selective (+¼), Area Of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +½), MegaArea (1” = the entire Universe, can scale down to 1” = 1 km; +10¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Personal Immunity (+¼) (20,625 Active Points); Only To Destroy Entangles Based On Character's State At Defined Moment In Time (-2). Total cost: 6,875 points.

So, that leaves us with a total cost for *What You Were Like* of 294,150 points.

### **SUB-POWER 3: WHAT YOU WERE LIKE (INFLECTING INJURIES)**

Now we have to deal with the possibility that the character was (or will be) worse off at the point in time to which the character wants to move him – he was injured (or will be injured) then, or suffered a Drain, or what have you.

*Former/Future Injuries I:* Drain All Characteristics 100d6 (standard effect: 300 points), all Characteristics simultaneously (+2), Area Of Effect (+1), Selective (+¼), Area Of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +½), MegaArea (1” = the entire Universe, can scale down to 1” = 1 km; +10¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Personal Immunity (+¼) (15,750 Active Points); Only To Remove Characteristics To Where They Were/Will Be At A Defined Moment In Time (-½). Total cost: 10,500 points.

Rather than having the character's Characteristics recover at the normal rate of 5 Character Points per Turn, with this power they return as they would normally over the passage of time.

As above, we also have to extend *Former/Future Injuries* to Powers, Skills, Perks, and Talents. That means this sub-power costs a total of 52,500 points.

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What about people who are Flashed or Entangled? Here's how to affect them:

*Former/Future Injuries II:* All Sense Groups Flash 100d6 (standard effect: 100 points), Area Of Effect (+1), Selective (+1/4), Area Of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +1/2), MegaArea (1" = the entire Universe, can scale down to 1" = 1 km; +10 1/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Personal Immunity (+1/4) (7,219 Active Points); Only To Flash Characters As They Were/Will Be At A Defined Moment In Time (-1/2). Total cost: 4,813 points.

*Former/Future Injuries III:* Entangle 100d6, 100 DEF (standard effect: 100 BODY), Area Of Effect (+1), Selective (+1/4), Area Of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +1/2), MegaArea (1" = the entire Universe, can scale down to 1" = 1 km; +10 1/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Personal Immunity (+1/4) (13,750 Active Points); Only To Entangle Characters As They Were/Will Be At A Defined Moment In Time (-1/2). Total cost: 9,167 points.

This is a little crude, since it doesn't account for variations such as Entangles that don't take damage from attacks, BOECV Entangles, and the like, but given the special effects involved, the GM can probably declare that those effects occur as they were/will.

Similarly, we have to account for the effect of Transforms. While we're at it, we can structure the Transform to make any other changes necessary, including the activation or deactivation of Disadvantages, the use of Charges, and the effects of Mental Powers.

*Former/Future Injuries IV:* Major Transform 100d6 (everything and everyone back to the way it was/will be at designated point in time for effects not otherwise accounted for in the Time Manipulation write-up; standard effect: 300 points), Area Of Effect (+1), Selective (+1/4), Area Of Effect (One Hex Accurate; +1/2), MegaArea (1" = the entire Universe, can scale down to 1" = 1 km; +10 1/4), Improved Results Group (anything; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2), Personal Immunity (+1/4) (22,125 Active Points); All Or Nothing (-1/2). Total cost: 14,750 points.

Thus, the total cost of Sub-power 3 is 81,230 points.

## Total Cost

So, what does this wonderful and amazing power cost a character?

Power	Cost
Sub-Power 1	36,419
Sub-Power 2	294,150
Sub-Power 3	<u>81,230</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>411,799</b>

Only a little over 400,000 points – not too bad, considering that Time Stop costs about 7.5 million.



# Leftover Hero: Terran Empire by Steven S. Long

## Cleaning Out the Fridge

Leftovers for dinner again? That's right! There were too many pages cut from *Star HERO's Terran Empire* to fit them all into one issue. So, here are the rest of the text that got cut from the final product – history, plot seeds, and campaign settings.

## Chapter Three

### PAGE 55 – MORE SENATORS

Here are profiles of a few more notable Senators.

#### **Maxim Jabi Of Rand IV (served 2630-2650)**

Possibly the most radical member of the Senate, Maxim Jabi is outspoken in his criticism of Imperial rule. A fiery speaker, he doesn't hesitate to attack the Empress herself, the Imperial security agencies, and even the whole concept of the Empire. Only his Senate immunity has kept him from being arrested for sedition or treason. Senator Jabi is too radical to be really popular – off his homeworld most of his support comes from students and fringe journalists.

#### **Thea Sarro Of Barnard (served 2630-2640 and 2650-2660)**

Senator Sarro supports the conservative faction, and after Senator Kyle's retirement she becomes the conservative leader. Senator Sarro also heads a major multiplanetary corporation (Red Star Industries), and gets tremendous support from all Imperial business organizations. Unlike Senator Kyle, she's tolerant of non-Humans; she believes in equal rights for everyone who has money to spend.

Accused of accepting bribes in 2638, Sarro declined to run for re-election in 2640. She returned to the Senate in 2650, silencing her critics by pointing out she was by then too rich to be bribed.

#### **Torenas Of Emerald (served 2636-2648)**

One of a handful of non-Humans to serve in the Senate during its long history, Torenas is an Osath from the cosmopolitan Emerald system. His "seat" in the Senate is a water-filled tank. Belonging to no single faction, he shifts between liberals, conservatives, and expansionists depending on the circumstances. Torenas naturally supports equal rights for non-Humans, and favors Imperial growth by colonization and voluntary annexation of inhabited worlds. He also believes the Empire should restrain aggressive powers like the Thorgons, which sometimes puts him at odds with the more pacific liberals.

#### **Seguin Velton Of Osiris (served 2635-2645)**

Sometimes referred to as "the Grand Admiral" because of his strong and unwavering support for the Imperial military, Senator Velton thinks the Empire should defend itself by expanding – conquer those bothersome Thorgons and Ackáilians, overrun the Se'ecra, and maybe even tackle the Perseids. Velton's home system lies along the path to Earth taken by both Xenovores and Thorgons in past wars, and he speaks for many who vow that such things must never happen again. In any crisis, one can count on Senator Velton to urge immediate massive military action; his chief complaint about the Empress is that she isn't aggressive enough. The small expansionist faction looks to Velton for leadership, and he usually aligns with the Imperial party or the conservatives.

### PAGE 84 – THE THORGON SECRET POLICE

Here's an interesting snippet of information about Thorgon intelligence:

Until the first war between the Thorgon Hegemony and the Terran Empire the Thorgons had a separate intelligence service, known simply as the Spies. The Secret Police used the Hegemony's defeat at the hands of Humanity as an ideal pretext to accuse the Spies, their hated rivals, of treason and incompetence. The CCC disbanded the Spies and assigned their intelligence-gathering function to the Secret Police.

## Chapter Four

### PAGE 98 – RELIGION

Here's some more information about alien religions:

#### **Telgasa**

A minority faith among the Mon'dabi, Telgasa, the Sacred Water Temple, claims water, not fire, is the source of all life. To no religious scholar's surprise, it began in desert areas, and is still mostly confined to the desert areas of Mon'da (and to deserts on other worlds).

Telgasa believers build shrines at springs and sacred wells. In some cases, they make sacrifices by throwing valuable objects into these holy bodies of water. They also keep sacred bowls of water, or even personal fountains, in their homes for daily worship services.

Mon'dabi history records a few short but vicious religious wars between followers of Telgasa and those of Rhigasa. At times, public officials accused Telgasans of sorcery. Interestingly, a higher than normal percentage of



## DIGITAL HERO #9

Mon'dabi psionics come from families with a Telgasan background.

Recently a group of Telgasa adherents petitioned the Terran Empire for permission to settle Darius, an uninhabited desert world in Imperial space. The Ministry for Colonization and Development has the matter under consideration.

### VELARIAN HERESIES

False Avatars litter the history of Scomaru Shaan. Many of them founded heretical splinter cults. Most of those last only for the lifespan of the originator – and back when the Velarians fought religious wars that might not have been very long. A few show more longevity.

#### The Bloodline Heresy

A very old heresy, the Bloodline faction maintains that true Avatars must descend from other Avatars. At any given time the Bloodline heretics recognize only one or two of the College of Avatars as genuine. However, since occasionally some Avatars have one or more Avatars as distant ancestors, the Bloodline faction accepts them. Naturally, Bloodline heretics refuse to acknowledge alien Avatars.

At one time the Bloodline heretics tried to select their own Avatars, but that merely led to massacres and assassinations during religious wars, so they abandoned the practice. Today about a million Bloodline heretics, all on Velaria proper, continue to try to persuade other Velarians to adopt their interpretation of Scomaru Shaan.

#### The Catavalan Heresy

Before contact with the Velarians, the Catavalans had a divine Emperor who claimed descent from the gods. Two hundred years ago the Catavalan Emperor declared he was a living Avatar and all his descendants would be as well. Since the Confederation already existed and could prevent a religious war from breaking out, the schism was relatively peaceful. Today, the Catavalan branch of the faith has 18 Avatars including the Emperor. About 20% of the Catavalan population belong to the splinter church.

#### The Donburil Heresy

Donbur's matriarchal society inevitably spawned a splinter cult, which recognizes only female Avatars (since the gods themselves are sexless, the Donburil do worship all the gods). About ten percent of Donburil Scomaru follow the heresy, which has its own College of Avatars on Donbur.

## PAGE 104 – THE CLONE MOB

Here's a Package Deal for Clone Mobsters:

### CLONE MOBSTER PACKAGE DEAL

All members of the Clone Mob are genetically identical, but actual Skills and attributes vary depending on the individual's training and experiences. Physically, a Clone Mobster looks just like Jax Maljek: tall, with dark straight hair, high cheekbones, green eyes, and a good physique.

Ability	Cost
STR +2	2
DEX +2	6
PD +2	2
ED +2	2
SPD +1	8
KS: Clone Mob (INT +2)	5
Fringe Benefit: Membership	3

Disadvantages	Value
Distinctive Features: Clone Mobster (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)	-5
Psychological Limitation: Loyal To The Clone Mob (Common, Strong)	-15

**Total Cost Of Package: 8**

## Chapter Eight: GameMastering

### CAMPAIGN SCALE AND STYLE

As you plan your Terran Empire campaign, consider the scale, tone, and subject of the game.

#### Campaign Scale

The Terran Empire is a big place, and the Milky Way Galaxy even moreso. Therefore you need to decide what scale the characters will adventure on – are they important figures or regular people?

### GALACTIC HEROES

One of the charms of Space Opera as a genre is the sense of size. Huge spaceships cover vast distances, weapons unleash incredible energies, and decisions affect whole planets and star systems. The sheer scope of a properly run Space Opera campaign evokes that sense of wonder. The large scale of Space Opera also means the players can run incredibly powerful characters: admirals, rebel commanders, even the Empress.

The key words in the paragraph above are “properly-run.” Space Opera poses its own problems and perils for gaming, so you need to prepare for them. The first is “adjective fatigue” – after saving all sentient life in the Universe,



what can the PCs do for an encore? You can avoid this problem with a little bit of advance planning. Before the campaign begins, draw up a list of cool villains and plot elements you want to use, then toss them at the PCs in ascending order of power. That way the PCs progress from local threats, to planetary threats, to sector-wide threats, to Empire-wide threats, to threats against the Galaxy itself! Alternately, try to come up with villains who threaten the PCs (or the Galaxy) in different ways. Sure, the Imperial Fleet coped handily with an invasion of space barbarians from Andromeda, but what can it do about the spread of a sinister religious cult?

Second, as the campaign progresses, it becomes more and more difficult to involve characters in adventures featuring personal danger and action when they command whole fleets and empires. The President of a modern nation doesn't lead his troops in battle, and it's unlikely the Terran Security Service would allow Empress Marissa to get within a million miles of an enemy in wartime. Solving problems becomes a matter of giving orders and making plans rather than actually doing things, and that makes for poor stories.

Several possible solutions exist. First, pay attention to the players' expectations, and your own. If the game centers around political and military leaders making decisions and potentially coming into conflict, that's fine as long as nobody wants to swing from chandeliers and zap space pirates.

Second, if the players feel the need for some physical action, you may want to let them create a second set of lower-powered field agent characters who carry out the missions determined by the high-level PCs. So once the players, as Marissa and the Grand Admirals, decide to cut off the supply of Se'ecra arms to rebels in the Empire, the Imperial Marine characters must actually go in and track down the weapons pipeline.

Third, you can avoid the problem by setting up your campaign so the PCs never reach positions of prominence like admiral or planetary governor. The PCs may be a Galaxy-renowned team of hard-bitten mercs, called on by the mighty and powerful to perform "impossible" missions no one else can handle, but they have neither political, social, nor military power, so they still have to go out and get things done.

### **WORKING STIFFS**

Player characters don't have to operate on a Galactic scale to have exciting adventures. A party of space merchants, Imperial soldiers, explorers, bounty hunters, or scientists can stumble into all kinds of dangerous and interesting situations. What happens to the PCs is

important to them and those around them, but not necessarily to the Fate of the Universe.

This doesn't mean you can't create stories as exciting as large-scale adventures – it just requires a different focus. Your stories should pay attention to the PCs and what happens to them. If they're interesting enough and well-developed enough, you won't have any problems. If the hero is sufficiently interesting *as a character*, it doesn't matter if the fate of the world rests on his shoulders. Sometimes all anyone wants to know is whether he gets the girl (or guy, or Qedustier...).

"Working stiff" campaigns offer one significant advantage: the PCs don't have vast resources at their disposal. A party of archaeologists dealing with an alien menace on a remote world has ordinary camping gear, some scientific tools, and maybe a few low-powered weapons. They can't call in an orbital laser strike or deploy the Marines when monstrous creatures suddenly appear – instead, the players have to use their heads and come up with innovative ideas to keep the characters alive.

Additionally, a small-scale campaign has room to grow. Struggling merchants can become successful merchants, moving from gritty starport adventures to boardroom intrigues to high-level plots as they gain in wealth and influence. Ordinary soldiers rise through the ranks. The progression seems natural and the players feel challenged at every stage.

### **Campaign Tone**

A campaign's scale tells you roughly how important the PCs and their actions are. Tone tells you the mood, feel, and backdrop of the campaign – do you want it to be scary, inspiring, simple, complex?

### **BLACK AND WHITE**

In a black-and-white universe, good is Good and evil is Evil. You must decide which side falls into which category, though the question has several aspects.

First, consider the idea of the Empire versus Everyone Else. As presented in this book, the Empire (or, more accurately, Humanity) is Good when compared to certain other species and organizations (primarily the Thorgons, Ackálians, Varanyi, Xenovores, Hzeel, and various criminal groups). Other governments or species are neutral – potential adversaries, potential allies. For all their faults, the Empire and Humanity are worth preserving against the dangers that face them. But don't feel bound by this presentation. If you want to make some other species or government (such as the CCR) the "good guy" focus of the game, do so.

Second, consider the Empire as an institution itself. It has a long and checkered

history, and there are times and places when a group of PCs could honorably and nobly serve it and its goals. But there are many more times and places when the Empire isn't living up to Humanity's potential. During Marissa III's reign, Imperial rule is already despotic in many ways, and it only gets worse from there. As presented in this book, the Empire teeters on the brink of Evil, if it hasn't already taken the plunge, so you need to decide whether the descent into true Evil is inevitable, or the PCs can prevent it.

### **GREY**

A shades of grey campaign emphasizes the fuzziness of the border between good and evil, and usually poses moral dilemmas for the characters. Does a vicious space pirate become a good guy just because he's helping the rebels against a tyrannical empire? Do idealistic rebels become evil just because they're working with pirates? Is Imperial despotism justified as a way of preventing even worse social condition from arising? If it's justified in 2640, what about several decades from now, when true oppression and cruelty reign?

The Terran Empire provides an excellent setting for this kind of ambiguity – while it is a tyranny, its defenders can plausibly argue that Marissa's authoritarian regime is the only thing protecting humanity from crime, civil war, and Galactic predators like the Ackálions and Thorgons. On the other side, the rebels are justified in trying to restore freedom and democracy, if only because (a) the Empire can't count on getting a relatively stable and competent leader every time, and (b) one could establish a government with all of the Empire's benefits, but none (or fewer) of its abuses of power.

Grey campaigns typically feature shifting alliances: rebels and pirates cooperate against the Imperial Navy; Imperials and rebels join forces against Xenovore raiders; and pirates help the Empire catch a fanatical rebel terrorist. You can portray some villains as sympathetic and sincere, and some allies as people the PCs cannot always trust. They also present the players with some hard questions: can the PCs work for a government with so many despotic elements? Can they effect positive change? Or, to remain true heroes, must they eventually throw in their lot with the rebel forces and get rid of the Empire by force?

### **Campaign Subject**

The scale and style of the campaign cover where and how the characters have adventures; the campaign subject describes what they actually do. Do they cruise around in a starship making deals, try to settle an untamed alien world, lead military missions, commit crimes? In

an Empire of a trillion beings, you can find an almost infinite variety of campaign “framing devices.” Some of the more common types from Space Opera fiction, and how they fit into the Terran Empire milieu, include:

### **THE ART OF THE DEAL**

Space merchants venturing from star to star provide a great structure for a campaign. The heroes' mobility lets them blunder into many different situations and dangers. They don't have much military power at their disposal, so they have to solve problems with wits and courage rather than firepower. Since they need to make a profit, you can easily create adventure hooks by having people hire them for jobs or presenting them with unusual moneymaking opportunities.

Problems peculiar to the merchant campaign relate to the nature of business. If the characters become too good at trading, they get rich and stop being adventurers... but if you keep them poor, the players may get frustrated. If the PCs focus too much on accounting and negotiations, the campaign can get boring. If they can't move a simple shipment from one planet to another without facing pirates, spies, and a Thing in the hold, the campaign starts to seem silly.

You can deal with these problems by paying attention to what the players enjoy. Some gamers really like delving into the minutiae of trade and business, and you can cater to them with complex business deals, unexpected expenses, and the like. If the players really want blaster-slashing adventure, keep the actual merchant business off-stage; thanks to their swashbuckling escapades fighting off pirates and plundering weird alien ruins, the business breaks even, and that's all they need to know.

Space traders need a ship. You should either let the PCs buy a ship with Character Points, or give them one as part of the campaign's backstory; if the characters start out with enough Money to buy a ship, they probably don't need to become adventurers (unless buying the ship took *all* their cash reserves...). They can reduce the cost of the ship with lots of Disadvantages (including the dreaded Social Limitation: Mortgaged) that they buy off over time as they make the appropriate upgrades and repairs.

### **BLASTERS FOR HIRE**

Mercenaries are technically illegal in the Empire, but millions of beings still make their livings as blasters for hire. They include “security consultants,” bands of mercs little better than pirates, illegal “militias” on distant worlds left unprotected by the Imperial Navy, and the like. Bounty hunters also sometimes fall into the “blaster for hire” category.

Player character mercs probably are, or belong to, a small band of “freelance security

### **BLOOD RED**

Horror in a Space Opera setting may seem a little out of place, but the Terran Empire has plenty of room for scary stuff. For small-scale “slasher movie” horror, there are few settings more isolated than a starship in hyperspace or a space station in a remote system. A lurking Xenovore or a crazed Ackálion make a good adversary. Keep the pace fast, the tension high, and the characters off-balance.

For a more Lovecraftian style of cosmic horror, Terran expeditions in search of relic technology may turn up more than they expect – remnants of the Elder Worm (page 195), entities on the run from Qliphothic space (page 202-3), and the like. (You may also want to look at *Champions Universe* and *Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks* for other ideas.) The Church Of The Infinite Dark probably serves a being of this sort. And what was so terrifying that it made the Mandaarions flee the entire Galaxy? You can build an entire campaign around the slow discovery that powerful ancient horrors still exist, sleeping fitfully on the edges of civilization as they

wait for some unwary explorer to unleash them.

### **THE EMPIRE WANTS YOU... DEAD!**

Military-style adventures can also focus on rebels' exploits. During Marissa's reign relatively few dissident groups exist, and most are limited to a single planet and concern themselves with changing local conditions rather than overthrowing the Empire. Think of Robin Hood and his band, who battle the corrupt Sheriff of Nottingham rather than trying to drive the Normans out of England. Adventures center on breaking captured rebels out of prison, protecting innocents from vicious Imperial thugs, and thwarting Imperial attempts to locate and crush the rebels. The PCs could also play a key role in organizing a greater rebellion.

In later periods, the Emperors get meaner and crazier and the rebellion grows in strength and support. By the time of Sandor the rebels have their own space fleet, a formal military organization, and a reliable supply of weapons from the Se'ecra. In this time period, the PCs are probably either important figures in

consultants" perpetually flirting with legal trouble from Imperial officials who don't trust them but can't muster enough evidence to arrest them quietly. The freelance route works well for PCs because it leads to more eclectic employment. They don't work for a mercenary company; instead the client hires them directly – usually in a seedy spaceport bar. They most commonly serve as bodyguards or security officers on small starships, but many other chores may fall their way. They frequently wind up on the shady side of the law, though most draw the line at outright robbery or assassination.

Alien mercenaries are actually more common than Terran ones – Ackálians view it as an honorable occupation, for example, and Velarian Confederation mercenary bands participate in the sporadic fighting among member states. The CCR and the Varanyi display even less tolerance for mercenaries than the Terran Empire.

You can run merc campaigns much like military ones (see below). Caveat: in a mercenary campaign, players tend to leave their ethics at the door, and testing the limits of what they're willing to do may cause the campaign to unravel quickly.

### **THE EMPIRE WANTS YOU!**

A large military empire naturally lends itself to military campaigns. Unlike the free-roving mercenaries described above, characters in the Imperial services have to follow orders and go where their superior officers tell them to. This makes for a very manageable campaign: higher-ups provide adventure hooks with every order and the heroes can't really refuse. When the PCs need special equipment, they can just trot down to the quartermaster and sign out the Really Big Guns – but when the scenario's over they have to return them, avoiding the whole problem of a campaign arms race between players and GM.

During Marissa's reign the Empire doesn't have any major wars going on. However, on an Imperial scale, a "minor conflict" can still involve millions of troops. In peacetime this primarily means the Navy and Marines. The Navy shoots at pirates and rebels, and tries not to shoot at Thorgon and Ackálian ships playing chicken. Small Navy ships see more action in peacetime than the huge battleships. A frigate with a crew of PCs can fight pirates one week, rescue crash survivors on a hostile planet the next, transport a team of covert operatives on a hush-hush mission into Thorgon space a week later, and finish the month by preventing violence during a labor dispute on a colony world. Marines have just as many opportunities for adventure: search and rescue on an Earthlike world; rooting out rebels hiding in an asteroid mine; guarding the Imperial embassy on a

neutral planet wracked by civil war; and all-out assaults against the Empire's next conquest. Campaigns involving Army soldiers stay on one planet for long periods, since the Army ties most of its units down in garrison duty. But you can still come up with plenty of scenarios on the right planet – such as a hotbed of rebel activity or a new colony with unexplored regions.

Military adventures do have some potential problems. Navy heroes with a starship, or Army troops with a tank, often become reluctant to leave the safety of the vehicle. Realistic behavior is another danger: a small band of soldiers confronted with overwhelming opposition typically falls back and calls for support rather than going off on the sort of brave but hare-brained attack so common in adventure fiction. An even worse problem is over-reliance on powerful military technology. Giving player characters access to antimatter missiles and planetary bombardment cannons can turn a campaign into a horrific and pointless bloodbath. You should do your best to get around these problems by setting up situations where heroes can't call on reinforcements, get the technology they want, or solve the problem without leaving the ship. It's a difficult task, requiring some attention and effort on your part, but if you take care when designing scenarios it shouldn't cause you too much trouble.

Military campaigns also suffer from a structural problem: battles aren't very interesting from a gaming standpoint. Resolving several hours of combat gets mind-numbingly dull, and a squad of troops usually can't affect the outcome of the battle. The best solution is to describe the large-scale events, then focus on goals the heroes can accomplish – taking out the nest of enemy gunners pinning down the whole platoon, getting a vital message back to headquarters when communications are down, conducting covert operations vital to the war effort, extracting a downed pilot from no-man's-land, and so on. Alternately, if the players like wargaming and strategy, you could let them fight out the battle as commanders.

### **EXPLORATION SERVICE**

Exploration Service campaigns strongly resemble classic science fiction television: the heroes belong to the crew of a starship operating far from home (usually they're the ship's senior officers). They get orders from home, but can't usually depend on help. Each adventure tends to be self-contained, leading to an episodic campaign – once they solve the problem and wrap up the loose ends, the heroes fly off to the next world.

Terran Exploration Service crewmembers often encounter strange things... usually when they've traveled so far from home they can't

summon help. Typical Explorer adventures involve discovering a new planet or an unusual stellar object, and then getting into danger as a result. Possible threats include hostile life forms, ancient technological items, spacefaring organisms, rival explorers, and the weird effects of an anomaly – such as being cast backward in time or into a parallel universe.

Alien explorer campaigns differ slightly. Velarian and Mon'dabi explorers are usually merchant-adventurers more interested in markets and new resources than pure science. Varanyi, Ackálian, Thorgon, and to a lesser extent Perseid explorers are unapologetic imperialists seeking out new worlds to conquer. Se'ecra explorers are even more science-oriented than the Terran Exploration Service.

The main potential problems you may encounter with exploration campaign is that the players may get tired of having a problem on every new planet they encounter. In other words, the adventures sometimes take on a certain boring sameness. You have to take care to vary the nature of the adventures you run enough to keep things “fresh,” and perhaps sometimes throw some non-exploration-oriented situations at the PCs – such as tangling with pirates or Xenovores in unexplored space, or getting caught in a diplomatic or espionage incident.

### **ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE**

Characters engaged in espionage can work for the Terran Intelligence Command, the Navy's intelligence service, the Mind Police, private interests, or even the Exploration Service. Espionage has an old and hallowed place in science fiction, and makes an excellent frame for Terran Empire games.

The scale of the campaign depends on the realism level: real-life spies tend to concentrate on a single region or nation, familiarizing themselves with the society and working their way into positions of trust and access. In a Terran Empire campaign, this could involve case officers and undercover agents on a single planet, either a neutral world or the capital of an alien empire. Adversaries include the local security services and counterintelligence groups; you can create lots of cat-and-mouse adventures in which the PCs must recover specific bits of information while avoiding counterspies. This sort of campaign can mix deadly perils with gentlemanly intrigue: uniformed TIC intelligence officers get sent home if the local government catches them spying, but local undercover agents face a firing squad or worse.

Less realism allows a James Bond-style campaign of star-trotting agents foiling villains and performing daring exploits across the galaxy. In this sort of campaign the heroes investigate various self-contained situations, moving on

once they stop the latest adversary's scheme. Enemies include spies from rival empires (Varanyi, Ackálians, Thorgons, and occasional friendly rival Perseid and Se'ecra agents) or Bondesque master villains with hidden lairs and plans to take over the Universe.

Finally, an interesting crossover campaign puts TIC liaison officers aboard Exploration Service starships, venturing into distant corners of the Galaxy to snoop about. The PCs can face both weird scientific perils and sinister alien plots, sometimes both at once. The mix of character types allows for interesting conflicts within the party – idealistic Explorers motivated by scientific curiosity clashing with hard-nosed spies loyal to the Empire.

### **Managing An Empire**

Running a Terran Empire campaign provides opportunities and challenges for you as a gamemaster. In addition to the ones mentioned above, here are two more you should consider:

### **BIG EVENTS**

A feature of the Space Opera genre as a whole (and the Terran Empire setting specifically) is the chance for characters to witness and become a part of major events, which provide numerous plot hooks and adventure opportunities. In the Terran Empire, even relatively low-powered characters could get involved in wars, rebellions, and political intrigues of Galactic import. Assuming you choose to use such events as part of your campaign, the big issue becomes: to what extent can the PCs affect the course of these events?

As an example, suppose you decide to use a power struggle between Empress Marissa and the Senate as the campaign's big event. In a high-powered game, PCs could take the roles of Senators, important nobles, or major figures in the Imperial court. They can try to sway influential NPCs, dodge assassination attempts, sneak past an Imperial Guards cordon into the Senate chamber for a key vote, and so on. By contrast, a group of low-powered characters would have less direct involvement – perhaps as TSS agents assigned to arrest a “traitor” who turns out to be a key Senator's young nephew, freelance mercenaries hired to carry out a “deniable” theft of documents from an Imperial official, or simply merchants with a perishable cargo trapped when the Navy closes down Earth's spaceports until the crisis resolves.

the rebellion who get to take an active role choosing targets and planning operations, or lower-level rebels conducting those missions.

