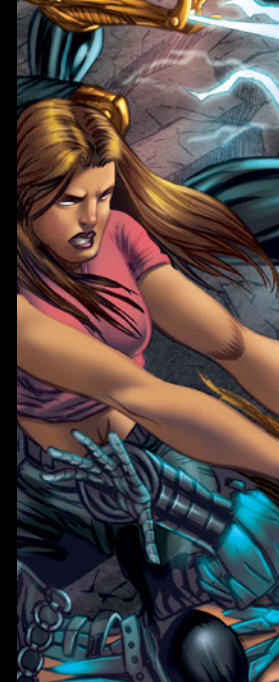
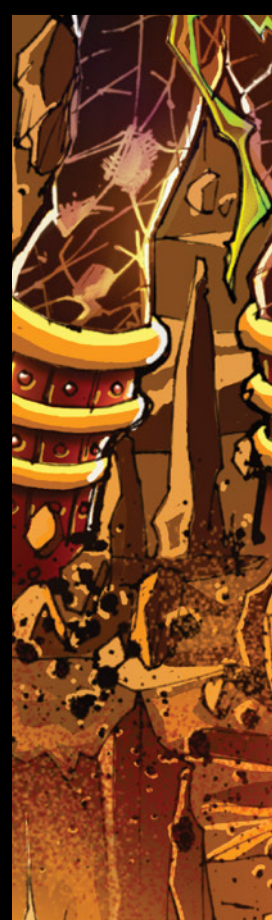
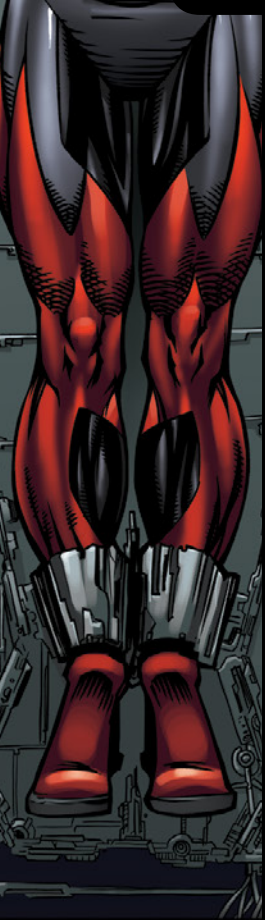


EMERALD CITY KNIGHTS

A MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS
ADVENTURE SERIES





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PROLOGUE: THE SILVER STORM

Welcome to Emerald City! *Emerald City Knights* is an adventure series designed for six to eight MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS heroes in the power level 8 to 10 range. It can accommodate a power level 12 hero as part of the group, but any more such powerful do-gooders are going to require the Gamemaster to ratchet up the opposition, either in numbers, power level, or both to provide a diverting enough challenge to the heroes.

This adventure is set in Emerald City in the present day, six months prior to how the setting appears in the *Player's Guide to Emerald City* and the *Secrets of Emerald City*. It can be used with other settings with minor changes.

The adventure contains everything you need to run it using just the MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS *Hero's Handbook*. Players intending to participate in this adventure should read no further. The rest of the text is for the Gamemaster only!

WELCOME TO THE BOOMTOWN

Its founders dubbed Emerald City “the City of Destiny,” because for them it was the last stop on the continent’s edge. With nothing but the deep blue sea beyond, a man had no choice but to meet his fate there—whatever it was. Even in the present age of supersonic jets and a shrinking globe, Emerald City remains the last stop for most who journey there, both for reasons joyous and tragic. Now, it’s the heroes’ turn to come face to face with their destiny.

IN THE CITY

Emerald City is located in the Pacific Northwest of the United States near the Atlas Mountain range, a quiet, humble neighbor of Seattle, Tacoma, and Portland. Founded on Malory Bay, it’s been best-known to fishermen (by trade and by hobby) and lumberjacks through most of its history.

The anglers and all others who venture there find a cosmopolitan place, befitting a gateway to the Far East, including a large, old, and influential Asian population who sought refuge from other, increasingly exclusionary, areas of the Pacific Northwest during the late 1800s. A century later, Emerald City is still graced by a large Eastern District and a “Jadetown” area sizable enough to rival San Francisco’s Chinatown.

Today, first-time visitors are greeted by twin giants: one a monument of God’s creation, and the other of man’s. The dormant volcanic peak of Mount Stanley has framed the city skyline from the start, and in 1968 was joined by the Emerald Tower, looming impressively towards the heavens (check out the cover of the *M&M Hero's Handbook* for a shot of the Tower).

In the last two decades, Emerald City has grown almost exponentially, becoming a true boomtown. The city proper

is quite large, surrounded by a number of expanding suburbs and bedroom communities. Driving this growth was the establishment of MarsTech, Inc. (MSTI on the New York Stock Exchange) by the flamboyant plutocrat and techno-wizard Maximilian Mars. As MarsTech and other high-tech companies flourished, so did Emerald City, transforming the once-sleepy burgh into a leading center for the computer industry and other high-technology businesses.

GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Nothing marks Emerald City newcomers more than making a Munchkin joke in public. They think it’s clever, but to longtime residents (and in truth) they’re just being punch-ably obvious and annoying. It’s all an understandable offshoot of the city’s 70-year-long love/hate relationship with *The Wizard of Oz*. There are many businesses and organizations that work overtime to avoid any association with the classic stories and legendary film, while others embrace the eponymous association wholeheartedly.

Those who revel in the city’s L. Frank Baum connection with the enthusiasm of flying monkeys successfully lobbied to have the open-air walking mall in the downtown shopping district dubbed the Yellow Brick Row. There, the street is indeed bricked just as advertised, duly painted yellow every year on the official birthday of the city, August 27th.

A map of the Yellow Brick Road area can be found on page 12 of the *Secrets of Emerald City* book.

A GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND

For years, things in Emerald City were stable, dependable. Sure, times were tough when the lumber and paper industries took a hit, and again when fishing and farming suffered, but they got better when the tech boom arrived, and companies like MarsTech, USNet, and Brande Management brought new jobs and new opportunities. Rapid development brought its own growing pains but, still, Emerald City didn’t have alien armadas filling the sky, or mad gods trying to turn it into a Hell on Earth.

Unlike Freedom City, Emerald has never had more than a few scattered costumed champions over the years, and none that stuck around long enough to make much of an impact. To most local residents, it’s just one of those things—like how the city’s never been able to attract an NBA franchise. When it comes to capes, however, the truth is far more sinister than David Stern considering Emerald “too small market.”

Emerald’s skies were free of flying figures, but also of aerial battles. There were a few costumed types now and again, but not so you would really notice. Things were stable... until the Silver Storm.

“With the metallic clouds rushing out and those weird bolts of blue-white lightning and that howling wind, it was like some kind of silver storm.”

—DANIEL KWAN, EMERALD CITY RESIDENT, INTERVIEWED LIVE ON KLST-TV

CHANGES

The “Silver Storm” explosion tears Emerald City’s facade of normalcy and unleashes a flood of dangerous super-criminals and monsters. This one incident upsets the delicate balance and changes everything.

The heroes begin writing their own chapter in Emerald City history on an otherwise pleasant day. There’s enough sunshine to make most anyone glad to be alive, and seemingly all of Emerald City has ventured outside to take advantage of it. Every downtown street is lined with people out roller-blading, walking their dogs, people-watching at sidewalk cafes, or doing a little shopping.

Bargain-hunters are preeminently drawn to Yellow Brick Row, and most local merchants have sidewalk sales set up to greet them. Food and beverage carts aren’t hard to find, and city newcomers are bound to notice the Row’s restaurants offer cuisine with an Asian flair. There are plenty of burgers and fries to be had, but just as many good spots to grab some pad Thai, teriyaki, and other Eastern delicacies.

Before any of the characters can sit down and grab their chopsticks, however, the deafening sound of trouble interrupts their good times. Time to go looking for a phone booth!

GETTING THE HEROES INVOLVED

Potentially the most work for the Gamemaster lies in getting previously unacquainted heroes together at the scene of the action. Depending on the players character concepts, their alter egos might be shopping, dining, or working in a building in or near the disturbance. Heroes on the move might be driving, walking, biking, or riding a bus close to the area.

Plugged-in, media savvy types almost certainly hear about the disturbance on TV, radio, or internet news sites. Sociable types (especially those with the Relationship complication) receive chat windows and phone calls from friends or loved ones near the explosion (landlines only, though—the area cell phone and wireless networks go down within minutes). And of course, any superhero actually doing something like patrolling the streets or skies of Emerald City notices something’s amiss, as does any character with an applicable danger sense or super-awareness.

A Gamemaster’s key consideration is to orchestrate events so all the characters are within a reasonable distance of the disturbance, but not smack dab in the thick of things. For reasons soon apparent, it’s vital the characters *aren’t* at ground zero when all heck first breaks loose. The only exception is for any heroes who aren’t yet super. More on them in a bit, but suffice to say they’re about to *be* super, and thus get a front-row seat for this chapter’s big happening.

Once the characters’ Convenient to the Next Scene locations are established, Gamemaster, read the following aloud to the players:

The loud, heart-stopping sounds of an explosion and shattering glass along with the accompanying shock strike you all without warning. Within moments, a strange cloud of silvery mist blankets the surrounding area. Just as panic and flight are about to take hold, the cloud begins to swirl without any evident prompting from the wind. It whips itself into a cyclonic mass, discharging what appear to be bolts of bluish lightning both within itself and outward around its immediate vicinity.

Both blast and bolts subside and begin to dissipate before anyone (yourselves included) can arrive on the scene, leaving the dead and injured as the most immediate concern. The fleeing, panicked crowds and hopelessly jammed roads make you all the only first-responders available for the critically injured now.

This interval allows the characters to band together and establish themselves as bonafide heroes—no small consideration, since they are most likely unknown to each other and the rest of the world. It also pauses the action long enough for any stragglers to reach the scene (with plenty of time to spare for them to show off their do-gooding skills as well).

BEGINNINGS

At the Gamemaster’s whim, any pre-super characters can be fortuitously positioned and get a closer gaze at what caused the Storm. *Much* closer. While what they see is of no immediate use, it offers some useful clues in the latter chapters.

A small panel truck marked “Redshift Energies” explodes just as it passes through downtown at the height of weekend shopping hours. The Silver Storm cloud emanates from the truck wreckage, and the Storm itself begins soon after.

The brand new heroes at ground zero are the first to note the Storm’s terrible toll. Their exposure to the Silver Storm transformed them and grants them powers and abilities beyond those of ordinary people. Unfortunately, the storm also injures many others with violent energy discharges, to say nothing of the collateral damage to buildings, vehicles, and infrastructure. Additionally, new player character heroes are not the only ones affected by the Silver Storm’s strange transformative properties. Far from it, in fact.

Whenever they arrive, the heroes should be allowed to deal with the aftereffects of “the Silver Storm” (as witnesses and the media are soon calling it) as they see fit. Be prepared to roleplay plenty of very surprised and grateful people while the heroes make their big heroic debut—or cast a deadly stare at them if they’re just lazily sitting around on their be-caped butts. No matter what, the heroes only have a few moments to help the people in the area, because a new crop of super-types, just gained their powers and they’re on a rampage.

SCENE 1: RIDERS ON THE STORM

Scene Type: *Combat*

Once the heroes have done their bit for disaster relief and the newly minted supers have decided on a battle cry, the real threat emerges. Some of those who transformed—the media christen them “stormers”—begin to react to their radically altered condition and start to run rampant.

A group of stormers gone berserk start tearing up downtown and generally causing chaos. Thus, finding them is no trouble, and once that’s done it’s equally obvious the day’s strange goings-on are getting stranger. While two of the stormers are just being their usual rotten selves, most of the putative bad guys aren’t really in control. Instead, they seem to have suffered complete mental breakdowns, almost like they’re sleepwalking or in shock.

As the rampaging stormers are all beyond reason, a big fight scene is pretty much inevitable.

PLAYING THE STORMERS

The following sections offer some tips on running this scenario’s particular antagonists.

LIGHTSHOW

His best use in the battle is as the Gamemaster’s tactical wild card. While his Laser Blasts can do some damage in the event he’s attacked head-on, Lightshow is better kept on the edge of the skirmish, using Holograms to trick and frustrate any hero who’s doing a little too well in the battle. One particularly reprehensible option for his Illusion effect is to create false images of innocent bystanders in distress (DC 18 Insight skill check to see through the ruse). Even after a hero suspects he’s being duped, can he *really* take the chance of ignoring the possibly false image and leaving a civilian to die? And when they do fall for the ruse, you should make sure you’ve got another villain standing by to ensure no good deed goes unpunished, but award the player a hero point for taking the leap of faith.

OCTAMAN

Slightly outmatched by a typical PL10 hero in hand-to-tentacle combat, Octaman can present more of a challenge if he grabs a hostage or three before entering the fight. Octaman’s Fast Grab advantage allows him to attack and grab with one action (d20 + 8 vs. the bystanders’ Strength/

Dodge 0; two degrees of success and they’re bound and helpless—his Improved Hold advantage makes Escape impossible for them). With his Elongation, he can snatch up bystanders from quite some distance away; surprising the good guys. Describing a trio of innocent people helplessly squirming within his suckered appendages can drive home the point that it’s better to be clever than fierce. This also emphasizes Octaman’s other asset: he looks freaky as heck. Seriously, he’s frickin’ creepy—use that (with his Intimidation Skill and Startle advantage: d20 +9 vs. Insight, Intimidation, or Will defense).

THE MONGOOSE

She can hold her own in a slugfest, and used well may give the heroes an unexpected challenge. Her Jumping power and Stealth skill allow her to exit any fight she’s losing, then lie in wait somewhere in the urban jungle to surprise strike any pursuers when the odds are more in her favor (d20 +11 vs. a hero’s Perception skill to pull this off).

LORD ETHERIC

Since Lord Etheric already fancies himself a super-villain, his focus is on making his mark by taking down the heroes. His Flight and Psychic Blast powers enable him to stay out of reach and hurt many otherwise nigh-invulnerable heroes. He’s also one of the few stormers who is his own master, and thus may spring an appropriately faux Goth-y creation with his Manifestation power on the heroes. Trapping them inside an etheric construct (like an ebon teardrop) requires a d20 +1 attack check vs. the target’s Dodge, who may then break out of the Toughness 8 trap as they may. Lord Etheric is also intended to be the most fun villain to take down, so make sure to ratchet up the petulance and pretension when speaking in character. It’ll make it that much more fun for the heroes to beat the snot out of him.

DEATH MAGNETIC

She’s got all her wits about her, and has turned them all over to her dark side. While the heroes probably beat her in her debut appearance, to paraphrase America’s greatest living actor, she’ll be back. Impressing that on the players is a nice bit of foreshadowing that in Emerald City, nothing will ever be the same again. Thus, you should include at least one moment that showcases her sheer power—dropping a few tons of metallic wreckage on an unlucky hero, for instance. This requires a d20 +8 attack check vs. the target’s Dodge, with a Damage 10 effect as the price of failure.

WHAT’S YOUR NAME?

We’ve tagged each of the featured stormers in this chapter with a supervillain handle for convenience’s sake. Given that all the baddies just developed their superhuman abilities, it’s possible the heroes come up with alternate monikers for them, and they may well stick if the heroes reach the media and broadcast the bad-guy handles they’ve devised before the costumed heels themselves do.



Lightshow, Octaman, and the Mongoose are (for varying reasons) uncommunicative and unsocial during their debuts, and thus may become better-known as whatever the heroes choose to call them. Lord Etheric has used that handle since he first got on the Internet, and is guaranteed to develop an annoying, petulant grudge against any hero attempting to rename him. Being the most powerful of the lot and the keenest on establishing her supervillain rep, Death Magnetic dramatically announces her newly chosen codename enough during the battle it's almost certain to remain her *nom du crime*.

THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE

If the Gamemaster wants to use the stormers later in on in his Emerald City-based series (they make a nice callback, if nothing else), here's a brief rundown on what most likely lies ahead for each of them.

- Of all the stormers, Death Magnetic's by far the Most Likely to Succeed in super-villainy. She has the ambition, power, and malice to become a recurring menace to the hero team. Octaman, destined to be a super-villain pawn, is a leading candidate to be one of her hired thugs. You can find out more about Death Magnetic in the *Threat Report* sourcebook.
- The Mongoose could go that route as well, becoming an assassin-for-fun to satiate her bloodlust. Alternately, she could try to conquer her bestial urges—perhaps with the help of a player character, for whom she could become a Complication.
- Lord Etheric works well as the heroes' continuing joke villain; a quick, satisfying punch-out for the player characters in the midst of dealing with more credible

foes. However, he's as ripe for a later, grimmer and grittier re-invention as any other formerly comic foil.

- Lightshow is likely to dedicate his newfound gifts to hooking up with the next Laser Floyd tour. He may be of help to the players later on once they begin to investigate the causes of the Silver Storm. Any reasonably friendly gesture towards him is enough to secure his cooperation—Lightshow's a cool, easy-going dude that way.

OUTCOME

Given their power levels and superior numbers (by design), the heroes should either defeat all of the stormers, or beat most of them and force the others to flee. In the aftermath, the heroes are greeted by the cheers of people emerging from under cover and the police and other emergency services thank them for their timely intervention. The heroes are welcome to stick around and help with the cleanup if they're so disposed. Hey, nobody said a superhero's life was all glitz and glamour.