### **ALIEN HEROES**

There's no reason a *Star Hero* campaign set in the Terran Empire era has to center on Humans. The other empires have their own potential for exciting adventure scenarios.

If the players like military adventures, let them play Ackálian warriors or Thorgon troops subjugating the Galaxy. Ackálian society allows for lots of factional intrigue and dueling in between battles, while the highly-regimented culture of the Thorgons works best in a blackly humorous campaign. Or they can play Se'ecra troops intervening on war-torn planets or trying to topple tyrannical regimes.

For merchant campaigns, a group of tough Mon'dabi traders or Perseid merchant princes make an intriguing alternative to a Human cast. Se-lag traders get involved in all kinds of mischief, especially if they work on a secret commission from the Republic's intelligence agencies.

Exploration is a natural campaign

subject for CCR characters, and Velarians do quite a bit of poking around in the wilds of the Galaxy as well. The two civilizations bring very different viewpoints: Se'ecra scientists want to study unique forms of life and alien cultures, while Velarians take a more pragmatic approach, seeking relic technology and commercial possibilities.

## The GM's Vault

Here are some snippets of material that I removed from the GM's Vault:

### HISTORICAL PLOT SEEDS

**The Capac Incident (2431):** The PCs find themselves caught in the middle between the people of Capac and Admiral Marissa DeValiere. The Capacites want to remain independent and she insists their world must join the Terran Union. Can the heroes find a way to keep Admiral DeValiere from using orbital bombardment against the planet without halting the (generally desirable) reunification of Human space?

**Fallout (2434):** The PCs are either the Terran Union commanders sent to arrest Admiral DeValiere, or a party loyal to Marissa who must warn her in time. Either way they must race against time and have no way to know who to trust.

**Coup (2434):** Marissa DeValiere's fleet reaches Earth and the system defenses can't (or won't) stop it. Can a band of heroes get President Wu off Earth in time and rally the other worlds of the Union against rule by force?

**Reunification (Esteban's reign):** The fledging Empire assigns the PCs, officers of an Imperial warship, to bring a remote colony into the Empire. Securing this world is vital to continuing the pace of reunification, but the PCs' ship is the only one nearby. Can the PCs arrange a peaceful resolution, or must they resort to brute force?

**Escape From The Thorgons (2505):** The Thorgons invade Imperial space, leaving the Terran fleet panicked and disorganized. Can a motley group of civilians and veterans (the PCs) get a convoy of refugees past Thorgon raiders and trigger-happy Imperials to safety?

**Where Terrans Dare (2508):** During Admiral Kanagawa's campaign against the Thorgons, the Imperial Marines have to use their orbit-to-surface assault tactics in commando raids and surgical strike missions. A group of elite PCs strap on their battlesuits and re-entry packs for an attack on a vital Thorgon outpost.

**Days Of Infamy (2548):** The PCs stumble across clues to the Ackálian assassination plot against Senator Yang, and must overcome both sinister Ackálian agents and blindly overconfident Imperial authorities to warn him before it's too late.

**Privateers (2550):** Daring freelance warriors (the PCs) harry the enemy flanks and disrupt communications with the rear – and maybe get rich in the process by capturing enemy ships and materiel. Of course, some privateers don't care who they raid, and some are perfectly willing to raid Imperial shipping if they get the chance....

**Armageddon 2552 (2552):** The heroes find themselves caught in the meat-grinder battle for the Tetsuo system. On the six worlds of the system the battle lines shift constantly, civilians get stuck in the middle of the fighting, and civil order completely collapses. Depending on your preference and the nature of the PC group, the characters could be soldiers battling the invaders, civilians trying to get out alive, or rogues who want to empty out the Tetsuo Museum of Antiquities under cover of the conflict.

**Harem Intrigues (Ibrahim's reign):** The Emperor Ibrahim is famous for his numerous mistresses. Beauties from all over the Galaxy flock to the Imperial court, hoping to be the next favorite. But his current paramours guard their status jealously, using gossip, scandal, sabotage, and even murder to maintain their positions of prominence. Do the heroes dare to get involved in the politics of the Emperor's bedroom? What if they discover one of the harem girls is more than she seems... an alien assassin, perhaps?

**Escape From Earth (2598):** Marissa II hopes to secure her position by arresting her rivals Ricardo and Ivan after they speak to the Senate. Ricardo dies, but with the help of some daring officers and maybe a few civilians (the PCs), Ivan must get off Earth and reach the safety of his fleet – with Marissa's assassins hot on his tail.

**The Golden Child (2601):** The heroes must locate Marissa II's son Feodor before the assassins sent by General Feng and Emperor Antonio find him. Then they have to find a way to keep him safe....

**Franklin In Paris (2601):** Twelve systems have proclaimed a new Terran Republic and need help from other Galactic powers to defend themselves against the Imperial fleet. The heroes, special envoys working for one side or the other, must make their way through space held by different Imperial factions, then persuade the Se'ecra or Mon'dabi to lend assistance to their side.

**Oath Of Blood (2614):** Friends of the young Emperor Feodor, the heroes learn General Feng plans to remove their friend and proclaim himself Emperor. Feng controls the security services – can the heroes get Feodor to safety, or perhaps kill Feng first?

**Cadet Cruise (Feodor's Reign):** The PCs are the officers and crew of the Exploration Service starship taking young Princess Marissa on her first duty assignment. The Princess is bright, energetic, and spoiled. And more than a few powerful people at Emperor Feodor's court would like to see her cruise end in failure – or death.

**The Lost Emperor (2668):** The heroes, a group of Exploration Service veterans who served with Count Vincent, receive a mysterious

message. It contains clues that reveal the location of a distant and supposedly uninhabited star system. Actually the system contains a prison planet where the TSS holds Vincent. Can the heroes rescue him and get him to Earth to claim the throne?

**A Deputation (Sandor's Reign):** The PCs come from a remote planet oppressed by a tyrannical Imperial governor. Surely if the Emperor knew he would put an end to this terrible injustice. Can the heroes navigate the complex currents of the Imperial Court to get word to the Emperor?

**The Last Defenders (2684):** Senator Kyle speaks out against Emperor Sigismund. In response, Sigismund abolishes the Senate. A group of elite Senate Guards (the PCs) must protect Senator Kyle and escort her to safety before Sigismund's goons kill her.

**Infiltrators (2703):** A band of rebels must somehow sneak aboard the Imperial dreadnought *Colossus* to carry a message to Admiral Panatic. If they succeed, he may switch sides; if they fail it means certain death.

**We Who Are About To Die (2703):** Sigismund always travels with a group of prisoners to interrogate for his personal amusement. Can his victims (the PCs) take advantage of a momentary slip by one of the guards to make a bid for freedom?

### EMPIRE PLOT SEEDS

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More plot seeds, this time relating to Imperial life and politics.

**Alien Source Intelligence:** The heroes, TIC officers stationed in Se'ecra space (or their hired agents), must set up a spy network of local agents. Most of the recruits are scum, members of a crime syndicate within the Conjoined Civilizations. One of them claims to have a valuable find – a data chip detailing Se'ecra "Uplift" operations in Imperial space. But now he wants more money, and threatens to snitch to the CCR counterintelligence service if the PCs don't pay up. The heroes must steal the data chip and avoid both trigger-happy gangsters and the Se'ecra authorities.

**Chateau d'If:** Either because of something they did, or because of something TSS thinks they did, the heroes find themselves incarcerated on a secret prison world. One of the other prisoners claims to know a way off-planet – by sneaking through an abandoned section of the tunnel complex and hiding aboard one of the resupply ships. Can they trust him? Can they actually pull off the escape, especially when they discover the TSS using the abandoned tunnels for a secret project?

**Colony Dispute:** The Ministry for Colonization and Development wants to establish a new settlement program on an

Earthlike world on the Empire's rimward frontier. The Exploration Service insists the planet needs more study, as its ecology displays curious anomalies. The heroes, hired by the MCD, must lead an expedition to choose a good colony site and prepare for the arrival of the transports. But problems soon arise: equipment disappears; something attacks expedition members at night; conditions at the site don't match TES reports. Is the Exploration Service trying to sabotage the colony project? Are the Thorgons trying to slow Terran expansion in the sector? Or does the planet have a dangerous secret?

**Countdown:** A band of ruthless space pirates take refuge aboard a civilian space station. Since they know they cannot safely surrender, the pirates rig the station with explosives and threaten to kill everyone aboard if the Empire doesn't let them leave unmolested. The PCs, a band of Imperial Marines tasked with getting aboard the station and killing the pirates, or a group of freelancers hired by the station's owners to do the same job when the Empire refuses to do anything, must save the day. The clock is ticking....

**Court Appearance:** After hearing about some noteworthy exploit of theirs, the Empress summons the PCs to an audience – one conducted during a SCUBA-diving session off the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. If they impress her, she may assign them a more important – and difficult – mission on the spot.

**Direct Retrieval:** Reports indicate the Ackálions are testing a new weapon system on a remote, highly secure planet inside their borders. Terran Intelligence can't suborn any Ackálions, so the Empress authorizes a Direct Retrieval mission. A mix of TIC operatives, Imperial Marines, and freelancers – the PCs – must enter the system aboard a super-stealthy Special Operations ship, penetrate the heavily-guarded weapon-testing facility, and get out with the data.

**House Hunting:** A newly-rich shipping tycoon has decided to enter Imperial high society, no matter what the cost. He hires a group of adventurers to secure an apartment in a fashionable part of Lyons. To keep costs down, he offers a flat price, and his agents can keep whatever they don't spend. Of course, the Lyons real-estate market is so tight people have been known to commit murder to get a good apartment, and many Imperial nobles who don't want to see this upstart living in the capital....

**Matters Of The Heart:** One of the Empress's lovers has gone missing, yet she doesn't want her own security services to know about it. Commodore Cham Xien disappeared from his suite in the Palace two days ago, and Marissa suspects TSS involvement. She picks a group of discreet and reliable individuals to

locate Commodore Cham or find out what happened to him. The Empress can give her new agents a useful cover position – Ministry of Evolution field researchers tracking a possible viral outbreak – but any overt backing from her would alert the kidnappers.

**Mission To Mosvan:** The heroes, either members of the Terran Diplomatic Corps or the “fortunate” subjects of one of Marissa’s snap decisions, find themselves on the neutral planet Mosvan, in the Spinward Territories. The Empress has given them a delicate mission: arrange the extradition of a Terran citizen arrested for desecrating a Mosvano religious site, but without revealing his true identity as a TIC agent. To complicate matters, the prisoner says he cannot remember the incident at all; his memory of that day is a complete blank (telepathy confirms this). Is the whole thing a frame-up? Did he stumble across something the Empire should know about? And why is the Varanyi Ambassador being so helpful?

**Operation Snow White:** Prince Stephen has just become the father of a healthy baby boy – something neither the Prince nor his mother especially want. The mother, a young actress, fears something may happen to her or the child, and just wants to get away from Earth. Lots of powerful factions would love to have a genuine Imperial Heir, especially one who’s still just an infant. Can the heroes get the girl and her baby to safety?

**The Ponce de Leon Project:** The Ministry of Evolution wants to track down rumors of a group of Humans with vastly extended lifespans, and offers good money to anyone who can bring in a DNA sample from one of them. The only lead, a merchant captain’s memoirs from fifty years ago, mentions transporting the immortals to a colony planet. Can the PCs locate the immortals and get a sample for the good of the species? Or will they help them guard their privacy? Is the whole thing part of some elaborate hoax or con game?

#### **MISCELLANEOUS SECRET FACTS**

Other juicy tidbits I had to remove for space reasons.

#### **Dangal**

Another Ackálian world of note is Dangal. An airless world of domed cities and tunnels, Dangal houses the Kairensa’s main alien study center. To learn more about alien societies, Kairensa operatives abduct individuals and hijack ships, setting up little communities under controlled conditions on Dangal where they can observe group dynamics and mass psychology. There are 40,000 Humans on Dangal in three communities, along with populations of Se’ecra, Mon’dabi, Perseids, and Thorgons. Each alien group includes remote-controlled robots that the

Kairensa researchers use as spies and participant observers.

The Terran Empire knows as much as it does about Dangal thanks to the fact that some Human captives held there escaped in 2634 and made it back to Terran space. The situation infuriates the Empress Marissa, but until she can find a way to free the Human captives without letting the Ackálian authorities know the Terran Empire did it, she intends to take no action.

#### **New Patagonia**

The descendants of the New Patagonia victims – horrible, twisted, half-bestial mutated Humans – still live on Razarka III. The Thorgons continue to use them as both fodder for genetics experiments and prey for hunting expeditions.

#### **Rhigasa**

Among the various splinter cults of Rhigasa is a dangerous and forbidden group known as the Immolators. This group believes true devotion to the Sacred Fire requires the ultimate sacrifice – of Mon’dabi and other sentient beings. Often the cult’s sacrifices involve arson or incendiary bombings. The Immolators attract deranged sorts, and recently began committing atrocities beyond Mon’dabi space.

#### **The Xenovore Fleet**

A growing schism has arisen within the Xenovore Fleet. The Xenovores who still command most of the ships have become a minority in the organization, and the other members want a bigger share of the pie. So far the Xenovores have kept the others in line via intimidation and some slaughter, but the other species still talk about splitting the fleet. The Imperial Navy doesn’t know if this would weaken the pirates or simply mean the Empire would have two pirate fleets to cope with.

#### **Psychic Healing**

The IPF has never verified any instance of a psi with true healing powers for one simple reason – they don’t exist, at least not at this stage of Human psionic development. (Virtually all other species are the same.) It will take at least another century before Humanity manifests such powers.





# Hero Universe

by Darren Watts

Salutations, mein heroes and heroines, and welcome to another installation of Hero Universe, the column that shines the Flashlight of Truth into the darker corners of Hero History. This week, by general acclaim and as promised, we turn to the adventures of the superteam that ushered in the Silver Age for the Champions Universe, the band of celebrity explorers of the unknown called the Fabulous Five! (This is Part One of what projects to be probably a four-part article, so be sure to collect 'em all!)

## Part I

In the spring of 1959, a panic swept across the world when government officials announced the discovery (by several agencies simultaneously) of a new comet, whose orbit seemed to be taking it on a direct collision course with the Earth. Dubbed "Comet X" by the press, the fiery missile measured almost three miles across, and though scientists debated the likely outcome of a collision, almost all agreed it would be extremely destructive and might mean the end of human life, much as a similar strike was theorized to have caused climactic changes that wiped out the dinosaurs. For days, every newspaper on Earth ran headlines about the forthcoming impact, and while families gathered in places of worship and prepared their shelters, government agencies like the relatively new NASA worked around-the-clock to provide the President with answers.

One solution they rejected outright came from a young engineer and inventor in Massachusetts by the name of Michael Renton. Renton claimed he had a spaceworthy ship called the Jules Verne he'd been building in his basement, with which he planned to fly out and meet the comet while it was still millions of miles away. After several failed attempts to get various government agencies to take him seriously, and with time slipping away, Renton decided to launch the ship without their approval.

Renton gathered together his crew, which consisted of his friend Ray Briggs (a pilot and co-designer of the Verne's control systems) and Ray's sister Patty, who would operate the onboard sensors and radio. Since their plan was to destroy Comet X with high explosives, Renton contacted a former colleague, geologist and explosives expert John Whitley, to join the team. Though reluctant at first, Whitley was eventually convinced and joined the team. The last crewmember was Michael's younger brother Allen, a fourteen-year-old left in Michael's care after the death of their parents some years before. Though the crew was at first reluctant to bring

along a child, Allen convinced them with both his quick wits and surprising maturity for his age, as well as the argument that if the team failed the Earth was likely to be destroyed anyway, so he was in no greater risk on the ship than staying behind.

The team launched the Verne from Renton's property in Northampton on April 7<sup>th</sup>. Although the ship was still in the experimental stages and had a few bumpy moments early in the flight, she became the first manned vessel to travel in space when it cleared the atmosphere a few minutes after six in the morning. The rocket traveled for nearly three days before intercepting Comet X about 180 thousand miles from Earth, well within the orbit of the Moon. (By this point, the comet was easily visible to the naked eye in the night sky, and panic began to sweep across the world. Riots were common, and wild rumors of secret spacecraft and Soviet missile programs were heard across the country.)

Early on the morning of April 10<sup>th</sup>, the Verne landed on Comet X. The crew left the ship in their space suits, carrying the explosives that Whitley planned to bury deep in the comet itself. However, Whitley and Renton quickly discovered that the rocky, pitted surface of the comet was only an accreted covering, and the "comet" itself was actually an artificial ship with a strange metal surface! While they worked to determine the nature of the ship, Ray and Patty went off exploring a little ways away, and were abducted by a pair of enormous robots, who brought the pair inside the ship through a hidden hatch.

Once inside, Ray and Patty were brought before the "Captain" of the vessel, who revealed himself to be Ajok, the alien caretaker of an entire race, called the Kuzane, who slept in massive hibernation chambers deep within the "comet." Since the unfortunate destruction of their own homeworld, the Kuzane had traveled through the galaxy, looking for a new planet to call their own. Ajok and his robots planned to wake the Kuzane in a matter of hours, in preparation for their invasion of the Earth!

Meanwhile, Michael, John, and Allen found another entrance into the ship, escaped a patrolling "guard-bot," and made their way to the hibernation chamber. There they found Ajok leading Ray and Patty (whose company he quite enjoyed, since they were the first people he'd spoken to in thousands of years) on a tour before their execution, and surprised and overpowered both Ajok and his robots. Secretly leaving behind John's explosives, the team raced back to

their ship. They barely succeeded in taking off before the comet exploded, apparently killing Ajok and all of the Kuzane.

However, unbeknownst to the crew of the Verne, the engines of the comet-ship ran on strange radioactive fuels unknown to humans, and when Ajok's ship exploded, the Verne was bathed in mutagenic particles. Ray and Michael were only able to partly program the ship's autopilot before they lost consciousness, along with the rest of the crew. Each of the five fell into a strange, dream-filled hibernation, and remained there for the rest of the journey home.

## Part II

The Jules Verne had a state-of-the-art guidance system, however, and despite her incapacitated crew, the ship landed fairly near where it originally launched. The ship crashed in a small forest near Brookline the night of April 13<sup>th</sup>, bouncing several times before wiping out a copse of trees and beginning a small fire. The impact woke the crew from their strange hibernation, and Michael was able to pull the rest of his friends from the capsule. One at a time, he helped them stagger some yards into the woods, leaving each leaning against a large oak out of the path of the fires.

The last one he went back for was John, who had been in the seat farthest to the back. When Michael made his way through the capsule, he was horrified to see that John had somehow been... transformed! His flesh seemed to have crystallized, dimly reflecting the light of the distant fires. Michael, assuming his new friend was dead, lowered his head in sorrow. His sadness turned to shock and surprise when John turned his head and said, in a newly deep and raspy voice, "What are you looking at?"

Michael couldn't help it. A ragged laugh escaped his lips. "Either I'm still dreaming, or something has happened to you. Maybe to all of us."

"What are you talking about? I'm fi—" John rolled partly over in his seat and, for the first time, caught a glimpse of his own arm, shining in the dim firelight. "Oh, my God."

"Come on," said Michael, gathering himself. "Let's get out of here, get you to a doctor. The effect may be temporary..." He grabbed John by the arm and tugged. With a shrug, John pulled his arm away, then gave Michael the lightest of shoves. Michael flew across the capsule, crashing into the far wall and slumping into unconsciousness. John looked at his friend, then down at his body again. With a roar of anger, he turned and tore a hole in the side of the capsule, struggling outside into the night.

Outside, Ray, Patty, and Allen had all regained consciousness. "All right, you guys stay

here. I'll go help Michael," said Ray, and he set off back toward the capsule.

Patty helped Allen to his feet. "How are you feeling, kid?" she said, and he smiled wearily. "Like somebody's tap-dancing between my ears." Then he looked over his shoulder, and his eyes widened in fear and surprise. "Wow – what's that?" he said, pointing.

Patty turned, and came face to face with John. His uniform had largely torn off, revealing the crystalline form his body had taken. He moved slowly and stiffly, unsure of his new weight and strength. He raised a hand, reaching out to Patty for help. Predictably, she misunderstood the gesture and screamed. Less predictably, the scream was of superhuman intensity. Allen grabbed his ears in pain, falling to the ground. The effect on John was even more spectacular; he flew backwards as though struck by a train, crashing into the underbrush some twenty feet away.

Stunned by what she had just done, Patty leaned heavily against a tree. "What happened? What was that?" she muttered, afraid to raise her voice again. She looked at Allen, who was on the ground holding his head. "Allen? Are you all right?" she asked quietly.

Allen continued to grab his head tightly, and his soft moaning grew louder. As Patty watched, his form began to change, shrinking in size slightly, and growing fur, while his head and limbs changed shape. Horrified, Patty stared as the boy she had known for months transformed into a wolf. The creature looked at her briefly, yipped, and ran off into the brush.

Some distance away, Ray approached the Verne. "Michael? John? Are you in here? Are you okay?" He put his hand on one of the fins and leaned toward the window. At that point, a piercing scream, as loud as a siren, filled the woods. "Patty? What the hell was that?" said Ray, turning to run back to where he left his sister. He launched himself at full speed into the woods.

It felt to Ray as if something entered him then. His legs moved fluidly, easily, and the wind rushed past him. He was startled by the sensation of power and ease, and pulled up his run. The woods around him seemed different. "I left them just over here. Where's the tree?" Ray looked around, trying to get his bearings. Then he saw the trail of broken, wind-whipped branches, and sprayed soft mud that he had created behind him, as far as he could see into the darkness. In those few seconds of running, he had covered half a mile. He turned around and began running back, trying to hold himself to a slower pace.

Meanwhile, inside the capsule, Michael woke up with a splitting headache and a burning sensation in his throat. He recognized the second

sensation almost immediately – escaping jet fuel fumes from the damaged engine. If he didn't get out of here soon, he'd be suffocated. As he struggled to his feet, he tried to focus his drifting thoughts through the pain of his contusion. The jet fuel was an experimental mix he'd developed, and as he forced himself to take small, staggering steps forward, he pictured the structure of the hydrocarbons in his mind. He tripped over a bundle of wires and crashed heavily to the ground. I'm not going to make it, he thought. Need more oxygen... and then he could feel it, the individual molecules transforming and changing in his mind, chemical bonds weaving and unweaving, and the sweet smell and taste of oxygen filling his nose, mouth, and lungs. With a burst of energy he forced himself through the hatch and out onto the forest floor. What did I just do?

As he regained his feet, his head swimming, he saw Ray approaching the capsule. "Mike, are you all right? You won't believe what just happened to me. Where's Patty and the others?" The words came in a rush, almost too fast to understand. Michael gestured to him to slow down, as he tried to get his own breath back.

"We're over here!" Patty's voice came from behind them, and Michael and Ray turned to see her and John step from behind a tree. "We're all right. John's with me, and he's okay."

Michael looked at John, who hung his head sheepishly. "Sorry for slugging you, buddy. I went a little nuts there for a minute."

Michael reached up to pat his friend on the shoulder. "I understand. Don't worry, we'll figure this thing out and change you back to normal." John nodded, clearly still frightened but back under control.

"Michael, what happened to us?" said Patty, her voice still barely above a whisper.

"I don't know," said Michael. "Where's Allen?"

"Well..." began Patty, but Ray answered, "Over here!" He dashed over to a nearby bush, where Allen was huddled on the ground, shivering. "You okay, little buddy?" said Ray, lifting him up to his feet.

"I was a wolf. For a minute there, I was really a wolf. Mike, we're all changed."

"I think you're right, little brother." The five heroes stood together in the forest, watching the fire burn out and listening to the sounds of sirens in the distance but getting closer. "I think everything's changed."

## To Be Continued...

## Diamond

**Personality:** John Whitley had a deserved reputation for pessimism and cynicism, even though he was among the world's most stalwart heroes. A skilled scientist in his own right, he was often overshadowed by his teammate Amazing Man, and sometimes resented the implication that as the team's strongman he was not also one of their leading thinkers. However, in the end, his dark sense of humor would always win out, as he was incapable of remaining angry for very long.

He maintains a fairly solitary existence, with only a few close friends, and tries to avoid the spotlight wherever possible.

Even among other superheroes his stamina and determination are legendary. Diamond himself never considers surrender, unless someone else convinces him it's strategically necessary (and even then he'll grumble and complain.)

**Quote:** "There's something funny going on around here, I tell ya. I don't like it one bit."

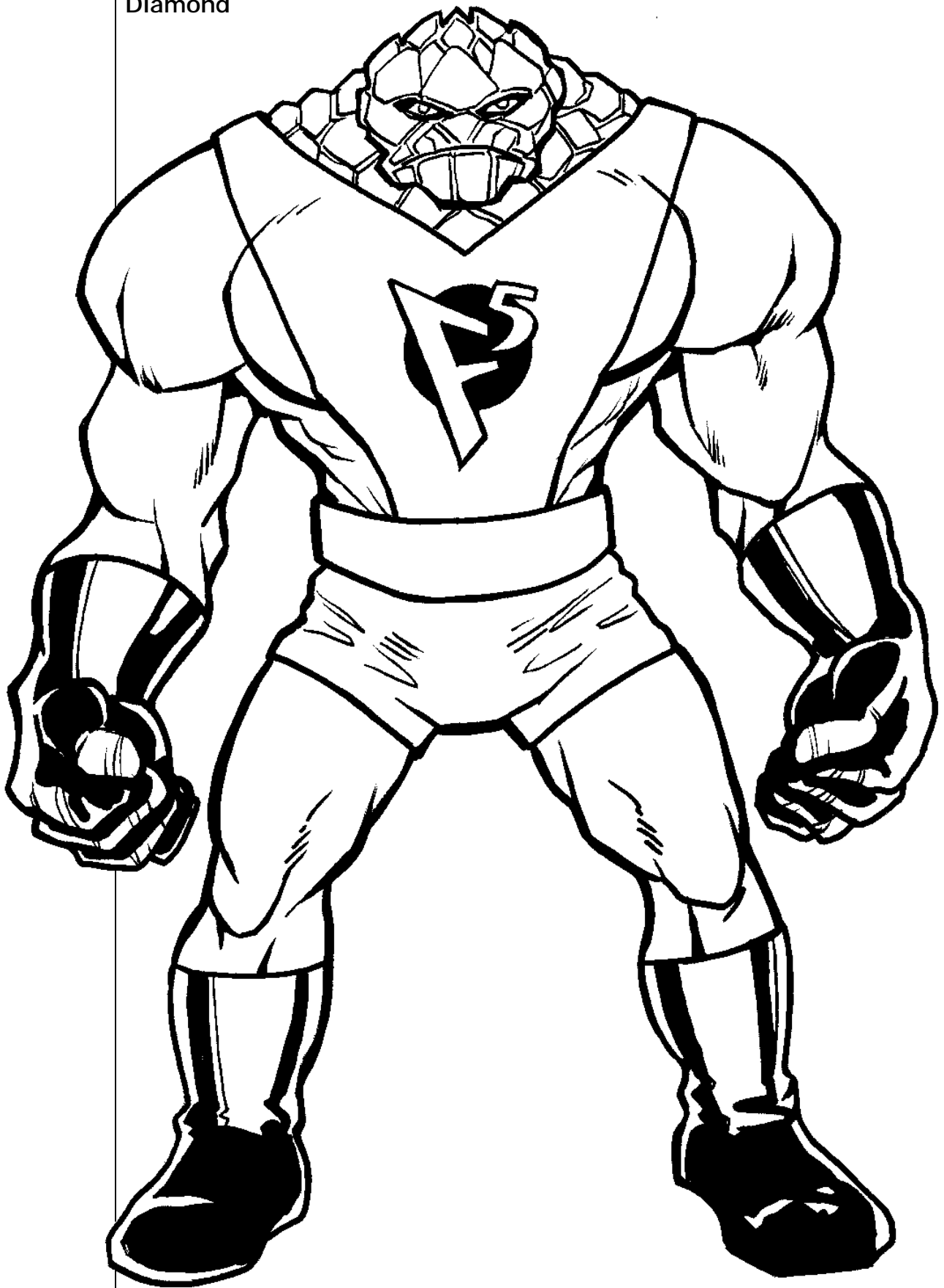
**Powers/Tactics:** Diamond is a "brick" of the first order; he's astonishingly strong and nearly indestructible, and his fighting style is straight-ahead. He wades into battle slowly (unless Streak is free to carry him), and is fond of hurling heavy objects at targets he can't catch.

**Appearance:** Diamond is a huge crystalline figure, standing nearly seven feet tall. Out of uniform, he favors heavy trenchcoats and other concealing clothes in public, and generally wears very little in private (since he no longer feels ordinary temperature differences).

## THE FABULOUS FIVE... INTO THE FUTURE!

The write-ups in this article represent the team's power level early in their careers (say, around 1962), not the level at their original appearance in 1959.

Diamond



## DIGITAL HERO #9

### Diamond

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
70	STR	60	23-	400 tons; 14d6 HTH [7]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
40	CON	60	17-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 12-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
40	PD	26		Total: 40 PD (30 rPD)
30	ED	22		Total: 30 ED (30 rED)
4	SPD	16		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
22	REC	0		
80	END	0		
75	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 244**

**Movement:** Running: 6"/12"  
Leaping: 14"/28"  
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
37	<i>Hard Body:</i> Damage Resistance (30 PD / 30 ED), Hardened (+¼)	0
30	<i>Diamond-Hard Hands:</i> HKA 2d6 (4d6 with STR)	3
5	<i>Bodily Cohesion:</i> Lack Of Weakness (-5) for Normal Defense	0
31	<i>Inhuman Metabolism:</i> Life Support (Immunity: All terrestrial diseases and biowarfare agents, All terrestrial poisons and chemical warfare agents; Longevity: 400 Years; Safe in: High Pressure, High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum)	0
10	<i>Heavy Body:</i> Knockback Resistance -5"	0

#### Martial Arts: Wrestling

##### Maneuver OCV DCV Notes

4	Crush	+0	+0	STR +4d6, Must Follow Grab
4	Escape	+0	+0	+15 STR vs. Grabs
3	Martial Grab	-1	-1	Grab Two Limbs, +10 STR
3	Martial Throw	+0	+1	STR +v/5, Target Falls
3	Takedown	+1	+1	STR Strike; Target Falls

#### Perks

8	Money (Wealthy)
4	Reputation: Celebrity Hero (A large group, 11-) +2/+2d6

#### Skills

20	+4 with Hand-to-Hand Combat
3	Climbing 12-
3	Computer Programming 12-
7	Demolitions 14-
3	KS: Mining 12-
2	KS: Superhumans of Earth 11-
3	Mechanics 12-
4	SS: Geology 13-
3	Tactics 12-
2	WF: Small Arms

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 192**

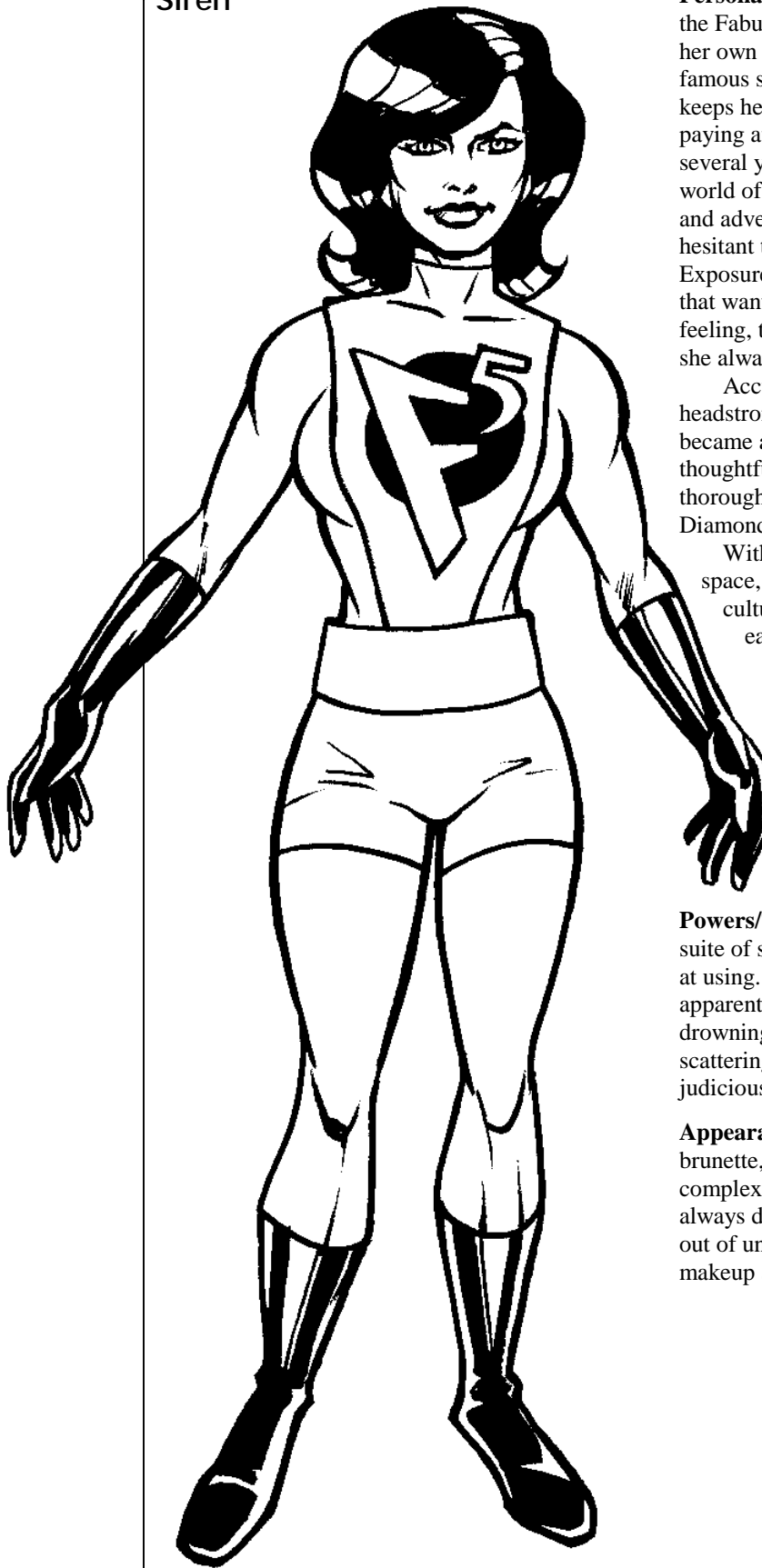
**Total Cost: 436**

#### 200+ Disadvantages

20	Distinctive Features: Giant Crystalline Body (Not Concealable, Major Reaction)
20	Hunted: Rogues' Gallery 11- (As Pow, Harshly Punish, PC has a Public ID or is otherwise very easy to find)
15	Physical Limitation: Inconvenient Size and Weight (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
5	Physical Limitation: Limited Sense of Touch (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
10	Psychological Limitation: Suffers Fools Poorly; Abrasive and Grumpy (Common, Moderate)
25	Psychological Limitation: Never Quits Once Committed (Very Common, Total)
15	Psychological Limitation: Sides with "Little Guy" (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Resents Common Belief "Bricks" are Dumb (Common, Moderate)
15	Social Limitation: Super-Celebrity (Frequently, Major)
10	Unluck: 2d6
91	Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 436**

## Siren



**Personality:** Patty Renton is the glue that holds the Fabulous Five together. While coping with her own extreme celebrity status as the most famous superheroine of the Sixties, she also keeps her teammates on an even keel, always paying attention to team dynamics. It took her several years to adapt to the rough and tumble world of superheroics; while she's both brave and adventurous, she disliked violence, and was hesitant to use her powers against anyone.

Exposure to a large number of people and things that wanted her dead eventually diminished this feeling, though it never went away entirely and she always preferred to find peaceful solutions.

Accustomed to keeping an eye on her headstrong brother anyway, Patty also naturally became a force for order within the team; thoughtful and methodical, she generally favored thorough plans and disliked it when Streak and Diamond "improvised."

Within a few days of the team's return from space, the lovely Patty had become a pop-culture phenomenon, setting off fashion earthquakes every time she cut her hair or wore a new dress in public. She naturally handled the press with aplomb, always appearing demure while cagily managing her image.

**Quote:** "If you boys would quit fighting and pay attention, maybe we could get something accomplished!"

**Powers/Tactics:** Siren has a fairly complete suite of sonic powers, which she's quite creative at using. She frequently concentrates on the apparent leaders of a group of enemies, drowning out their communications while scattering them across the battlefield with judicious application of her powers.

**Appearance:** Patty is a lovely young dark-brunette, with a slim figure and porcelain complexion that sets off lovely blue eyes. She is always dressed in the height of fashions when out of uniform, with classy and understated makeup and jewelry.

## DIGITAL HERO #9

### Siren

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
19	DEX	27	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
16	CON	12	12-	
9	BODY	-2	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll: 12-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
20	COM	5	13-	
5	PD	3		Total: 13 PD (8 rPD)
8	ED	5		Total: 16 ED (8 rED)
5	SPD	21		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
5	REC	0		
42	END	5		
26	STUN	4		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 111**

**Movement:** Running: 6"/12"  
Leaping: 2"/4"  
Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Sonics</i> : Elemental Control, 60-point powers	
30	1) <i>Counter-Vibrations</i> : Dispel 16d6, Any Sonic or Vibratory Power (+1/4)	6
30	2) <i>Sonic Blast I</i> : Energy Blast 12d6 (vs. ED)	6
26	3) <i>Sonic Blast II</i> : Energy Blast 5d6 (vs. ED), Double Knockback (+3/4), Area Of Effect (10" Cone; +1); No Range (-1/2)	7
30	4) <i>Sonic Blast III</i> : Energy Blast 6d6 (vs. ED), No Normal Defense (+1)	6
20	5) <i>Sonic Overload</i> : Flash 10d6 (Hearing Group), Area Of Effect (7" Cone; +1); No Range (-1/2)	6
18	<i>Sonic Defense Field</i> : Missile Deflection (Bullets & Shrapnel), Ranged (Adjacent Hex; +1/2); Will Not Work Against Heavy Missiles (-1/4)	0
40	<i>Immunity to Sonics</i> : Damage Reduction, Energy, Resistant, 75%; Only Works Against Sonics (-1/2)	0
3	Ultrasonic Perception	0
15	Active Sonar	0
16	<i>Costume</i> : Armor (8 PD / 8 ED); Activation Roll 15- (-1/4), IIF (-1/4)	0
	<b>Perks</b>	
10	Money (Wealthy)	
2	Reputation: Fashion Plate and Idol (a large group, 8-) +2/+2d6	

### Talents

3 Perfect Pitch

### Skills

10	+2 with Ranged Combat
9	+3 with Sonic Blasts
3	Breakfall 13-
1	Bugging 8-
3	Bureaucratics 13-
1	Computer Programming 8-
3	Concealment 12-
5	Cryptography 13-
3	Electronics 12-
5	High Society 14-
5	KS: Fashion 14-
3	Linguist
1	1) Language: French: Fluent Conversation
1	2) Language: German: Fluent Conversation
1	3) Language: Mandarin: Fluent Conversation
1	4) Language: Japanese: Fluent Conversation
1	5) Language: Spanish: Fluent Conversation
3	Paramedics 12-
3	PS: Radio/Communications Officer 12-
5	Systems Operation 13-
5	Ventriloquism 13-

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 345**

**Total Cost: 456**

### 200+ Disadvantages

15	DNPC: Mother (Ida Briggs) 8-, (Incompetent, Infrequently)
10	DNPC: Rhonda Huber (best friend) 8-, (Normal, Infrequently)
5	Distinctive Features: Always Wears Latest Fashions (Easily Concealed)
20	Hunted: Rogues Gallery 11- (As Pow, Harshly Punish, PC has a Public ID or is otherwise very easy to find)
15	Psychological Limitation: Code vs. Killing (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Loves Amazing Man (Common, Moderate)
20	Psychological Limitation: Protects the Innocent and Helpless (Common, Total)
15	Social Limitation: Super-Celebrity (Frequently, Major)
146	Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 456**

## Streak II

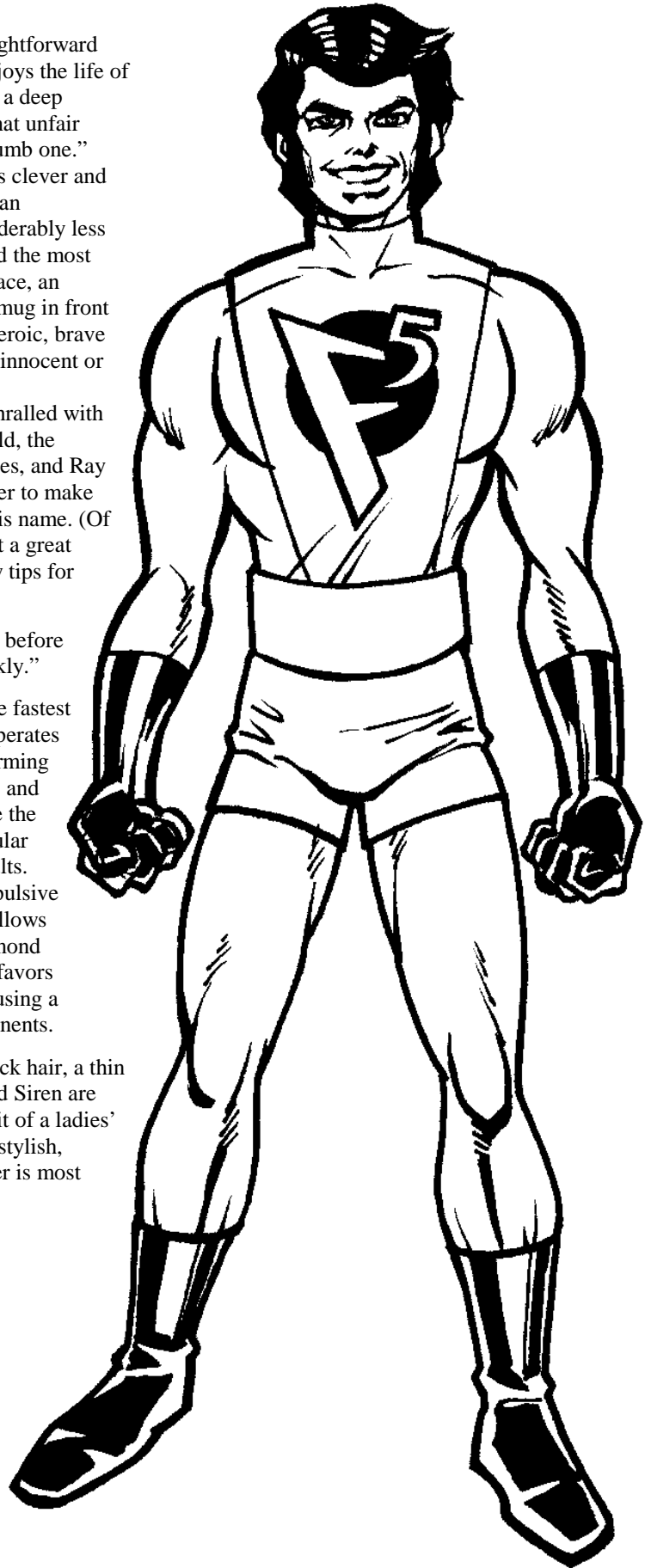
**Personality:** Ray Briggs is a straightforward and uncomplicated fellow, who enjoys the life of a celebrity. He's impatient and not a deep thinker, which has led to a somewhat unfair public perception of him as "the dumb one." He's not dumb, by any stretch; he's clever and occasionally quite perceptive, and an accomplished pilot. But he's considerably less intellectual than his teammates, and the most likely to be distracted by a pretty face, an entertaining brawl, or a camera to mug in front of. Nevertheless, he is resolutely heroic, brave and wouldn't consider harming an innocent or breaking a law.

Ray is also the Fiver most enthralled with simply being a superhero. As a child, the original Streak was one of his heroes, and Ray tracked him down early in his career to make sure he was okay with Ray using his name. (Of course, the older hero considered it a great compliment, and offered him a few tips for using his superspeed.)

**Quote:** "I'll have this wrapped up before you can say... well, anything, frankly."

**Powers/Tactics:** Ray is among the fastest men who ever lived, and usually operates as the team's advance scout, performing reconnaissance whenever possible, and then trying to outflank and surprise the opposition while his more spectacular teammates handle the frontal assaults. Left to his own devices, Ray is impulsive and fairly unimaginative, but he follows orders from Amazing Man or Diamond with alacrity. In direct combat, he favors attacking with a Passing Strike or using a length of nylon cord to tie up opponents.

**Appearance:** Streak II has jet-black hair, a thin build, and a handsome face. He and Siren are clearly brother and sister. He's a bit of a ladies' man, and out of costume he wears stylish, expensive tailored suits or whatever is most recently fashionable.





## DIGITAL HERO #9

### Streak II

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150kg; 2½d6 HTH [1]
26	DEX	48	14-	OCV: 9/DCV: 9(11)
20	CON	20	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll: 11-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
20	COM	5	13-	
7	PD	4		Total: 15 PD (8 rPD)
5	ED	1		Total: 13 ED (8 rED)
8	SPD	44		Phases: 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9,
10	REC	6		11, 12
50	END	5		
27	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 149**

**Movement:** Flying: 30"/240"  
 Running: 6"/12"  
 Leaping: 2½"/5"  
 Swimming: 2"/4"

Cost	Powers	END
56	<i>Super-Running:</i> Flight 30" (8x Noncombat Movement); Only in Contact with a Surface (-¼)	7
27	<i>Vibration Control:</i> Desolidification (Sonics, Vibratory Attacks, Magic); Linked to Super-Running (-½)	4
6	<i>Speed Tricks:</i> Elemental Control, 12-point powers	
9	1) <i>Hail of Blows:</i> HA 4d6 (6½d6 with STR); HA Lim (-½)	2
7	2) <i>Catching Bullets:</i> Missile Deflection (Bullets & Shrapnel); Costs Endurance (Only Costs END to Activate, -¼)	1
14	3) <i>Speedy Moves:</i> Change Environment 4" Radius, Variable Effect (things that he could normally do – just a lot faster, +1)	2
11	4) <i>Mini-Whirlwind:</i> Telekinesis (15 STR); Affects Whole Object (-¼), Reduced By Range (-¼)	2
16	<i>Costume:</i> Armor (8 PD/8 ED); Activation Roll 15- (-¼), IIF (-¼)	0
22	<i>Nylon Cords:</i> Entangle 5d6, 5 DEF; OAF (-1), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼)	5

#### Martial Arts: Speedster Tricks

##### Maneuver OCV DCV Notes

5	Flying Dodge	—	+4	Dodge, Abort; FMove
5	Passing Disarm	-1	-1	Disarm, +10 STR; FMove
5	Passing Strike	+1	+0	STR +v/5; FMove

#### Perks

10	Money (Wealthy)
4	Reputation: Celebrity Hero (A large group, 11-) +2/+2d6

#### Talents

3	Lightning Calculator
3	Lightsleep
6	Speed Reading: x100

#### Skills

6	+2 with Speed Tricks
5	+1 with Hand-to-Hand Combat
10	+2 with DCV
3	Breakfall 14-
3	Combat Driving 14-
3	Combat Piloting 14-
3	Computer Programming 11-
3	Electronics 11-
3	High Society 12-
3	Mechanics 11-
4	Navigation (Air, Land, Space) 11-
3	Power (DEX-based) 14-
3	Seduction 12-
3	Sleight Of Hand 14-
3	Systems Operation 11-
3	TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Early Spacecraft, Small Planes

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 270**

**Total Cost: 419**

#### 200+ Disadvantages

15	DNPC: Mom (Ida Briggs) 8-, (Incompetent, Infrequently)
5	Enraged: When Humiliated or Embarrassed (Uncommon, Go 8-, Rec 14-)
20	Hunted: Rogues' Gallery 11- (As Pow, Harshly Punish, PC has a Public ID or is otherwise very easy to find)
15	Psychological Limitation: Code vs. Killing (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Enjoys the Spotlight; Showoff (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Hotheaded and Impulsive (Common, Strong)
15	Social Limitation: Celebrity Superhero (Frequently, Major)
20	Vulnerability: 1½x STUN and BODY from Toxics and Poisons (Common)
99	Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 419**



**WHEN WE TWO PARTED**

When we two parted  
In silence and tears,  
Half broken-hearted  
To sever for years,  
Pale grew thy cheek  
and cold,  
Colder thy kiss;  
Truly that hour  
foretold  
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the  
morning  
Sunk chill on my  
brow –  
It felt like the warning  
Of what I feel now.  
Thy vows are all  
broken,  
And light is thy fame:  
I hear thy name  
spoken,  
And share in its  
shame.

They name thee  
before me,  
A knell to mine ear;  
A shudder comes o'er  
me –  
Why wert thou so  
dear?  
They know not I  
knew thee,  
Who knew thee too  
well:  
Long, long shall I rue  
thee,  
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met –  
In silence I grieve,  
That thy heart could  
forget,  
Thy spirit deceive.  
If I should meet thee  
After long years,  
How should I greet  
thee?  
With silence and  
tears.

**You Gotta Have Character** by Jason Walters

“Life is lived forwards, but understood backwards.” — Kierkegaard

**LOVE LETTERS**

My dearest Teresa,

I have read this book in your garden; my love, you were absent, or else I could not have read it. It is a favorite book of yours, and the writer was a friend of mine. You will not understand these English words, and others will not understand them – which is the reason I have not scrawled them in Italian. But you will recognize the handwriting of him who passionately loves you, and you will divine that, over a book which was yours, he could only think of love. In that word, beautiful in all languages, but most so in yours Amor Mio is comprised my existence here and hereafter. I feel I exist here, and I fear that I shall exist hereafter – as to what purpose you will decide; my destiny rests with you, and you are a woman, seventeen years of age, and two out of a convent. I wish that you had stayed there, with all my heart... or, at least, that I had never met you in your married state.

But all this is too late. I love you, and you love me – at least, you say so, and act as if you did so, which last is a great consolation in all events. But I more than love you, and cannot cease to love you. Think of me, sometimes, when the Alps and the ocean divide us...

Byron was the Romantic Movement's most flamboyant figure, a revolutionary spirit who fell into writing because he didn't have the temperament for politics... and who gave critics plenty to discuss outside of his poetry. His own epic story included a broken marriage, an alleged affair with his half-sister, a flight to the Mediterranean and the Near East, bisexual promiscuity, an involvement in the Greek revolution, and a gruesome and untimely death. He created his own cult of personality, the concept of the "Byronic hero" as a sort of outlaw-cavalier; a defiant, misunderstood, melancholy young man who broods constantly on some mysterious, unforgivable sin in his past. Byron's influence on European poetry, music, novel, opera, and painting has been immense, although the poet was widely condemned on moral grounds by his contemporaries.



## DIGITAL HERO #9

### Lord George Gordon Noel Byron (a.k.a. The 6<sup>th</sup> Lord Byron or simply Byron)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150kg; 2½d6 HTH [1]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
15	CON	10	12-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
20	COM	5	13-	
9	PD	7		Total: 9 PD (0 rPD)
7	ED	4		Total: 7 ED (0 rED)
5	SPD	36		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	REC	4		
38	END	4		
40	STUN	10		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 131**

**Movement:** Running: 5"/10"  
Swimming: 6"/12"

#### Cost Powers

##### Martial Art: Boxing

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4 Cross	+0	+2	STR+2d6 Strike
3 Jab	+2	+1	STR Strike

##### Perks

- 5 Money (Well Off)
- 5 Fringe Benefit (Member of the Aristocracy/Higher Nobility)
- 2 Reputation (European Intellectuals, 8-) +2/+2d6



#### Skills

- 5 +1 with Hand-to-Hand Combat
- 3 AK: England 13-
- 4 AK: Greece 14-
- 4 AK: Italy 14-
- 3 AK: London 13-
- 5 Animal Handler (Birds, Canines, Equines, Felines, Reptiles & Amphibians) 8-
- 5 Conversation 14-
- 7 High Society 15-
- 5 KS: Ancient Greek Literature 14-
- 2 KS: Boxing 11-
- 3 KS: European History 13-
- 4 KS: Literature 14-
- 7 KS: Poetry 17-
- 3 Language: Greek: Fluent Conversation (Literacy)
- 4 Language: Italian: Completely Fluent, w/ Accent (Literacy)
- 5 Oratory 14-
- 5 Persuasion 14-
- 3 PS: Politician (PRE-based) 13-
- 11 Seduction 17-
- 3 Streetwise 13-
- 3 Tactics 13-
- 2 WF: Blades, Flintlocks

**Total Powers and Skills Cost: 119**

**Total Character Cost: 250**

#### 125+ Disadvantages

- 5 Distinctive Features: Dandy (Easily Concealed)
- 0 Normal Characteristic Maxima
- 5 Physical Limitation: Clubfoot (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 5 Psychological Limitation: Arrogant (Uncommon, Moderate)
- 5 Psychological Limitation: Egocentric (Uncommon, Moderate)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Melancholy Depression (Uncommon, Total)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Overconfident (Very Common, Moderate)
- 10 Reputation: Debauched 8- (Extreme)
- 10 Social Limitation: Social, Artistic, and Political Revolutionary (Frequently, Major, Not Limiting In Some Cultures)
- 5 Social Limitation: Harmful Secret (guilty of incest, homosexuality) 8- (Minor)
- 50 Experience Bonus

**Total Disadvantage Points: 250**

## BYRON ON RELIGION

I am no Platonist, I am nothing at all; but I would sooner be a Paulician, Manichean, Spinozist, Gentile, Pyrrhonian, Zoroastrian, than one of the seventy-two villainous sects who are tearing each other to pieces for the love of the Lord and hatred of each other. Talk of Galileism? Show me the effects – are you better, wiser, kinder by your precepts? I will bring you ten Mussulmans that shall shame you in all goodwill towards men, prayer to God, and duty to their superiors. And is there a Talapoin, or a Bonze, who is not superior to a fox-hunting curate? But I will say no more on this endless theme; let me live, well if possible, and die without pain. The rest is with God, who assuredly, had He come or sent, would have made Himself manifest to nations, and intelligible to all.

**Background/History:** Lord Byron's father, dashing Captain John "Mad Jack" Byron, married his second wife Catherine Gordon, a Scottish heiress, in 1785. Quickly squandering her fortune on drink, gambling, and sin, he died in France in 1791 – but not before fathering a son, known simply as George Gordon, by her. Born with a deformed clubfoot, the young George was taken by his mother, Catherine Gordon, to Aberdeen, Scotland, where they lived in modest lodgings on her meager remaining income. He began his education by attending the Aberdeen Grammar School where he learned his Old Testament "through & through." In 1798, at the age of 10, young George inherited the title and estates of this eccentric great-uncle, the "wicked" fifth Lord Byron. His mother took him to England to the family's ancestral estate, Newstead Abbey, a present from the notorious King Henry VIII, which contained a good portion of Sherwood Forest. The young Lord Byron quickly fell in love with the Abbey's ghostly halls while delighting in the fields, glens, and lakes of the neighboring wood.

Unfortunately this idyllic scene of boyhood good fortune would soon to be shattered by the quivering hand of poor judgment. Byron's mother, aware of her son's extreme sensitivity to his lameness, hired a sadistic quack doctor named Lavender to treat his condition while, as the same time, hiring an unbalanced governess to look after the household affairs so that she might undertake the traditional upper class Englishwoman's pilgrimage into madness at the hands of wine and laudanum. This governess, one May Gray, was alcoholic, physically abusive, neglectful, and is reputed to have made sexual advances upon the pre-adolescent Lord.

After stumbling upon this ghastly domestic scene in 1799, John Hanson, the family attorney, rescued Byron from the pernicious influence of May Gray, the tortures of "doctor" Lavender, and his increasingly unbalanced mother by taking him to London, where a reputable physician prescribed a special brace, and in the autumn of that year, sent him to a respectable school in Dulwich. Yet, on some levels, the psychological damage had already been done. In 1801, Byron was sent to Harrow, where his friendships with younger boys fostered a romantic fondness for that school. It is possible that these friendships were the first examples of his notorious sexual ambivalence, which was to become more pronounced at Cambridge and later in Greece. It is also possible that they were not, as Byron would prove to be a defender of the weaker and less fortunate throughout his life. In the summer of 1803, he was taken by his mother to Southwell (near Nottingham), but soon escaped to Newstead to stay with its tenant, Lord Grey, and to court his cousin Mary Chaworth...

which was the first example of the young Lord's tendency toward incest as well as the subject of the amorous poem "To Emma." When she grew tired of "that lame boy," he indulged his grief by writing his first melancholy poetry. Mary became the symbol of idealized, unattainable love in his early work. Later, when Byron had achieved sufficient fame to become the darling of London society, she came to regret her rejection.