As they grab their super-brooms and mega-dustpans, the heroes witness the Emerald City Police and FEMA agents dealing with tangled traffic caused by the accident itself and people coming to see what happened. The new heroes in town are quickly surrounded by curious onlookers on foot, riding bikes, staring from cars and trucks, and even a dark-windowed limousine gliding around the scene.

At most, the characters only note the limo's inexplicably ominous nature. Unbeknownst to them, inside is E.C. tech magnate Maximilian Mars, come to study the aftermath of the Storm firsthand for reasons known only to himself. For now.

CHAPTER 1: PICKING UP THE PIECES

With the last of the berserk stormers defeated or in retreat, the heroes have a number of options. As always, there's no telling for sure what the players are going to do, but this section provides some guidelines for the most likely possibilities. If they go beyond the scope of what's provided, feel free to mix and match these scenes, or wing it entirely, as the proper plot progression necessitates.

SCENE 1: WE CAN BE HEROES

Scene Type: Challenge

Of the most obvious and critical concern are the innocent people in need of rescue, injured, or trapped by falling debris from the berserk stormers' rampage (and the heroes' fight with them). Only those driven by Complications or with absolutely no clue of what being a hero actually means are ever going to bail on these sort of tasks, so here are some guidelines on how to handle the player characters' efforts to lend aid and succor.

COMFORTABLE WORDS

Deeds normally count more than just talk, but when words can calm a panic and get the many rubbernecks to disperse peacefully, speeches are worthwhile. If the heroes have demonstrated good, noble conduct thus far, they face Indifferent crowds that depart once they're sweet-talked up to Favorable or better via the normal DC 15 Persuasion check. Characters Behaving Badly thus far in the adventure (your typical '90s-refugee antihero, for instance) can use Intimidation instead, treating the bystanders (Will defense 0) like minions. This isn't exactly the best public relations move, but it does clear the scene as needed.

THE WEIGHT

Some downtown buildings and walls proved not to be up to super-fight code and collapsed, burying many innocents alive. A few victims are easily found and uncovered, but most require some searching and heavy lifting before being rescued. At the extremis, the most deeply entombed victims require a DC 20 Perception check to locate, and enough Strength to lift 10 ranks of weight or greater to budge the biggest chunks of debris off the helpless, trapped people underneath. If the heroes are a little on the shrimpy side and fall short of these numbers (even with a Team Check and/or Extra Effort), remind them there are still plenty of other victims that can be rescued with lower Strength ranks.

EMERGENCY!

As outlined above, simply locating the trapped victims is a crucial first step towards getting the necessary heavy-

lifting equipment where it's needed. In addition to being extra sets of eyes and ears, characters who answered that Charles Atlas ad can help clear a path through the rubble and into the troubled areas for the emergency services vehicles. As above, an effective lifting of Strength 10 or greater overcomes any obstacles. An effective lifting Strength 12, however, allows a hero to make a truly spectacular Emerald City debut by simply lifting the emergency vehicles themselves and carrying them over the debris to where they need to be! You can bet that image will be on the front page of *The Emerald City Courier-Express* tomorrow, and go viral on the net within minutes of the actual feat. Heroes with Damage effects may also be able to clear away debris with sufficiently precise use: a DC 15 attack check against the Toughness 8 rubble manages to clear a path without making the situation any worse, but two or more degrees of failure on the attack check might cause another collapse, inflicting Damage 8 on the hero and anyone else nearby.

YOU MAKE ME FEEL BRAND NEW

Characters with Healing effects can be of no end of use, encountering every degree of injury possible. If the heroes live up to the name and keep at their merciful tasks, time becomes a blur for them, marked only by the sincere, heartfelt thanks of those they help. Any characters with the Treatment skill have to get by just on old-fashioned know-how when aiding the injured (DC 10 to diagnose traumas; DC 15 to stabilize the dying as usual), but are no less busy or appreciated.

FIRE

Heroes with power over flames, water, air, or the weather have an opportunity to shine by helping to put out the various fires started by the Storm and the stormers running amok. The fiercest blazes top out at rank 7 (unless the characters did something foolish earlier that exacerbated matters), and may be countered with the appropriate powers (see **Countering Ongoing Effects** on page 96 of the *Hero's Handbook*).

SMOKE FROM A DISTANT FIRE

If the previous calamities aren't enough, there's always the double-jeopardy option: rescuing people from fires who are *also* trapped by fallen debris (and possibly injured or incapacitated). The guidelines are the same as above, with an added element of racing against the clock to get to the victims in time. It's a perfect opportunity to introduce the players to the concept of Challenges from the *Hero's Handbook* (see page 185): They have to make three successful checks—such as Perception, Athletics, and Treatment—before accumulating more than three failed checks within



a set amount of time—say 10 rounds (1 minute). Can they make it in time?

SCENE 2: DREAM POLICE

Scene Type: Roleplaying

It's only natural for the heroes to approach the police and other emergency units on the scene for information and possibly assistance. While nothing's 100%, the local authorities are genuinely grateful for the heroes' help. The cops, paramedics, and firemen are respectful, and thank the heroes for doing what they did. The higher-ups in the police department encountered are the most notable exception—they're not huge fans of "vigilantes"—but almost to a man the guys on the street obviously appreciate the costumed assistance.

This is, in short, a golden opportunity for the characters to develop some personal contacts with some of Emerald City's men and women in blue. Being (and staying) on good terms with the local police is obviously vital to their long-term success as Emerald City crime-fighters, but also of great importance in the following chapters of *Emerald City Knights*. See the **Emerald City's Finest** sidebar for some prefab Friends with Badges for the heroes to encounter.

GET TOGETHER

It's a small thing, but a pause amongst all the derring-do and supporting-character entrance scenes to allow the

heroes a chance to have a little quiet "us" time and talk to one another. There is of course the highly practical comparing of notes and abilities to be taken care of, and the first steps (however tentative) towards founding a superhero team Emerald City can call its own.

Once the player characters are done exchanging business cards, the police (most likely Detective Buckner or Chief Toliver, see the **Emerald City's Finest** sidebar) notice the heroes now *look* like a super-team at least, and ask for a way to contact them in case they're needed. Alternately, the police offer the characters dedicated hotline phone numbers in exchange for keeping the ECPD informed of anything they uncover about the Storm. Since the police offer to reciprocate, it's a deal the heroes should definitely take.

GOVERNMENT WORK

After the situation is well in hand, the first federal agents finally show up. Once it finally sinks in the actual work's pretty much done, the feds—mostly FBI, with some FEMA folk mixed in—turn on the grating passive-aggression only civil servants can muster.

From then until the end of the opening scene, the feds continually and disdainfully get in the player characters' way. Their (usually unspoken—*usually*) attitude is, "Oh good! *More* interfering idiots with powers and no responsibilities." While the feds' storyline presence is as mere irritants, they serve the plot by making the heroes *want* to work with the local authorities, thereby helping cement that crucial relationship as much as possible.

EMERALD CITY'S FINEST

Much as the wounded bystanders shouldn't ever become faceless casualty numbers, neither should those who serve and protect become a nameless blue mass in the players' eyes. Here are a few thumbnail character sketches for in-game use or to help inspire the Gamemaster's own creations.

MASTER PATROLMAN LEE "BUSTER" BROWN

After more than 20 years on the job, there isn't much "Buster" Brown hasn't seen. He's weathered it all in large part due to his unflinching coolness and calm, and this ability to remain unflappable no matter what the crisis has made him a ECPD legend. Though the decades have left him with a little more waistline and a lot less hair than when he started, his Zen-like composure, experience, and often hard-won wisdom and knowledge make him one of the city's top cops. Since he's unawed by superheroics and pragmatic enough to welcome caped help, he's likely to show up when the characters least expect it, and matter-of-factly provide just the bit of sage advice they need.

Use the Police Officer archetype on page 217 of the *Hero's Handbook* for Patrolman Brown, shifting a point of Strength and Stamina to Awareness and presence and adjusting skill ranks accordingly.

ROOKIE OFFICER JACKSON "JACK" RAMSEUR

Brown's partner, as per department policy, is a fresh-from-the-academy rookie, Jack Ramseur. Jack represents the fourth generation of Ramseurs to carry a badge, and he's eager to live up to the much-honored service of his ancestors—maybe *too* eager. Whereas the elder Brown is quiet with occasional bursts of calculated action, Ramseur throws himself in harm's way on instinct alone. There's no doubt Jack will do the force proud, but it'll take some coaching from his partner before there's much chance of him doing it for long. Until then, the characters most probably encounter Jack as he suddenly leaps between them and some previously unseen danger, like a supervillain attack or chunk of falling debris.

Use the Police Officer archetype on page 217 of the *Hero's Handbook* for Officer Jackson.

DETECTIVE MAGGIE BUCKNER

In her early 40s, somewhat dowdy, half-Korean (on her mother's side), and with a face punctuated by her trademark glasses, Maggie Buckner could pass for a typical Emerald City working mom. This first impression is deceiving, as it masks one of the keenest, sharpest minds on the entire ECPD. As one of the youngest detectives on the force, she's eager to prove herself in a job she's sacrificed pretty much everything else in her life to attain. Thus, she feels a sort of kinship with Emerald's new and still green costumed champions. Of all the plainclothes division, Det. Buckner is most willing to cooperate with the heroes in solving cases. With her near-encyclopedic knowledge of crime-solving techniques, and an uncanny ability to "read" people, the heroes quickly find her a most valuable ally and contact.

Use the Police Chief archetype on page 216 of the *Hero's Handbook* for Detective Buckner.

CHIEF OF POLICE MARCUS TOLIVER

Chief Toliver is a tall, dignified African-American gentleman, looking a good decade less than his 55 years. The player characters won't encounter him until after the Storm-related emergencies are under control and they've received the cold shoulder from most of the rest of the plainclothes division.

At first, Toliver is formal and inquisitive with the heroes, but if they've acquitted themselves well to this point, his mood becomes chattier. He asks the characters if they're familiar with a particular Freedom City superhero, Commander USA. A DC 10 Intellect or Expertise skill check (or GM with a sense of the dramatic) reminds the characters of the famed World War II era "mystery man"—one of the very first African-American superheroes (pictured on page 215 of the *Hero's Handbook*). "He's my uncle. He was an inspiration to me—to a lot of us," the Chief relates. "Be that kind of hero," he says to the players with a handshake and approving smile, "Welcome to Emerald City."

Use the Police Chief archetype on page 216 of the *Hero's Handbook* for Chief Toliver. Toliver does not appear in the other books in this set because he takes early retirement when it is offered after the events of the Silver Storm.

THE SHIELD

Also running a day late and a dollar short, AEGIS (the American Elite Government Intervention Service) eventually makes its presence belatedly felt. Much like the feds, the organization's local higher-ups—including the slovenly, pudgy, drawling Chief Administrator Joseph D. Mitchell—are noticeably annoyed that the formerly quiet, stable situation (read: cushy) in Emerald City looks to be changing.

Player characters who take note of the AEGIS agents at work observe they (like their Chief Administrator) come off as straightforward, thorough, and professional. No check is required for the heroes to notice AEGIS' attitude towards them—the "rogue vigilantes," dangerously trying to do things on their own. The AEGIS personnel's attitude reflects their conviction that they're in charge because no one elected or appointed a bunch of folks in masks who don't have the training and experience to handle this stuff. And to a point, they're absolutely right... at least until the heroes prove themselves.

ON THE SCENE

The heroes are going to go a long way towards keeping the public's trust if they maintain good media relations, and **Meet the Press** offers them a chance to make that happen right from their debut. This sidebar offers a few ready-to-use media contacts. Use the Reporter archetype on page 216 of the *Hero's Handbook* for all these sample supporting characters.

OVERNIGHT SENSATION

As the heroes become besieged by surly bureaucrats, the Gamemaster should re-emphasize that the citizenry is really quite surprised to see super-types helping out. As longtime residents among the characters can confirm, the city just isn't used to this sort of thing. The people are nonetheless genuinely thankful... and maybe a little leery. Still, the Gamemaster should take a moment to remind the players their heroes have made a smash-hit debut in Emerald City.

MEET THE PRESS

Following on the heels of the authorities are the members of the Fourth Estate: the media. Local news crews arrive with eager reporters from the print media (nearly all of whom have already been scooped by amateur news-hounds posting cell phone videos online). The media quickly fixates on the people with the super-powers in the brightly colored costumes and barrage the heroes with questions and requests for interviews.

This is another make-or-break moment, since it gives the heroes a chance to introduce themselves to the people of Emerald City—and the world—in their own words (subject to some network editing). It's also a good opportunity to introduce any media-related characters in your series. (See the **The Media** section of the *Secrets of Emerald City* book for some sample media characters.) Does a hero have a Relationship with a reporter? Is a character in Emerald City to interview for a job at a local newspaper or TV station? You can tie all of that in to this scene.

Lastly, the press has a habit of naming things and people in superhero stories, and the monikers they assign tend to stick. So the end of this scene is a good place to plant the seed of a name for the heroes' group by having a reporter throw it out there, often in the form of a tangential question or statement like: "Everyone is wondering: Who are these new sentinels in Emerald City?" or "Have you appointed yourselves the protectors of Emerald City?" Similarly, quips that the heroes make can become the soundbite of the hour and, before they know it, the media is calling them the "Storm-Breakers" or somesuch.

SCENE 3: PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS

Scene Type: Investigation

Whilst the featured supporting characters and peevish civil servants have their moments on stage, the heroes are also probably checking out the site of the blast and trying

to figure out what happened. Therefore, this scene likely overlaps with the previous: as some player characters get to know the cops, or field questions from the feds or the media, others might be looking for clues. The sections following outline what they may find.

I'M EASY

No skill checks are required to find out all the following, simply by looking in the right places (effectively a DC 10 routine Perception check):

- By talking to survivors and witnesses, the heroes get a decent picture of what happened: truck exploded, Storm effects, the stormers' rampage, etc.
- The truck at the center of the explosion belonged to Redshift Energies, based on the vehicle's surviving, though well-singed, markings.
- The truck-driver is dead, apparently killed by the blast.
- The truck was carrying a load of storage tanks, which are all burst open. Whatever was in them (if anything) is now completely gone... at least to the naked eye.
- Reports are coming in of strange sightings and incidents elsewhere in the city, all following the Silver Storm. There are too many to immediately follow-up on, given the crisis at hand, but it's clear there are potentially more stormers out there than the ones the heroes encountered.

(I'VE BEEN) SEARCHIN' SO LONG

With the work of the Masters of the Obvious now done, player characters with the requisite skills and advantages can turn the following clues:

- **Investigation (DC 15):** Anyone taking some time to gather evidence inside the wrecked Redshift truck finds some microscopic residue (like a fine metallic dust). If none of the heroes succeed on the check, the police (likely Detective Buckner) can report this information to them later.
- **Well-informed (Investigation or Persuasion, DC 10):** Heroes with the Well-informed advantage can make an Investigation or Persuasion check to learn Redshift Energies is a local energy research company that's been quite successful in recent years. Most notably, their technology is being used in some of the newer-model hybrid vehicles.
- **If they ask, any hero with Perception or Expertise: Streetwise** doesn't see anyone on the scene that looks particularly suspicious or shady. Just victims 'round here, now. Sorry.

WHO WAS THAT MASKED MAN?

It is entirely possible the characters flee the scene before much, if any, of **Scene 2** or **Scene 3** can take place. Hopefully, they won't, but if it happens, the Gamemaster must try and get the publicity-shy heroes the information they need to make it to the next Scene.

The media are perhaps the best hope of keeping the hermit-like heroes on target. Whether they're 24-hour-news junkies, itinerant web surfers, or old-school newspaper readers, they are still able to glean pretty much all the information given in **I'm Easy**. The general citizenry's sense of amazement and gratitude about the city's new costumed defenders is evident, along with the mystery and trepidation engendered by their rapid departure.

Statements from the police make it clear the Five-0 wants to establish a line of communication with the heroes. If they fail to pick up on this particular nudge, nudge, wink, wink, the Gamemaster may just have to have an intrepid reporter (like the *Courier-Express*' ace muckraker Eddie Pollard) connect the dots between Redshift and Maximilian Mars for them. Should that fail to shove the player characters down the proper path, it may just be time to clear the table and get a nice game of *Candyland* started.

DOING SCIENCE

Cerebral science-y types are bound to run the various bits and specks collected at the blast site through a battery

of tests. Once these brainy characters are away from the scene and have time to conduct some lab work on their findings, they can find out the following.

- The metallic dust is the most potentially illuminating piece of physical evidence, and heroes with the Investigation skill collect a proper sample with the usual DC 15 check. Later, with access to a Laboratory, a couple of uninterrupted hours, and a DC 20 Expertise (with an appropriate specialty), Investigation, or Technology skill check, the characters discern the true nature of the dust. While examining their samples under a powerful microscope, it becomes apparent the "dust" is made up of tiny machines, imperceptible to the naked eye. The machines the characters collected are not functioning; possibly damaged by the explosion. Indeed, they're in the process of breaking down into their component elements. Incredible though it seems, they are what the "Silver Storm" was.
- If the heroes make a second excursion to the scene of the explosion to scour the area for additional samples, in another couple of hours they find further corroborating evidence. More of the microscopic machines are present, inert and breaking down like the ones recovered earlier.
- Anyone with the Expertise: Science, Expertise: Engineering, or Technology skills examining the microscopic machines and succeeding on a DC 15 check can identify them by their proper name: nanites. They also pretty quickly recognize them as products of an amazingly advanced technology. Even heroes



from advanced extraterrestrial civilizations find these nanites beyond their people's capabilities.