It was also during that period that Byron began an intimate, now infamous correspondence with his half-sister Augusta Byron. As the two excitable young people had been raised separately, this exchange of letters quickly took an amorous turn. After a term at Trinity College, Byron indulged in a round of debauchery and undue generosity in London that put him deeply into debt – a pattern which would recur throughout his life. He returned in the summer of 1806 to Southwell, where he supervised the completion, private printing, and exclusive circulation of his early poems in a volume with the title *Fugitive Pieces*. The following June his first commercially published collection, *Hours of Idleness*, appeared – only to be savagely (although not entirely unfairly) attacked by the literary critic of the well-respected *Edinburgh Review*. Enraged, Byron responded with the satirical *English Bards and Scottish Reviewers*, his first major work.

Returning to Trinity later that year, Byron found that, though he was having little trouble with his clubfoot, the effects of his London intemperance were taking their toll; his 5'8" frame was carrying more than two hundred pounds. Adopting a vigorous regiment of exercise with a vastly restricted diet, he managed to restore himself to a trim 140 pounds within a few months. This was the foreshadowing of yet another pattern that would recur throughout the poet's life – namely a distinct tendency towards self-indulgent gluttony followed by a quick, severe period of Spartan self-regulation. It was also during this time that he formed a close friendship with John Hobhouse, who stirred his interest in liberal, populist ideals. Together they were part of a close circle of young intellectuals and radicals who provided Byron with long-lasting friendships which were to withstand his increasing dedication to eccentricity and outrage; for example, when confronted with a school rule forbidding the keeping of dogs on campus, Byron instead chose to keep a tame bear in the turret above his quarters.

At the beginning of 1808, with college behind him, Byron moved to London, settling into the comfortable role of upper class eccentric bard, dandy, and hedonist. On reaching his majority in January 1809, he took his seat in the House of Lords as a member of the liberal Whig

political party to begin what promised to become a successful political career. However, his normal habits quickly drew Byron into “an abyss of sensuality” in London that threatened to undermine his health. An alarmed John Hobhouse suggested that the two of them embark upon a traditional upper class “Year Off” upon Byron’s 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, an idea to which he readily agreed.

Because of the military situation on the Continent (Napoleon was busily burning it), they opted for an unusual Eastern Tour over the usual Grand Tour of Europe. It was a decision that was to overshadow the remainder of Byron’s life. On July 2, 1809, they sailed to Lisbon on a packet ship, made a dangerous crossing of Spain during the Peninsula War, and proceeded by Gibraltar to Malta. There, Byron fell in love with a married woman, skipping town before he had to fight a duel on her account (this was undoubtedly Hobhouses’ good sense prevailing). They next landed at Preveza, Greece, and made an inland voyage to Tepelene in Albania to visit Ali Pasha’s sumptuous oriental court. On their return, Byron began at Janina a semi-autobiographical poem, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, which he continued during the journey to Athens. They lodged with a widow, whose daughter, Theresa Macri, Byron celebrated as *The Maid of Athens*. In March 1810, they sailed for Constantinople by way of Smyrna, where Byron visited the site of Troy so that he might swim the swift current in imitation of Leander, the legendary lover of Hero. He then visited Constantinople with its bazaars, mosques, and luscious palaces – all of which would later take their places in his *Oriental Tales*.

In July of 1811, after two years of travel, Byron returned to his native England (after a brief stop in Malta to recover from a bout of gonorrhea) as a cosmopolitan nobleman with a particular understanding of the insularity of his countrymen. His sojourn in Greece made a lasting impression on his mind and character. He delighted in the sunshine, moral tolerance, and natural nobility of its people while mourning their captivity at the hands of the decaying Ottoman Empire. After leaving, he often spoke longingly of his visit, his desire to return, and, in the words of his character *Don Juan*, that he “dreamed that Greece might still be free.”

On February 27 1812, he made his first speech in the House of Lords, an impassioned opposition to a Tory bill proscribing the death penalty to unemployed Nottingham weavers who destroyed the mechanical looms that had replaced them. At the beginning of March he found a publisher for his *Childe Harold*, which almost immediately took London by storm, propelling Byron to the artistic forefront of liberal English society. A poetic travelogue of

exotic lands, *Childe Harold* also gave a voice to the mood of melancholy and disillusionment which infected post-Revolutionary, Napoleonic Europe. This phenomenal poem also conveyed the disparity between the romantic ideal and the world of reality, an almost unique achievement in 19<sup>th</sup> Century verse.

Byron was lionized in Whig circles (“I awoke one morning and found myself famous,” he later commented), and the handsome poet with the clubfoot was swept into affairs with dozens of upper class women, including the passionate Lady Caroline Lamb, the “autumnal” Lady Oxford, his half-sister Augusta Leigh, and Lady Frances Webster. The sense of mingled guilt and exultation which these affairs aroused in the young poet’s mind is reflected in the *Oriental Tales* he wrote during the period. Seeking escape in marriage, he proposed to the oddly humorless Anne Isabella Milbanke. The marriage took place on January 2 1815. After a honeymoon which was “not all sunshine,” the newlywed couple settled in London. Delays in negotiations to sell Newstead left the Byrons financially embarrassed, with bailiffs daily arriving at his house demanding payment of debts. Byron escaped to the home of his publisher John Murray, leaving Anne Isabella to face the bill collectors. Meanwhile, his sister/lover Augusta Leigh had come to London for a visit, and Byron, exasperated by his debts and recent rise to fame, irritated his wife with drunken, wild talk, which hinted at past sins.

Lady Byron gave birth to a daughter, Augusta Ada, and in January Anne Isabella left with the child for a visit to her parents after letting Byron know that she was not moving back. As reasons for her decision were never publicly stated, the rumors began to fly about London society, most of them centering on Byron’s relations with his half-sister Augusta Leigh. With these rumors growing around him, Byron signed legal separation papers with his wife, packed a few belongings, and quietly went abroad, never to return to his native England. After visiting the battlefield of Waterloo, Byron journeyed onto Switzerland where at the Villa Diodati, near Geneva, he met with fellow Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley and his literary entourage (which included his wife Mary Shelley, the future author of *Frankenstein*). A boat trip to the head of the lake with Shelley gave Byron material for his *Prisoner of Chillon*, and he completed a third canto of *Childe Harold* at Diodati. At the end of the summer, the Shelley party left for England, and Byron departed for a tour of the Bernese Oberland with his old friend Hobhouse, providing the scenery for *Manfred*, a Faustian poetic drama that reflected Byron’s brooding sense of guilt and remorse as well as

## GOthic (1987)

Possibly one of the best, or worst, films ever made depending on whether or not you dye your hair black regularly and spend a lot of time listening to The Cure, *Gothic* (1987) is the extremely stylized tale of the night in which Mary Shelly, Percy Shelly, John Polidori, and Byron decided to write the ghost stories which would ultimately result in the composition of Shelly’s *Frankenstein* and Polidori’s *The Vampyre*. Directed by an obviously drug-addled and overwrought Ken Russell (think *Tommy*, *Altered States*, and *The Lair of The White Worm*), the film’s basic plot revolves around the character’s overacted attempts to frighten one another into accepting as reality of their individual weird tales... while Russell attempts to frighten the audience out of ever seeing another one of his hallucinogenic movies by throwing in a mechanical belly dancer, nudity, walking suits of armor, an orgy, séances, grotesque masks, leeches, a pig’s head, stigmata, and snakes. The results closely resemble a laudanum-soaked, Victorian horror-porno with a plot.

## WOE AM I: HEROIC SUFFERING

Over a period of many centuries, the Ancient Greeks created a literature of such brilliance that many critics today believe it has never been surpassed nor even rarely equaled. In the fields of poetry, tragedy, comedy, and history, Greek writers created masterpieces that have inspired, influenced, and challenged readers to our present age (including Byron). The topics and themes that were prevalent in Greek literature were so universal that there is scarcely an idea discussed today that has not been debated by these ancient writers. Aeschylus was the earliest, and possibly most important, of the Ancient Greek tragic dramatists. His plays are marked by a strong moral sense, demonstrating not only that suffering is the inevitable consequence of sin, but that suffering must continue until the wrongdoing has been expiated. The philosopher Aristotle later laid the foundations for Western literary criticism in his work *Poetics*. By establishing a relationship between pity, fear, and catharsis in drama, Aristotle defined the basic criteria of the

his wider frustrations as a romantic spirit doomed by his own human limitations.

By 1816 Byron had thoroughly integrated himself into the literary scene in Venice. The finale sale of Newstead Abbey had not only cleared most of his debts, but also left him with a small income that supported him in Italy. Publication of Canto III of *Childe Harold* and *Prisoner of Chillon and Other Poems* by John Murray back in England had gone a long way toward recapturing an audience that he had lost to scandal. Yet money seemed not solve any of his inner problems, notably his dissatisfaction and restlessness, and Byron once again fell into extreme decadence. His Venetian *palazzo* was transformed into a personal harem populated by local prostitutes and housewives as well as a menagerie for exotic pet animals, while another bout with gonorrhea had left him grossly overweight and seemingly permanently disheveled. Interestingly, Byron's creative output was at its height during this period as he began work on his now infamous *Don Juan*, an epic poem in which a handsome roue is both a sexual predator *as well as* the prey of womankind.

A chance meeting with the Countess Teresa Guicciolo in April 1819 ended this period of debauch, changing the course of Byron's life. In a few days, he fell completely in love with Teresa, a 19-year-old beauty married to man nearly three times her age. Byron slavishly followed her to Ravenna, and, later in the summer, she accompanied him back to Venice, staying with him until her husband called for her. Byron returned to Ravenna in January 1820 as Teresa's gentleman-in-waiting (a kind of socially acceptable gigolo). There he won the friendship of her father and brother, who initiated him into the secret revolutionary society of the Carbonari. It was during this period that Byron came into closer contact with the soul of the Italian people than he had ever been. He gave arms to the Carbonari, alms to the poor, and devoted his considerable skills to producing artistic tributes to their culture. It became one of the happiest and most productive periods of his life. He wrote *The Prophecy of Dante*; three cantos for *Don Juan*; the poetic drama's *Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*, and *Cain* (all published in 1821), as well as his satire on the poet Robert Southey, *The Vision of Judgment*. When Teresa's father and brother were exiled by the Austrian authorities for their part in an abortive uprising, she was forced to follow them into exile, ending this romantic period of Byron's life. He reluctantly removed to Pisa, where Shelley had rented the Casa Lanfranchi on the Arno River for him. He arrived on the first of November 1821, having left his beloved daughter Allegra (a product of a previous liaison)

in a convent near Ravenna where he had sent her to be educated. She died on April 20 of the following year, heaping sorrow upon his sorrow.

Although depressed, Byron stayed doggedly at work on various projects, including cantos VI to XVI of *Don Juan*, *The Age of Bronze*, and *The Island*. Soon enough, however, Byron's old restlessness returned. Even the presence of beloved friends and the simple domesticity of his life with Teresa (who had joined him with her family) gave him no satisfaction. He also longed for the opportunity for some noble, self-sacrificing action that would redeem him in the eyes of his countrymen. Accordingly, when the London Greek Committee contacted him in April 1823 to act as its agent in aiding the Greek war for independence from the Turks, Byron immediately accepted the offer. All of his legendary enthusiasm, energy, and imagination were now put at the disposal of the fledgling Greek army.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, Byron left Genoa on a chartered ship, arriving at the island of Cephalonia in August. He sent 4000 pounds of his own money ahead to prepare the newly constructed Greek fleet for sea service before sailing to Missolonghi in December to join Prince Alexandros Mavrokordatos, leader of the forces in western Greece. With tremendous energy and passion, he undertook plans to attack the Turkish-held fortress of Lepanto. He employed a specialist to prepare artillery, taking under his own command and pay a contingent of Souliot soldiers, reputedly the bravest of the Greeks. In addition, he made a dedicated but ultimately fruitless effort to unite eastern and western Greece in a common cause. On February 15 1824 he fell ill; the usual remedy of bleeding weakened him at the same time that an insurrection of the Souliots opened his eyes to their cupidity. Though his enthusiasm for the Greek cause was undiminished, he now possessed a more realistic view of the obstacles facing the army. He was also suffering from the emotional strain of his romantic friendship with Loukas Chalandritsanos, a Greek boy, whom he had brought as a page from Cephalonia and to whom he addressed his final poems.

The spring of 1824 was wet, cold, and miserable. While Byron was still weak from his sickness in mid-February, he continued to carry out his duties and seemed on the path to rapid recovery. But in early April he was caught outdoors in a rainstorm; though drenched and chilled, he continued working at various military tasks rather than going inside. Soon he was afflicted with a violent cold, which was quickly aggravated by the bleeding insisted on by his doctors. Though he briefly rallied, the cold grew worse; he eventually slipped into a coma.

## DIGITAL HERO #9

Around six o'clock in the evening of April 19 1824, Lord Byron passed away at the age of 36.

News of his death was met with shock and disbelief in England, where Byron's self-sacrifice, poetic talents, and love of liberty had served to make him the living embodiment of the principles of Romanticism. He was celebrated as a national martyr in Greece, whose untimely death was certain to lead directly to Greek liberty. Deeply and genuinely mourned, he became a hero throughout their land. While his body was embalmed, his heart was removed and buried in Missolonghi so that it might forever remain in the land he died trying to free. His remains were then sent to England and, refused burial in Westminster Abbey, placed in the vault of his ancestors near Newstead.

**Personality/ Motivation:** "The Byronic Hero is the one protagonist who in stature and in temperament best represents the [heroic] tradition in England," the renowned Romance scholar Peter Thorslev once said. A Byronic Hero (as epitomized by Byron himself) exhibits several characteristic traits. He's a rebel, often without "heroic virtue" in the usual sense; he has many dark qualities including arrogance, overconfidence, abnormally emotional sensitivity, and extreme egocentricity. In one form or another, he rejects the values and moral codes of the society that he was born into, because he is often unrepentantly "wicked" by that society's standards. This is usually because Byronic Hero is "larger than life" with titanic or legendary passions, appetites, pridefulness, and an absolute sense of self-identity. He is usually isolated from society as a wanderer or is in some kind of legal or spiritual exile. It does not matter whether this social separation is imposed upon him by some external force or is self-imposed. Byron's *Manfred*, a character who wandered desolate mountaintops, was physically isolated from society, whereas *Childe Harold* chose to "exile" himself and wander throughout Europe. Although *Childe Harold* remained physically present in society and among people, he was not by any means "social," perpetually remaining an outsider.

Like Byron himself, the Byronic Hero is usually moody by nature or passionate about a particular issue. Because he also has emotional, intellectual, and artistic capacities that are superior to those of the average man, he often throws himself heart and soul into a monumental project for a period of time, only to become despondent and slothful when things do not work out as planned. The Byronic character is obsessed with the idea of his own fated mortality, sometimes to the point of self-destruction (Byron's fellow Romantic poet Keats is rumored to have died from reading too many

negative reviews of work). His actions are a reflection of his struggle to obtain some form of artistic or historical immortality before *the* (dramatic pause) *inevitable* (place back velvet gloved hand on noble brow) *end*.

**Quote:** "Man is half dust, half deity, alike unfit to sink or soar."

**Powers/Tactics:** Though he was primarily a poet and inveterate traveler (like many upper class Englishmen of the time), Lord Byron was also adept with his fists, sword, and pistol. He certainly had little trouble defending himself throughout his life. Physically brave, used to giving orders, and capable of strategic planning (as shown by his service to the cause of Greek liberty), Byron also made a passably inspiring military officer – though he did spend a considerable portion of his life plunged into drunken whoremongering or laudanum-drenched half-sane ranting. A great deal of Byron's heroism is philosophical, not physical, so how useful he is in a combat situation would probably depend on how sunk into his Psychological Limitations he is at the time.

**Campaign Use:** A familiar recurring figure in many works of film, fiction, and theater is the handsome-to-the-point-of-pretty, melancholy, and well-bred young man (or occasionally woman) who must face some horrible, usually secret, event from his past (a murder, a betrayal, and so forth) so that he can overcome some tremendous threatening evil, thus redeeming himself from his original misdeed. This character is generally a good person who is afflicted with some sort of character-defining flaw, such as tendencies toward anger, lust, or pride. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a perfect example of this sort of "tragic antihero," as is the character of Oedipus from Aeschylus' infamous *Oedipus Rex*, Kai last of the Brunnen-G from the Sci-Fi Channel's inescapable *Lexx*, Leiji Matsumoto's mournful yet determined anime space-pirate Captain Harlock, Ann Rice's sinister but reflective Vampire Lestat, and the drunken, inevitably doomed Wildstorm Comics character Jenny Sparks, to name but a few.

While Lord Byron himself makes a terrific PC or NPC for any historical campaign set in the early 1800s, he is far more useful as the basis for a tragic antihero package deal than he is as an actual character. The roleplaying game world is full of Byronic Heroes; for example, nearly every vampire player character fits into this category. Lord Soth from TSR's *Ravenloft* setting exhibits many Byronic characteristics, as do R.A. Salvatore's characters Drizzt Do'Urden, Artemis Entreri, and Jarlaxle from the popular *Dark Elf* series. Any player who is sufficiently self-absorbed, intelligent, and gloomy will gravitate

tragic hero. His ideas revolve around three crucial effects: First, the audience develops an emotional attachment to the tragic hero; second, the audience fears what may befall the hero; and finally, after misfortune strikes, the audience pities the suffering hero.

According to Aristotle's *Definition of the Tragic Hero*:

✍ The tragic hero is a man who is characterized by good and evil. He is a mixture of good characteristics and bad characteristics.

✍ The tragic hero has a tragic flaw, or *harmatia*, that is the cause of his downfall.

✍ The tragic hero has a person or thing that sets the stage for his fall, known as *hubris*.

✍ The tragic hero almost always goes on a journey.

✍ The tragic hero is someone people can relate to. If people were put into the tragic hero's position, they could see they would probably do the same things that the hero does.

✍ The tragic hero must always fail in the end – otherwise he wouldn't be a tragic hero. Because of his *harmatia*, his story invariably ends up in catastrophe both for him and for those he cares about... just like Lord Byron.

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naturally toward the Byronic Hero package deal, adopting it at the drop of a crushed velvet fedora.

Though a tragic antihero is more often a victim of his own defective personality than outside forces, his struggle against what must always be inevitable doom is the very essence of what the Romantic Poets stood for. Much like Byron himself, the Byronic Hero always feels trapped in a world he didn’t create, at the mercy of internal or external forces he has no control over. He always feels himself to be fighting a dramatic battle against “Evil,” “the Darkness,” or “Death,” no matter how self-indulgent or pointless his actions may seem to others. The GM should feel free to shower excessive cruelty upon this sort of hero, as he has little compunction about dragging innocent friends or loved ones into the maelstrom along with him. After all, without an audience to watch your downward spiral, nobody can appreciate how heroic and doomed you really are, can they?

**Appearance:** Dark-haired, raven-eyed, and possessing the striking good looks of the English Nobleman at his best, Lord Byron sported a wavy shock of unruly hair, an arrogant manner, and an impressive wardrobe of hand-tailored clothing. His overall appearance was calculated to make a striking, almost shocking, first impression; his sometime lover Lady Caroline Lamb described this look in her personal journal as “Mad – bad – and dangerous to know.” Byron’s whole outlook on life was centered on the ideals of noble Romantic heroism, so he did his best to look, act, and dress the part.

Though born with a clubfoot, Lord Byron wore a corrective brace throughout much of his life, which made this disability practically unnoticeable. The poet himself stood 5’8” tall, though his weight varied wildly from between 137 and 202 pounds depending on whether he was binging or purging at the time (he once said that everything he swallowed was “instantly converted to tallow and deposited on his ribs”). It was this pattern of sloth followed by frenzied activity, both artistic and romantic, which would define much of his life. For example, when Shelly stumbled across him in Italy in 1818, he noted that at the age of about 30, Byron looked almost 40, having turned grey, grown his hair long, and put on considerable weight (“the knuckles of his hands were lost in fat”). Yet Byron had recovered completely by the following year – chasing teenage girls, scheming with the secret revolutionary society of the Carbonari, writing brilliantly, and getting in trouble with the Austrian authorities in Ravenna – all at once.

**BYRONIC HERO PACKAGE DEAL**

Ability	Cost
+3 STR	3
+4 DEX	12
+5 INT	5
+5 PRE	5
+6 COM	3
<b>Skills</b>	
High Society 12-	3
KS: History 11-	2
KS: Literature 11-	2
KS: Romantic Poetry 11-	2
WF: Blades	1
3 Skills from the following list: (Conversation, Language Skill (fluent, literate), Oratory, Persuasion, Seduction, Streetwise)	9
<b>Disadvantages</b>	
Distinctive Features (Dandy)	5
Psychological Limitation: Egocentric (Uncommon, Moderate)	5
Psychological Limitation: Melancholy Depression (Uncommon, Total)	15
Social Limitation: Controversial Anti-Hero, Frequently (11-), Major, Not Limiting In Some Cultures	10
Social Limitation: Harmful Secret, Occasionally (8-), Minor	5
<b>Total Cost of Package</b>	<b>7</b>





# Your Horoscope For: Taurus

by Allen Thomas

So Daedalus in countless corridors  
Built bafflement, and hardly could  
himself  
Make his way out, so puzzling was the  
maze.  
— From “The Minotaur” by Ovid  
(Tr. A.D. Melville)

This month’s installment of *Your Horoscope For* concerns the bull-headed Minotaur and its preferred habitat, the labyrinth.

A frequent source of inspiration in fiction and often alluded to elsewhere, the tale of Theseus and the Minotaur from Greek mythology can also serve as the basis for a challenging scenario in *Fantasy Hero*. This article presents one possible way of running such an encounter. Rather than using a physical map, Characteristics and Powers reproduce the effects of being lost within the maze, and the Minotaur has a preternatural ability to navigate its corridors.

After such an encounter, your PCs will likely have newfound respect for the Greek hero, Theseus, and his deed below the palace of Minos!

## The Labyrinth

The evil wizard conducts his arcane experiments in a spirit-haunted tower. The tyrannical noble rules from a brooding fortress. And the savage Minotaur lurks within the twisting and bewildering corridors of the labyrinth. The rules in *HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* treat the wizard’s tower or noble’s fortress as a Base, and those same rules can be applied to the Minotaur’s labyrinth.

Like many other locales in a fantasy campaign, the mythological labyrinth is more than just stone walls and mortar. The following quotes taken from *Bullfinch’s Mythology* describe the labyrinth and offer some insight into its nature.

“[The Minotaur]... was kept in a labyrinth constructed by Daedalus, so artfully contrived that whoever was enclosed in it could by no means find his way out unassisted.”

“[The labyrinth] was an edifice with numberless winding passages and turnings opening into one another, and seeming to have neither beginning nor end....”

As can be seen, the labyrinth was no ordinary maze easily mapped with pen and paper, but rather a magical construction, and the Base is created keeping that in mind.

## The Labyrinth

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
10	BODY	8	
2500”	Size	26	-12 DCV
5	DEF	9	
30	PRE	20	

**Total Characteristic Cost: 63**

### Abilities & Equipment

Cost	Power	END
20	<i>Below The Palace:</i> Location: Underground	0
17	<i>Lost Within The Maze:</i> Entangle 4d6 (standard effect: 4 BODY), 4 DEF, Stops Bump Of Direction and Eidetic Memory, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Takes No Damage From Attacks (+¼); Only Works Once When Target Enters Labyrinth (-1½), Target Can Move Normally, But Cannot Leave Labyrinth (-1½), No Range (-½), Escapable With KS: Mazes And KS: Puzzles (5 Minutes; -¼), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), Works Against INT, Not STR (-0)	0
	<b>Skills</b>	
9	KS: Mazes 16-	

**Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 46**

**Total Base Cost: 111**

**Total Disadvantage Points: 0**

**Total Cost: 111/5 = 22**

## The Labyrinth In Play

What follows details the effects of the labyrinth once the PCs have entered it.

### “I THINK WE’RE LOST...”

Once the group has moved out of sight of the entrance, they are affected by the *Lost Within The Maze* Entangle. No Attack Roll is necessary, since the PCs have entered the Entangle willingly – in other words, voluntarily subjected themselves to the effects of the labyrinth. Each member of the group is affected individually, and must break free of his own Entangle before helping others do the same. Because of the *Only Works Once When Target Enters Labyrinth* Limitation, the Entangle only works once – when the PC first enters the labyrinth. In other words, the Entangle does not continue to “attack” PCs within the maze.

To break free, INT is substituted for STR, and similar to a standard Entangle, where the PC must flex his muscles or otherwise exert his strength to break free, he must continue to walk through the labyrinth to “exert” his intellect.

## TAUREAN INSIGHT #1

Taurus is the first of the Earth Signs, which also include Virgo and Capricorn. Its symbol, ♉, appears as a circle with two, upward curving horns, and traditionally, the sign is depicted as a bull.

## IN PULP HERO

Circa 1900, Sir Arthur Evans, a British archaeologist, excavated what he believed to be the palace at Knossos where Theseus came to free the Athenians from the tyranny of King Minos. The palace was large and filled with many chambers, leading some to conjecture that the mythological maze was a metaphor for the palace itself.

But what if they're wrong...

Now it's the 1930s and archaeologists have made an astonishing discovery. Beneath the palace itself, they have unearthed the entrance to a maze of endless corridors. Some scholars have entered the maze but never returned, and on occasion a savage bellow can be heard echoing from the halls. Daedalus was reputed to have created statues that could speak... could he also create statues that could move? A statue of bronze with the head of a bull perhaps? Or is that mere superstition and a more mundane – but still treacherous – reason explains why the scholars have disappeared?

**Example:** *Sylarin, a thief and confidence man with an INT of 18, has wandered into the labyrinth and become lost within its maze of passages. He rolls 3½d6 and counts the Normal Damage BODY for a total of 5. After subtracting the DEF, he does 1 BODY to the Entangle. Narratively, Sylarin begins to understand the pattern behind the bewildering complexity of the labyrinth, but is still lost. He must continue to wander aimlessly (and continue attempting to break free of the Entangle) before he fully understands – only then can he apply his intellect to the task of finding the way out.*

The Entangle can also be escaped with successful use of KS: Mazes or KS: Puzzles.

**Example:** *Luckily for Sylarin, the thief from the example above, he spends his idle hours solving puzzles and has KS: Puzzles 13-. Rather than use "brute" intellect to solve the labyrinth, he uses his skill with mazes and such. He makes a successful Skill Roll. Narratively, he walks through the labyrinth constructing a mental map of its corridors. After five minutes or so, he understands it well enough to believe he can find his way out.*

The Entangle stops Bump Of Direction (the twists and turns baffle even a PC with an uncanny sense of direction) and Eidetic Memory (all the corridors look the same at first). Once a PC has broken free, both Talents work normally – the PC with Bump Of Direction gets his bearings, and the PC with Eidetic Memory begins to note subtle differences in the corridors.

When a member of the group has broken free, he has two choices concerning the rest of his fellows.

Either he can help the others break free by "attacking" their individual Entangles – in essence, he explains his insight into the labyrinth and helps them gain the same understanding. No attack roll is necessary to "hit" the Entangle.

Or the PC can simply lead the others through the labyrinth. Of course, if the PC who has broken free of the Entangle is somehow incapacitated or separated from the others, the group is again lost until one of them breaks free.

While entangled, a PC has full OCV and DCV, and can move at his standard movement – he just cannot find his way through the labyrinth.

(For more details on INT-Based and other exotic Entangles see the article, *HEROglyphs*, in *Digital Hero* #5.)

## "IT'S RIGHT OVER HERE..."

Within the labyrinth, two locations are worth finding: the exit and the Minotaur's lair – the rest is a tangle of seemingly endless corridors.

(Although this isn't to say your labyrinth can't have more locations. Daedalus' labyrinth was intended to imprison the Minotaur, but would have also been an excellent place to hide treasure... or even artifacts too evil or powerful to be hidden by more mundane means.)

After a PC has broken free of the Entangle, he still cannot find his way through the labyrinth without difficulty. Finding the exit or Minotaur's lair is a Skill Versus Skill Contest (described on page 27 of *HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*). The PC must state where he is attempting to go and then succeed with an INT Roll. He can substitute KS: Mazes or KS: Puzzles for his INT Roll if he possesses either Skill, and Deduction, Navigation, or Tracking are Complimentary Skills. At your discretion, Absolute Range Sense, Eidetic Memory, and Bump Of Direction might provide the PC with a bonus. Finally, the PC's roll is opposed by the Labyrinth's KS: Mazes.