CSI: EMERALD CITY

It's kind of gross, but a generation of players raised on a steady diet of TV autopsies are bound to make for the corpses in search of forensic evidence. Sadly, there are some who suffered the worst of the explosion's effects. Assuming the heroes haven't committed some egregious violation of public trust, the authorities grant them reasonable access to anyone in their care or custody, as well as any needed facilities.

The important thing is not to let the departed become statistics. As the characters examine bodies, mention a personal item still on the deceased—an inscribed wedding ring, a wallet with family pictures inside, a still-clutched leash of a beloved pet out for a walk. Such details are unrelated to the mystery, but drive home the loss of innocent life that makes it important for the heroes to solve it.

Examinations of most victims reveal only the expected traumas from the blast, storm, and energy discharges, but heroes with applicable skills (Treatment, Expertise: Medicine, etc.) and access to a Laboratory or Infirmary can turn a vital clue by studying one of the stormers captured in the previous chapter. Success on a DC 20 check with a relevant medical skill reveals, after a few hours' work, that there are nanites present in the bloodstream and tissues of exposed individuals. The nanites seem inert, but aren't breaking down like those found outside of a "host" body. The heroes may also learn this later from accessing the medical files of a stormer if they lack the required skills and you feel like passing the information along to them.

FOLLOW THE MONEY

In addition to all the messy forensic stuff, the heroes may take a closer look into Redshift Energies itself. Polite inquiries don't get them any farther than voice mail or a corporate-buzzword filled website.

Impolite ones (like break-ins) as well as using the Investigation skill to dig up background information on the company is a more fruitful pursuit. Taking an hour (or no time flat, with the Well-informed advantage) and a check against the usual DC 10 can turn up the following information:

- *One Degree of Success:* Redshift Energies is a wholly owned subsidiary of a company called Paladyne Industries.
- *Two Degrees of Success:* Paladyne is a shell company owned by MarsTech, Inc.

Poking around in MarsTech-related sources can yield the following:

- *One Degree of Success:* MarsTech, Inc. is one of the largest employers in Emerald City, as well as being one of the most successful technology companies in the world. Its owner is a local plutocrat known as Maximilian Mars.

SCENE 4: MISSION TO MARS

Scene Type: Combat

At this point, all signs point to Maximilian Mars as the only person who might have a clue as to what's going on. The Gamemaster may have to resort to some unsubtle hints, like a news bulletin from the All-Plot Point Station ("This just in: Noted city father Maximilian Mars issues a public statement, welcoming the city's new costumed heroes and inviting them to meet with him at their convenience to discuss mutual efforts toward bettering Emerald"). However you get them there, it's critical for the player characters to have some face time with Mr. Mars for events to proceed apace.

The good news for the heroes is it's amazingly—perhaps even ridiculously—easy for them to gain an audience with someone who should by rights be extraordinarily busy. So whether the heroes fly up outside his office building or set up an appointment with the front-lobby receptionist, they get buzzed right in like real VIPs. If they take the elevator up, Gordon Lightfoot's classic tune "If You Could Read My Mind" plays and accompanies them throughout, for no other reason than to drive paranoid players crazy with a false suggestion that Mars is a mind-reader.

BABY, WHAT A BIG SURPRISE

However and whenever the heroes show up, Maximilian Mars welcomes them and ushers them inside his private office with a reassuring grin. Once the player characters are all inside, their pleasant visit with Mars is rudely interrupted by a quartet of shady-looking costumed characters teleporting into the room without so much as a by-your-leave.

Whoever they are, Mars certainly doesn't seem afraid of them, and the sinister foursome seems to know him well enough. It may well appear to the heroes the sketchy-looking folks are Mars' confederates, and the Gamemaster is encouraged to allow the players to think that.

Even if the player characters are mellow types, ready to sit and drink tranya with their costumed peers, Mars' newly arrived guests aren't as sociable. The strangers recognize the heroes from the "Silver Storm" media coverage, and—apparently unimpressed by what they saw—attack them on sight. No words or good vibes from the heroes alter this course, even if there were time for either. Which there isn't.

DO YOU FEEL LIKE WE DO

The player characters' newly minted enemies are representatives of Emerald City's tightly knit supervillain community; specifically part of a truthfully advertized collective known as the Fraternal Order of Evil (F.O.E.). That they are bad guys probably isn't much of a surprise, but their reasons for being there probably are.

Truth is, Emerald City's resident bad guys are just as baffled and curious about what the heck's going on with



the Silver Storm, the stormers, and what not. However, instead of actually doing any detective work on their own, Emerald's caped mountebanks lazily sat around and complained about how their formerly cloistered bad-guy town was now going straight to Hell.

As the message boards over at EmeraldCityEvil.com overflowed with net-rage—okay, not really—the leader of F.O.E.—a mysterious individual known only as “the Big Brain”—finally decided to act. The Big Brain lived up to his billing and reasoned that Mars, as the smartest guy in Emerald, was most likely to know what’s going on. When the F.O.E. members teleported in, their aim was to get Mars to spill what he presumably knows about the Storm. Once they noticed the heroes, the already suspicious bad guys jumped to the conclusion Mars was already working with the city’s new good guys.

PLAYING THE VILLAINS

The F.O.E. members sent to question Mars are:

CANNON

Paying no mind to the exquisite decor, Cannon straightforwardly opens up at every opportunity on anyone wearing a costume he’s not used to seeing around F.O.E. headquarters. He does obey Cyberknight’s order to blast open a wall for Gargantua on his first action, but after that unleashes a ceaseless bombardment on the good guys. Indoors or outdoors makes no difference to him—like Michael Bay, it’s all about making the explosions happen for Cannon.

If things are going too well for evil in this fight, Cannon’s overconfidence can help tilt the battle back in the heroes’ favor. Giving into his zeal to deliver the kill-shot, Cannon can try to end the fight with an Explosive Shot and carelessly include some of his teammates in the blast radius.

Like his erstwhile allies, Cannon won’t stick around to see the end of a losing battle. Once two or more of his F.O.E. mates go down, he teleports away to greener pastures elsewhere.

GARGANTUA

Sadly for Gargantua, his intelligence doesn’t expand with his mass as he employs his one superpower and grows really, really big. He is sharp enough to realize he’s at a disadvantage indoors, and once the battle is joined he makes his way post haste to the nearest exit—probably one provided by Cannon (see his entry above for details).

Once he takes it outside, Gargantua expands to his full 60’ *en route* to the ground, then looks to see if any puny hero has been dumb enough to follow him. Any such do-gooder, he tries to squash flat. It’s not fancy, but it works for the G-man.

If the heroes opt to remain on the giant-free side of the building, they actually make Gargantua potentially more threatening. The restricted field of vision imposed by the indoor conditions actually makes Gargantua hard to track. This opens up the possibility that an unwary or

otherwise occupied hero might be on the receiving end of the least likely surprise attack ever: a 10' fist suddenly crashing through a wall.

Once half the F.O.E. contingent is out of commission, Gargantua makes giant tracks away from the fight. He resumes his normal size as soon as locates a safe place to hide.

CYBERKNIGHT

Technically not the smartest villain present (that'd be Tempus), Cyberknight still has the most wits about her when it comes to a skirmish. Playing her as the only one with any real clue how to win the fight is key, Gamemaster.

For instance, she knows Gargantua needs to be away from a long succession of ceilings, and orders Cannon to make that happen (see above). Cyberknight knows her Netcaster is as good as a knockout blow against many heroes, and with her Metahuman Database and Insight skill, she can pretty quickly and easily figure out exactly who they are. If the player characters are good hand-to-hand fighters, Cyberknight uses her Flight to stay out of their way and lead them outside, where Gargantua's much bigger hands await.

"The Big Brain" is well aware of Cyberknight's knack for making intelligent tactical decisions and has anointed her the field leader for the Mars fact-finding

mission. This can be used to give the other villains an edge if the fight is going too well for the player characters, as she can coach the likes of Cannon and Gargantua into (temporarily) fighting smarter than their norm with timely tactical advice.

If on the other hand the heroes are the ones taking most of the lumps, Cyberknight's presence can actually make Cannon and Gargantua stupider. At heart, both of them deeply resent being "nagged" and "bossed around" by "the skirt," and their pig-headed sexism can rear its head at a critical moment for the good guys. Depending on the circumstances, they may ignore her counsel in favor of something dumb and dangerous, or waste valuable actions yelling back at "that stupid witch."

Once the villains are obviously overmatched, Cyberknight is sharp enough to call a retreat—preferably via Tempus' teleportation power. She attempts to save downed teammates if no risk is involved, but definitely does not risk her own neck for theirs.

TEMPUS, THE MASTER OF TIME

As far as the actual combat is concerned, Tempus is a one-trick pony. He tries to stay as far away as practical from the heroes, and uses his Time Control power on anyone who appears likely to close the distance. Staying out of fist range also preserves Tempus for his primary role in this chapter: providing an escape route for the F.O.E. contingent; one that (odds are) they will need.

Tempus can also be used to add a creepy tangent to the proceedings. He likes to boast about powers, and threatens his enemies with strangling them in their cribs, murdering their grandparents before they met each other, and similar acts of temporal mayhem. The Gamemaster can demonstrate just enough of Tempus' abilities to give the player characters good cause to fear his threats.

SETUP

Mars' office faces out on an open area surrounded by other parts of the MarsTech primary corporate facility. The open area that includes a small park (about 150 feet on a side) with heavy stone benches (Toughness 8) and a small pond (about 10 feet on a side and 4 feet deep). Those leaving Mars' office through the window eventually take note of the concrete walkway (Toughness 8) just outside the building.

MarsTech's campus itself is a sprawling facility. A majority of the buildings are only three stories tall, though some buildings feature underground labs and parking structures.

If the fight goes back into the building proper, the internal

walls are heavy construction material, better built than is typical for such a structure (Toughness 8 with everything considered), but external walls are a transparent poly-ceramic composite (Toughness 10)

that casual observers easily mistake as glass. The rooms are standardized at small office (10 foot by 10 foot), large office (20 foot by 15 foot), and conference room (20 foot by 30 foot) sizes randomly spread around the structure, with hallways a standard 5 feet wide. Mars' office is special, the approximate size of one of the conference rooms.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

The majority of the corporate campus is as described under **Setup**. There are however two other considerations to keep in mind.

Approximately 350 feet away, across the park, the buildings end at a large parking lot (at least 500 feet on a side). On the other side of *that* is a four lane highway, and then a forested area. Parking lots are ideal for lots of easily available throwing weapons usable by super-strong characters, and a forested region provides good hiding places as well as boulders and trees which can also be used as weapons.

The other consideration is the available innocent bystander population. This isn't an isolated area—it's a place of business with several hundred employees in the surrounding area. Heroes need to stay aware that there are probably people behind those walls, cowering in those stairwells, or hiding in those vehicles getting tossed about. The sheer number of innocent bystanders should be tailored to the level of additional Complications the Gamemaster wants to pile on top of the heroes... but





since they earn hero points for their headaches, it's probably worth it.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

For MarsTech employees, use the Bystander and Scientist archetypes from the "Supporting Characters" section of the *Hero's Handbook* for most of them, and the Police Officer archetype from the same section for Security Personnel.

The members of F.O.E. are found in their own section on pages 13-16.

OUTCOME

With the heroes likely bringing superior numbers to this fight, victory is probably theirs. That, and they frankly don't have to do all that much to win simply because the villains attempt to flee once half of them are put out of commission. "The Big Brain" attached Tempus to the team in order to provide a quick escape route if needed, and once things turn sour for the F.O.E. members, the Master of Time duly teleports the remaining villains away from the fight as previously instructed. Since they don't make any serious effort to save each other, prisoners are a distinct possibility (which is played out in **Everybody Plays the Fool** below).

As in **Scene 1**, the many innocent bystanders on the MarsTech campus means at least some of them got in the way of the battle, and other nearby office buildings may also have been damaged. The guidelines for game-mastering the resulting superheroic rescue missions are covered in that section if the players still have an appetite

for role-playing caped paramedics. Otherwise, the possibility is best covered with a narrative description; again, with an emphasis on the human element in the aftermath of super-fights.

LIFE ON MARS?

Maximilian Mars should come out of the fight without a scratch. He never lifts a finger against the heroes (or to aid the villains), and the F.O.E. members spend the battle situated between him and the heroes, so the temptation for a player character to shoot him on general principle should be a practical impossibility. Should it happen anyway, point out to the players how their "heroes" are striking down an unarmed man, and give them your best "Guess you've decided to live a hero point-free life, eh?" look.

Even though he's sitting out this particular scrum, the Gamemaster should include at least one moment to show Mars isn't doing so because he's a total wuss. Describe an errant ranged attack grazing and scorching Mars' custom-made suit, and his not even flinching. In fact, unless it's absolutely a matter of life and death, he doesn't budge at all during the battle, and in any case never shows any sign of fear or panic. Make it clear that whoever he is, Mars isn't your typical billionaire tuxedo-wetter in a time of crisis.

In truth, Mars stays on the sideline because at the moment he's a non-super man, and one who isn't quite sure where his interests lie in this particular conflict. Normally, he's shielded by a cadre of bodyguards, but since Mars originally intended to keep his meeting with the heroes private and wasn't expecting trouble, they were sent elsewhere before the fight.

MAXIMILIAN MARS

Maximilian Mars is described in full in *Secrets of Emerald City*, specifically the **Business** section of **Chapter 2**, including his game traits. There is much more to him than meets the eye when the heroes initially encounter him, but they learn more about Max as this story progresses and he comes to trust and rely upon them. In this initial meeting, Mars plays his cards carefully, given he is used to dealing with criminal masterminds (and old habits are hard to break).



SCENE 5: EVERYBODY'S TALKIN'

Scene Type: Roleplaying

Though they may have trouble finding an intact chair, and the conversation pit is probably filled with rubble, this final scene is all about some delayed conversations for the player characters. Their little chat with Maximilian Mars is all but guaranteed (and the Gamemaster should take whatever steps are necessary to make sure it does). There's also the possibility one or more F.O.E. members are in the heroes' custody, and the section following provides some guidelines for giving captured bad guys the third degree.

EVERYBODY PLAYS THE FOOL

The Gamemaster needs to keep the villain interrogations short, as they can yield no information of real use to the player characters other than the bad guys present (and their affiliates) had nothing to do with the Silver Storm. Really, the only difference is the specific wording the heroes get from each particular costumed heel. Any successful Insight skill check readily confirms the veracity of F.O.E.'s non-involvement in the Storm.

Each and every F.O.E. villain encountered is, naturally, Hostile as far as using the Persuasion skill is concerned. Even if by some according-to-Hoyle miracle a player character should improve matters to Helpful, telling the heroes anything beyond "We didn't do it—know nothing about it" entails risks well above any the bad guys are willing to take. Thus, in all likelihood, this interval is just the villains playing dumb and staying quiet.

Intimidation can coax a truthful denial of involvement with the Storm, but nothing else worth the effort of making additional threats. The villains are simply way more scared of crossing "the Big Brain" than the good guys. Cyberknight wants to protect her kids, Tempus can see in the future how the heroes won't back up their threats, and "the Big Brain" keeps Gargantua and Cannon too well paid for them to betray him.

Any attempts by the characters to use Mind Reading on the bad guys only confirm the F.O.E. goons don't know anything relevant. If the heroes ask what the members



of F.O.E. were supposed to do after meeting with Mars, who they were to report to, where they were supposed to go, if F.O.E. has a regular meeting place, or the like, the answer is pretty much the same. The Big Brain contacts the members using telepathy and he tells them where and when to meet up. It's always someplace new.

MISSION MARS

As soon as the fight ends, Mars asks his employees to get to work cleaning things up and making sure all those injured are properly tended to. He then formally but sincerely thanks the heroes for subduing the F.O.E. contingent. If asked, Mars admits he's not happy about the damage to his business, but he is well aware it was F.O.E. which attempted to strike the first blow. At the very first opportunity, Mars then asks the player characters why they've come to see him.

It's likely any heroes with the Insight skill (DC 20) attempt to gauge how truthful Mars is being in this scene, especially since they probably consider Mars the prime suspect for masterminding the Silver Storm. The Game-master should adjudicate checks as normal, but whatever the results, Mars is truthful throughout. His tone varies depending on the how heroes conduct themselves, and he simply refuses to answer silly queries or ones that pry into areas irrelevant to the matters at hand. However, Mars does not tell any lies.

SUSPICIOUS MINDS

"What did you know and when did you know it?" type questions about the Storm are brushed aside with sincere "I was rather hoping you could tell me" styled replies from Mars. Not only is he being straight with the heroes, in doing so he's also trying to find out what they know. While Mars is no softie, he is genuinely concerned about the Storm and what its aftermath means for Emerald City.

If/when the heroes finally point the finger at Mars and "J'accuse!" him, his reaction is totally nonplused. He simply asks what evidence the player characters have that points to him—and if *all* their evidence points to him. If the heroes respond by showing him some of what they found at the scene of the explosion (the nanites, in particular), he asks if they've divined what the silver dust is, and asks to analyze it if the heroes are (or pretend to be) clueless. Once the dust's nature is known to him, Mars' mood turns

grim, and he says, "I have an offer of a most grave nature to make to you all" before the events of the next scene, **Freedom Rock**, interrupt.