**Example:** *Sylarin (the thief who, conveniently enough, enjoys solving puzzles) decides he's seen quite enough of the labyrinth for one day and wishes to make his way out. He has KS: Puzzles 13- and Deduction 13-. Deduction is a Complimentary Skill, so he attempts a Skill Roll. He rolls an 11 and receives a +1 to his KS: Puzzles Roll, which turns out to be a 10. Sylarin's total degree of success is 4 – 3 for KS: Puzzles and 1 for the Complimentary Skill. Meanwhile, the GM rolls a 9 for the labyrinth's KS: Mazes Roll. Even after applying the -4 penalty, the labyrinth succeeds in baffling the amateur puzzle-solver Sylarin. After walking around for awhile, the poor thief realizes he is still lost.*

Success means the PC (and anyone following him) can find his way to the area so long as his concentration is not interrupted. And the attack of a bestial and savage Minotaur counts as an interruption! If interrupted, the PC must again succeed with an INT Roll to find his way. You may decide the second attempt is easier than the first and assess a bonus of +1 to +3 to the PC's roll.

The distance between the PC and his destination can be determined with the following:

$$(6 + 2d6) \times 100 = \text{total inches.}$$

## DIGITAL HERO #9

The distance is not measured in a straight line, but instead the total distance the group must travel before arriving at their destination. The exit might be on the other side of a wall... but the path to the exit could wind through the length and breadth of the labyrinth.

### “WE’LL NEVER GET OUT!”

If a PC has fared poorly in the labyrinth – either failing to break free of the Entangle or having failed numerous INT Rolls to find his way – you might decide a Presence Attack is in order. The effect is: The PC, confronted with the immensity and complexity of the labyrinth, begins to believe his situation hopeless and surrenders to either despair, frustration, or both.

The exact effect of a successful Presence Attack depends on the individual PC and his Disadvantages. A PC with Psychological Limitation: Overconfidence or Stubborn could be convinced he alone knows the way out, and might refuse to listen to dissenting views. A PC with Psychological Limitation: Fear Of Failure might break down and refuse to move another step. And a PC with Psychological Limitation: Claustrophobia is in for a bad time indeed.

### Labyrinthine Dimensions

The Character Sheet for the labyrinth gives its area as 2500”; this assumes a 50” x 50” square. (For illustration, a football field is approximately 50” long.) A corridor is 1” wide and 1 1/2” high. In some circumstances you might need to know the length of a corridor. For this you can refer to the box, *Random Corridors*.

### The Minotaur

And what’s a labyrinth without its most famous inhabitant, the Minotaur! The following Powers can be added to the Minotaur’s Character Sheet on pages 104-105 of the *HERO System Bestiary*, to give it an almost supernatural means of moving about the labyrinth and escaping detection.

### MASTER OF THE MAZE

Whether it can detect the movement of air currents or possesses some supernatural sense of the labyrinth, the Minotaur knows when someone enters its home and where that intruder is at all times.

*Detect Physical Objects 16- (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc Of Perception (360°), Range, Sense, Targeting, Telescopic (+8 versus Range Modifier) (Active Points: 50 points); Only In Home Labyrinth (-1/4). Total cost: 40 points.*

The Minotaur turns a corner and moves out of sight. The PCs pursue but when they round the corner, they discover the beast has disappeared into the tangle of endless corridors. The Minotaur reappears soon enough though – when it attacks the PCs from behind. The Minotaur knows its home so well, it can move about with almost preternatural ability. A successful Tracking Roll limits its ability to escape pursuit, but tracking over stone floors is never easy!

*Teleportation 10”, Safe Blind Teleport (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (1/2 END; +1/4) (Active Points: 30 points); Only When Out Of Sight (-1), Requires An AK: Home Labyrinth Roll (subject to Skill Versus Skill contests [Tracking]; no Active Point modifier; -0). Total cost: 15 points.*

The Minotaur moves so swiftly through the labyrinth, appearing so suddenly and seemingly out of nowhere, even a PC with Danger Sense cannot tell when it will strike next.

*Invisibility to Danger Sense, No Fringe, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2) (Active Points: 45 points); Only In Home Labyrinth (-1/4). Total cost: 36 points.*

### Concerning Ariadne

The material above will make entering a labyrinth to confront the Minotaur within a legendary deed akin to Theseus’ own. But in the myth Theseus had help, and so might the PCs.

**A Ball Of Twine:** Ariadne, King Minos’ own daughter, provided the hero with a sword and a ball of twine. Theseus’ use for the sword is obvious. The twine, however, the hero used to find the labyrinth’s exit by letting it out behind him, and the PCs might implement a similar plan. Of course, just because the Minotaur of Greek myth didn’t cut the thread, doesn’t mean every Minotaur is so unwise...

*KS: Mazes 31- (24 Active Points); Only To Find Exit In Labyrinth (-2), Independent (-2), OAF Fragile (a length of twine; -1/4). Total cost: 4 points.*



### RANDOM CORRIDORS

First, determine the corridor’s length:

Length = (1 + 2d6) inches

Then roll 1d6

twice, once for each end of the corridor and compare the result to the following:

- 1 Dead End (if rolled the second time, treat as a 2)
- 2 Ends At A Tee
- 3-4 Turns Left
- 5-6 Turns Right

Note: After several consecutive corridors, astute players might announce that the corridor is impossible – maybe because it crosses a corridor the group has just left, or passes beyond the boundaries of the labyrinth. If so, just nod your head knowingly – the exact layout of the labyrinth is far beyond the comprehension of most mortals.

# Infectious Enthusiasm by John Taber



## Champions for Five

Infectious Enthusiasm is a complete *Champions* adventure, suitable to run at conventions or to introduce new players to the *HERO System*.

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY

This adventure involves a new team of superheroes, based in Sacramento, called The Forces Of Nature. The world has already been exposed to superheroes and their ilk, although this team is the first one to appear in the Sacramento region. Legends of superhero teams like the Champions and Vanguard are common. The rookie team The Forces Of Nature must deal with a dastardly plot by a new team of Sacramento-based supervillains known as The Masters Of Mayhem.

### SCENARIO BACKGROUND

*Infectious Enthusiasm* is a simple one-shot *HERO System* game set in the *Champions* genre. The superhero characters are provided for the players. The villains are provided for the GM. All characters are based on 350 total points (200 Base + 150 Disadvantages), the standard from the *HERO System 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*. The power levels are set to “Superheroic – Standard.”

The plot in this adventure is simple. It would be work best for new *HERO System* players who would like to get a feel for the genre and rules without having to do everything from scratch.

## Character Information

There are five heroes and five villains. The information on The Forces Of Nature heroes should be given to the players before they choose their PC.

### THE FORCES OF NATURE

This is the superhero team. Blazer, Landslide, and Pipeline have been contacted by the United States government about combining their talents to become the Forces Of Nature. Even though the threesome is not excited about the idea of being under the jurisdiction of the government, they feel that having support from them is probably a good idea. Typhoon is appointed as the team’s government liaison.

### MASTERS OF MAYHEM

These are the bad guys. The Masters Of Mayhem are a new group of supervillains that have been gathered by the infamous Doctor Mayhem. Most of the villains have been motivated to join the team by simple greed.

## Introduction

Doctor Mickey Calloway has been researching the effects of a newly discovered plant spore on lab mice. He has discovered that this spore causes mice to become aggressive. The virus actually appears to suppress the centers of the brain that control non-violent tendencies. Doctor Calloway got excited about the possible positive effects of using the spore to deaden violent emotions, and has written an extensive whitepaper on his findings. Doctor Mayhem read the researcher’s paper, but he saw the idea as a powerful weapon. Doctor Mayhem plans to steal the spore so he can perform his own “experiments.” Afterwards, the evil Doctor plans to release the results on the local populace.

## Prelude

This section describes why the various PCs will be present. The first scene involves the unveiling of a new monument, on a clear Saturday morning. The monument commemorates the firemen who sacrificed their lives on September 11<sup>th</sup>. The fountain is being constructed in a new biomedical industrial park on the outskirts of Sacramento. The industrial park is called Acorn Hills Medical Research Center.

**Landslide:** What would a dedication be without a politician to give a speech? Landslide’s campaign manager, Tony Viocinni, will also be present.

**Blazer:** Blazer will be present in her secret identity as Registered Nurse Sheronga Jones. She is on a lunch break with one of her coworkers, Michelle Brady. Her hospital is nearby. She is reading an article in last month’s issue of *The Journal Of The American Medical Association (JAMA)*. The cover story is an article about treating mania through medicine, by Doctor Mickey Calloway.

**Pipeline:** Thomas is listening to the dedication with some of his classmates and his chemistry teacher, Doctor Rosenthal. The students are bored, and looking for a reason to get distracted. They do not like being at school on a Saturday, even if it is a field trip.

**Typhoon:** Typhoon is at the dedication representing the newly formed Forces Of Nature. He is on the stage, and will be giving a short dedication, then usher the playing of Taps for the crowd. Warn Typhoon’s player that he will have to devise a brief dedication for the firemen who gave their lives in the tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Masq:** On the trail of an infamous intergalactic thief, Masq has learned that his prey has bartered for a short-range craft and is heading for a planet called Earth. The residue from the ship leads to one of the larger landmasses...

### EDITOR’S NOTE

The contents of this article are *not* “official” *Champions* Universe material, and as such have no effect on the events and characters depicted in published Hero Games *Champions* products.

**Scene #1 – Construction Crisis**

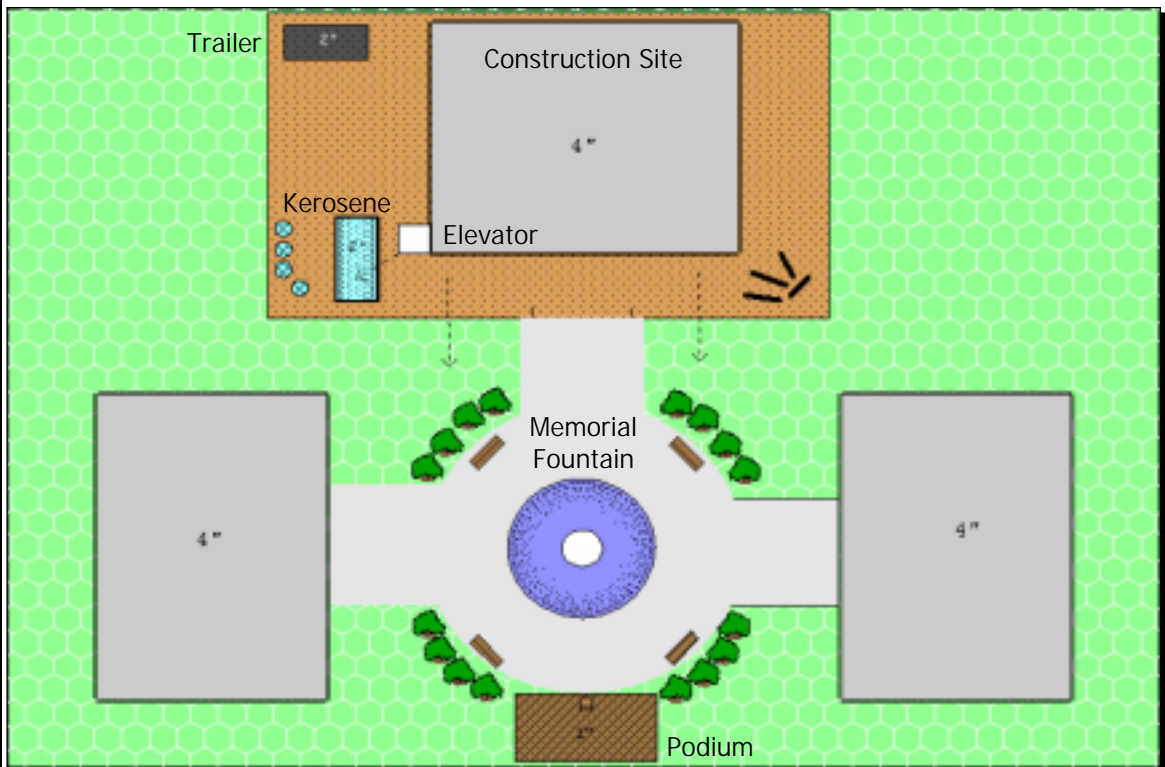
Doctor Mayhem has decided to steal the new spores from the company conducting Doctor Calloway’s research, but he has decided that the best way to get the toxin is to get an inside man. In fact, Doctor Mayhem has enlisted the aid of Mickey Calloway himself! Mayhem has done this by convincing the researcher to let himself continue the work at a faster pace under Doctor Calloway’s constant guidance. Doctor Calloway is wary of the famed “mad scientist,” but he does know that the man is brilliant, and as long as he is in control himself, he can make sure that nothing unethical occurs. (Note that Doctor Calloway’s involvement will not become apparent until a later scene.) Doctor Mayhem’s plan is to have Vapor and White Dwarf steal the spores while A.N.Vil mans the escape vehicle. He and Chiller will cause a distraction at a nearby construction site.

As the dedication begins, a strong feeling of patriotism fills the air. *Sacramento Bee* reporter Marcus Cline and his cameraman will be recording the ceremony for the evening news. Over the fountain is a large sheet. When Typhoon approaches the podium, the sheet is removed, and the water starts to flow. The statue is that of a firefighter bending down over a fallen comrade. At the feet of the fireman is a fire hose that sprays water into the large tiled basin. With that, Typhoon will be given a chance to explain his presence and make a dedication. After the dedication, he will announce the playing of Taps.

After Taps completes, Tony Viocinni will move forward and announce County Controller Justin Clearlake III. He will also make sure he is announced as Landslide. With a flourish, Justin approaches the stand. As he clears his throat, a flash of light lowers from the sky, and a being of glinting copper will float down into the scene. His arms will open as he hovers in front of the stage. At first, the crowd will think it is some type of publicity stunt, but soon, based on the reactions of the NPC and PC on the stage, they will realize that this is not planned. At this point, Landslide will feel something trying to probe his mind! He will likely not be comfortable with it, and will likely resist.

As things are starting to lull, a huge crash ensues! From behind the crowd (i.e. opposite the main stage), one of the buildings that is under construction will start to buckle. The top edge will start to fall forward, causing buckets of rivets and loose tools to drop. Eventually, an I-beam will fall towards some spectators. Finally, a piece of the elevator will collapse onto a tank of kerosene. This will set a fire across the scene. The scene will be chaotic, but the PCs should be allowed to react while the damage is mounting. This should be a fun scene where the PCs can show their stuff while saving some lives.

The building and construction elevator will fall as shown by the dashed lines. The elevator falls into the tank starting a chemical fire. The small building behind the structure is a construction trailer. The I-beams in the pile of stuff and on the falling building are DEF 9



Dedication Ceremony at the Park

BODY 8 and take a STR of 20 to lift. Spectators should be placed on the map in locations that allow them to be heroically rescued by the PC. For example, some viewers might be watching from one of the benches opposite the stage and be in danger from falling building supplies.

An observant PC should be allowed to notice a red alarm light on the building to the left of the stage. Obviously, the PC will have other priorities.

A key result of this scene is that Masq will immediately move to help the PCs. The PCs should then realize that this strange being is not evil. This should be roleplayed with Masq attempting to contact the PC. Although Masq can't speak English, he can completely understand the Earthlings with which he has the Mind Link established.

### Scene #2 – Investigating the Construction Site

There are several clues that the PCs can discover at the construction site. Since the dedication is being held on a Saturday afternoon, there are not a lot of men at the construction site, but there is a foreman working in the trailer office. The overweight foreman, known simply as John “Big” House, was working at his desk when he saw a strange movement out his trailer window. He peered through the dirty blinds and saw a strange man wearing a blue suit. The man touched some I-beams at the front of the building, then the structure started to creak. When he went out to investigate, he saw another man lifting out the foundation on the rear side of the building. The man was wearing what he thinks was a white lab jacket. The PCs will know that this is Doctor Mayhem, the infamous leader of The Masters Of Mayhem.

If the PCs investigate the beams, they will see that the ones touched by the man in blue are cracked and split. They do not appear to be shorn or torn. Note that even though “Big” House appears to be slovenly, he does have a master's degree in metallurgy and will be able to examine the beams under a microscope if asked. Under the eye of an expert, the metal fractures can be attributed to tremendous stress. The researcher will state that these beams should easily be able to support the weight of the structure. The beams in the back of the building show bends that appear to be caused by hands, at a height of around 6 feet.

### Scene #3 – Investigating the Robbery

During the crisis, some of the PCs may have noted flashing lights at one of the other buildings in the complex. The obvious conclusion is that the construction site was a distraction for the robbery. When the PCs first arrive at the scene of the robbery, they will find that it is a biomedical company called Vertex Pharmaceuticals. Vertex is a company that specializes in drug research. If the PCs go directly from the combat to Vertex, they will find that the place is full of flashing red lights, security guards, police sirens, and reporters. If the PCs try to force their way through the crowd, they will be told by the security chief, Jacob Fosse, and the Sacramento Police officer, Sergeant Alicia Veracruz, that they should come back in a couple of hours when things have died down a bit. The aging security man will at first be extremely hostile. Jacob will explain forcefully that, right now, everything is being secured and sealed. There are people running all over his company, and that has to stop. After a few moments, he will seem very tired, but also very happy to have help from the PCs at a later time.

The robbery at Vertex was performed using an intricate plan devised by Doctor Mayhem, Doctor Calloway, Vapor, and White Dwarf. Doctor Calloway arrives at work on Saturday morning. He brings a small lunch and a large thermos. The Doctor then proceeds to his desk where he does some typing at his computer. As the researcher is about to leave, he opens the thermos. He then quickly leaves. Opening the thermos releases Vapor! Vapor seeps out of the thermos, and proceeds to a nearby fire door that is not on any of the local cameras. At the door, she deactivates the alarm from the inside, then lets in White Dwarf. The two proceed down the hall, where they open the door to the outer lab area. This allows White Dwarf to see the inner lab. White Dwarf then shifts into the lab directly in front of the main camera. Fosse sees him in the camera, and sets off the alarm. White Dwarf then grabs a pen from a nearby bench, and slides it into the lock. The freezer opens quietly. White Dwarf removes several vials, and shifts out of the lab. Vapor and White Dwarf proceed to the fire door and escape with the rest of their teammates.

When the PCs return, they will be met by Sgt. Veracruz and Jacob Fosse. After introductions, Sgt. Veracruz will take the lead explaining the situation. Jacob Fosse will be opening doors with a security badge as the group walks through the building. The PCs should note that there are a lot of electronic security badge check points. If prompted, Jacob will pull off his hat, wipe his brow, then suggest that Vertex works on a lot of classified and dangerous

materials, so the security cameras and doors are necessary. Here is the information that Sgt. Veracruz will relay to the PCs as they walk through the building:

“We definitely have actions by beings with superpowers. I’ll show you the scene of the crime, then we can look at the security camera footage. The robbers apparently took some rare plant spores from the main research lab. The plant material is not inherently dangerous, so we are not sure why this particular specimen was taken.”

“Right now, we have no idea how the criminals were able to get into and out of the building undetected. Any light that you can shed on this would be appreciated. I have lots of experience with robbery, but I’ve never investigated a case like *this*....”

Vertex is in a new building, so it is very plush. The carpets are new, the windows are sparkling clean, and the cube walls are spotless. New pictures from a local artist adorn the walls, and a bank of windows form an entire wall in the lobby. The reception desk at the lobby contains cameras that are used to scan the area outside Vertex, the main labs, and some of the main halls.

As the PCs enter the heart of the Vertex complex, they see sets of cubes, then a set of windows that peer into a clean room laboratory. When Fosse opens the door for the cube area (i.e. the area outside of the main lab), the PCs hear escaping air from the door. Fosse will explain that this is a seal for the researchers’ cubes. Researchers are in a less severe pressure controlled environment. Fosse will then lead the PCs into the windowed clean room lab. Once through the door into this area, the PCs will see a completely sealed room with air venting and pressure stabilization. The heroes will be asked to wear clean suits when entering the main labs. (Note that Pipeline will not be able to enter the lab in his watery form. This will give Pipeline a chance to look around the cubes outside the lab.)

The clean room lab contains several workbenches that act as workstations for various types of research. There is a freezer, an incubator, a room with lab mice, a spectrum analyzer, lots of powerful microscopes, and other miscellaneous medical gear. A security camera monitors the entire room, including the scene of the crime.

Fosse will lead the PCs toward one of the freezers. He will then carefully open the freezer door with his gloved hand, making sure to show the lock to the PCs. Imbedded in the lock is a pen. It appears to be completely fused with the molecules of the lock! Masq will be able to convey that this is sign that White Dwarf was

one of the thieves. Inside, several samples on one shelf are missing. The rest of the freezer is full. PCs will note that all of the samples are carefully numbered. (The thief obviously knew what samples to steal.) If the PCs look around, they will find a clipboard with details on the samples. The samples are a strange plant spore from Africa, called Lupicarious Alentium.

While the other PCs are in the main lab, Pipeline, and maybe some of the other PCs, can be looking around the cubicles. In the cubicle area, they will find that, curiously, only one of the computers is in screensaver mode. The rest of the computers are powered off. (Last night the power was cycled. The move was done to install a new server.) That cube belongs to Doctor Mickey Calloway. The desk is cluttered with various magazines and papers. A filthy coffee cup sits next to the monitor. On one cleared-off area is an open thermos. The thermos is curiously spotless. If the computer is examined, several files will be found in an encrypted area. These files can be decoded, with some time, by Pipeline and a Computer Science roll. They appear to be research papers about a strange African spore called Lupicarious Alentium. The information is very advanced, but details the doctor’s plan to proceed from lab mice testing to larger animals or humans. Also on the computer is the entire article about Doctor Calloway’s findings, which was published in *JAMA*.

The black-and-white security cameras in the building can convey several useful pieces of information. The cameras do not have sound. Here is what the various cameras show:

#### FRONT LOBBY

- 9:48 Doctor Calloway enters the lobby, looking a bit disheveled. His hair is not combed, and his shirt is untucked. He is carrying a bag lunch and a large thermos. He nods to Fosse as he moves through the building.
- 11:25 Doctor Calloway leaves the lobby. On the way out, he does not speak to Fosse. He does not have the thermos.

#### MAIN LAB

- 11:31 There is a strange straight ripple, then a small misshapen figure in a glistening suit (i.e. White Dwarf). White Dwarf moves to the refrigerator, then stops when he sees the lock. He reaches over and takes a pen from a nearby bench. He then shifts and appears with the pen in the lock. The lock snaps, and the door opens. White Dwarf then reaches in and grabs



## DIGITAL HERO #9

three vials. He pockets them in his glove, turns, and disappears through what appears to be another vertical ripple in space. (Masq can convey that this is White Dwarf.)

The PCs will obviously want to investigate Doctor Calloway. They can proceed with Sgt. Veracruz to his house to look for more clues. The house is in a fairly rich area of Sacramento, and although quite cluttered, it appears normal. It is full of medical journals and books. The group will also find a set of books about building strength of will and impressing members of the opposite sex. On successful Skill Rolls, the heroes will note that Doctor Calloway's bedroom closet is missing some clothes, and that his refrigerator has no perishable foods. (Doctor Calloway will now be considered a suspect in the robbery.) Sgt. Veracruz will send out an APB for Doctor Calloway, then collect address books and begin to perform other routine police work. She will ask the PCs to give her a private line so that she can contact them if anything comes up or if she finds Doctor Calloway.

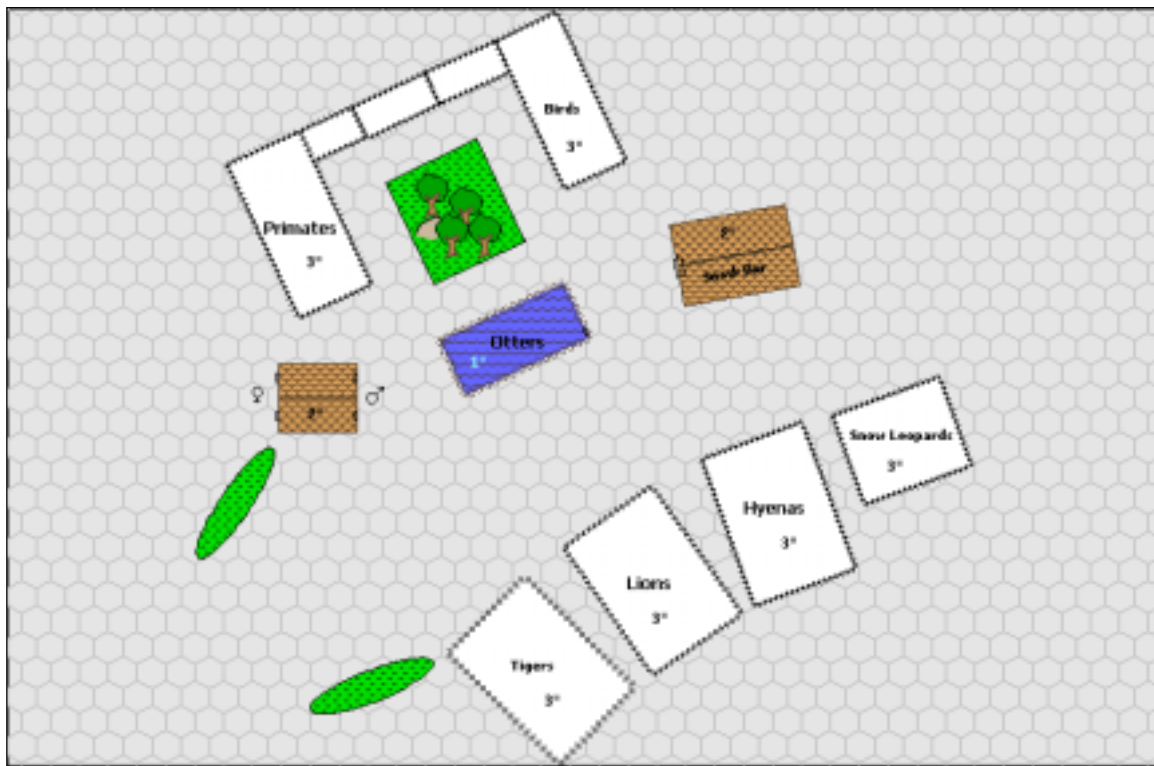
### Scene #4 – Zoo Antics

After less than a week, Doctor Mayhem and Doctor Calloway have advanced the formula to a near-final state. In fact, they have made so much progress that Doctor Mayhem decides the next course of action is to test the sera. The problem is that Doctor Mayhem wants to test the formula in a situation similar to what he plans to use on the

general populace. A test of this nature would also validate the delivery mechanism. When Doctor Mayhem tells Doctor Calloway of his grand plan, it scares the simple researcher. At this point, Doctor Calloway realizes that he has given this terrible man a deadly weapon, but what can he do against a man with superhuman powers?

This scene has the Forces Of Nature involved in a chaotic rescue at the Sacramento Zoo in William Land Park. Doctor Mayhem has decided to release the formula into the water supply that is used to feed the animals. This will allow him to test the delivery and results of the formula on larger creatures. When the animals in the park drink the tainted water they become uncontrollable. Quickly, the zookeepers are overwhelmed, and animals begin to escape from their cages. It is at this point that the PCs get called into action. Typhoon will contact the PCs, and ask them to move with all possible haste to the zoo at William Land Park.

When the PCs arrive, they will have to deal with crazed animals of various types. These animals can be taken from the *HERO System Bestiary*. Some of the escaped animals could include a giraffe (use the camel on page 142), a large orangutan (gorilla, page 165), a tiger (page 147), a lion (page 145), some hyenas (wolves, page 188), an eland (long horned antelope, page 150), a zebra (riding horse, page 168), and a boa constrictor (page 177). The animals will threaten guests and keepers. It is up to the heroes to stop the animals and save the various innocent bystanders.



The Sacramento Zoo

The cage bars are DEF 6 BODY 6. The otter pen is a Plexiglas enclosed structure that is DEF 6 BODY 10. The snack bar walls are DEF 4 BODY 3. The trees are DEF 5 BODY 8, and take 25 STR to uproot.

When the PCs have subdued the animals and aided any victims, they can research what happened at the zoo. With the lead zookeeper, Nancy Miller, the investigation will begin. Nancy, like the other keepers, will be very confused by the actions of the animals. This behavior is extremely abnormal.

After looking around for a while with the heroes, one of them should notice a metal fire door that is ajar, behind one of the large cat habitats. The padlock on the door has been ripped from housing. When the PCs open the door with Nancy, she will explain that this is the main water filtration system for the exhibits. There will be a small pump, as well as many large pipes. Two small pools sit on opposite sides of the room. From the surface, nothing is visible in the pools. Resting next to the drain at the bottom of one pool will be a small metal sphere about the size of a baseball. The sphere is nearly the same color as the drain, and is thus difficult to detect.

When the orb is brought to the surface, the PCs will be able to examine it in more detail. It appears to be a metal sphere with a black rubber plug that is attached to one side. The inside of the sphere is coated with a rubber surface. The plug is already open when the sphere is extracted from the pool. Nancy will remark that this is not part of the filtration system. Some PC may recall that it looks like a ball that might be used to deliver fabric softener to a load of wash. No trace of the chemical can be found in the ball, but the water can be examined. Nancy will note that until a filter can be established, the pools will be emptied and cleaned.

If the PCs get the idea to check out the city's water supply, go straight to Scene #5. Otherwise, move them there with a plot device, such as the following.

After the PCs have conducted the investigation at the zoo, Sgt. Veracruz will arrive with more officers, firemen, and ambulances to treat any injuries. As she greets the PCs and the cleanup begins, she will get a call on her police radio. Sgt. Veracruz will seem focused and will ask for a private office. In the office, Sgt. Veracruz will tell the PCs that she has someone claiming to be Doctor Mickey Calloway on the radio! Apparently, he called the station and they have connected it through the radio. Doctor Calloway will be very nervous and be speaking in a hushed tone. He will be quite frantic as he explains the situation....

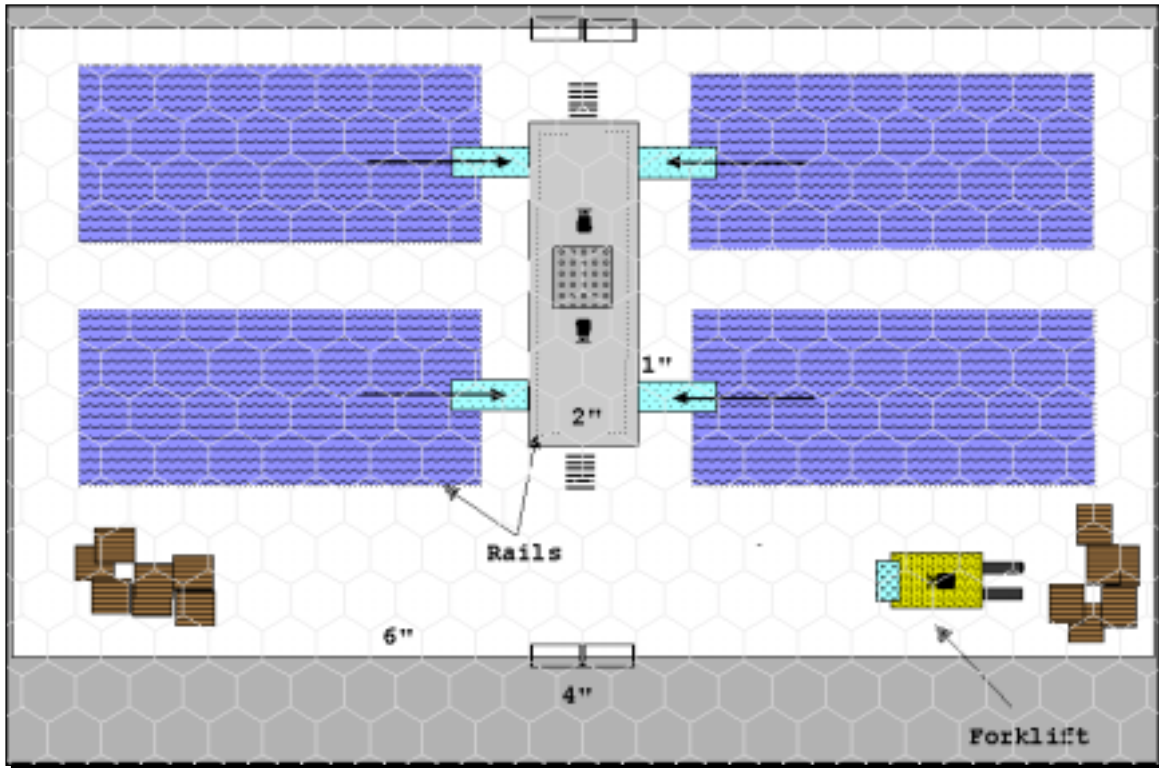
“Hello... is this the officer in charge of the Vertix robbery? This is Doctor Mickey Calloway. I've got to speak quickly, so please do not interrupt. I was misled by an evil man, Doctor Mayhem. He promised me that he would give me unlimited resources to complete my formula. Doctor Mayhem did not tell me that he plans to use my research in a method for which it was not designed. Now I fear that Doctor Mayhem plans to release it into the city's general water supply! I overheard him talking with his goons about conducting an experiment... wait...” [Shuffling can be heard, then a strange female voice with a slight Japanese accent comes over the line.] “Well, well, well... what have we here?” [Static.]

## Scene #5 – Battle At The Water Purification Plant

The events of the test and the bit of conversation from Doctor Calloway should alert the group that Doctor Mayhem plans to introduce the formula into the local water supply. The logical place to do this is at a local water treatment plant. If the heroes are having difficulty coming to this conclusion, have Sgt. Veracruz throw out some hints. When the PCs arrive at the local plant, they will see a strange helicopter outside. It seems to be armed with several strange chain guns. As they near, they will see some unconscious men and a busted open door. Inside the plant, Doctor Mayhem is about to release the formula. When the PCs approach, he will throw four metal spheres the size of basketballs into several pools that reside in the plant. He will then soliloquize to the PCs, “You foolish rookies are too late to stop my master plan. Soon all of Sacramento will be cursed with insanity! Such destruction! How perfectly grand.”

As the PCs move to attack, they will note that a bound and gagged Doctor Calloway sits at the feet of Doctor Mayhem as a sort of instant hostage should the need arise.

This will leave the PCs with several immediate goals. They must stop the villains, grab the spheres before they break open, stop the pumps, and save Doctor Calloway. During this chaotic scene, extra tension should be provided by stray shots that hit pumping engines, having one of the orbs burst open before any PC arrives to grab it, or anything else that would add excitement and tension.



**Water Purification Plant**

The forklift is DEF 4 BODY 10. The rails are DEF 5 BODY 2. The wooden crates contain replacement parts and are DEF 4 BODY 7. Each crate takes 20 STR to lift. The large water carrying pipes are DEF 9 BODY 7. Note that the arrows on the map show the direction of water flow. The water is cleansed, and then pumped out through ducts under the center platform. The controls for the pumps are DEF 4 BODY 12. The concrete enforced walls of the building are DEF 8 BODY 5.

Hopefully the PCs will be able to – at a minimum – grab the spheres and save Doctor Calloway. After that, anything else that they can accomplish would be considered an added bonus.

**APPENDIX – KEY NPCS**

This section contains a list of the important NPCs, and some information about each one. The list is provided in the order in which they occur in the story.

Name	Information
Dr. Mickey Calloway	Caucasian. 5’8”, slightly overweight, thinning sandy blond hair, glasses that hang down on his nose. Developer of the spore that is the source of Doctor Mayhem’s master plan.
Marcus Cline	Caucasian. 6’, well-built, square chin with a small cleft. His hair is <i>always</i> perfect. <i>Sacramento Bee</i> ace reporter.
Tony Viocinni	Italian. 5’10”, slim, no facial hair, dark olive skin, and dark black hair. Landslide’s campaign manager. Uses lots of hand motions when he speaks.
John “Big” House	Caucasian. 5’8”, obese, unshaven, with brown hair. Construction manager for Acorn Hills Medical Research Center. Observed several strange men at the construction site, and knows about metallurgy.
Jacob Fosse	Norwegian. 6’2”, tall, big man, blond hair, gray at the temples, mustache is long and sort of frayed at the ends. Security Chief of Vertix Pharmaceuticals.
Sgt. Alicia Veracruz	Mexican. 5’6”, very fit, with long black hair tied back in a braid. Wears little makeup. Confident and well versed in police procedure but not in dealing with superbeings. Sacramento Police Officer in charge of the robbery investigation at Vertix.
Nancy Miller	Caucasian. 5’7”, slightly overweight, gold wire rimmed glasses, light brown hair that is tied back in the center. Wears only a little makeup and a khaki colored zookeeper uniform. Competent woman who can deal with all types of animals, except people. Often folds under verbal assaults. Sacramento Zoo lead zookeeper.

**Blazer (Forces of Nature)**

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
29	DEX	57	15-	OCV: 10/DCV: 10
20	CON	20	13-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 12-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
16	COM	3	12-	
				Total: 20 PD (10 rPD)
				Total: 20 ED (10 rED)
				Phases: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9,
				11, 12
10	PD	8		
10	ED	6		
7	SPD	31		
6	REC	0		
40	END	0		
30	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 145**

**Movement:**

Running:	6"/12"
Leaping:	2"/4"
Flight:	20"/160"

Cost	Powers	END
55	<i>Blazing Speed:</i> Flight 20", 8x Noncombat, Position Shift, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Only When in Contact With a Surface (-¼)	2
20	<i>Quick Eyes:</i> Find Weakness 11- with all Speed Trick attacks	0
56	<i>Speed Tricks:</i> Multipower, 70-point reserve; Only After Moving (-¼)	
4u	1) <i>Rapid Punches:</i> HA 7d6 (9d6 with STR), Autofire (5 shots; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½); Hand Attack (-½), Only After Moving (-¼)	3*
3u	2) <i>Mook Attack:</i> HA 5d6 (7d6 with STR), Area Of Effect (4 hexes Any Area; +1), Selective (+¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Hand Attack (-½), Only After Moving (-¼)	3
3u	3) <i>Cyclone:</i> Telekinesis (20 STR), Area Of Effect (4" Radius; +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); No Range (-½), Affects Whole Object (-¼), Only to Push Away or Pull Closer (-¼), Only After Moving (-¼)	2
3u	4) <i>Whirl Around:</i> Drain DEX 5d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Must Be Able to Lift Target (-¼), Recovers 5 points per Phase (-¼), Only After Moving (-¼)	2
3u	5) <i>Fast Hands:</i> Missile Reflection (bullets/shrapnel, reflection at any target); Will Not Work Against Heavy Missiles (-¼), Only After Moving (-¼)	0
2u	6) <i>Blink Of An Eye:</i> Invisibility to Sight Group, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Only After Moving (-¼)	1

3u	7) <i>Speedy Worker:</i> Change Environment 2" (build or complete manual task quickly), Any Area, Long-Lasting (Permanent), Varying Effect (broad group, completed task; +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); No Range (-½), Must Have Resources at Hand to Complete Task (-¼), Only After Moving (-¼)	3
20	<i>Armored Suit:</i> Armor (10 PD/10 ED); OIF (armored suit; -½)	0

**Perks**

1 Fringe Benefit: License To Practice Medicine

**Talents**

3 Lightning Calculator  
4 Speed Reading (x10)

**Skills**

3 Acrobatics 15-  
3 Breakfall 15-  
7 Paramedic 14-  
3 Power (Speed Feats) 15-  
3 PS: Nurse 12-  
3 SS: Medicine 12-  
1 Streetwise 8-  
2 TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 205**

**Total Cost: 350**

**200+ Disadvantages**

25	DNPC: Hospital Friends 11- (Normal, unaware of character's Secret Identity, Group x2)
10	Enraged: If Held (Common), Go 8-, Rec 14-
15	Hunted: Masters of Mayhem 8- (Mo Pow, Kill)
20	Psychological Limitation: Code Against Killing (Common, Total)
15	Psychological Limitation: Must Protect Those Under Her Care (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Showoff (Common, Moderate)
5	Rivalry: Professional (fellow nurse; Rival Aware of Rivalry)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frequently, Major) (Sheronga Jones)
15	Unluck: 3d6
20	Vulnerability: 2x Effect from Drug-Based Powers (Common)

**Total Disadvantage Points: 350**

### Blazer (Forces of Nature)

**Background:** Sheronga Jones grew up in a tough neighborhood of Oakland. All her life, she wanted to escape, so she decided that study would be the best way out. Sheronga picked up science well, and studied to become a nurse. During one stint as an intern at Viralogic in Menlo Park, she met an interesting and brilliant doctor known as Doctor Martin Mayfair. The Doctor had some grandiose ideas about the “human condition” that Sheronga did not appreciate, but he did teach her a lot about how things work in a medical research laboratory.

It was during one of these instruction sessions that an accident occurred. A vial of accelerated microbes spilled on Sheronga’s ungloved hand. Not wanting to lose her job, Sheronga said nothing, and finished her internship. Later she discovered that the accelerated microbes gave her superhuman speed! Sheronga could perform amazing tasks and run at an incredible pace! Donning a mask like those she had seen on TV, Sheronga secretly became Blazer. Sheronga currently works at Sutter General Hospital in Sacramento.

**Notes:** Blazer is a speedster. She has several talents, skills, and powers often possessed by these archetypes. Her *Speed Tricks* Multipower can be used after she takes some Blazing Speed movement. If Blazer is held, these powers can’t be used. Since her metabolism is accelerated, drugs have more impact on her superhuman anatomy.



### Pipeline (Forces of Nature)

**Background:** Thomas Ignacio Caballero is a mutant. His father, Diego, worked on a research project at Lawrence Livermore Labs. The project involved dangerous isotopes that would hopefully be used to produce efficient nuclear-driven engines. Unknown to Thomas’ father, these isotopes would cause his son to be a mutant, and cause his early death.

Diego died when Thomas was only 12 years old. Thomas could not handle his father’s death, and started to rebel. He took in with several street gangs as way to get out of the house. At the age of 14, Thomas’ mutant powers started to manifest themselves. At first, Thomas would wake up soaking wet. Soon, he noticed that his skin was becoming clear, and that he quickly became dehydrated. The other members of his gang turned against Thomas, and threw him out when they saw his skin changing. In a fit of rage, Thomas sent the gang leader 30 feet in the air with a jet of high-pressure water! Thomas had nowhere to turn, so he returned home.

Thomas’ mother, Maria, took in her son, and has gained back his respect and love. The two have made a pact that they will do anything in their power to make sure these strange mutant powers do not prevent Thomas from making a normal life for himself. Thomas is currently a model student at McClatchy High School, and plans to take the accelerated placement exam for Chemistry and Computer Science.

**Notes:** Pipeline has an assortment of water powers, and his watery body makes him extremely resistant to damage. The *Downpour* power is essentially a wide-angle spray of his Energy Blast. Since Pipeline’s body is comprised of living water, he is susceptible to ice-based attacks and powers.



**Pipeline (Forces of Nature)**

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	Lift 75kg; 1½d6 HTH [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
20	CON	20	13-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 12-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
10	PRE	0	11-	PRE Attack: 2d6
12	COM	1	11-	
5	PD	3		Total: 25 PD (20 rPD)
5	ED	1		Total: 15 ED (10 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
6	REC	0		
40	END	0		
34	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 98**

**Movement:** Running: 6"/12"  
Leaping: 2"/4"  
Swimming: 18"/36"

Cost	Powers	END
70	<i>Water Powers:</i> Multipower, 70-point reserve	
7u	1) <i>Water Blast:</i> EB 7d6, Double Knockback (+¾), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	3
4u	2) <i>Turn Into Water:</i> Desolidification (affected by attacks that disrupt water), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Cannot Pass through Solid Objects (-½)	0
6u	3) <i>Downpour:</i> Suppress Fire 2d6, All Powers with a Fire Special Effect Simultaneously (+2), Area Of Effect (3 hexes Any Area; +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) <b>plus</b> Change Environment 3 hexes Any Area, -1 to all DEX Rolls and DEX-Based Skill Rolls, -1 to Hearing Group PER Rolls, -1 to Hearing Group PER Rolls, -1 to Points of Telekinetic STR Down, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Linked (-½)	3
45	<i>Water Body:</i> Armor (20 PD/10 ED)	0
15	<i>Water Body:</i> Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%	0
15	<i>Water Body:</i> Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%	0
34	<i>Water Body:</i> Life Support (Diminished Eating: Character Does Not Eat, Immunity: All Diseases And Biowarfare Agents, Immunity: All Poisons and Chemical Warfare Agents, Safe Environment: High Pressure, Self-Contained Breathing)	0
6	<i>Attacks Splash Through Water Body:</i> Knockback Resistance -3"	0
16	<i>Fast Swimmer:</i> +16" Swimming (18" total)	2

**Skills**

- 6 +2 with Water Powers
- 3 AK: Sacramento 12-
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 Computer Programming 12-
- 5 Cramming
- 3 KS: Pop Culture 12-
- 1 KS: Punk Music 8-
- 3 Power (Water Feats) 13-
- 3 SS: Chemistry 12-
- 4 TF: Skateboarding, Skiing (water), Small Motorized Ground Vehicles, Surfing

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 252**

**Total Cost: 350**

**200+ Disadvantages**

- 10 Dependence: Immersed in Water Every 6 Hours or 3d6 Damage (Very Common)
- 20 DNPC: School Friends 8- (Incompetent; Group x2)
- 10 DNPC: Mom 8- (Normal)
- 15 Distinctive Features: Body Composed Entirely Of Water (Not Concealable)
- 15 Hunted: Masters Of Mayhem 8- (Mo Pow, Kill)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Water Body is Very Heavy and Wet (All the Time, Slightly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Can't Smell Or Taste (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 5 Psychological Limitation: Overactive Teenage Hormones (Uncommon, Moderate)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Rebels Against Authority Figures (Common, Moderate)
- 5 Psychological Limitation: Wants To Be Like Other Kids (Uncommon, Moderate)
- 5 Social Limitation: Teenager (Occasionally, Minor [prevents access to certain licenses and admittance to certain events])
- 20 Vulnerability: 2x STUN from Ice Based Attacks (Common)
- 10 Vulnerability: 1½x Effect from Ice Based Powers (Common)

**Total Disadvantage Points: 350**

## DIGITAL HERO #9

### Landslide (Forces of Nature)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
20	CON	20	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 12-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
18	COM	4	13-	
4	PD	2		Total: 24 PD (20 rPD)
4	ED	0		Total: 24 ED (20 rED)
5	SPD	17		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
6	REC	0		
40	END	0		
25	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 97**

**Movement:** Running: 6"/12"  
Flight: 30"/30"  
Tunneling: 4"/8"

Cost	Powers	END
63	<i>Rock Attacks:</i> Multipower, 79-point reserve; Reduced by Range from Ground (-¼)	0
6u	1) <i>Rock Spikes:</i> RKA 3d6, Indirect (up from the ground at any location; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Reduced by Range from Ground (-¼)	3
6u	2) <i>Eruption:</i> EB 7d6, Explosion (+½), Indirect (up from the ground at any location; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Reduced by Range from Ground (-¼)	3
6u	3) <i>Rock Pillar:</i> EB 9d6, Indirect (up from the ground at any location; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Reduced by Range from Ground (-¼)	3
30	<i>Earth Moving Powers:</i> Elemental Control, 75-point powers; Reduced by Range from Ground (-¼)	0
24	1) <i>Rock Crust:</i> Force Field (20 PD/20 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Reduced by Range from Ground (-¼), Extra Time (Full Phase to Activate; -¼) <b>plus</b> Density Increase (400 kg mass, +10 STR, +2 PD/ED, -2" KB), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Reduced by Range from Ground (-¼), Extra Time (Full Phase to Activate; -¼), Linked (-½)	0
21	2) <i>Digging:</i> Tunneling 4" through 6 DEF, Ranged (+½), Usable As Attack (does not work on characters with Flying; +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Reduced by Range from Ground (-¼), Only through Rock or Soil (-½)	3

19	3) <i>Move Earth:</i> Telekinesis (20 STR), Area Of Effect (10 hexes Any Area; +1¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Reduced by Range from Ground (-¼), Only on Earth and Rock (-½), Affects Whole Object (-¼)	3
23	4) <i>Rock Walls:</i> Force Wall (6 PD/4 ED; 3" long and 1" tall; Opaque to Sight Group and Normal Hearing), Indirect (Up from the ground at any location; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Reduced by Range from Ground (-¼), Vulnerable to Water, Sound, and Vibration Attacks (-½)	3
19	5) <i>Rock Sled:</i> Flight 30", Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Reduced by Range from Ground (-¼), Restrained (Easily knocked off; -½), No Noncombat Movement (-¼)	3

#### Perks

3 Fringe Benefit: City Official

#### Skills

3	Acting 13-
3	Bribery 13-
3	Bureaucratics 13-
3	Conversation 13-
3	High Society 13-
3	KS: Local Politics 12-
1	KS: Smear Campaigns 8-
3	Oratory 13-
3	Persuasion 13-
3	Power (Rock Feats) 14-
3	PS: Politician 12-
2	TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 253**

**Total Cost: 350**

#### 200+ Disadvantages

20	DNPC: PR Manager 14- (Normal)
15	Hunted: US Government 14- (As Pow, Watching, NCI)
15	Hunted: Masters Of Mayhem 8- (As Pow, Kill)
15	Psychological Limitation: Desires Public Office (Very Common, Moderate)
20	Psychological Limitation: Elitist (Very Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Ruthless (Common, Strong)
15	Reputation: crooked politician, 14-
10	Rivalry: Professional (with other politicians; Rival is More Powerful, Rival Aware of Rivalry)
10	Social Limitation: Public Official (Frequently, Minor [noticed and recognized in public])
15	Vulnerability: 1½x STUN Water, Sound, or Vibration Attacks (Very Common)

**Total Disadvantage Points: 350**

## Landslide (Forces of Nature)

**Background:** Growing up as the son of a rich entrepreneur from the Silicon Valley, Justin Clearlake III had too much time to get in trouble. It also gave him a bad attitude. Justin strongly believes that only the elite should lead. Money provides better education and access to better medicines and healthcare. Thus, why shouldn't the wealthy elite lead the less fortunate?

After attending Stanford and studying law, Justin turned his attention to politics. He began to enter the local races, and eventually became the county controller for the well-to-do district of Sacramento known as Citrus Heights. It was during this campaign that Justin toured an ancient Ohlone burial site, which was blocking the construction of a new highway off-ramp that he had pushed through the bureaucracy. At this site, many Native Americans were holding a non-violent demonstration. As Justin approached the site, an older man gave Justin a terrible prophecy. The man told Justin that he would be cursed forever if he touched the ruins in the sacred burial grounds. The Ohlone elder foretold of ancient gods from the earth who would strike down those who disturbed this ancient place. Of course, Justin considered the man a crackpot, and ordered the off-ramp completed.

That night, Justin was visited by an ancient Ohlone deity. The deity gave Justin great powers over earth and rock, but explained that these powers would only serve him when he fights to preserve the sanctity of the land. Justin has taken these powers, but turned them to his advantage. He does use these amazing earth powers to protect the land from those that would destroy it, and has actually become a strong environmental advocate, but he plans to also use the gift as a further lever for his career – the first superhero President! Justin currently has his sights set on the position of Mayor.

**Notes:** Landslide is probably the most difficult character of the bunch. He has several powers, in both an Elemental Control and a Multipower. The *Rock Crust* power pulls rock around him to form a sort of makeshift armor. If this is struck by certain forms of attack, the earth presses into him, and causes more damage than it might if the power was not active. The special effect of the *Rock Sled* is that Landslide grabs a piece of earth and puts it under his feet. The reason it is easily fouled is that he can be knocked off of it (in a sense, restrained). By using the *Move Earth* power, Landslide can transport people with him when he flies. All of his powers are affected by his distance from the earth. As he leaves the ground, his powers weaken.





## DIGITAL HERO #9

### Typhoon (Forces of Nature)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
60	STR	50	21-	100 tons; 12d6 HTH [6]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
25	CON	30	14-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll: 11-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
10	COM	0	11-	
28	PD	16		Total: 28 PD (20 rPD)
25	ED	20		Total: 25 ED (20 rED)
5	SPD	22		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
17	REC	0		
50	END	0		
63	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 192**

**Movement:** Running: 9"/18"  
Leaping: 12"/24"

Cost	Powers	END
60	<i>Strength Based Air Feats:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve	
3u	1) <i>Inhale/Exhale:</i> Telekinesis (20 STR), Area Of Effect (7" Cone; +1); No Range (-1/2), Affects Whole Object (-1/4), Only To Suck In Or Blow Out (-1/4)	6
6u	2) <i>Blow Away Gas:</i> Dispel Gas Power 16d6, any gas power one at a time (+1/4)	6
2u	3) <i>Blow Off Projectiles:</i> Missile Deflection (bullets & shrapnel), Range (Full Range; +1); Costs Endurance (-1/2)	3
1u	4) <i>Hold Breath:</i> Life Support (Extended Breathing: 1 END per Hour)	
20	<i>Tough Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (20 PD/20 ED)	
6	<i>Bit Faster:</i> +3" Running (9" Total)	1
<b>Perks</b>		
3	Fringe Benefit: Member of Army Elite Forces	

### Skills

10	+2 with HTH Combat
6	+2 with Air Feats
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Bureaucraties 13-
3	Climbing 13-
3	Combat Piloting 13-
3	KS: US Military Process and Procedures 11-
3	Power (Air Feats) 13-
3	Oratory 13-
3	Stealth 13-
2	Survival (Temperate/Subtropical) 11-
3	Tactics 11-
6	TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Combat Aircraft, Helicopters, Large Planes, Small Planes, Wheeled Military Vehicles
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms
2	Weaponsmith (Firearms) 11-

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 158**

**Total Cost: 350**

### 200+ Disadvantages

20	Enraged: Command Openly Questioned (Common), Go 11-, Rec 11-
20	Hunted: US Military 14- (Mo Pow, Watching, NCI)
15	Hunted: Masters Of Mayhem 8- (Mo Pow, Kill)
15	Psychological Limitation: Overconfident (Very Common, Moderate)
15	Psychological Limitation: Patriot (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Domineering (Common, Moderate)
5	Reputation: harsh commander, 11- (Known only to the military and those under his command)
20	Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major [character suffers punishment for disobedience])
10	Unluck: 2d6
20	Vulnerability: 1 1/2x STUN and BODY from Fire Attacks (Common)

**Total Disadvantage Points: 350**

## Typhoon (Forces of Nature)

**Background:** “Scrawny” Steven Jackson was always getting picked on by his classmates. After graduating from high school, he decided to join the Army. The Army would make him tough enough to stand up to others. Steven took to the military instantly. He found the training demanding, but rewarding. After 8 years in the military, Steven advanced to the position of drill sergeant. Sergeant Jackson was stationed at Vandenberg Air Force base, and was taught to fly all types of craft by the Air Force. Surprisingly, Steven found that he was better than most of the Air Force cadets at combat flying.

A year later, Steven was given the chance of a lifetime. He was given the opportunity to take part in an advanced Army research project known as “Iron Eagle.” The project involved six men taking a drug that would give the user temporary super-strength and stamina. After taking the drug, Steven fell into a near-fatal coma and the other five men died. When Steven emerged, he found that he had permanent superhuman strength, stamina, and lungs. The military abandoned the drug, as it was found to be too dangerous, but consider Steven a success. They gave him the codename Typhoon, and have given him the task as leader of the Forces of Nature. Sergeant Jackson relishes the task, and looks forward to leading these raw recruits into battle. His only problem is that they don’t always seem to listen to his orders... especially that kid.

**Notes:** Typhoon has military training, a very high strength, and super-breath abilities derived from his powerful lungs. Fire powers cause him more damage, as his cells contain a supernaturally high degree of oxygen.

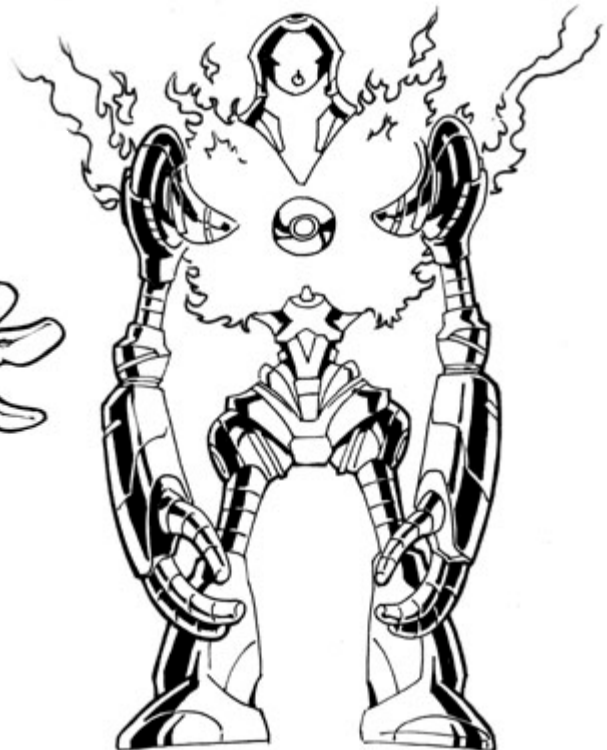


## Masq (Forces of Nature)

**Background:** Once every cycle, the primordial oceans on the planet of Thanetos give “birth.” The strange orange fluids part, and a being of pure solar energy emerges. These beings are taken by the Stellar Police Force, and trained as enforcers of galactic law. They train to arrest criminals of the known galaxy. Even though the group is very small, they are very good at what they do, and extremely powerful.