Questions about F.O.E.'s appearance are likely to come up as well. Mars' replies are the Gamemaster's opportunity to establish the essence of his personality: not a saint, not a villain, but an eminently pragmatic man who (given reasonable conduct by the heroes) is becoming convinced his concerns coincide with the player characters'.

"I know who they are, of course," Mars relates, "And so long as their interests do not conflict with mine, I normally pay them the courtesy of a polite audience." If the player characters inquire as to what F.O.E.'s business was, Mars tells them (preferably after the heroes have blamed him for the explosion) with great, biting relish, "Presumably, they came to accuse me of orchestrating the so-called Silver Storm."

FREEDOM ROCK

This scene concludes on a cliffhanger. As soon as the heroes' conversation with Mars reaches its dramatic climax. Before the characters gear up for a violent confrontation with Mars, or their conversation with him simply peters out, read the following aloud:



Amidst the sound of settling debris you hear the cracking of concrete and see a large bubble grow out of the paved pathway. A second later it retracts and a voice calls out, "We should have known you couldn't be trusted, Mars!" Standing inside is the Freedom League! Johnny Rocket, Bowman, Dr. Metropolis, and their newest recruit, Seven. Dr. Metropolis was the one speaking and he continues, "And now you'll pay for what you've done!" Before you can reply, Dr. Metropolis shakily puts one hand to his forehead and yells, "Get out of my head!" With his other hand he points at Mars. Immediately, the buildings come alive around you, steel and concrete flow like mud to form grasping hands and swinging mallets, while the other Freedom Leaguers quickly follow his lead and attack!

Some days, it just doesn't pay to put on a cape and go save the day.



CHAPTER 2: OUT OF THEIR LEAGUE

In this chapter of *Emerald City Knights*, the player characters have the opportunity to prove themselves against members of the Freedom League. Following that wonderful comic book tradition of heroes fighting each other due to a misunderstanding, the heroes find they have a sponsor and a swanky pad ready for them to move into.

Well, almost ready—the heroes get to be involved in the final stages of construction of their new base. They also get to do some relationship-building with the authorities, followed by defending their new turf from the Grandmaster's Chessmen agents. This chapter concludes with a bit of old-school violence as the heroes stop the first set of organized stormal villains from making a name for themselves when they attack an AEGIS (the American Elite Government Intervention Service) transport.

Assuming this chapter is run for the players immediately following **Chapter 1: Life in the Aftermath**, the heroes should be at MarsTech, Inc. interrogating Maximilian Mars after driving away the villains of F.O.E.

PROLOGUE

Read or paraphrase the following to the players.



Wreckage lies all about you, the aftermath of a battle you weren't expecting. You weren't the only ones with questions for the smartest man in the city... and F.O.E. wasn't keen on you being there.

Amidst the sound of settling debris you hear the cracking of concrete and see a large bubble grow out of the paved pathway. A second later it retracts and a voice calls out, "We should have known you couldn't be trusted, Mars!" Standing inside the is the Freedom League! Johnny Rocket, Bowman, Dr. Metropolis, and their newest recruit, Seven. Dr. Metropolis was the one speaking and he continues, "And now you'll pay for what you've done!"

Before you can reply, Dr. Metropolis shakily puts one hand to his forehead and yells, "Get out of my head!" With his other hand he points at Mars. Immediately, the buildings come alive around you, steel and concrete flow like mud to form grasping hands and swinging mallets, while the other Freedom Leaguers quickly follow his lead and attack!

Some days, it just doesn't pay to put on a cape and go save the day.



SCENE 1: BIG LEAGUE TROUBLE

Scene Type: *Combat*

As the Freedom League arrives and suddenly attacks, the player characters all receive a hero point. This is very important as it gives them a slight edge (it's their comic book after all!).

Unbeknownst to the heroes, some of the technology at MarsTech is generating an odd sort of interference that very few people can even begin to sense, let alone be affected by. One of those people is Dr. Metropolis. He throws the first punch because of the unexpected effect the interference has on him. It drives him to violence and he lashes out without thinking. He doesn't know what it is but it hits him the moment he arrives. (The feedback would have affected him anywhere within a few miles of MarsTech, but it's especially strong on campus because of the amount of tech in the vicinity).

His teammates don't have time to notice the odd behavior because Dr. Metropolis attacks immediately, plus their attention is on Mars and the heroes, who the League members assume are his new crew. When Metropolis attacks, Johnny Rocket, Bowman, and Seven follow his lead. They're all accustomed to Metropolis being the voice of reason, so they assume Mars and his cronies (the heroes) have mentally attacked their teammate. The characters have little choice but to defend themselves.

PLAYING MARS AND THE FREEDOM LEAGUE

MAXIMILIAN MARS

Mars is shocked and caught off guard by Dr. Metropolis' attack, but recovers quickly. He was expecting a visit from the League (or, more specifically, Captain Thunder) at some point, but is just as shocked at Metropolis' immediate violence as everyone else. He stays calm and continues to try to defuse the situation even as the Metropolis commands the building to attack him.

BOWMAN

A thrillseeker *par excellence*, Bowman loves being in the middle of the fray and it's obvious to observers that he shifts from being surprised by Metropolis' actions to being able to barely contained excitement at the prospect of a good fight. While extremely well-trained, Bowman is still young and a show-off. He flirts with female opponents and fires off non-stop banter.



...METROPOLIS WOULD NEVER DO THAT!

Well, not normally, no. There are extenuating circumstances. And the fact that the least hotheaded of the League is acting peculiar makes things all the more confusing for his teammates. However, you may not like using the good Doctor in this fashion and that's okay. A couple of other options are available to you. The first is to use Captain Thunder's son, formerly Bolt and now going under the name Thunderbolt. Or use Megastar. Both have graduated from the Claremont Academy and make excellent candidates for membership in the Freedom League. In Thunderbolt's case, assume that his father has mentioned a story or two about the Commander and Thunderbolt has a score to settle with his old man's old enemy. For Megastar, the MEGAS is Preserver technology and the same effect driving Metropolis over the edge also affects the MEGAS, but even harder. Stats aren't provided for these alternate characters, but Thunderbolt can easily default to the Speedster archetype and Megastar to the Paragon (trading out two power points, one for the Alternate Effect off his Strength for a Ranged Damage attack and the other for the Feature (Guidance from MEGAS).

DR. METROPOLIS

In this scene, Dr. Metropolis is a natural force erupting in violence at Mars and those around him. This is *not* the calm, emotionally detached figure with whom everyone is familiar. He verbally attack Mars while unleashing his powers at everyone who's not a member of the Freedom League.

JOHNNY ROCKET

Strangely quiet, Johnny is also acting out of character. Normally verbose and practiced at exchanging witty banter with Bowman in the heat of battle, Johnny is surprised by Metropolis' behavior and is dividing his attention between putting down his opponents as efficiently as possible while also trying to get his teammate to explain himself and calm down.

SEVEN

Serena doesn't know what's going on. This is *not* how the mission was supposed to go and she's adapting on the fly. She mostly fights defensively, protecting her teammates from harm as much as possible until she has no choice but to fight back! Still relatively new to the team, she is trying to keep her wits about her while processing Metropolis' uncharacteristic rage. She's also concentrating too much on holding up her end of the fight for her to look at the bigger picture.

KEY POINTS

Even though they can't keep the fight from starting, the heroes notice several important things during the conflict.

Regardless of tactics, the level of training and skill the League members show is impressive. The player characters are acutely aware that they're facing very experienced opponents, people who have stood against SHADOW and Omega and triumphed. An Expertise: Current Events check (DC 15) allows a hero to remember that the majority of the League is off-world dealing with some kind of threat.

Insight checks (DC 20) reveal a high degree of confusion among Metropolis' teammates over his behavior, regardless of how smoothly they recover and follow his lead when he attacks.

It appears Mars is taking no offensive action towards the League. He's defending himself, dodging attacks, and attempting to reason with Metropolis. An Insight check (DC 25) reveals that he is just as confused as everyone else, but hides it well.

ACTION

There are two things you should make clear to the heroes during this fight. The first is to make the League members seem impressive and worthy of their reputations without overwhelming the characters. The League has a slight power level advantage and you'll need to keep them from rolling over the heroes. The second is that the players should come out of the fight feeling like they've done something remarkable. Their characters just fought the superstars of the hero community and they held their own.

One way to achieve both of these goals is to include 'Shining Moments of Awesome'—at least one instance for each of the heroes in which they get to show off a signature power or maneuver. The same goes for the members of the Freedom League. Examples of these sorts of moments include Bowman flipping backwards and (while upside-down) firing arrows at multiple opponents and simultaneously firing off a few taunting words, or Johnny building a makeshift cage around an opponent and then stopping to look critically at the hero while saying something like "be a good boy and stay there." Seven could use magic stunts to counter a hero's powers without undue effort. The sheer power of Dr. Metropolis' area-based animate objects effect should carry enough weight on its own, especially given a detailed description.

These examples are just that... you should improvise and elaborate however you wish. Each group of players is different and you'll need to tailor the heroes' own 'Shining Moments' for maximum gratification of your own players.

SETUP

MarsTech's primary corporate campus is a sprawling facility. The majority of the buildings are only three stories tall, though some buildings feature underground labs and parking structures.

The heroes begin the fight in Mars' office. The office itself is most likely in ruins after the fight against Cyberknight

and the other members of F.O.E. from **Chapter 1's** conclusion, so there are broken walls and debris from shattered furniture and windows everywhere. Assume a Damage 2 to Damage 4 effect for anyone thrown, knocked prone, or knocked back onto the surroundings.

Mars' office looks out on an open area that includes a small park (about 150 feet on a side) with heavy stone benches (Toughness 8) and a small pond (about 10 feet on a side and 4 feet deep). Metropolis used a power stunt to teleport himself and his teammates to the facility, and showed up on the concrete walkway (Toughness 8) just outside the building. The internal walls are heavy construction material, better built than is typical for such a structure (Toughness 8), but external walls are a transparent polyceramic composite (Toughness 10) that casual observers easily mistake for glass. The rooms are standardized as small offices (10 foot by 10 foot), large offices (20 foot by 15 foot), and conference rooms (20 foot by 30 foot), with hallways 5 feet wide. Mars' office is special, the size of one of the conference rooms. See the Marstech Offices map, page 3.

TACTICS

Seven, Bowman, and Johnny Rocket fight together intelligently, just as they've trained to do. Unless forced to do otherwise by specific opponents giving them good individual fights, the three of them spend a couple of rounds getting to know their opponents, then concentrate their attacks on one target until it drops. Then, they move to a new target and do the same. Each of them do their best to protect bystanders, Bowman attempts to draw fire to himself in order to give his teammates openings to attack without being threatened. Johnny is a bit protective of both Seven and Bowman (as he still views both as young and inexperienced regardless of the reality of the situation).

Metropolis adheres to no tactics and instead, tears into Mars and the heroes with abandon.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Approximately 350 feet away, across the small park, the buildings end at a large parking lot (500 feet on a side).



On the other side of *that* is a four lane highway, and then a forested area. Parking lots are ideal for lots of easily available throwing weapons for super-strong characters, and a forested region provides good hiding places as well as boulders and trees which can also be used as weapons.

This isn't an isolated area—it's a place of business with several hundred employees in the surrounding area. Even assuming most of them fled the area during the battle against F.O.E., there are still people behind those walls, cowering in stairwells, or hiding in vehicles. The sheer number of innocent bystanders should be tailored to the level of additional Complications you want to pile on the heroes... but since they earn Hero Points for them, it's probably worth it.

Just as the heroes show concern for the innocent bystanders, so do the League members... except for Metropolis. The fact that he pays no attention to them is a strong indicator that he isn't in his right mind.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

The Freedom League and Mars appear in the **Heroes & Villains** section at the end of the adventure. For MarsTech employees, use the Bystander and Scientist archetypes, and the Police Officer archetype for Security Personnel (see *Hero's Handbook*, pgs. 216-217).

OUTCOME

At the point when it looks like either the League is about to win, or that the heroes are about to win, Raven shows up. Read or paraphrase the following to the players.



Suddenly, from above, a loudspeaker-enhanced voice rises above the din of the battle, "Stand down!" Instinctively, you and your opponents look up and see one of the Freedom League's Pegasus space-planes hovering silently in the air with Raven standing on top of it looking down at the scene below. The Pegasus hovers in mid-air as she hops off and glides down to land near you.



Raven's intimidation factor, especially combined with the loudspeaker and the hovering jet, is sufficient to grab everyone's attention. If Metropolis is still up, he collapses, unconscious, finally overwhelmed by whatever's been bothering him. The other members of the League stop fighting (and hopefully the heroes do likewise).

REWARDS

If the heroes managed to make a particularly good showing against the Freedom League, that's worth a hero point. They should also earn hero points during the fight for any complications that come into play, or for particularly good roleplaying.

SCENE 2: AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE

Scene Type: Roleplaying

While the rest of the League went to MarsTech, Raven went into the city to investigate. After hearing combat chatter over the team communicators, she diverted to the facility to put a stop to whatever was going on.

Raven tells Seven to see if she can do anything for Dr. Metropolis, dresses down Johnny and Bowman, and then introduces the heroes by name to her team. (She's Raven—she already knows everything that is publically available about the characters.) Bowman and Johnny are both apologetic and a bit sheepish.

Raven excuses herself to have a few words in private with Mars, while Johnny and Bowman try their best to make nice with the heroes. If the heroes ask to be included in the conversation Mars, she asks them to indulge her for Mars' sake. Mars agrees that he'd prefer to have the conversation in private. You should stress that Raven is being *extremely* polite and has no interest in offending the heroes.

Johnny and Bowman (mostly Johnny) provide lively conversation and pepper the heroes with questions. Exactly what the Leaguers talk about with the PCs is up to you, but be sure to tailor it to the heroes; it could be wholly social, a comparison of powers, information gathering about the Silver Storm, whatever makes sense. It should be obvious to the characters that the Leaguers are attempting to mend fences... and that Johnny and Bowman are actually quite friendly and charming (and they are *pouring* on the charm to compensate for their earlier actions).

LISTENING IN

If one of the PCs can eavesdrop, even while being distracted by the Leaguers, they overhear Raven and Mars discussing someone called the Commander and that Captain Thunder sent them to check in on Mars... and that they're keeping an eye on him. She also asks him if he had any involvement in the Silver Storm, to which he responds that he had no prior knowledge and only heard about it on the news after the fact. He adds that his intentions are in the best interest of the city and he'll prove it the moment they rejoin the others.

When the two conversations are finished, the groups get back together and Mars announces he has an offer that will, he hopes, help the city and give the Freedom League a bit more confidence in him: He offers to sponsor the heroes as Emerald City's official super-team, the Sentinels (or whatever it is the heroes decide to name their team), and will supply them with a headquarters in the top five floors of the Emerald Tower.

Read or paraphrase the following to the players.



"Perhaps this information will help alleviate a few concerns—I've been working on putting together resources for a team of hometown defenders for Emerald City. Given the lack of heroes in the city and the presence of organizations like F.O.E, and whoever or whatever is behind this "Silver Storm," I think it's high time we had our own defenders. So, to that end I'd like to donate whatever resources are needed to get all of you set up as a team. I have connections in the city government and, with the League's help with AEGIS, I believe we could have things taken care of in short order. My people have been working on a headquarters in the top floors of Emerald Tower complete with the very best technology I could put together.

I've been thinking about this for some time and I've spoken with the local authorities in general terms. They have mixed feelings about an organized group of heroes taking up residence in the city, but they're open to it. I think with the chaos caused by this Silver Storm, they might be even more open to it.

Rome wasn't built in a day and all that, so I have every confidence AEGIS will come around after the League puts in a good word and you've spent a little time talking with them.

If I or anyone else had any doubts about your dedication or abilities, your actions since the Silver Storm have certainly erased them. I know there's a lot to work out, but what do you say?"

If the heroes are open to the idea, Mars welcomes the opportunity to make a more detailed pitch, including a tour of the headquarters, and introductions to the necessary Emerald City law enforcement figures and elected officials.

If the heroes are concerned about accepting support from a former supervillain, assuming they are aware of that fact, Mars does whatever's necessary to convince them (within reason). He is a very persuasive man with a lot of experience sealing the deal with hard customers, and he is highly motivated to sell these heroes on agreeing to become the team he's been laying the groundwork to present to the city.

If the heroes turn to the Freedom League to get their opinion on the matter, they believe Mars' offer is on the up-and-up, but they don't entirely trust him—and they caution the heroes to do likewise.

After the conversation, Raven excuses herself and her teammates as they need to check in with Lighthouse and try to figure out what happened with Dr. Metropolis. This leaves the player characters with time to talk with Mars if they so desire, but otherwise they set to setting up their new headquarters and establishing themselves as a team.

SCENE 3: HOMETOWN HEROES

Scene Type: Roleplaying

The assumption for this part of the adventure (as well as the series as a whole) is that the heroes have accepted Mars' offer and decide to work with him to finish building their headquarters and officially form a team. Some of the heroes may be concerned about Mars' motivations, or they may need a few days to get comfortable with the idea, that's fine. However, in order for the series to move forward the heroes need to team up. If some of the characters (or players) are reluctant to work with Mars because there's doubt as to whether he's a decent guy, you should work with that player to come up with a reason to join that appeals to the character. Exactly how you and the player(s) work this out depends on their characters, but it could be as simple as convincing them that the best place to keep an eye on Mars is as part of the team.

Once the group has decided to move forward, with whatever additional roleplaying is required to get them all to that point, you can read the following aloud to them.