Masqueriathaetos is one of these beings, and an elite member of Stellar Police Force One. His current task is to track down a being known as Tri L’Tar who has stolen an advanced no-friction suit from a merchant on Alpha Centauri. Masq has tracked Tri L’Tar, who goes by the name White Dwarf, to the third planet around a star known as Sol. L’Tar’s ship appears to have landed on one of the larger landmasses known as North America. As Masq can’t find L’Tar at the crash site, he has decided to fly to the nearest settlement to find the crafty intergalactic thief.

**Notes:** Masq is probably the easiest PC to understand, but he is difficult to roleplay. He has an assortment of alien solar powers that draw their energy from his solar-collecting alien body. These powers also weaken if Masq is not in direct sunlight. By using *Mind Speak*, Masq can communicate with any willing alien he may encounter in his travels. Remember that Masq can only understand those who are inside his Mind Link.



## DIGITAL HERO #9

### Masq (Forces of Nature)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH [1]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
20	CON	20	13-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 12-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
5	PD	2		Total: 20 PD (20 rPD)
5	ED	1		Total: 30 ED (30 rED)
6	SPD	27		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
7	REC	0		
30	END	-5		
30	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 125**

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Leaping:	3"/6"
	Flight:	15"/120"

Cost	Powers	END
20	<i>Natural Solar Battery:</i> Endurance Reserve (100 END, 12 REC); Only Recovers in Sunlight (-¼)	
24	<i>Solar Powers:</i> Elemental Control, 30 points; Reduced to Half Effect if Not in Sunlight (-¼) [Powers Use Endurance Reserve]	
24	1) <i>Solar Heat Blast:</i> EB 12d6; Half Effect if Not in Sunlight (-¼)	6
24	2) <i>Glistening Orange Skin:</i> Force Field (15 PD/25 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Half Effect if Not in Sunlight (-¼)	0
24	3) <i>Ray Riding:</i> Flight 15", 8x Noncombat; Half Effect if Not in Sunlight (-¼) <b>plus</b> FTL Travel (32 Lightyears per Year); Half Effect if Not in Sunlight (-¼)	4
36	<i>Mind Speak:</i> Mind Link, Any 4 Minds <b>plus</b> Detect Meaning of Thoughts 12-, Discriminatory, Range, Sense; Linked (-¼)	0
5	<i>Metal Alien Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (5 PD/5 ED)	0
10	<i>Alien Mind:</i> Mental Defense (10 points) (14 points total)	0
5	<i>Polarized Eyes:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (5 points)	0
25	<i>Lives In Space:</i> Life Support (Diminished Eating: Character Does Not Eat, Diminished Sleeping: Character Does Not Sleep, Safe Environments: High Pressure, High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum; Self-Contained Breathing)	0

### Perks

- 5 Fringe Benefit: Intergalactic Police Powers
- 2 Reputation: Stellar Police Officer (among stellar crime fighters and criminals) +1/+1d6

### Skills

- 4 AK: Solar Systems 13-
- 3 Criminology 12-
- 3 Deduction 12-
- 3 KS: Alien Criminals 12-
- 2 Navigation (Space) 12-
- 3 Power (Solar Blast) 14-
- 3 PS: Galactic Police Officer 12-

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 225**

**Total Cost: 350**

### 200+ Disadvantages

- 5 Dependence: Sunlight Every Day or 3d6
- 15 Distinctive Features: Metallic Orange Skin (Concealable, Major Reaction)
- 25 Hunted: Stellar Criminals 14- (Mo Pow, Kill)
- 20 Physical Limitation: Completely Alien to Earth Culture (All the Time, Greatly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Does Not Know Earth Languages (All the Time, Slightly Impairing)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Honorable (Common, Total)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Tries to Obey Local Laws (Uncommon, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: honest Stellar Cop, 11-
- 10 Susceptibility: Complete Darkness, 2d6 per Minute (Uncommon)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2x STUN and BODY from Darkness Attacks (Uncommon)

**Total Disadvantage Points: 350**

**Dr. Mayhem (Masters of Mayhem)**

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6 tons; 8d6 HTH [4]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
25	CON	30	14-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
28	INT	18	15-	PER Roll: 15-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
25	PD	17		Total: 25 PD (25 rPD)
20	ED	15		Total: 20 ED (20 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
13	REC	0		
50	END	0		
53	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 197**

**Movement:** Running: 7"/14"  
Leaping: 8"/16"

Cost	Powers	END
15	<i>Primal Anger:</i> Absorption 6d6 (physical, half to STR, half to STUN); Side Effects (character always acquires Disadvantage <i>Enraged: In Combat (Very Common), Go 8-, Rec 11-</i> and Drain INT 1d6 (-1))	0
15	<i>Primal Anger:</i> Absorption 6d6 (energy, half to STR, half to STUN); Side Effects (character always acquires Disadvantage <i>Enraged: In Combat (Very Common), Go 8-, Rec 11-</i> and Drain INT 1d6 (-1))	0
23	<i>Tough:</i> Damage Resistance (25 PD/20 ED)	0
5	<i>Neanderthal Body:</i> Lack Of Weakness (-5) for Resistant Defense	0
2	<i>Bit Faster:</i> +1" Running (7" Total)	1

**Perks**

40	Follower: A.N.VIL (see separate character sheet)
10	Headquarters: Base (generic villain base with laboratory)
2	Reputation: Mad Scientist (among science community, 14-) +1/+1d6

**Skills**

3	Computer Programming 15-
3	Electronics 15-
3	Forensic Medicine 15-
3	Inventor 15-
3	Mechanics 15-
3	Oratory 13-
3	Paramedics 15-
3	PS: Doctor 15-
3	Scientist
2	1) SS: Anthropology 15-
2	2) SS: Biological Warfare Agents 15-
2	3) SS: Genetics 15-
2	4) SS: Medical Devices 15-
2	5) SS: Medicine 15-
2	6) SS: Robotics 15-
2	7) SS: Weapon Delivery Systems 15-
3	Systems Operation (Medical Devices) 15-
1	TF: Small Motorized Ground Vehicles
6	Weaponsmith 15- (Biological, Chemical, Energy, Incendiary, Missiles & Rockets)

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 163**

**Total Cost: 360**

**200+ Disadvantages**

10	Distinctive Features: Neanderthal Body (Easily Concealed; Always Noticed; Causes Major Reaction)
20	Enraged: if authority questioned (Very Common), go 8-, recover 11-
20	Hunted: Law Enforcement Agencies 11- (Mo Pow, Harshly Punish, NCI)
10	Hunted: Forces Of Nature 8- (As Pow, Harshly Punish)
20	Psychological Limitation: Megalomaniac (Very Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Overconfident (Very Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Biased Against Those With Little Intelligence (Very Common, Moderate)
15	Psychological Limitation: Loves To Create Weapons Of Mass Destruction (Very Common, Moderate)
20	Reputation: mad scientist and leader of Masters Of Mayhem, 14- (Extreme)
10	Social Limitation: Known Villain in Sacramento Area (Very Frequently, Minor [law abiding citizens will react poorly], Not Limiting To Other Criminals)
5	Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 360**

## Dr. Mayhem (Masters of Mayhem)

**Background:** Doctor Martin Mayfair won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry when he devised a way to extract century-old enzymes from early Neanderthal bones. Doctor Mayfair used the funds from the Nobel Prize to further his work in the field. Soon, other scientists would realize that there would be many practical uses for this research. It was during one of these early experiments that things went very wrong. A defective vat ruptured, sending a spray of dangerous Neanderthal enzymes over the Doctor.

The chemicals merged with Doctor Mayfair, changing him into something quite different. His bones and muscles grew, giving him super strength. His skin toughened, giving him increased defenses. The problem was that the chemical concoction also warped his skull. The massive pain changed the Doctor mentally. No longer would others think that his research was not useful. Now he would show the world what real research means! Doctor Mayfair changed his name to Doctor Mayhem, based on an incident that he had with a well-known *Sacramento Bee* reporter, Marcus Cline.

**Notes:** Doctor Mayhem has increased strength, stamina, and toughness. He also has all of the science skills that earned him the Nobel Prize. The *Primal Anger* power causes the Doctor to become stronger when his adrenaline starts to flow. In game terms, this occurs when he takes damage. Whenever his strength grows, so does his rage. This is done with a Side Effect that always occurs. The side effect causes Doctor Mayhem to lose 1d6 Intelligence, and gain an Enraged Disadvantage.



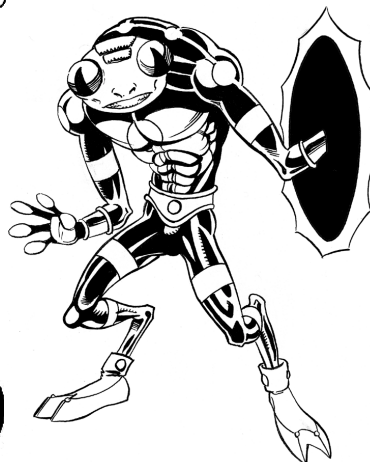
## White Dwarf (Masters of Mayhem)

**Background:** Tri L'Tar is an alien from the planet T'Stro. On L'Tar's world, members of his race are instantly able to travel great distances by forming lapses in space. This power has put a very strange twist on their society and culture. The T'Stro hold nothing private. Everything is shared, as it is very hard to hold secrets or guard anything of value.

When the race was first encountered by space travelers, they soon discovered that the simple T'Stro were potentially powerful allies. The small race was quickly indoctrinated as spies and thieves, which they took to quickly. Tri L'Tar is a T'Stro who wants to make a name for himself. He has stolen a powerful low-friction suit, and now plans to use his abilities to become an infamous intergalactic thief known as White Dwarf. Unfortunately, he has been forced to flee to a backwater planet known as Terra in order to escape from the Stellar Police Force.

After crash landing, Tri L'Tar was discovered by Doctor Mayhem. Doctor Mayhem appeared to Tri L'Tar as a person with great power who had resources that could easily be used for his own gains. After learning the customs of this strange planet, Tri L'Tar plans to pick it clean then leave.

**Notes:** The T'Stro are a small race of creatures with smooth green skin and large red eyes. Their hands have only three large digits. Most people from Earth would claim that the T'Stro remind them of large geckos. With the low-friction suit and his powers of teleportation, Tri L'Tar is a slippery adversary. The *Slide Step* is a quick teleport out of the way of an incoming attack. Tri L'Tar's *Blink Illusions* power is his ability to teleport so quickly that there appear to be several images of himself. The low-friction suit includes a standard translator that allows him to communicate with the Earthlings.



**White Dwarf (Masters of Mayhem)**

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	150 kg; 2½d6 HTH [1]
29	DEX	57	15-	OCV: 10/DCV: 10
20	CON	20	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
13	INT	3	12-	PER Roll: 12-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
14	PD	11		Total: 20 PD (6 rPD)
13	ED	9		Total: 19 ED (6 rED)
6	SPD	21		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
7	REC	0		
40	END	0		
27	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 130**

**Movement:** Running: 12"/24"  
Leaping: 3"/6"  
Teleport: 15"/60"

Cost	Powers	END
75	<i>Space Slide:</i> Teleportation 15", 2 Floating Fixed Locations, 4x Noncombat, No Relative Velocity, Position Shift, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	3
56	<i>Teleportation Tricks:</i> Multipower, 70-point reserve; Only After a Half-Phase Teleport (-¼)	
3u	1) <i>Slide Into Object:</i> RKA 2½d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); No Range (-½), Beam (-¼), Need a Small Object to Leave Inside Target (-¼), Only After a Half-Phase Teleport (-¼)	3
3u	2) <i>Side Step:</i> +11 with DCV, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Costs Endurance (-½), Must Be Aware of Attack (-¼), Only After a Half-Phase Teleport (-¼)	3
4u	3) <i>Blink Illusions:</i> Sight and Hearing Group Images, -6 to PER Roll, 8" Radius (+¾), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Only Images Of Himself (-½), Only After a Half-Phase Teleport (-¼)	3
12	<i>Padded Low Friction Suit:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½)	0
7	<i>Life Support System:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing); OIF (-½)	0
6	<i>Low Friction Coating:</i> +10 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only For Escaping From Grabs And Entangles (-½), No Figured Characteristics (-½), OIF (-½)	0
12	<i>Slippery Shoes:</i> +6" Running (12" total), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (-½)	0

13	<i>Alien Headset Communicator:</i> Universal Translator 12-; OIF (-½)	0
<b>Perks</b>		
2	Reputation: Stellar Outlaw (among stellar police and criminals) +1/+1d6	
<b>Skills</b>		
3	Breakfall 15-	
3	Contortionist 15-	
3	KS: Crime 12-	
1	KS: Stellar Police 8-	
2	Navigation (Space) 12-	
3	Power (Teleport Tricks) 15-	
3	PS: Intergalactic Thief 12-	
3	Security Systems 12-	
3	Systems Operation (Spaceship Controls) 12-	
2	TF: Science Fiction & Space Vehicles	

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 220**

**Total Cost: 350**

**200+ Disadvantages**

15	Distinctive Features: Gecko Alien Appearance (Concealable, Major Reaction)	
25	Hunted: Stellar Police Force 14- (Mo Pow, Harsh)	
15	Physical Limitation: 1m Tall (50 kg, +3" Knockback) (All the Time, Slightly Impairing)	
15	Physical Limitation: Does Not Understand Earth Customs And Laws (All the Time, Slightly Impairing)	
15	Physical Limitation: Does Not Know Earth Languages (All the Time, Slightly Impairing)	
10	Physical Limitation: Suit Is Very Slippery (-1d6 Knockback rolls and hard to manipulate small objects) (Frequently, Greatly Impairing); OIF (-1/2)	
15	Psychological Limitation: Love To Commit Robbery (Common, Strong)	
10	Psychological Limitation: Wants To Commit Perfect Public Theft (Uncommon, Strong)	
5	Reputation: wanted stellar criminal, 8-	
15	Social Limitation: Escaped Solar Outlaw (Frequently, Major [character may be detained by law enforcement agencies])	
10	Unluck: 2d6	

**Total Disadvantage Points: 350**

## DIGITAL HERO #9

### A.N.VIL (Masters of Mayhem) (Artificial Nuclear Villain)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
20	CON	20	13-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll: 11-
0	EGO	0	9-	ECV: 0 (Android)
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
20	PD	17		Total: 20 PD (20 rPD)
24	ED	20		Total: 24 ED (24 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
7	REC	0		
0	END	-20		
33	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 106**

Movement:	Running:	6"/12"
	Leaping:	0"/0"
	Swimming:	0"/0"
	Flight:	15"/15"

Cost	Powers	END
60	<i>Weapons Systems:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve	
3u	1) <i>Laser Eyes:</i> EB 12d6; 12 Charges (-1/4), Beam (-1/4), No Knockback (-1/4) [12]	
5u	2) <i>Micro Missiles:</i> RKA 2d6, Penetrating (+1/2), No Range Penalty (+1/2); 12 Boostable Charges (-0), Can Be Missile Deflected (-1/4) [12bc]	
3u	3) <i>Flamethrower:</i> EB 6d6, Area Of Effect (7" Cone; +1); No Range (-1/2), 6 Charges (-3/4) [6]	
17	<i>Jump Jets:</i> Flight 15"; Limited Turn Ratio (Can only change facing on first hex; -1/4), No Noncombat Movement (-1/4), 12 Charges (-1/4) [12]	
22	<i>Metallic Shell:</i> Damage Resistance (20 PD/24 ED) 0	
7	<i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance STR (0 END; +1/2) 0	
6	<i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance Running (0 END; +1/2) 0	
38	<i>Android Body:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Diminished Eating: Does not have to eat at all; Diminished Sleep: Does not have to sleep at all; Safe Environment: Radiation; Immunity: All diseases and poisons) 0	
15	<i>Telescopic Eyes:</i> Telescopic Sense (Sight Group; +10 to PER) 0	
12	<i>Built-In Radio:</i> HRRP (Radio Group) 0	
5	<i>Low Light Filter:</i> Nightvision 0	

#### Talents

- 3 Absolute Range Sense
- 3 Absolute Time Sense
- 5 Eidetic Memory
- 3 Lightning Calculator

#### Skills

- 3 Computer Programming 11-
- 3 Concealment 11-
- 2 KS: Lab Tools 11-
- 2 KS: Maps 11-
- 1 KS: Medical Reference Material 8-
- 2 KS: Phone Books 11-
- 2 KS: Websurfing 11-
- 1 Language: English (Basic Conversation)
- 4 Navigation (Land, Marine, Air) 11-
- 3 Tactics 11-
- 14 TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Construction and Agricultural, Tracked and Wheeled Military, Railed, Small and Large Planes, Helicopters, Combat Aircraft, Small and Large Motorized Boats, Small and Large Military Ships

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 244**

**Total Cost: 350**

#### 200+ Disadvantages

- 10 Dependence: Must Plug into Electrical Source Every 6 Hours or Suffer Weakness and Power Activation 11- (Very Common)
- 15 Distinctive Features: Android (Concealable; Major Reaction)
- 15 Hunted: Forces Of Nature 8- (Mo Pow, Kill)
- 20 Hunted: Law Enforcement Agencies 11- (As Pow, NCI, Kill)
- 20 Physical Limitation: Robotic Body, No Sense of Smell or Taste, Can't Leap, and Can't Swim (All the Time, Greatly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Complete Ignorance of Human Life (Frequently, Greatly)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Completely Obeys Dr. Mayhem (Very Common, Total)
- 20 Vulnerability: 1 1/2x STUN and BODY from Electricity (Common)
- 10 Vulnerability: 1 1/2x STUN and BODY from Magnetics (Uncommon)

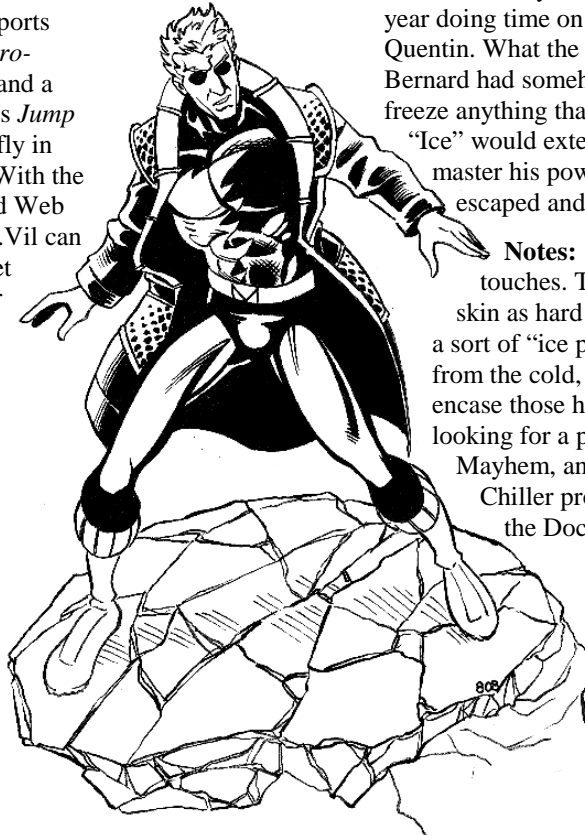
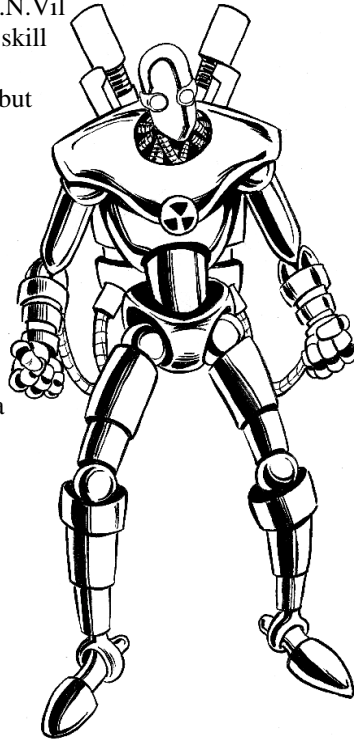
**Total Disadvantage Points: 350**

## A.N.VIL (Masters of Mayhem) (Artificial Nuclear Villain)

**Background:** A.N.Vil was created by Doctor Mayhem. He has been programmed not only to act as a weapons platform, but also as a research assistant, pilot, and driver. A.N.Vil is completely and totally obedient to Doctor Mayhem. When playing the robot, the key thing to remember is that he follows only the last command given by Doctor Mayhem. A.N.Vil can make a Tactics skill roll to use different weapons and such, but the last command remains.

Note that the Doctor has programmed his assistant with one special command. If Doctor Mayhem goes enraged and gets near A.N.Vil, a recorded message plays in a soft female voice, saying, "Please calm down Doctor. Concentrate." If this happens during the session, it should provide some comic relief.

**Notes:** A.N.Vil sports *Laser Eyes*, a *Micro-Missile* launcher, and a *Flamethrower*. His *Jump Jets* allow him to fly in straight patterns. With the *Built-In Radio* and *Web Surfing* skill, A.N.Vil can contact the internet remotely to gather data for Doctor Mayhem.



## Chiller (Masters of Mayhem)

**Background:** Bernard Washington is a lonely, bitter man. He grew up on the wrong side of San Francisco, and has never recovered. His mother was an alcoholic waitress, and his father was a small time hood who got in way over his head and died before he could bond with his son Bernard. As a result, Bernard grew up alone in the streets. In his teen years, Bernard joined up with a hood known as Jimmy Montgomery. At the time, Jimmy was a small-time crook who worked small-time rackets in small-time neighborhoods. As Jimmy progressed through the ranks, Bernard rode his curtails. It was during these early years that Bernard was given the nickname "Ice" by Jimmy. Jimmy liked the way Bernard always stayed calm, even in the most dangerous of situations.

In 2001, when Jimmy and Bernard were supposed to be meeting with a client at an old chemical warehouse, they discovered that they had been set up by the police. As the dragnet closed, Bernard told Jimmy to escape through the basement, and that he would hold the cops upstairs. As Jimmy ran into the basement, Bernard found an old gas canister and attempted to seal the doors. Bernard would never see Jimmy Montgomery again. As the officers entered, they began to exchange gunfire with Bernard. In the chaos, one of the shots hit the canister that was blocking the door, spraying toxic freezing gas over Bernard. He fell unconscious, and awoke weeks later in a secure medical facility. Bernard would spend the next year doing time on a 10-year sentence in San Quentin. What the police did not know was that Bernard had somehow gained the ability to freeze anything that he touched. While in prison, "Ice" would extend his contacts and learn to master his powers. Bernard has recently escaped and taken on the name "Chiller."

**Notes:** Chiller can freeze anything he touches. This allows him to make his skin as hard as ice, form ice under his feet in a sort of "ice pillar," make things brittle from the cold, create sheets of ice, and encase those he touches in icy shells. When looking for a partner, he encountered Doctor Mayhem, and the two are a perfect match.

Chiller provides a cold sober touch to the Doctor's grandiose visions.



## DIGITAL HERO #9

### Chiller (Masters of Mayhem)

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH [2]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
23	CON	26	14-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll: 11-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
8	PD	4		Total: 23 PD (15 rPD)
8	ED	3		Total: 23 ED (15 rED)
6	SPD	27		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
9	REC	0		
48	END	1		
37	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 141**

**Movement:** Running: 9"/18"  
Flight: 18"/18"

**Cost Powers** **END**

- 50 *Ice Attacks:* Multipower, 62-point reserve; Fire or Extreme Heat Restrains/Reduces Effects of Powers (-¼)
- 5u 1) *Bitter Frost:* Drain PD 5d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Fire or Extreme Heat Restrains/Reduces Effects of Powers (-¼) 2
- 3u 2) *Ice Slick:* Change Environment 32" any area, -5 to DEX Rolls, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); No Range (-½), Target Must Be Touching Surface (-¼), Fire or Extreme Heat Restrains/Reduces Effects of Powers (-¼) 2
- 3u 3) *Icy Prison:* Entangle 4d6, 4 DEF, Takes No Damage From Ice-Based Attacks (+¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Vulnerable To Fire (-½), Fire or Extreme Heat Restrains/Reduces Effects of Powers (-¼), No Range (-½) 2
- 22 *Ice Powers:* Elemental Control, 44-point Powers
- 18 1) *Ice Hard Skin:* Force Field (15 PD/15 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Extra Time (Full Phase to Activate; -¼) 0
- 9 2) *Cold Regeneration:* Simplified Healing 2d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Self Only (-½), Only In Freezing Environments (-½), Always On (-½) 0
- 11 3) *Ice Pillar Riding:* Flight 18", Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), No Noncombat Movement (-¼), Restrained (Fire Or Extreme Heat; -¼) 2
- 2 *Resistant To Cold:* Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Cold)

6 *A Bit Faster:* Running +3" (9" total) 1

#### Martial Arts: Dirty Infighting

**Maneuver OCV DCV Notes**

- 4 Backhand +0 +2 10d6 Strike Roundhouse
- 4 Block +2 +2 Block, Abort
- 4 Kidney Blow -2 +0 1d6+1 HKA
- 3 Throw +0 +1 8d6 + v/5; Target Falls
- 16 +4 Damage Classes (already added in)

#### Skills

- 10 +2 with Hand-To-Hand Combat
- 1 AK: Prisons 8-
- 5 Breakfall 15-
- 3 Bribery 13-
- 3 Combat Driving 14-
- 3 Gambling (Dice Games, Poker) 11-
- 3 Interrogation 13-
- 2 KS: Prison Survival 11-
- 3 Power (Ice Tricks) 14-
- 7 Streetwise 15-
- 2 TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles
- 4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms
- 3 Weaponsmith (Firearms, Knives) 11-

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 209**

**Total Cost: 350**

#### 200+ Disadvantages

- 20 DNPC: The Cool Gang (Thugs who hang out with Chiller) 11- (Normal, Useful Skills, Group DNPC x4)
- 10 Hunted: Forces Of Nature 8- (As Pow, Harshly Punish)
- 20 Hunted: Law Enforcement Agencies 11- (Mo Pow, Harshly Punish, NCI)
- 5 Psychological Limitation: Extreme Curmudgeon (Uncommon, Moderate)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful toward Law Enforcement Agencies (Very Common, Moderate)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Vicious Killer (Very Common, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: vicious killer, 14- (Known Only To Law Enforcement Agents)
- 15 Social Limitation: Known Felon (Very Frequently, Major [character may be incarcerated], Not Limiting In Some Groups [other criminals won't care])
- 10 Susceptibility: to extremely hot climates, 2d6 every 20 minutes (Very Common)
- 5 Unluck: 1d6
- 20 Vulnerability: 1½x STUN and BODY from Fire/Heat (Common)

**Total Disadvantage Points: 350**

**Vapor (Masters of Mayhem)**

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH [1]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
23	CON	26	14-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll: 13-
14	EGO	8	12-	ECV: 5
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
16	COM	3	12-	
10	PD	8		Total: 20 PD (10 rPD)
10	ED	5		Total: 20 ED (10 rED)
6	SPD	27		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
7	REC	0		
48	END	1		
27	STUN	0		

**Total Characteristics Cost: 133**

**Movement:** Running: 6"/12"  
Leaping: 2"/4"  
Gliding: 5"/10"

**Cost Powers END**

- 54 *Nerve Gas Powers:* Multipower, 67-point reserve; Can't Be Used in High Winds (-¼)
- 5u 1) *Choking Vapor:* EB 6d6, NND (defense is protected breathing; +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Reduced By Range (-¼), Can't Be Used in High Winds (-¼) 3
- 3u 2) *Noxious Cloud:* EB 2d6, NND (defense is protected breathing; +1), Area Of Effect (7" Cone; +1), Continuous (+1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); No Range (-½), Can't Be Used in High Winds (-¼) **plus** Darkness to Sight Group 2" cone, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); No Range (-½), Can't Be Used in High Winds (-¼) 3
- 4u 3) *Gaseous Form:* Desolidification (affected by powers that affect gas); Cannot Pass through Airtight Areas (-¼), Can't Be Used in High Winds (-¼) **plus** Shrinking (½ meter tall, 1½ kg mass, -4 PER, +4 DCV, +6" Knockback), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Linked (-½), Can't Be Used in High Winds (-¼) 5
- 30 *Wispy Body:* Armor (10 PD/10 ED) 0
- 30 *Attacks Partially Pass Through Body:* Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50% 0
- 3 *Tainted Lungs:* Life Support (Immunity: Nerve Gasses) 0
- 5 *Lighter Than Air:* Gliding 5" 0
- 15 *Sense Movements In Gas Clouds:* Detect Movement In Gas Clouds 13-, Targeting Sense 0

**Skills**

- 10 +1 Overall
- 3 Acrobatics 14-
- 3 Breakfall 14-
- 3 Climbing 14-
- 3 Concealment 13-
- 3 Contortionist 14-
- 1 Criminology 8-
- 2 Forgery (Art Objects) 13-
- 3 High Society 13-
- 3 Language: English (fluent conversation; literate) (Japanese is native)
- 3 Lockpicking 14-
- 3 PS: Art Appraiser 13-
- 3 Scholar
- 2 1) KS: Antiques 13-
- 2 2) KS: Fine Art 13-
- 2 3) KS: Museum Security 13-
- 3 Security Systems 13-
- 3 Seduction 13-
- 3 Shadowing 13-
- 3 Stealth 14-
- 3 Streetwise 13-
- 3 Trading 13-
- 1 TF: Small Motorized Ground Vehicles

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 217**

**Total Cost: 350**

**200+ Disadvantages**

- 20 DNPC: Elderly Butler 8- (Incompetent; Unaware of Character's Career as a Thief)
- 20 Hunted: Law Enforcement Agencies 11- (As Pow, Harsh, NCI)
- 15 Hunted: Forces Of Nature 8- (Mo Pow, Harshly Punish)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Gaslike Body Structure (weighs 25 kg, +3" Knockback) (All the Time, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Reluctant To Kill (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Thrill Seeker (Common, Strong)
- 5 Psychological Limitation: Loves The "Good Life" (Uncommon, Moderate)
- 10 Reputation: master thief, 14- (Known Only To Law Enforcement Agents)
- 5 Rivalry: Professional (Reginold Baxter, known art thief; Rival is As Powerful; Rival Aware of Rivalry)
- 15 Susceptibility: Chemicals that React with Her Nerve Gas Skin, 3d6 damage instantly (Uncommon)
- 15 Vulnerability: 2x STUN and 1½x BODY from Wind Attacks (Uncommon)

**Total Disadvantage Points: 350**

### Vapor (Masters of Mayhem)

**Background:** Fumiko Oyama grew up with a silver spoon in her mouth. Her father owned a large Japanese electronic company, and spoiled her rotten. While Fumiko lived a life of luxury, she grew bored. She began to desire objects of art that could not be so easily bought. It was then that Fumiko decided to train as a thief. Fumiko mused that she would not be a “common” thief but that she would be a master. She used her father’s money and resources to train herself in all forms of security and stealth.