The next few days are a whirlwind of activity, during which you meet with local authorities, politicians, citizen groups, and the press—for interviews, press conferences, and photo shoot after photo shoot. Mars and his team organize the meetings and press events, but step aside when it's your time to shine and only offer advice or input when asked for it. In all, they prove to be a good resource, but mostly stay out of your way. You, in turn, learn a lot about dealing with the authorities both in public and private. Thankfully everyone appears to want to work with you. They're very interested in having a team of superheroes to call on when threats like the Silver Storm and its aftereffects occur in the future.

To show its support for you, one of the citizen groups suggest the mayor give you the key to the city. That proves to be a popular suggestion and by the end of the week you find yourselves standing on a stage on the steps of City Hall receiving the key in a public ceremony. Afterward you spend some time talking to the press and signing glossy pictures of yourself for adoring fans.

Once the ceremony and the media circus surrounding it is over, you're due to meet with some AEGIS agents at their headquarters in City Hall. You're shown into a small, non-descript conference room where you meet Agents McKenzie and Nguyen.



KEY POINTS

The heroes have just acquired the Fame complication. The GM should highlight the benefits and drawbacks of their

new-found celebrity through interaction with the adoring public, autograph-chasers, and the like.

- The heroes' faces are everywhere. Secret IDs just got much harder to keep in this age of the internet, camera phones, and sophisticated surveillance.
- A public ID means *no* privacy. An adoring public is cool, *but they don't go away*. Ever. Go outside and attract a throng of fans. And if you thought SHADOW was soulless and evil, wait until you deal with the paparazzi.
- The heroes' new-found fame may rankle some members of the police and fire departments. After all, they're out there saving lives every day, then these heroes come along and handle a single event and hog all the glory? That may lead to trouble with some members of the force.
- The press can turn on you without mercy or warning. Where once a little-known hero might have gotten the benefit of the doubt in a fight gone expensively wrong, now every bit of collateral damage is fodder for "special investigations" on the city's defenders. That's not a problem in these early days, but it may be at some future point.

PLAYING THE AEGIS AGENTS

AEGIS Agents: Agents McKenzie and Nguyen (pronounced "win") are friendly but businesslike...they don't want to antagonize the heroes, but they definitely want to make sure the heroes understand that it's AEGIS who ultimately signed off on the heroes becoming a team and they expect a certain level of professionalism and responsibility. For full details on Agents McKenzie and Nguyen, see pages 53-54 of the *Secrets of Emerald City* book.

The purpose of this meeting is to find out as much as additional information as they can about the heroes. They ask lots of questions, they even ask about things they already know about, just to make sure their information is complete. Gamemasters should think up some questions of their own to ask the heroes, but here's a list to get you started:

- *Can you please give us an overview of your powers inasmuch as you're familiar with them?*
- *How long have you been operating as a "hero?"*
- *What motivated you to start?*
- *What were you doing on the day of the Silver Storm that you were able to get there so quickly?*
- *Did any of you know each other before joining the Sentinels?*
- *Did any of you know Maximilian Mars previous to your encounter with F.O.E. and the Freedom League at MarsTech?*
- *Are your powers dangerous to others in any way... other than when you use them on someone?*
- *Where did you get your powers, or if you're not comfortable revealing that, what's their origin?*
- *How long have you had your powers and how experienced are you with them?*



- *Why did you decide to become a, pardon the term, vigilante instead of joining a government agency or program?*
- *Do any of you have military experience?*
- *Do any of you hold advanced degrees of any kind, such as engineering or the like?*
- *Do any of you know first aid?*

McKenzie and Nguyen apologize if any of the questions offend the heroes, but they go on to say they need to learn as much as possible about the heroes so they can properly support them and vice versa. They'd like the heroes to see them as partners when they work together, not as inconveniences or adversaries. They all want the same thing after all, for the people of Emerald City—and America—to be and feel safe.

In addition, the agents give the heroes an overview of AEGIS, the local office, and the sorts of resources and support they can expect to receive. The specifics are unimportant, but the heroes walk away knowing a great deal more about AEGIS, which should come in useful in the future.

REWARDS

This scene lacks built-in combat encounters, but it's rife with opportunities to award hero points due to the trouble and inconvenience caused by Fame or any other complication a hero might have to deal with. In addition, given this scene's focus on roleplaying, you should also give hero points to any player who impress you.

SCENE 4: OPENING GAMBITS

Scene Type: *Combat and possible Challenge*

Grandmaster, leader of the Chessmen, is a local criminal mastermind. He's decided not to let a new team of heroes set up shop in his city and interfere with his profits! He's also angry with Mars for getting involved, so he's going to use his attack on the heroes as cover for pilfering whatever information or technology he can from the heroes' new headquarters.

KEY POINTS

It is *crucial* that the gamemaster pay careful attention to the balance of combat in this encounter. The Chessmen have several advantages and between their abilities and control of the training room, they can easily crush the heroes if the players aren't smart, careful, and lucky. GMs should be aware that the Chessmen's TacNet ability means the Knights and Pawns are disproportionately effective for their power levels. It's also important to keep in mind that the Pawns are minions (see **Minions**, page 193 of the *Hero's Handbook*) so the heroes should be able to deal with them more easily than with the Knights.

ACTION

The Chessmen have three goals—to steal all the information they can from the HQ's secure links to MarsTech and various other external databases that have been

CHESSMEN ATTACK TIME

HERO'S WILL DEFENSE	ROUNDS BEFORE THE CHESSMEN ATTACK				
	1	2	3	4	5
Immune	—	—	—	—	—
0	5	5	5	5	5
1	4	5	5	5	5
2	3	5	5	5	5
3	2	4	5	5	5
4	1	2	3	4	5
5	0	1	1	2	2
6	0	1	1	1	2
7	0	0	1	1	1
8	0	0	0	1	1
9	0	0	0	0	1
10 or higher	0	0	0	0	0

hooked up (like AEGIS), to field-test the Knights' and Pawns' newly-upgraded systems, and to show the world how incompetent these new heroes are. They do this by luring the heroes into their own training room, which is being remotely controlled by the Chessmen's Queens. Once inside, the Queens attack using the capabilities of the training room, while the Knights and Pawns study the heroes before moving in for kill.

SETUP

Despite all of the security in place, the Grandmaster compromised the security of the heroes' Emerald Tower headquarters as it was being built, with a rotating set of Bishops infiltrating the construction crew to plant data taps, surveillance equipment, and teleport transponders. They've been tapping all the data links they could since the links went active and are finally ready to move to stage two.

Read or paraphrase the following to the players.



As work on your headquarters nears completion, Mars tells you it's time to test the training room. He meets you there, standing in the center of the room, arms outstretched, grinning like a proud papa. The room is large and non-descript right now, but you've all seen it being tested and know it's capable of so much more. Mars himself built the systems that power the room—he's been very secretive about it—and it's equipped with powerful moving floors, powerful weapons, and holographic projectors to simulate all sorts of training scenarios. As the doors slide shut behind you, he lowers his arms and says, "Let the games begin." Then his image digitizes and he fades away... just as the walls all around you slide open to reveal coil launchers, flamethrowers, and taser cannons, while sections of the floor rise up to

create a maze of barriers. On the far side of the room, a small, white disk with a large red "X" on it unfolds from the wall near the ceiling. Then you hear Mars' voice say, "Go!"



While the heroes may believe this is just a training session, what's really happening is that the Chessmen have taken over the training room and are using it as part of a trap. Once the heroes realize they're in a trap, that's worth a hero point, optionally, you could give them a hero point as soon as the doors close.

"Mars" was actually a hologram created by the Queens who are in control of the room. They're using it to hide some Knights and Pawns in the room (see later in this section) and to attack the heroes with the following weapons, each of which has the Unreliable flaw (the weapons can take a few seconds to recharge), so each only attacks on a roll of 11-20 every round. There are enough weapons to attack each hero and the room has the following combat abilities:

OFFENSES

Initiative +5

Coil Launchers +10	Ranged, Snare (Resisted by Dodge; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobile)
Flamethrowers —	Line Area, Damage 10
Laser Blasters +12	Ranged, Multiattack Damage 7
Taser Cannons +8	Ranged, Affliction 12 (Resisted by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated)

DEFENSES

DODGE	5	FORTITUDE	Immune
PARRY	5	TOUGHNESS	8
WILL	Immune		



Because the weapons are mobile and take actions, they can be dazed and staggered normally (see **Damaging Objects**, pages 104 or 192 of the *Hero's Handbook*).

Rather than attacking the weapons, a technologically savvy character can attempt to shut down the entire room by gaining access to the control systems. This is a challenge sequence, during which the room continues to attack the hero, making it particularly challenging. In this instance the hero(es) must use their standard action to make skill checks.

Heroes who aren't involved in the challenge can attempt to draw fire off the other characters by targeting the weapons attacking the characters facing the challenge. When a weapon is attacked by a character, it returns fire, turning away from whomever it was previously targeting. This sort of action is worth a hero point to a character making himself a target.

TRAINING ROOM CHALLENGE

Five degrees of success before three degrees of failure.

- **Athletics (DC 15):** Success on this check allows you to force or rip open a section of the wall and gain access to the control systems. Athletics may only be used to gain one success for this challenge.
- **Perception (DC 15):** Success on this check allows you to spot one of the panels that gives access to the portions of the control system you need to reach. Perception may only be used to gain one success for this challenge.

- **Expertise: Science (or other appropriate Expertise) or Technology (DC 15):** Success on these checks allow you to open the access panel (without ripping it open) and then bypass the security protocols in order to shut down the room's combat simulator. These skills may be used to gain up to four successes for this challenge.

If a character or characters manage to complete the challenge, the room's weapons cease firing and all the holograms cease functioning immediately. That saves the heroes from worrying about the room, but there are also some Knights and Pawns hiding in the room, courtesy of the holograms.

TACNET INTERFACE

During the first few rounds of the heroes fight with the training room, the Knights and Pawns, hidden by their EM Cloaks and the room's holograms, sit back and observe the heroes. This gives their TacNet Interface a chance to work, before the Pawns attack from hiding followed by the Knights who drop their cloaking fields and join the fight.

Using their TacNet Interface effect (see the Knights and Pawns in the **Heroes & Villains** section), the Chessmen may already have the heroes at a disadvantage. It's a system that ties all the Knights and Pawns together and allows them to learn how to fight the heroes by observing them. If you wish, you should *secretly* make Will resistance checks (DC 15) every round for each of the heroes before the Knights and Pawns enter the combat. It's important to make the checks secretly because



the heroes don't know anything is happening. The TacNet doesn't drain their abilities, instead it gives the Chessmen more knowledge about how to fight them, so there's no way for the heroes to see or feel anything happening to them.

If you'd rather not make that many rolls for your players, you can use the following table to determine how much the TacNet has learned about the heroes. Whether you use the table or not, give each hero affected a hero point for the inconvenience.

For each hero, find that character's Will defense, then find the number of rounds before the Chessmen join the fight. At the junction of those two values is the penalty that hero suffers to his or her attack bonuses, Dodge, and Parry. If the Chessmen aren't discovered, they wait five rounds, then reveal themselves and attack.

TACTICS

There are two Knights and ten Pawn minions (five teamed with each Knight). Each group picks a hero and concentrates fire until that target drops, then moves on to a new target. Knights and Pawns use their Teamwork advantages to help each other when possible.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

The Toughness of external walls is 16 whereas internal walls are Toughness 12 except for the training room, which is Toughness 18. The training room's normal size is

150 by 200 feet (30 by 40 squares if using a tactical map), but holograph projectors, moving floors, and carefully applied force fields can make it appear any size and shape.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

The Chessmen are a relatively new criminal organization. Led and built from the ground up by the mysterious Grandmaster. It is actually a re-invention of an older organization brought down many years ago during one of the original Raven's last cases. It was an organization comprised of highly skilled agents cherry-picked from global intelligence agencies. The original Grandmaster died in prison, but his son, a technical genius, is intent on honoring his father's memory by resurrecting the Chessmen. Using resources hidden by his father, as well as those gained from other sources, the Grandmaster has built a base of operations underneath Emerald City, a headquarters called "the Board." Two AIs known as *Black Queen* and *White Queen* coordinate all Chessmen operations from the Board and act as sophisticated switchboards for the highly

EMERALD TOWER

Emerald Tower, the new headquarters Max Mars proposes to give to the heroes, is described in more detail in **Chapter 5** of the *Player's Guide to Emerald City*, including a floorplan, layout, and game information. Although it is set up as the HQ of the sample Sentinels heroes, it is intended for the heroes Mars works with. If you're also using the Sentinels in your series, feel free to give them a different headquarters.

encrypted communication system and run teleporters to move resources as needed. Advanced robot *Pawns* are the foundation of any combat operation, supplemented by powered-armor wearing *Knights* and mobile weapon platform *Roosts*. Cyborgs called *Bishops* with artificial cyberpathic interface systems act as infiltrators and intelligence agents. Only Knights and Pawns come into direct contact with the heroes in this adventure. They're both detailed in the **Heroes & Villains** section.

OUTCOME

Given the odds against them, the heroes could easily be defeated by the Chessmen, in which case the Grandmaster is able to steal all the technology and information he wants and then orders the Chessmen to leave. He has what he wanted—terabytes of data from both MarsTech and AEGIS, as well as video of the heroes being defeated in their new headquarters! Video that quickly makes its way into the hands of the media. Although it doesn't end their careers, it's a major setback and the heroes have to do some serious damage control to win back public confidence. The defeat does, however, earn them each a hero point.

If the heroes win, the Knights and Pawns self-destruct. The men inside the Knight armor die and their equipment along with the robotic Pawns is reduced to white-hot sludge. Simultaneously, all the other Chessmen equipment secreted around the base also self-destructs. The damage caused to the headquarters is minimal and Mars rebuilds as necessary. Regardless, the base is operational and the heroes can move in right away.

Mars, if and when the heroes track him down, is somewhere else in the building while the heroes are fighting for their lives and knows nothing about "his" involvement in luring them into the trap. Any investigation the heroes undertake to prove otherwise only confirms his story; neither he, nor anyone else, was in the control room. In addition, the training room computers confirm that the Mars the heroes interacted with was merely a hologram controlled from outside the building. It's impossible to trace where the controllers were located because that information was wiped out when the Chessmen destroyed their links to the building.

REWARDS

The heroes should receive at least one hero point during the early parts of this encounter (as directed in the text), but could earn more through their actions or clever play.

SCENE 5: STORM WARNING

Scene Type: Combat

The powers-that-be in Emerald City's underworld have noticed the stormers and their potential value as super-powered lackeys. A test of these potential recruits has been arranged. They're going to hit a secret AEGIS transport. Nothing fancy is planned, just a snatch-and-grab,

preferably with a lot of collateral damage. This is also a test of the local AEGIS team and the new heroes.

Read or paraphrase the following to the players.



It's been an interesting week or so... meeting important people, trying to learn names, codes, and security procedures. Apart from the "excitement" in the training room, it's been a busy, boring week. That changes when an alarm starts going off and you all rush to the meeting room.

A quick flash of information on one of the large view screens tells you an AEGIS transport has come under attack not far from the Emerald Tower and the agents are pinned down by some unknown super-powered assailants.



If they decide to check with the authorities, the heroes find out that, yes, the transport is under attack and all phone and cell communication in the area is being blocked. The heroes don't have a lot of time to decide what they're going to do, but investigating in person is likely their best bet.

PLAYING AEGIS AND THE VILLAINS

Here are a few guidelines and tactics for the opposition in this scene.

AEGIS AGENTS

In this situation, the agents are desperate, harried, and fighting a losing battle against overwhelming numbers. They don't know much of anything about these new stormers, they can't get through to anyone else on their communicators, and they're concerned for their well-being. They are very happy to see the heroes.

CAPTAIN OBLIVION

Melodramatic almost to the point of being operatic. He likes posing and loves monologuing, but he throws out a malapropism here and there, so it's hardly effective. He's also openly flirting with Epiphany Jones.

EPIPHANY JONES

Jones is obviously enjoying herself. The AEGIS agents are just the sort of boring busybodies that always got under her skin when she was nobody. She's having fun making them squirm, and flirts right back at Oblivion while doing it. The heroes aren't as much fun as the agents, but she tries to make the most of their discomfort, too.

GATOR

Gator is going through the motions when the heroes arrive. He was hired to inflict property damage and that's what he's been doing. He's already torn up the street and



has thrown cars into surrounding buildings. He's a little bored and doesn't enjoy Oblivion's blathering. He's actually relieved when the heroes arrive and welcomes the opportunity to tear into them.

TAR BABY

He has people to hurt and things to vent his frustrations on, so he's happy. Given how cool and attractive most hero types are, he takes an instant and intense dislike to them and obviously enjoys bringing the hammer down on whichever hero is closest.

TRINITY

This is a job—it has a goal and a payoff and that's all Trinity finds important. She's emotionally detached and sees the heroes as a new and bothersome problem for which she has to find a solution. If anything, she seems to be in something of a hurry.

Note that the flexible nature of this encounter means that GMs can easily add, subtract, or substitute stormers as needed, be it characters of your own creation, or some of the stormers from the *Threat Reports* series of PDFs published by Green Ronin.

KEY POINTS

Emerald City's existing underworld is trying to decide what to make of both the stormers and the city's new

hero team. Emerald City has long been a safe haven for a number of criminals, but these stormers are drawing too much attention, as evidenced by this new team of heroes taking up residence in town. Some of stormers could be useful, but there are too many unknowns. This mission will help answer some questions for some of the key players in town.

These stormers have been chosen from the newly emerging population due to their power, potential, and reputations. Few of them know each other already or have operated together, so they're not coordinated and don't really work as a team. If they make a good showing, future employment is a safe bet. If they screw up, nobody has anything invested in them and they're expendable muscle.

None of the villains will fight to the bitter end and are more than willing to run off if they feel they've made a good showing—or if it looks like they're going to wind up in jail. They're not fighting for a cause, they're fighting as part of an audition and they know it. Talkative villains say as much before they flee.

The stormers were told to knock over the AEGIS truck, take the case inside, and then stick around until the heroes showed up. When the heroes arrive, the stormers have just retrieved the case. They don't know what's inside it.

The organizers behind this event don't really expect the stormers to make the rendezvous (at an abandoned warehouse down by the docks) and no one will be there to meet them. Instead, they left a cheap cell phone and a case with



\$25,000 in it for them to divide amongst themselves. If they actually make it, the phone will be used to contact them and arrange future work and contact details. Otherwise, the phone and the money are the price of doing business.

ACTION

The stormers have trashed the convoy and forced the AEGIS agents into weak defensive positions, but they aren't moving in to finish them. Instead, they're playing with the agents while waiting for the heroes to arrive. All communications in the area are being jammed, so backup isn't on its way, only the heroes.

SETUP

The combat takes place on a four-lane main street through downtown. There's a crushed, flipped, and damaged semi-truck in the middle of the road. In front and behind it are twin AEGIS SUVs that have also been destroyed. Two of the surviving agents are taking cover behind the rear SUV and the other four agents are inside a nearby building fighting back as best they can while waiting for backup. The villains are arranged as shown on the map.

TACTICS

When the heroes arrive, the villains launch a crude ambush. The plan, such as it is, is for Oblivion to attract the heroes' attention so that Trinity, Gator, and Tar Baby can get their shots in while Epiphany causes problems from out of sight in an alley. However, the villains aren't team-players, and they haven't trained together, so they don't stick to the plan for long. The fight quickly degenerates into chaos. If things start going really poorly for the stormers, they abandon each other without a second thought. Gator and Tar Baby head towards the sewers, Trinity flies off, and Captain Oblivion blasts an escape tunnel into the sewers or Undercity for him and Epiphany Jones to use. They take the case with them if the heroes haven't recovered it from them, but they won't delay their escape to try and get it back.

The AEGIS agents mostly stay out of the way of the heroes and villains since they're not equipped for a serious fight. However, if an opportunity presents itself, the agents aren't afraid to return fire or help out the heroes in some way.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

The surrounding buildings are brick and stonework (Toughness 8-9) and are three to four stories tall, with an occasional five-story building, which run from 40 to 70 feet tall. One corner of one of the blocks is a gas station—a hero or villain may decide to blow up the underground gas tank (Burst Area 2 (60 foot radius) Damage 13), or the GM may decide to trigger a hero's Accident complication, which results in the same effect. (Remember to award a hero point if you do that!)

The cars on the scene have already been destroyed and can be used as cover... or as weapons by stronger characters. In addition, fuel has leaked out of the destroyed cars and covers the five feet surrounding them. The fuel catches fire (Damage 3, Secondary Effect) when hit by any attack that will set them ablaze. The fire persists until put out. The vehicles' gas tanks won't explode unless a player spends a hero point to edit the scene to make it happen, or you inflict another hero-point worthy complication on them (Area Burst Damage 10).

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

The stormers used in this encounter all appear in the **Heroes & Villains** section at the end of this adventure. For civilians, use the Bystander archetype and normal AEGIS agents use the SWAT archetype, both from the *Hero's Handbook*.

OUTCOME

If the heroes lose, the stormers leave as they were instructed. None of them are coldblooded killers (yet) and they aren't getting paid to kill anyone, not even the heroes.

Given the nature of the opposition, the heroes *should win*. At which point, AEGIS takes possession of the briefcase the villains were after. The agents refuse to answer questions as to what the case contains, citing national security concerns, then they thank the heroes, and see to helping locals deal with the aftermath of the battle.

If a hero insists on finding out what's in the case (Toughness 10 against attempts to rip open, Technology check against DC 25 for a more civilized method), the heroes find it contains a transparent vial of gray sludge and a few pieces of odd looking (and obviously damaged) tech, all secured in transport foam. Without some context for the items, it should be impossible for the players to deduce what they are. Be vague in answering questions about the items, but remind the players that their heroes probably just violated a number of federal laws and soured their relationship with AEGIS.

REWARDS

If the heroes figure out this is a trap and take precautions or approach the situation carefully, foiling the stormers' ambush, that's worth a hero point. A couple of the villains in this scenario have Luck, which is usually reserved for heroes, since it allows villains to, effectively, impose a complication on the heroes without giving them a hero point. Instead of doing that, it's recommended that you give the affected hero(es) a hero point. Finally, there are plenty of AEGIS agents and property around for the heroes to protect, that sort of heroic activity is definitely worth a hero point.

YOU WANT MORE?

If you're looking for hooks you can expand on between chapters of the adventure—or to expand your series setting—the heroes can investigate the Chessmen or chance onto another one of their operations. Perhaps they're using some of the information they found in the information they stole from MarsTech or AEGIS to recover a much-needed experimental power source or prototype weapon.

The heroes could also build relationships with important people in the community, either by performing various good deeds or participating in fundraisers or other public events... which leave them open to attack by enemies.

You could also expand on the briefcase the stormers stole (or attempted to steal) from AEGIS. If the heroes didn't find out what was inside, you can substitute an item of your own and spin off an entirely new plotline to occupy the heroes.

EPILOGUE

Following the action-packed first few days of the team's existence, well-deserved downtime is in order. While practicing in their (now fully-restored) training room or otherwise taking advantage of their new home's features, a few of the technical-minded heroes can use their time to investigate the the Silver Storm.

Assuming the heroes haven't already had the chance to study the evidence they collected at the site of the Silver Storm in a fully stocked laboratory, they can now use the lab in their new headquarters to do so.

See **Scene 3: Private Investigations** of **Chapter 1**, particularly **Doing Science** and **CSI: Emerald City**.

Mars has no access to this data unless the heroes share it with him. If they involve Mars, he says he'll gladly work with them to uncover what he can about the strange technology.

Once he gets a chance to look over the devices more thoroughly, he recognizes aspects of their technology as being of the same origin as the salvaged alien tech he used to make his Commander armor. This worries him, but he doesn't mention it to the heroes just yet.

The heroes may pick up on the fact that he's hiding something (either with powers or an opposed Insight check versus his Deception skill check result). Regardless, he's good to his work and not only investigates the new devices, but also compares it to his own alien technology in an effort to figure out how they might be linked.

CHAPTER 3: POWER PLAY

By this point, the heroes should be getting established in Emerald City following the explosive events of the Silver Storm, and starting to settle into their new roles as the city's defenders. Distinguishing themselves in battle against the superhuman stormers, super-powered beings created by the Silver Storm, the heroes won the approval of the Emerald City Police Department—and the attention of mysterious billionaire Maximilian Mars. Mars has offered to help the heroes by sponsoring the team and providing a high-tech headquarters in the heart of the city.

But their encounter with the Freedom League may have left the heroes wondering about the background and motives of Maximilian Mars. They're about to get a chance for some answers, as a threat hiding in the shadows of Emerald City reveals itself....

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

For years, the villains of Emerald City have been kept on a short leash. In this adventure, the overlords who kept them in check for years are gone, and the villains make a play to seize power before Maximilian Mars and his team of heroes get too established. Banded together as F.O.E.—the Fraternal Order of Evil—the villains stage a jailbreak to recruit some of the new stormers into their ranks, then launch a massive crime wave—all in hope of luring the heroes into a trap where they'll face the leader of F.O.E.: the Big Brain.

As the chapter begins, the heroes are contacted midway through a weekday morning by AEGIS Senior Security Analyst/Field Operative Justin McKenzie. (McKenzie is one of the agents the heroes spoke to at AEGIS headquarters in **Chapter 2**.) Those heroes in their Emerald Tower headquarters receive the message on a large screen in the main meeting room, while those elsewhere in the city might receive the call on MarsTech communicators given

"FUTURE USE"

Though the heroes most likely defeat F.O.E.'s plans during this adventure, in doing so they make a powerful enemy that can and will return to haunt them another day. F.O.E.'s schemes in this adventure should give you a good feel for the types of plans they put together in the future, plans that can make use of nearly any villain they can recruit into their ranks.

F.O.E.'s crime wave also gives you three crimes you can repeat in future adventures—a battle in the streets, a museum heist, and a running battle above the streets. Whether the villains they defeat today return to try again for the same targets, copycat villains attempt to succeed where the previous attempts failed, or you just change some of the details (perhaps swapping out the museum for a bank), these are scenes that can reoccur in your campaign as needed.

to the team. The communicators are simple but ruggedized gadgets that allow voice and video communications among team members, and are really only devices to help move the adventure along—if the players want the communicators to have more functionality, they'll need to invest points in better equipment.

Once the whole team is on the line, read McKenzie's message to the team:



"Good morning. It's good to see you again. In case you don't remember, I'm Agent McKenzie, I'm the Senior Security Analyst and a Field Agent for the AEGIS office in Emerald City. I was hoping I could ask you a favor."

"The Emerald City Police Department has been struggling to contain the stormers you captured after the Silver Storm. Then they rounded up a bunch more who sparked up some powers and started wreaking havoc. The city hasn't had to deal with many powered criminals in the past, and they're definitely not ready to handle so many so quickly."

"They borrowed some power dampeners from us to detain the stormers as best they can, but the department is reporting a suspicious series of malfunctions. I'm looking into it on my end, but I guarantee AEGIS would never send out dampeners with anything but a spotless maintenance record. So I asked your friend Maximilian Mars if MarsTech could help out. A few minutes ago his techs confirmed my suspicions: someone is sabotaging the dampeners."

"Once they finish repairs, the techs should be able to stay on top of the problem, but the police were impressed with your work containing the stormers earlier and are hoping you could come by and keep an eye on things until the work is done. Plus, I'm not just the Senior Security Analyst of the AEGIS office in Emerald City, I'm pretty much the only one around while the other agents are out on other assignments. So on behalf of AEGIS, I'd appreciate your help too. It shouldn't be more than a couple hours until everything is back to normal."



Famous last words, of course, as there's about to be a major jailbreak at the Emerald City Detention Center. If the heroes do as Agent McKenzie requests, they arrive just as the jailbreak occurs. If they dismiss McKenzie or delay going, explosions in the distance and news reports call them to the scene. When they get there, the heroes quickly realize that the sabotage of the power dampeners was arranged by villains come to recruit some of the new stormers into the campaign of crime and terror they're about to launch in the name of their organization: F.O.E.

SCENE 1: JAILHOUSE ROCKED

Scene Type: Combat

If the heroes immediately head to the detention center, they arrive just in time to see F.O.E. easily break into the twelve-story detention center run by the Emerald City Police Department. It's a modern facility on the edge of downtown with well-armed and well-trained police, but the E.C.P.D. is still unprepared to face a full-on attack—especially as one group breaks into the maximum-security floor near the roof, another smashes a hole into the general holding facility on the sixth and seventh floors, and a third group shreds its way in through the loading dock just outside the incoming prisoners area on the first floor. The top and bottom floors are where the stormers are being held, and are the main targets of the attack. Opening the general holding facility just adds to the chaos and helps distract the police.

PLAYING THE VILLAINS

F.O.E. has three of its veteran members leading the jail-break:

DREADNOUGHT

Leading the assault on the roof, Dreadnought runs his attack like a military operation, assuming command over the villains he's freeing and barking commands. If any of his recruits fall, that's just "the bloody cost of doing business" to the battlefield-trained villain—but he takes any attacks targeting him very personally and unleashes his full fury upon any hero who threatens him. A loyal member of F.O.E., Dreadnought considers any escaping villains already in the organization to be "his men."

NIGHTBLADE

Nightblade is a silent shadow as he moves through the interior of the building, an enigmatic but deadly threat who would prefer to accomplish his mission for F.O.E. without anyone knowing he's there—though he doesn't hesitate to leave behind considerable clues in the form of blinded and sword-slashed victims. If engaged by the heroes, he interacts with them like a swordsman, dancing at a distance and maneuvering, silently assessing, engaging to strike at the opportune moment, then withdrawing to begin the cycle again.

LORD QUAKE

A stately warrior-king of a villain, Lord Quake sees the attack on the jail's loading dock as an opportunity to free the repressed peoples of the surface powers and recruit them to his cause. Throughout the attack he reassures the villains around him that when F.O.E.'s battle is done, they will be welcome in the imperial army of his Colorado kingdom. Though he expects his new followers to rally to the cause, Lord Quake proves he is a worthy leader by stepping in to defend them from the heroes when needed.



VILLAINS, VILLAINS EVERYWHERE!

Note that to have a force of villains accompanying each F.O.E. commander during their crime wave later in this adventure (see **Scenes 4-6**), you'll want at least a dozen villains ready to escape and join F.O.E., along with more in case your heroes knock them out during the jailbreak or otherwise prevent them from escaping. This may seem like a lot of villains... that's because it is! But each group is treated as a separate encounter in a running battle. They're not part of a single, unified force the heroes face at one time. Each encounter should be a challenge for the hero or heroes involved, but shouldn't be overwhelming. Dreadnought, Nightblade, and Lord Quake are all a good match for an individual hero, but if your heroes team up to take them on, add more villains to even the odds a bit. Because it's impossible for this adventure to take every possibility into account, you'll need to customize each encounter using stormers and other villains you want to introduce.

Beyond these three, the escaping prisoners in this scene can be any and all of the stormers the heroes have previously faced in the **Heroes Journey**, such as Lightshow, Octaman, and Death Magnetic, or they may be new villains you want to introduce to the campaign at this point—stormers whose powers were activated after the Storm itself and picked up by the police or AEGIS agents. Some of the escapees may be members of F.O.E. the heroes have already faced in **Chapter 1: The Silver Storm**, such as Cyberknight, Gargantua, Cannon, and Tempus, who would be imprisoned here in the Emerald City Detention Center if they were captured during that adventure. Villains of your choice appropriate to the power level of your heroes from *Mutants & Masterminds Threat Reports* or created using the Quickstart Character Generator in the *Mutants & Masterminds Gamemaster's Kit* might also fill these roles.

Depending on their individual personalities, some villains who have faced the heroes before may come for revenge once the heroes are on the scene, while most others focus on the opportunity to escape. Villains who are already members of F.O.E. recognize the authority of the veteran members, and follow their lead in the battle, but none of the villains are interested in being (re-)captured.

KEY POINTS

During the battle, heroes knowledgeable about particular villains (an appropriate Expertise, or multiple successful uses of Insight with the Assessment advantage (DC 15 for either)) or who pay attention to the overall strategy of the attack (Perception or Expertise: Tactics checks (DC 20)) recognize that this operation is unusually well organized. Further, depending on the villains in the mix, they might see villains working together who would normally fight on sight, or villains who might normally be consumed by rage keeping their anger in check. The former hints at F.O.E.'s expertise in coordinating villains, while the latter is F.O.E.'s leader using his mental abilities to keep troublemakers in line, though he immediately disengages if the heroes detect his intervention.

A Perception check (DC 10) allows the heroes to overhear the members of F.O.E. recruiting the former prisoners, promising everything from costumes and technical support to a safe haven and the chance at wealth and power. They may also hear, "The Chamber is no more, and Emerald City is finally fair game!" and "It's time to carve up the Emerald!" By the end of the battle, the heroes should know that F.O.E. was behind the breakout, and that they have plans for Emerald City.

ACTION

In general, the scene should be one of planned and well-executed chaos. The heroes may defeat every villain they confront, but for each one they defeat five slip away. (See the **Villains, Villains Everywhere!** sidebar.)

SETUP

When the heroes arrive, a gaping chasm has opened in the earth near the loading docks of the detention center, and Lord Quake has ripped open the gates to free recently-captured stormers. Midway up the building, escaping prisoners have used a desk to smash out a window, and from inside the heroes hear the blare of fire alarms and see clouds of roiling black smoke—all the work of Nightblade as he moves through the cellblocks. Dreadnought is on the roof and has just blown a hole through the roof into the maximum-security block on the top floor, with stormers climbing up to board Dreadnought's flying drones.

TACTICS

The trio of F.O.E. commanders fight the battle on three fronts, in order to maximize the chaos, free as many prisoners as possible, and force the heroes to divide their efforts. As Lord Quake and Dreadnought focus on getting as many new recruits safely away as possible, they keep as many villains as needed close at hand (particularly freed F.O.E. members) to keep themselves safe and the odds in their favor. Be sure to add enough villains to the scene (see **Playing the Villains** on page 3) to make the jailbreak a challenge for the heroes.

On the roof, Dreadnought uses his Arsenal array to keep approaching fliers and police helicopters at bay, and recruits escaping stormers to help him as needed while ferrying as many as possible away using his Air Cavalry drones. Each drone can carry two or three normal-sized villains, and returns three rounds after departing. If the heroes chase after a drone, it takes an alternate route leading away from the drop-off point where they are leaving other villains.

On the ground, Lord Quake uses his Earthshaping abilities to shield superhuman recruits as they move between the building and the opening to his tunnels. If the heroes try to pursue the escaping villains underground, Quake collapses the tunnel and points the next group of escapees toward a new tunnel he opens nearby.