Fumiko’s first job was to steal a large ruby known as the Crimson Iris. The mission went off without a hitch, and even made the front page of a local newspaper. The entire endeavor excited Fumiko. She threw herself into robbery after robbery. Fumiko stole paintings, gems, famous manuscripts, and other priceless antiques from around the world. While traveling around the world, she encountered another infamous English thief known as Reginold Baxter and has since developed a form of professional rivalry with the man.

In one of her robberies, Fumiko decided to steal an ancient Egyptian mummy. After returning home with the loot, she opened the small coffer to examine the skeleton. As she gazed into the lifeless skull of the ancient man, the bones began to smoke! Soon the entire room was covered in a noxious blue vapor. When Fumiko awoke, she found that her skin was partially made of the blue gas and that she could project it in various ways. Fumiko now uses the gift to further her crime sprees.

While Fumiko travels the world, she does so with her father’s butler, Tujiro, who has since become her trusted friend and surrogate father. Tujiro has no idea that Fumiko is a thief, and cares for the girl as if she was his own kin. Fumiko likes it that way, and has grown fond of the old family butler.

**Notes:** Vapor has the ability to project gas from her body and to become gaseous. In its most concentrated form, the blue gas can knock out a man in seconds. Fumiko can sense things that move in the gas just as well as if she could see them.



**SPECIAL THANKS**

In addition to Ray Greer, Ronald M. Green, and Kerry Connell, whose help and influence have been noted in the main article, I would like to thank the original Hero Auxiliary Corps, Keith Hannigan, Marc Blumberg, and Mike Maloney for inspiring the structure and moral dilemma aspects of the event; Sue Grau and the other GMs of Infinite Imaginations, Inc., who have carried on the HAC tradition of great HERO System events and continue to inspire me to this day; past and present incarnations of Hero Games, who have provided prizes for these events; the many GMs and fellow players from the original campaigns which gave birth to many SuperSquad America team members; and finally, all of the players from SuperSquad America events, who have shown me new sides to old characters and who, through their roleplaying and decision making, have influenced the direction of past and future events. All of you have helped make running the SuperSquad America events an entertaining and satisfying experience.



# Playing the Con Game by Rod Currie

## Life as a Convention GM

### Humble Beginnings

Many years ago, at Origins '85 in Baltimore to be precise, I stumbled onto the *Champions* tournament run by the Hero Auxiliary Corps (now Infinite Imaginations, Inc.). My views on convention gaming changed forever. The HAC *Champions* tournament was an annual event using the same team of characters every year, with each year's adventure building on what came before. In short, it was an ongoing campaign with one game session per year.

But the ongoing campaign aspect of the HAC tournament was not the only thing to capture my interest, it was also my introduction to "moral dilemma" *Champions*. That is, each tournament built to the team needing to make a big decision at the end of the second round (which featured the best players from several runs of the first round), usually with various team members falling on different sides of the issue. This often led to entertaining roleplaying. And because I had always been far more interested in roleplaying than in just beating up villains, these events had tremendous appeal to me.

After several years of playing in a variety of HAC events, Ray Greer, one of the original Hero Games partners, began to ask me when I was going to run something. I usually brushed him off with some comment like, "Nah, I have too much fun playing," but in the back of my mind, ideas began to brew.

In 1991, I became involved with a local gaming convention, and decided it was finally time to give this convention GM thing a whirl. Unfortunately, low attendance prevented my game from really coming off, so I put the idea on the back burner.

Finally, at Origins '96, I decided to try again at a major convention where I knew the pool of potential gamers would be greater and the event was successful. That was the first of five different SuperSquad America events I ran at GenCon and/or Origins over the next several years.

Based on the comments of players who have participated in my events, I think I have done a pretty good job, so I thought that some of you out there who are thinking of running a convention game might like to hear about how I put together the team, the world, and their adventures.

### Creating The SuperSquad America Team

Once I decided to run a *Champions* convention game in the Hero Auxiliary Corps style, the first thing I needed was a superhero team to feature. I started with the name: SuperSquad America. I had used the name for an NPC hero team in a couple of my campaigns and had grown fond of it. Plus, it felt right. It clearly indicated that this was a superhero team, likely one of some prominence, since they had taken on a national name, as opposed to calling themselves something like SuperSquad Altoona. It also indicated the five-color (four-color with a touch of gray) feel I was aiming for with the event.

At this point, I also chose to base SuperSquad America in New York City, a city seemingly made for superheroic adventuring. And, again borrowing an idea from one of my campaigns, I would give the team a headquarters in a former Broadway theatre.

Now that I had a name and base of operations for my team, I needed to fill out its roster. To do so, I followed the example of my good friend, Ronald M. Green, who had created a convention superhero team from characters he had played in various campaigns.

Like most *Champions* players, I had played a variety of characters over the years, so I had a good selection from which to choose. However, when it came to putting them together as a team, I looked at four aspects of each character: their powers, their personality, their role in the team, and their potential for looking at issues differently from their teammates. Each character's powers should be somewhat unique on the team, his personality and role on the team should provide good roleplaying hooks, and finally, his differing outlook should serve to intensify any argument surrounding the solution to an adventure's moral dilemma. To accomplish this, I would need to make some changes to each potential member of the team.

**CHALLENGER**

I started with the team leader. For this position, there was really only one choice. I don't usually play leaders in campaigns, but Challenger was the one character I had designed to fill such a role. Challenger was an American patriot, and the son of a great hero of the same name. He wore a battlesuit that enhanced his strength and agility to make up for the fact he had not inherited superpowers from his father.



His patriotism, business-like approach to superheroing, and desire to live up to his father's legacy would make good role-playing hooks for players; And since he was primarily a skilled martial artist, his abilities would be simple enough to manage, without getting in the way of being the team leader.

Challenger was also a wealthy industrialist who ran his own company, which would give the team some access to the upper echelons of American society. He also had a private plane, which, because he had a public identity, could be used to transport the team when needed.

For the SuperSquad America event, I decided the original Challenger had led the first incarnation of SuperSquad America back in the 1960s. This not only provided additional backstory for the event, but also gave the son something else to live up to.

**RICK DAVIES, THE RESILIENT RUBBER-MAN**

Rick was a fun-loving stretching character who liked publicity, loved comic books and science fiction, and grew up admiring superheroes. While the public believed he got his powers by falling into a vat of experimental rubber, in truth, he was the prototype for Project Victory, a top secret government project to build a superhero team. This project had failed drastically when a group of agents from EUREKA (the European Underground Research Establishment for Knowledge Advancement) attacked, killed the project leader, and kidnapped the other subjects to brainwash them into being supervillains.



This was all part of Rick's background in the original campaign in which I played him and dropped nicely without modification into the SuperSquad America world.

One important aspect of Rick, to me, was his search for a surrogate father, since his own had run out on the family when Rick was young. In the original campaign, another Player Character, a retired super spy, had filled this role. For the SuperSquad America version, I made the original Challenger an advisor on Project Victory and had the two develop a pseudo father-son relationship.

As a result, the current Challenger would resent Rick's closeness to his father, and Rick would be overly critical of Challenger when comparing him to the original, resulting in a rivalry between the two. Making Rick SuperSquad America's deputy leader and their differing views on superhero teams would intensify this rivalry and provide conflict, which is always good for interesting roleplaying opportunities.

**SILVER BOW**

Originally created as a Spiderman-Hawkeye mix and later becoming a religious crusader in the original campaign, Silver Bow was a female archer with a swingline and some martial arts.

However, I already had a fun-loving character in Rick, and the religious crusader bit never really worked for me, so I chose to redo her background.

Like Challenger, Silver Bow was always envisioned as a second-generation hero. So, I kept the bit about her father being Silver Archer, a very good normal archer with lots of trick arrows, and made her mother a hero as well – specifically, the martial artist Finesse. To explain why Silver Bow had enhanced strength and agility, I made Finesse a princess from the extra-dimensional magical world of Eyratha where the royal family all had superpowers.

I also created a backstory where the Silver Archer had helped save Eyratha from an evil wizard, and while there, he and the princess fell in love. As a reward, the king granted the archer his daughter's hand in marriage, and a magical bow.

As for her personality, I felt the team needed a gritty, streetwise character, and Silver Bow was a good candidate for that role. To that effect, I decided that she had come home from the university one night to find her parents, who had retired from the superhero business some years before, murdered in their sleep by a thirteen year-old junkie looking for cash. Silver Bow took up the hero game, determined to clean up the streets, torn between this desire and the sense of fair play instilled in her by her parents. I also gave her skills like Streetwise, Persuasion,

**WHAT IF?**

As indicated in this article, the SuperSquad America events are set in their own specific world. However, there is no reason that, with a few changes, these events could not be run in the Champions Universe.

First, SuperSquad America would be one of the premiere teams in the Champions Universe's America, as opposed to clearly being the country's number one team. And, of course, the original Challenger would no longer be the first superhero but merely a prominent one. I would also consider basing the team in another city, perhaps Washington, D.C., because New York City already has both the Justice Squadron and the Sentinels.

Second, the agencies described in this article would be redundant in the Champions Universe. I would probably substitute ARGENT for EUREKA, given that both groups are international in scope and share a technological/scientific basis. Instead of EAGLES, I would use PRIMUS, another American agency set up to deal with superhuman threats. I would have L'Instiut Thoth take the place of OASIS

in the role of super science agency.

Finally, I would replace some of the major SuperSquad America villains with major villains in the Champions Universe. For example, Dr. Destroyer would substitute for DeathGrip. While Destroyer is much more powerful than DeathGrip, both are megalomaniacal villains in powered armor who are considered among the most dangerous threats in their respective universes. Similarly, Teleios, the Perfect Man could easily replace Dr. DNA in the role of evil genetic scientist.

Conversation, and Interrogation that would be useful in accomplishing her goals, and gave her Dirty Fighting as her Martial Arts package.

Finally, since both she and Challenger were children of heroes, I made her parents teammates of the original Challenger, and she and the current Challenger old friends, who had even tried dating at one point in the past. This gave me a character who again had good solid roleplaying hooks, and a slightly different approach to the superhero business.

### CRIMSON FIST

Crimson Fist was my character in a short *Golden Age Champions* campaign. His primary ability was to manifest a field of glowing crimson energy around himself. This field protected him, allowed him to fly, and could be projected in the form of a large crimson fist. In adding him to SuperSquad America, I upgraded his powers so that he could project the crimson energy in a variety of shapes besides just a fist, and made his powers innate rather than focused in a mystical amulet.



His origin as a golden age character had dealt with him finding the amulet on an archaeological dig in Egypt, but that story no longer seemed appropriate. Because Crimson Fist was likely to be the flashiest and one of the most powerful heroes on the team, I thought it would be interesting to make him a reluctant hero who had had his powers thrust upon on him.

Thus, his new origin became that he and a friend were kidnapped by the villainous Dr. DNA, who gave them both crimson energy powers and brainwashed them into working for him. On their first outing, his friend Donna broke free of the brainwashing, and turned on the doctor, who killed her. Seeing his friend die, Crimson Fist's anger broke through the brainwashing and he managed to apprehend Dr. DNA.

Cursed with these unwanted powers, he felt he had no choice but to be a superhero, even though he was not totally secure in that role, often using sarcastic wisecracks to cover his insecurities. Being an ordinary guy who was not comfortable as a hero, he too would have a unique point of view.

### FORETHOUGHT

Forethought was a telepath who gets her name from the precognitive flashes she gets of dangerous things about to happen (*i.e.*, Danger Sense). Because Forethought's origin in her original campaign had involved her powers being triggered when she was raped, I gave serious thought to changing it to avoid offending players. However, my event was intended for mature roleplayers, so I decided to take the risk and leave it unchanged.

Personality-wise, the rape had left her shy, slightly withdrawn, and distrustful of men. Also, the triggering of her powers had put her assailant into a coma for several months, and made her worried about misusing her powers. This would make her a challenging character to roleplay, and an even more challenging character for me to judge because of her low-key nature.

Also, with such a tragic background, she would likely empathize with others in such a situation, something her teammates may or may not be able to do.



### DYNAMO

I chose Dynamo for the team because of his unusual powers. While on the surface, he simply had electrical powers (a force field, an energy blast, and the ability to travel through electrical wires), in truth, he was also a cyberkinetic who could sense and control electrical and electronic equipment.

As for his personality, Dynamo worried about misusing his cyberkinetic abilities, meaning he would be unlikely to walk up to a banking machine and empty it of cash unless it was for a very good reason. He was also cocky about his ability as a computer programmer (even without using his powers) and a bit of a wisecracker. Finally, because I felt the character needed something extra and the original scenario I planned for the local convention dealt with AIDS, I decided to make Dynamo gay and in the closet. I figured this would give him a strong opinion on that issue and would color how he saw other situations. Again, because I was aiming for mature players, I felt comfortable with including a homosexual character.



WHIZ KID

Whiz Kid was a teenaged speedster whose mind worked just as fast as his feet. He was just sixteen years old and already had a Ph.D. in physics. Originally, I had played in a mini-campaign where he had been an orphan being raised by his grandmother. For SuperSquad America, I changed his background and had him raised by his single mother. As I thought about his mother, Dianne Armstrong, she seemed a good choice to be the team's administrative assistant, a position she would have taken to keep an eye on her teenaged son.

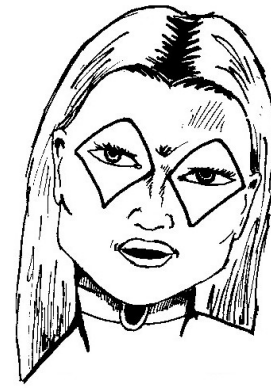


Because his brain worked much faster than most people's, Whiz Kid hated not doing anything, and liked to keep busy at all times. As well, he usually could not resist an intellectual challenge, and despite his name, which he felt was clever, he hated being treated as anything but an adult.

While Whiz Kid did not do as much pure damage as many of the other SuperSquad members, his speed and intelligence would make him valuable in a support role, and would let him attempt tasks the others would not even consider. Finally, the difference in age and intelligence would cause him to view the world differently.

FRICITION LASS

When it came to choosing the eighth and final member of SuperSquad America, I had three main possibilities from which to choose. I considered Professor Plasma, but his powers were too similar to Crimson Fist's for my liking. Gauntlet, another candidate, was a brick in powered armor. And while the team lacked a truly strong character, both Rick and Crimson Fist (with his Telekinesis) were fairly strong and could absorb fair amounts of damage, and I already had one character in a battle suit. So, Gauntlet, too, did not make the cut.



That left Friction Lass. While Rick Davies the Resilient Rubber-Man already filled the silly name niche, Friction Lass did have other things to recommend her. Her name not only accurately described her ability to control friction and air resistance, but it also described the effect she created when she was with others. Basically, she was gorgeous and she knew it, and loved using her looks to manipulate men. She was happiest when she was the center of attention, getting her own way. Putting her on the team would create a lot of "friction" – especially with her female teammates – and on any issue, Friction Lass would undoubtedly choose the side that benefited her the most.

STATS POWERS & SKILLS DISADS HISTORY RELATIONS WITH TEAM

Silver Bow (Kelly Quinn)

COMBAT STATS

PERSONAL DATA

TOTALS

MANEUVERS

Silver Bow (History)

Silver Bow (Reactions)

61

a SuperSquad America character sheet

## FINALIZING THE CHARACTERS

Once I had decided on the team's lineup, I began to look in more detail at how the characters would fit together. Silver Bow became a pseudo-big-sister and protector to Forethought; Forethought and Crimson Fist were given a mutual attraction to each other, but both were afraid, for their own reasons, to act on it; Whiz Kid was given a crush on the older Friction Lass; Friction Lass' publisher father was made the owner of the magazine Silver Bow worked for in her secret identity; and so on.

To make these relationships between characters clear to the players, I added a section to each character sheet describing how the character felt about each of the others (and Dianne, their administrative assistant). For example, Silver Bow's sheet noted how she felt Friction Lass was setting the cause of women back thirty years ago with her skimpy costume, her shop-till-you-drop attitude, and the shameless way she threw herself at men; while Challenger's sheet noted that he felt Rick Davies the Resilient Rubber-Man was a dumb name for a hero.

I also fleshed out other pieces of basic personal information about each hero, such as date and place of birth, hair and eye color, and height and weight. Knowing the information I wanted on each sheet, I set out to design the actual character sheets. After a few attempts, I decided to use a standard 8½" by 11" piece of paper turned sideways. One side would contain the standard character sheet information, along with the basic personal information, while the other side would contain the character's backstory along with his opinions of his teammates.

As I prepared for the fourth year of SuperSquad America, I decided that it would be a nice extra for players in the tournament to see what the characters looked like. As a result, I commissioned an artist, my fellow Infinite Imaginations Inc. GM Kerry Connell, to create drawings of each of the team members. So, from the fourth year on, each player had a cardboard stand-up in front of them with their character's portrait, along with both their superhero and civilian names. This provided not only a visual for each character, but also made it easy for everyone, including me, to remember who was playing which character.

## Creating The World Of SuperSquad America

When I was writing the backgrounds of the characters, I had made certain decisions about the world in which SuperSquad America existed. For example, every member of the team was hunted by DeathGrip, a supervillain in power armor who, like most such villains, had his sights set on conquering the world. In addition, various backgrounds had mentioned the organizations EUREKA, EAGLES, and OASIS. These were all organizations I had used in other campaigns and dropped into the SuperSquad universe.

EUREKA, as mentioned earlier, was the European Underground Research Establishment for Knowledge Advancement. It was a collection of European scientists who had turned their talents toward evil, and were primarily interested in the acquisition of knowledge and technology.

Working for EUREKA was the supervillain team Victory. Victory was the superpowered subjects created by Project Victory, kidnapped by EUREKA, and brainwashed into being villains.

EAGLES was the Elite American Group for Law Enforcement and Security, an American agency created to deal with superpowered threats. While EAGLES had no superheroes on its payroll, it did have well-equipped agents, and maintained strong relations with established heroes. It also maintained a database of villains and heroes for the PCs to draw on.

OASIS was the Office of American Scientific Investigative Studies, a government sponsored laboratory. Both Rick and Whiz Kid were scientists as well as superheroes, so this would be a good place for them to work. I also chose to make OASIS and EAGLES jointly responsible for Project Victory, the project that gave Rick his superpowers.

As I sat down to create the SuperSquad America scenario for Origins '96, this was all I knew about the world the heroes lived in; however, in most cases, as I created each year's scenario, a little more was added.

In the first year, the adventure dealt with the life and death of Steven Kennedy, the original Challenger, so I worked out his backstory. He was the world's first superhero who had been labeled by President John F. Kennedy (no relation) as "a hero to meet the challenge of the new frontier." I also detailed the history of the original SuperSquad America and its members. And finally, because, the adventure would take the team to my native Canada, I outlined the Canadian national superhero team, the Peacekeepers.



Because the second year's adventure dealt with EUREKA employing the process that was used to create Rick Davies the Resilient Rubber-Man, but this time to kill superheroes, I created additional information on both Project Victory and the process itself. Also, the nature of the plot forced me to outline several other heroes, villains, and teams residing in the SuperSquad universe.

Year three centered around a mystical occurrence mentioned in the first adventure, and forced to me examine at least part of the cosmology and mysticism of the universe. This examination continued when I created the fourth year's adventure, which was an outgrowth of the events of the third year. That year also took the characters to Eyratha, the extra-dimensional homeworld of Silver Bow's mother.

For the first time, the creation of the fifth year's adventure did not involve any significant additions to the world, although I am certain as I continue creating new adventures for this team, the world will continue to grow and evolve.

### Creating A SuperSquad America Scenario

From the beginning, I knew that I wanted SuperSquad America to be a dynamic team that would grow and change with time, and that such changes should be brought about by the decisions made by the players portraying the characters. Also, I wanted the adventures of SuperSquad America to be unique to that team, and not just be generic superhero adventures that could be handled by any generic superteam.

As a result, the first thing I look at when creating each year's event is the logical consequences of the previous year's adventure. If I ran the previous year's event only once, then the results of that final round make up the official history. If I ran it more than once (for example, at both Origins and GenCon), I create an official history based on an amalgamation of the final rounds. In some cases, the choices made may immediately give me an idea for the next adventure.

For example, in the third year, Dynamo chose to become the new Earth Template, a being whose own tone and nature sets the general tone and nature for life on Earth (and its related dimensions). What effect would this choice have on the world? Well, as a cyberkinetic, Dynamo had a highly technological bent and thus, with him as Template, the delicate balance between magic and technology would be tipped towards technology. This would cause problems on both Earth and the magic-based extra-dimensional homeworld of Silver Bow's mother, Eyratha. With this simple starting point, I had the basis for the fourth year's adventure.

Another starting point that I have used for SuperSquad America adventures is the characters' histories. For example, the first year's adventure dealt with the death of the original Challenger and involved Dr. DNA, the villain who gave Crimson Fist his powers. And in the second year, I used EUREKA's theft of the process that created Rick Davies as the basis for the adventure.

Once I have the basic idea for the year's adventure, it's time to work out the details. My first step is to usually determine the big question that will end the second round. As described earlier, this should be an important question that will ideally divide the team on how to answer it. Once I know my ending, I can create the rest of the scenario leading up to it.

Because I run the SuperSquad America events by myself, I do not need to create an elaborate write-up of the adventure, but can instead get by with a brief plot outline, character sheets for the villains involved, and a solid understanding of what is going on. This lets me be more spontaneous when I am running the adventure and tailor it more to the actions of each group of players.

A typical SuperSquad America adventure has a fairly simple structure. The first round is usually structured something like this:

- Introductory Phase
- Intrusion Phase
- Investigation Phase
- Confrontation Phase

Generally, the Introductory Phase has the team doing something fairly mundane: attending a party, visiting a dying hero in the hospital, doing a TV interview, etc. This allows the players to briefly explore their characters' personalities and relationships, and in the case of something like a TV interview, actually answer questions in character.

The Intrusion Phase is where the actual adventure intrudes. This could be an attack by villains, an unusual event occurring, or an NPC informing the team of something going on. This is often where the first combat of the adventure occurs. Such a combat is usually designed to be short and quick and if necessary, in play, can be stopped once the outcome is fairly obvious. For this and all combats, I usually prepare a Combat Record Sheet (similar to the one in the *HERO System Resource Kit*) showing all of the possible participants, along with the SPD, DEX, and other relevant combat information for each. With the combatants listed in descending DEX order and each one's phases marked off, this sheet makes it very easy to tell whose turn it is to act next, and we can proceed through the combat quickly.

If the adventure did not begin with an interview of some type, I will usually insert an encounter with an inquisitive press here. Whether it occurs here or earlier, these questioning scenes serve not only to get the players thinking and speaking in character, but also, through the questions asked by the press, let me introduce possible themes that I feel are important to the adventure. That's why, despite my tendency to go with a fairly brief outline, I normally fully script out the questions that are to be asked, so I can cover the themes I want to introduce, and also ensure that I have questions for everyone on the team.

The Investigation Phase is usually fairly freeform as the characters are given a chance to use their individual abilities to discover more about what is going on. For this phase, I simply prepare a list of possible information sources and what information they have. Usually, a piece of information is available from more than one source, but if it is only available from a single source, I usually have multiple ways for the characters to get to that source. If the players ever seem to be stuck on how to proceed, I use Deduction Rolls (or other skill rolls) to point them in the right direction, or have an NPC (such as Challenger's contact, Major Jeffery Knox, the head of EAGLES) provide them with a key clue to get them moving again. This phase of the adventure is also a good place to introduce some colorful NPCs that the players can have fun interacting with.

Once the characters have learned enough about what's going, it's time for the Confrontation Phase. Normally, this will take place in a location that the characters have been led to by the information acquired during the Investigation Phase, and brings SuperSquad face-to-face with either the major villain of the adventure, or his agents. Inevitably, this leads to a combat. This combat usually sets up the cliffhanger ending for the first round. For example, it might be a one-sided affair that leaves SuperSquad America in the clutches of the major villain, or it might result in the revelation of a key piece of information, or it might simply force the team to take certain actions. In any event, this combat and its immediate aftermath should leave the players wanting to know what happens next, and encourage the players chosen for advancement to come back for the second round.

While I often use this structure for creating my first rounds, it is not written in stone, and other than ending the round on an interesting cliffhanger, I feel no obligation to use it for all SuperSquad adventures. However, in general, I like the first round to be standard *Champions* with an emphasis on combat and investigation, but with some good opportunities for roleplaying.

The second round, however, is a completely different ballgame. With any luck, the players who advance to that round are all good, if not great, roleplayers. For that reason, I usually, but not always, make the second round much more roleplaying-intensive. Generally, I will very loosely plot the round starting with a resolution to the round one cliffhanger and ending with the big moral dilemma that I have built the event around. This loose plot usually leaves room for significant input by the players into what happens. For example, in year four, when the characters visited the Forest of Futures in the extradimensional realm of Eyratha, each player got to create the vision of a likely future his character saw.

Once I have created the adventure, I update the character sheets for the team. I usually give each character about 10 or 15 experience points to represent what they have earned since the last adventure. I also occasionally modify the Disadvantages lists to more accurately reflect the character's current state. Such changes are often related to what has happened in the previous adventure, but I also like to extrapolate on what else has happened to the characters since then and include that in my updates. Often, this involves advancing or creating sub-plots that deal with the character's personal life. Once the main character sheet has been updated for a character, I then update the history and character reaction sections of the character sheets to also reflect these changes. In addition, during this updating, I look for places where I can emphasize personality traits and opinions that are likely to be key in that year's adventure.

Finally, I update the world history handout that summarizes the previous years' adventures, so that new players can get a glimpse of what has gone before. Then, with the creative work done, I print off the adventure and the character sheets (enough for all runs including the final, plus some extras just in case) and I am ready to go.

## Final Thoughts

So, there you have it. That's how I put together my SuperSquad America convention events. This, of course, is not the only way to put together such an event. There are probably almost as many ways of running convention games as there are convention GMs. Find a style that works for you and use it.