Inside, Nightblade moves through the building opening cells for non-powered prisoners F.O.E. has no intent of

recruiting but who light fires and endanger guards, which should slow down the heroes as they help out. Unlike the other commanders, Nightblade operates alone and does not ask escapees for assistance aside from suggesting they seek revenge on their captors. If discovered by the heroes, he immediately teleports elsewhere in the building to cause more chaos rather than fight—leaving the heroes to clean up whatever mess he's left behind. Along with escaping prisoners, this includes prisoners attacking guards, and guards barred in cells or trapped by fire. Heroes who focus on protecting innocent guards during the battle should be rewarded with an additional hero point.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Though much of the battle likely takes place outside the detention center, if the heroes pursue Nightblade or otherwise go inside the building, they find walls of eight-inch-thick reinforced concrete (Toughness 11), steel doors, and guard centers with windows of bulletproof glass (both Toughness 9). After opening the doors to both the cell blocks and the cells themselves on the general population floors, Nightblade took out the detention center's power to disable the remainder of the security system, though emergency lights provide some light as the heroes move through the building.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

For police officers and escaped prisoners, use the Police Officer and Criminal (or Thug) archetypes, respectively, from *Hero's Handbook*, page 217.

OUTCOME

Over the course of the jailbreak, prisoners should continue to escape and the chaos escalate. If the heroes are overcome in battle, police from across the city finally arrive in force and quell the riot. Even if the heroes stay together and make a stand, the F.O.E. commanders send escapees into the breach to ensure their own escape.

In short, regardless of how good a fight the heroes put up, many prisoners are going to escape and the bad guys are going to get away. While this might be demoralizing, unless the heroes shied away from battle or made obvious and grievous mistakes the guards and policeman on the scene will acknowledge that the heroes did the best they could and likely kept *everyone* from getting away.

On the plus side, though the heroes don't know it yet, they won't have to wait long for a rematch!

If the heroes help investigate the cause of the jailbreak, an Investigation check (DC 15) allows them to quickly piece together surveillance footage from before the power went out. The footage shows guards wandering through the hallways in a daze turning off alarms and damaging the power dampeners. When questioned, the guards don't remember doing what they see on the videotape, and the heroes with Expertise: Psychology or an appropriate power easily recognize that the guards were manipulated into helping the jailbreak by some outside force.

REWARDS

Thanks to this battle, the heroes continue to earn the respect of the Emerald City Police Department, and may be able to call upon AEGIS (or at least Agent McKenzie) for a favor. A hero point also goes to those heroes who ventured into the detention center and saved guards endangered by Nightblade and the freed criminals, plus another hero point for "allowing" (some, most, or all of) the villains to get away.

SCENE 2: QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Scene Type: Investigation

Whether they return to their Emerald Tower headquarters by way of the streets or through the air, the heroes notice a great deal of commotion around the base of the building, as what appears to be a large party is being set up inside. Waiting for them at the headquarters is a recorded message from Maximilian Mars:



"Nice work at the detention center. Don't worry too much about the ones that got away. F.O.E. pulls themselves together every once in a while, usually just long enough for a group of heroes to break them up again. It's been a while since F.O.E. has tried anything quite this ambitious in Emerald City, but I suppose we shouldn't be surprised. I'm sure they have something planned, and when they set things in motion that will be your chance to round them up. You might be able to dig something up on them in the computer."

"In the meantime, you might come down and enjoy yourselves in the lobby. MarsTech has finally finished moving some of its offices and facilities into Emerald Tower, and we're having a grand opening celebration. As our neighbors in the tower, we'd be happy to have you as our guests at the party. I'll be going down shortly. Hopefully I'll see you there."



Throughout this scene, there are several leads the heroes can investigate:

WHAT IS F.O.E.?

After hearing villains shouting slogans in the battle at the jail, the heroes may want to know more about the group that launched the jailbreak. Using the name "F.O.E." as their lead, heroes who do succeed on a Investigation check (DC 10) or have the Well-informed advantage discover the following about the group, from sources like journalists or the police:

- F.O.E. is the Fraternal Order of Evil, a nefarious organization that has been thought defeated by heroes a few times in the last decade, only to arise again not long later with a new membership of villains and a

new wave of crimes. Dozens of villains have been members of F.O.E. over the years, drawn in by offers of everything from riches to help recovering from battle... but mostly by promises that in joining F.O.E. they increase their chances of success by coordinating their efforts.

- While F.O.E. has operated across the nation and around the world, they've only rarely appeared in Emerald City, and even then they've only made occa-

THE MAXIMILIAN MARS STORY

If players visit the MarsTech museum, they find a small, quiet room with low lighting, spot-lit cases containing photos and memorabilia, and a large television screen looping a well-produced documentary with the following narration:

Maximilian Mars was born the son of a lawyer and a high school physics teacher, both Emerald City natives. A bright and studious boy, Mars graduated at the top of his class, and earned a doctorate in chemical engineering from CalTech in his early twenties. Pursuing childhood dreams that cast his vision toward the stars, Mars worked at a NASA facility for several years before he was recruited into the private sector, eventually returning home to a corporate research laboratory in Emerald City—just as the lab's poor management lost the confidence of investors.

Mars seized upon the company's failure as his opportunity, spending money inherited from his recently deceased parents to purchase the company's assets and use them as the foundation for his own new company: MarsTech. Mars' innovative ideas, stifled under government and corporate overseers, now had a chance to flourish. Six months later, MarsTech released its first product: photoreactive dyes that allowed the creation of MarsTech Programmable Paint, first adopted for military camouflage but quickly embraced by the world of fashion and consumer products. It was only the first of a dozen breakthroughs, from adaptive polymers to piezoelectric ceramics—most directly from the private laboratories of Maximilian Mars—that have made Mars not only the richest man in Emerald City but one of the richest men in the world. Still wary of management and investors, Mars has remained in firm control of his company, even as it grew to become one of the largest employers in the city.

As MarsTech prospered, so did Emerald City! As the fortunes of MarsTech rose, crime rates in its home fell until Emerald City had one of the lowest crime rates in the country. From the Emerald City Orchestra and the Pacific Museum of Art to Warm Kettle shelters for the homeless and Block Party community centers, MarsTech and Maximilian Mars have supported every aspect of Emerald City and helped it to be named one of the best places to live in the United States! While superhumans appeared in places like Freedom City, Maximilian Mars famously declared at the opening of the 2000 Emerald City Expo that "in Emerald City, we can be our own heroes!"

But now the Silver Storm has forced superhuman powers and the chaos that comes with them upon the people of Emerald City—and once again Maximilian Mars has stepped forward to help the city use its newfound power responsibly! The top floors of this very building—once intended for Maximilian Mars' personal offices—have been graciously donated to a new team of heroes who have dedicated themselves to protecting Emerald City. Now they join MarsTech high atop Emerald Tower, keeping a watchful eye on the city they love, and guiding it into the future!

sional, isolated but well-planned attacks. Only a few Emerald City local villains have been known to be members of F.O.E.—more often villains seem to join F.O.E. before coming to Emerald City. The jailbreak of stormers appears to be an attempt by the organization to aggressively grow their local membership.

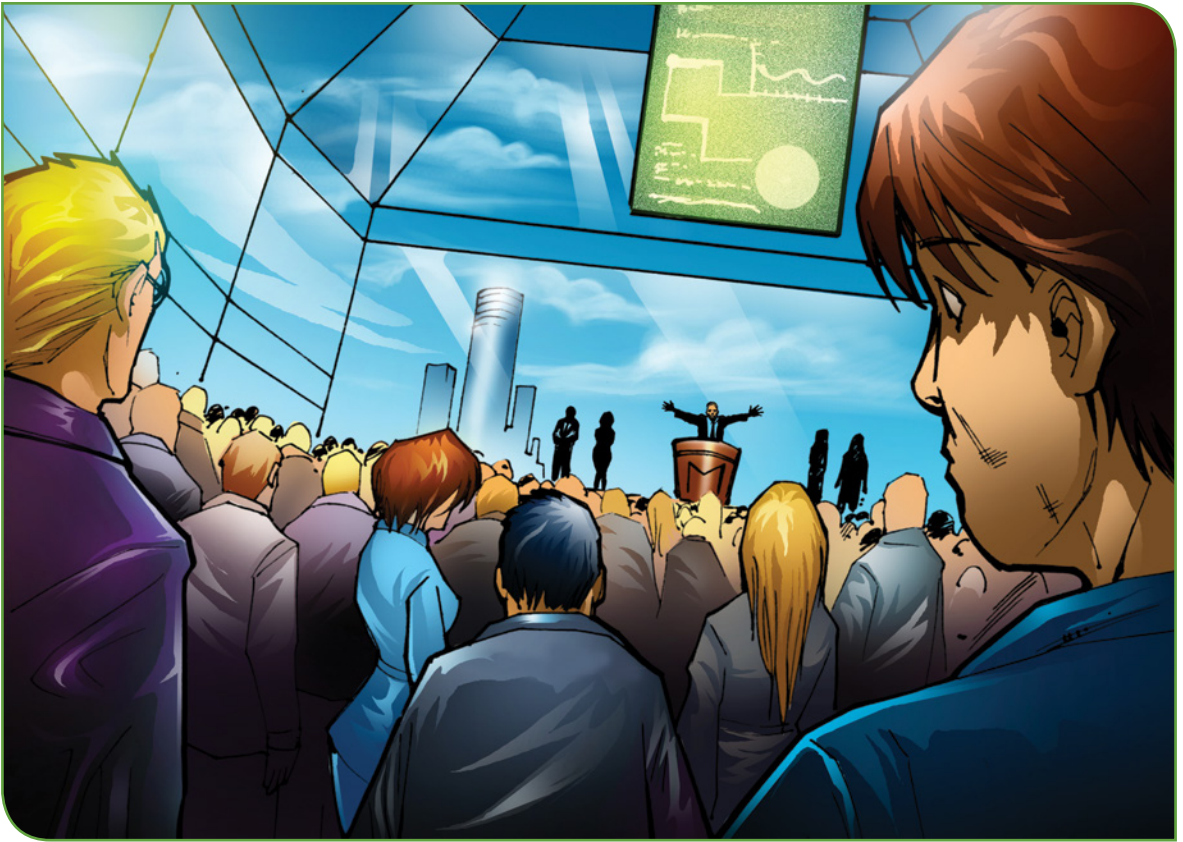
Successful Investigation checks (DC 15) for each of the F.O.E. leaders the heroes encountered in the jailbreak reveal the following information about their backgrounds and their relationship to F.O.E.:

- **Dreadnought:** Dreadnought has been a member of F.O.E. for nearly as long as it's been known to exist. For years he's been stealing technology for the organization, often in order to sell or auction it to underworld clients, but sometimes to help upgrade his armor. F.O.E. appears to act as his technical support, keeping his armor combat-ready and helping to add improvements. In return, Dreadnought is fiercely loyal to F.O.E.
- **Lord Quake:** Lord Quake comes from somewhere deep underground, from a kingdom he says was destroyed by the surface world. Unfortunately, he sees the governments and heroes of the surface world as its destructive repressors, and villains like F.O.E. as freedom fighters carving out their own place in the world through strength. Since joining with F.O.E., Quake has been stealing items of high monetary value—particularly gemstones and precious metals, as Lord Quake takes his share of the loot off to a new kingdom he claims to be building somewhere in the mountains.
- **Nightblade:** Today was the first time Nightblade has been known to operate in the United States, but in the past he has been connected to China's Phoenix Moon Society, a criminal syndicate in a long rivalry with the heart of Emerald City's own Asian underworld, the Golden Dragon Society. Some rumors say Nightblade is the Phoenix Moon Society's chief assassin, while others claim he heads up the entire organization. If the heroes have contacts with international law enforcement agencies, they may speculate that Nightblade is working with F.O.E. as an exploratory strike into what was long the heart of enemy territory until the recent death of underworld overlord Dragoneye.

FURTHER F.O.E. FACTS

An Investigation check (DC 25) reveals not only the above but more about F.O.E.'s inner workings:

- A villain recruited into F.O.E. offers up their plans for wealth and conquest, and F.O.E. helps to improve those plans in return for loyalty and a portion of the take from their crimes. Often F.O.E. sends other super-powered villains to assist a member with their scheme. Nearly always, F.O.E. coordinates the timing of a villain's plans so that their attack coincides with those of other members, splitting the forces of heroes who might try to stop them.



- Success on another Investigation check (DC 25) for a hero with access to classified information allows them to find the secret hidden deepest in the files of investigators who have looked into F.O.E. in the past:

Authorities suspect that while F.O.E. has appeared in many forms over the years, there is a single person pulling the strings for the entire organization, guiding dozens of villains from behind the scenes. Villains thought to be this mastermind in the past have turned out to be following the orders of someone else—and in at least one case, they were actively mind-controlled by an outside force!

WHERE IS THE CHAMBER?

Heroes may also want to look into the “Chamber” mentioned by F.O.E. during the attack. An Investigation check (DC 15) reveals that in the past, criminals arrested in Emerald City have alluded to the fact that particular crimes were and weren’t allowed in the city by the Chamber, and that those who broke the rules were quickly—sometimes fatally—punished. However, any time investigators tried to put rumors about the Chamber on the record, informants disappeared or died before they could be brought before a grand jury, a powerful deterrent to other potential stoolies.

WHO IS MAXIMILIAN MARS?

Though the heroes should be given time to investigate other leads if they so choose, after a time they begin to get calls from Maximilian Mars’ assistants, reminding them that they are invited to the party beginning shortly in the lobby.

Unless they attend in a non-heroic identity, if the heroes go down to the party being thrown by MarsTech, they arrive to applause from the gathered employees of the company. After a moment it dies down, and a man in a suit steps up to a dais in the center of the cavernous lobby:



“I’d like to thank Emerald City’s newest heroes for attending our little celebration, particularly after what they did for the city today. But as MarsTech employees, I think we all know there’s another hero in the room, a man who has done a lot of good not just for us personally but for all of Emerald City—not to mention the technological gifts his brilliance has brought into the world.”

“He threw this party for us, but I hope we can also consider it to be a party where we can take a moment to appreciate him, and invite others to do the same. To that end, I and the rest of the MarsTech executive board have arranged a little surprise, a small museum dedicated to him just off this lobby. He’s the founder and president of MarsTech, and he’s my hero: ladies and gentleman, Maximilian Mars!”

The room erupts in cheers and applause as Mars steps up to the dais.

“Thank you. Thank you all. I see they’ve called the museum ‘The Maximilian Mars Story’. I won’t keep you from your well-earned celebration for long, except to tell you that my story is merely a prologue to the one we will build together, here in this tower. My past is past, and in time what will

truly be important is the MarsTech legacy. You will be as important a part of that as I. So thank you all, for the work you've done, and for the work you'll do in the years to come."

A jazz band swings into a song, and the party kicks into gear. The size of a small aircraft hanger, the glass-walled lobby is packed with more than a thousand MarsTech employees dancing to the music, eating fresh sushi prepared by chefs in the center of the room, and accepting drinks from the waiters moving through the crowd. Mars remains on the periphery of the event, speaking quietly with the company's executives and top scientists.



If the heroes hobnob with MarsTech employees, they find that without exception the company's employees have a lot of respect for Maximilian Mars. However, they also admit he's a highly private man (which isn't too surprising for a billionaire with excessive demands on his time), and they don't know much beyond what the heroes might discover from a visit to the new corporate museum just off the lobby. (See **The Maximilian Mars Story** sidebar for more details.)

SCENE 3: RACE AGAINST CRIME

Scene Type: Challenge

Just as the afternoon party reaches its peak, an explosion shatters the Emerald Tower's atrium, raining glass and debris on the crowd below!

Run the challenge outlined below here. During the first round of actions, read—or paraphrase—the text below to the heroes



MarsTech security surrounds Maximilian Mars, and pushes him under a nearby table to protect him from the chaos. Then you, and apparently everyone in the lobby, hears a booming voice in their mind:

"Emerald City does not belong to Maximilian Mars! It belongs to F.O.E., and our reign begins now!"

As the voice fades, a portal opens near Mars—and he steps through! As soon as Mars is gone, the portal snaps shut and he's gone.



A player who succeeds on an Insight check (DC 25) notices Mars' movements appear hesitant, which hints at some sort of coercion (heroes with Mental Awareness notice the effect with a Perception check (DC 20), but can't sense its origin). Distant explosions and sirens alert the heroes: only hours after the jailbreak, F.O.E.'s Emerald City crime wave has already begun.

The heroes can choose to ignore the dangers outlined below and head off to deal with the chaos in the city, but

if they do, they leave a number of innocents to be injured (or worse!). Plus, any hero who sticks around to help out earns a hero point—whether or not they succeed at their chosen challenge!

The heroes have a few options available to them in this challenge. They can deal with the glass falling down on the MarsTech employees below, clear the MarsTech employees out of the dangerous area (or protect them some other way), or attempt to keep the employees calm as they stampede for the doors. Heroes are free to tackle these problems together or split up and cover two or three fronts at once.

This challenge is PL10. The heroes need to succeed on five checks (DC 10) before failing three. Attacks automatically hit, but if the player opts to make an attack check vs. Dodge/Parry of 10, that counts as one of the checks for completing the challenge. In addition, if the hero hits with their attack, he or she gains a +5 bonus to their Damage effect for the attack.

FALLING GLASS

While the majority of the glass breaks up into pieces, a handful of panes wobble loose of their frames and fall intact. The hero (or heroes) need to keep the panes from falling or break them into smaller pieces, which won't cause serious injury. For this challenge the heroes can make checks using the following effects:

- Any **Damage** effect to break up the glass into small pieces.
- **Move Object**, in order to grab a pane of glass and place it safely on the ground or back in its frame.
- **Strength**, as long as the hero can break up the glass while it's in the air. Flight, Leaping, or Elongation are particularly useful when combined with Strength in this regard.
- **Flight** or **Teleportation** Attacks or that are Usable on Others or that Affects Objects (probably requiring a power stunt) can be used to move a pane to a safe location.
- Any other effect that your players come up with that sounds reasonable.

SAVING INNOCENTS

The MarsTech employees are divided into two camps; one group is fleeing for the exits in total diarray, and the other is standing stock-still, shocked into inaction by the chaos around them and the glass falling from above. Heroes who opt to protect these civilians from harm as opposed to dealing directly with the panes of glass have a couple of options:

- Any **Burrowing**, **Flight**, **Leaping**, **Movement (Swinging)**, **Speed**, or **Teleport** effect the hero possesses can be used to quickly move people out of the danger zone. If a fast-moving hero also has **Quickness** he or she gains a bonus to the check: +2 for 9 or fewer ranks of Quickness, +5 for 10 or more ranks.

- **Move Object** can be used to move innocents out of harm's way.
- Any **Enhanced Defense** or **Protection** effect with an appropriate **Area** extra can be used to shield the employees from harm.

ENHANCING THE CALM

The MarsTech employees running for the exits run the very real risk of trampling one another as they flee. Heroes may wish to calm them down, which is ultimately both quicker and safer than trying to stop them by force. To do so, the heroes have these options:

- Interaction checks using **Intimidation** or **Persuasion** can be used to cow or convince, respectively, some of the crowd into behaving themselves.
- Appropriate **Expertise** skills, such as EMT, Military, Tactics, etc. can be used to effectively command the people to move safely out of the building.
- **Mind Control/Emotion Control** can calm the employees (this may require a power stunt if the hero doesn't have an Area version of their power).
- **Features** such as a loud speaker grant the hero a +2 bonus to any of the above skill checks.

If the players succeed at all five checks (remember, they're DC 10), they manage to break up the panes or prevent them from falling on the innocents below. For every failed check, a small portion of the people are injured. If the heroes fail three checks, something goes wrong and all their work is undone because the panes fall out of their housing again, too much glass reached the ground, or there were too many people left in the atrium.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

As is F.O.E.'s usual tactics, they've orchestrated several simultaneous crimes across the city—a large scale version of the same plan they used during the jailbreak:

- Lord Quake is robbing the jewelry stores of Emerald City's Diamond District.
- Nightblade is stealing art from the Pacific Museum of Art.
- Dreadnought has hijacked a load of high-tech weaponry.
- Meanwhile, each is giving their new F.O.E. recruits from the morning's jailbreak a trial under fire!

Heroes who can follow the Emerald City police bands quickly hear of each crime. Alternately, heroes who follow the smoke or sound toward one crime scene but succeed on a Perception check (DC 20) realize there are other crimes going on elsewhere in downtown. The first and major decision the heroes have to make is whether to stay together and increase their chance of defeating the villains, or divide their forces in hopes of preventing all three crimes.

The following three sections describe each crime as its own scene. Note that the heroes can choose to arrive at

them in any order. As the crimes are occurring simultaneously, if the heroes stay together and don't spend an usual amount of time defeating the first F.O.E.s they encounter, they likely have time to confront one other group at a second crime scene, while the third escapes scot-free.

REWARDS

Heroes who stuck around to save the MarsTech employees from the aftereffects of the explosion should each be awarded a hero point. If they spent a hero point on a power stunt to save the employees, give them that hero point back. They'll need as many hero points as they can get their hands on in the next encounters!

SCENE 4: DIAMONDS ARE A F.O.E.'S BEST FRIEND

Scene Type: Combat

Read the following to the heroes as they arrive on the scene:



F.O.E. has claimed Emerald City's two-block Diamond District for their own. Earthen barricades block the intersections, and alarms blare from the smashed windows of the high-end jewelry shops and gem wholesalers that line the street. Police officers have taken cover behind the barricades, and have joined the security guards opening fire on Lord Quake as he erupts from beneath the surface. "You have ripped your wealth from the earth!" he roars. "I reclaim it in the name of my people!"



PLAYING THE VILLAINS

LORD QUAKE

Commanding his new army, Lord Quake is the king in battle, guiding and protecting his men as they loot and conquer. He loudly cheers the valor of the villains he commands as they emerge with gems and jewelry—and curses any who hesitate to press the attack, even after the heroes appear.

OTHER VILLAINS

Regardless of their motivations, other villains you chose to include in the adventure as F.O.E. recruits are taking part in the attack because they want to be part of the organization, and follow Quake's orders. At least three villains stand with Quake at the beginning of the encounter, joined by minor villains or minions who emerge from looting stores during the battle. Villains can be added to Quake's core group or the villains emerging from the stores can be

more powerful in order to make the scene a challenge for the heroes.

KEY POINTS

Lord Quake is particularly interested in the Stephano Emerald, one of the largest in the world. Though he does his best to protect all his loyal allies, he lets others take the fall and lose other loot if it means he can escape with the emerald.

ACTION

In this scene, Lord Quake tries to hold off the heroes, reinforced by F.O.E. looters emerging from the stores. If the heroes can't interrupt his plans or contain the villains, Quake helps his F.O.E. allies escape using his Burrowing.

SETUP

As the heroes arrive on the scene, most of F.O.E.'s villains are already in stores. Lord Quake is in the streets, directing his allies against the severely overpowered police who were first on the scene. One other villain is in the streets with him, and one more emerges from a looted store each round until they're all involved in the fight.

TACTICS

Though battling near one of his earthwall barricades when the heroes arrive, Quake quickly moves toward the intersec-

tion at the center of the Diamond District after the heroes arrive, to make it easier for his allies up and down the street to join him as they emerge from the stores. Once there he makes his stand, using Earthshape to throw up cover for villains as needed. If things go well for the villains, they make their getaway from this same point at the end of the battle.

Lord Quake orders villains who can attack from a distance to stay behind the cover he creates, while he joins those who go out to face the heroes in hand-to-hand combat. He and all the other F.O.E. villains on the battlefield are more interested in helping looters emerging from the store get to their extraction point than they are interested in defeating the heroes. However, if a looter is clearly overpowered, captured, or defeated, they cut their losses and leave them behind (unless the looter was carrying Lord Quake's obsession, the Stephano Emerald.)

As soon as all looters have emerged from the stores, and as many as possible are at the extraction point, Lord Quake uses his Burrowing effect to create an escape route for the villains, closing it behind them.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Lord Quake's waist-high earthshaped barricades at the far ends of the Diamond District are intended primarily to block vehicles from entering the area, and can provide partial cover from heroes. He's created similar cover for villains at the center of the battlefield.

The streets of the Diamond District are much like anywhere else in Emerald City, but the storefronts are a



bit more reinforced. Those stores F.O.E. has not broken into before the heroes arrive were quick to close steel gates over their doors and windows. If either the heroes or villains decide to try and enter one of the closed stores during the battle, the gates have Toughness 9 or can be ripped open with a Strength check (DC 20). (Such action also sets off an alarm, but most of the alarms in the neighborhood are going off already.)

Most of the closed stores have an armed security guard, with the same stats as the Police Officer (see *Hero's Handbook*, page 217). Guards in the looted stores were knocked out before the heroes arrive, but if the heroes spend a hero point the guards in the closed stores might assist the heroes by firing through the closed gates at Lord Quake and F.O.E.

OUTCOME

Unlike the jailbreak in **Scene 1**, Lord Quake doesn't need to escape this scene. If he's defeated early in the battle, the tactics of the other F.O.E. villains (particularly any stormers who just joined that morning) fall into disarray, especially as they're left without an escape plan. If the heroes question F.O.E.s after the battle, they may get leads toward either of the other crimes currently happening in Emerald City (**Scene 5** or **Scene 6**), though spending excessive time questioning the villains may allow enough time to pass that the other crimes are complete before the heroes can get there. The same is true if this battle turns into an extended siege during which a lot of time passes. You'll need to judge for yourself how long is too long for the heroes to get to another of the crime scenes.

SCENE 5: A PICTURE WORTH A THOUSAND BLOWS

Scene Type: Combat

Things are quieter down near the waterfront at the Pacific Museum of Art, where Nightblade and F.O.E. released anesthetic gas into the museum before entering. The quietest crime scene of F.O.E.'s crime wave, the heroes may only find out about this crime by hearing about it from other members of F.O.E. during the crime wave, or from police signaled by the silent alarm. If the heroes don't respond quickly, F.O.E. escapes with the museum's Zhi Chin Asian Art Collection, and possibly other art treasures from its galleries.

PLAYING THE VILLAINS

NIGHTBLADE

While Nightblade is typically quiet and enigmatically dangerous, this particular caper is personal for him, as the Zhi Chin Asian Art Collection once belonged to his nemesis, the now-deceased crime lord Dragoneye, leader of the Golden Dragon Society. As F.O.E. moves artworks to the truck, he gloats not only about how it now belongs to him, but that it will never be

seen in public again. If any of the artwork is damaged or destroyed, he must succeed on a Will check (DC 20) or immediately turn to attack whomever is responsible (though if it is a F.O.E. ally, he turns back to the enemy after making a single attack.)

OTHER VILLAINS

Whether already members or stormers recruited by F.O.E. during the jailbreak, the villains accompanying Nightblade at the museum follow his orders, regardless of their normal motivations. Stormers in particular may be trying to prove themselves worthy of membership. Use at least three villains in addition to Nightblade, with others added to make the scene a challenge for the heroes.

ACTION

While Nightblade oversees the operation, the other F.O.E.s on the scene move artwork from the Asian art gallery to a waiting truck. If the heroes went to another crime scene before coming to the museum, the Asian art is already loaded and F.O.E. is busy loading select pieces from other sections of the museum. After they arrive, it will be up to the heroes to prevent F.O.E. from making off with the whole collection.

SETUP

The Pacific Museum of Art has a single main gallery, with two smaller galleries off the north side on each of its three levels. Patrons and museum docents lie unconscious on the floor throughout, as do the museum's guards. The levels are connected by the Switchback, an enormous zig-zagging ramp and modern art piece carved from a chunk of Emerald City's bedrock. The Asian art gallery is off the second level of the main gallery. Opposite the Switchback, a three-story wall of glass floods the building with natural light. F.O.E.'s truck is parked at a loading dock that opens directly into one end of the main gallery.

As the other agents of F.O.E. move through the galleries procuring art, Nightblade stays near the openings to the side galleries, overseeing the operation. Occasionally, he uses his ability to walk through shadows to move smaller pieces down himself and check on the loading of the truck.

TACTICS

Greed keeps F.O.E. on the scene until the heroes arrive, but if the Asian art gallery is already emptied when the heroes come on the scene, Nightblade quietly signals for the truck full of purloined artwork to leave. Then he and the full power of F.O.E. turns to engage and distract the heroes long enough for the truck to get safely away. If the heroes go to the museum immediately, Nightblade orders F.O.E. to attack but he spends four rounds teleporting critical pieces he wants from the Asian art collection down to the truck before sending it away and joining the battle.

In battle, Nightblade immediately damages a large nearby piece of artwork (perhaps slicing a large bronze sculpture in two) to see if he can get the heroes to be more cautious

by threatening nearby artifacts. If the heroes react, he uses nearby artwork defensively, and uses his Darkness Falls ability to make nearby heroes less certain of their attacks.

Depending on their personalities, the other agents of F.O.E. may pick up on their leader's tactics, or they may engage the heroes directly. Nightblade gives few direct orders to the other villains, expecting them to either prove themselves worthy of F.O.E. membership or fail and be left behind.

Nightblade uses his teleport ability to jump among the heroes, slashing strategically at them with the Sword of Midnight to draw them through the museum and prolong the battle for as long as possible, up to 12 rounds. If possible, he brings the battle to other F.O.E.s, letting them keep the heroes engaged one on one, while he focuses on either eliminating the weakest heroes or battering the strongest.

When sufficient time passes for the truck to escape, Nightblade gives a simple "Disperse!" command to his allies, then steps into a shadow and is gone. With the inexperienced stormer agents left to their own devices, this might be the best chance the heroes have for capturing someone for questioning.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

The museum is full of a wide variety of precious artwork that can play a part in the battle. Representative pieces include:

- **"The Midnight Sentinel"**: An enormous bronze statue of a nude man staring resolutely into the

distance, fifteen feet tall on a three-foot marble plinth, and weighing a combined three and a half tons. Provides full cover, Toughness 6.

- **"Albion Towne, 1638"**: A 4' x 5' oil painting in a teak frame. Big enough to provide total concealment to a normal-sized character, but the painting is destroyed by any attack.
- **"Zhi Dragon Soul"**: A jade funerary urn, the last piece Nightblade takes from the Asian art gallery, and the only one he protects from harm. If broken, a ten-foot radius is filled with a cloud of ashes, leaving anyone in the area visually unaware until they make a Fortitude check (DC 15).
- **"Salish Seal Harvest Story"**: A six-foot long whalebone scrimshaw bound in iron. Can be used as a Strength-based Damage 1 bludgeoning weapon with the Unreliable flaw.
- **"Atlas' First Burdens"**: Six globes made up of colored rubber bands, each nine feet in diameter and hanging above the main gallery by four steel cables. Requires any character flying through the main gallery to make an Acrobatics check (DC 15) or an Agility check (DC 20) to avoid getting caught up in the cables. If cut loose, each globe weighs six tons and bounces randomly around the main gallery wrecking havoc.
- **"POP POP"**: A wall of 65 1' x 1' modern art lithographs, each depicting a different soda bottle.

Though the artwork can be used to a wide variety of effects, doing so almost certainly results in it being



destroyed or at least severely damaged. As noted previously, Nightblade and the other villains of F.O.E. have no compunctions about doing so if it allows them to manipulate the heroes into worrying about the artwork thus leaving themselves open to attack. Heroes who go to great lengths to protect the artwork—especially at the cost of letting F.O.E.'s truck or the villains themselves escape—earn an additional hero point.

Characters need to run sixty feet on the back-and-forth of the Switchback to move from one level of the museum to another, or they can climb directly up its stony face. Doing so requires an Athletics check (DC 15) or Movement (Wall-crawling).

Each side gallery has gates that can be dropped to close them off or trap characters inside. Searching a docent and succeeding on a Perception check (DC 15) allows heroes to find the key required to control the system, though each gate needs to be opened or closed individually. Alternately, a Technology check (DC 20) allows a character to jury-rig the control panel for a particular gate and take control of it.

OUTCOME

If the heroes fail to pursue the truck full of artwork, within three rounds it vanishes into the downtown traffic. Heroes who fail to protect the museum's artwork during the battle find themselves with a tarnished reputation in the aftermath, as footage from the museum's security cameras leaks to the press (with the heroes looking particularly bad in the public eye if Nightblade escapes, as his invisibility to cameras means there's no proof on television of his presence at the crime scene.)

More successful heroes might defeat Nightblade and any or all of his F.O.E. allies in this scene. As in **Scene 4**, villains defeated or captured in this scene can provide leads via Intimidation or Persuasion toward **Scenes 4** or **6** if the heroes haven't ventured to those crime scenes yet—though the time spent questioning is time passing that may allow those crimes to be successfully completed.

REWARDS

The museum and its wealthy patrons are thankful to heroes who protect its collection and save the unconscious visitors. Heroes who go out of their way to protect the museum's artwork from the villains during the battle earn an additional hero point, especially if it comes at the cost of allowing villains to escape.

SCENE 6: SKYJACKED!

Scene Type: Combat

By the time the heroes locate the attack led by Dreadnought, they find him not in the streets of Emerald City but above them! A mile north of the Emerald Tower, he and some stormers have hijacked a cargo truck carrying prototype high-tech weaponry to a demonstration at Fort Brewer, a naval base outside the city. However, the truck is

heavier than F.O.E. expected, and Dreadnought's Air Cavalry drones are unable to simply fly away with the stolen truck. Instead, the truck is moving in short hops through the sky above the city, pausing on one rooftop while the propulsion reactors build power, then moving to the next.

PLAYING THE VILLAINS

DREADNOUGHT

Normally accustomed to his heists being executed with military precision, Dreadnought is clearly frustrated and short-tempered at how events have interfered with his plan. Though even less likely than normal to brook failure from his F.O.E. allies, he constantly reminds them of the military mantra—"Improvise! Adapt! Overcome!"—as he does so himself and leads them against the heroes.

OTHER VILLAINS

Dreadnought has done his best to recruit the best and most competent of the F.O.E. members and recruits available to him, focusing on those who will obey his orders without question and those with the ability to fly. If any of the villains are the type who would object to being used as cannon fodder, Dreadnought orders them into the thickest parts of the fray, as an example to the others of the cost of disobedience. Newly-powered stormers who would thrive as part of a larger group are probably particularly enthusiastic about serving under Dreadnought, one of F.O.E.'s highest ranking members. Use at least four villains in addition to Dreadnought, with others added to ensure the scene is a challenge to the heroes.

ACTION

Riding atop and flying around the cargo container, F.O.E. battles the heroes across the Emerald City skyline, a crime scene on the move!

SETUP

The container being stolen by F.O.E. is a standard shipping container, forty feet long and eight feet square. Dreadnought has any F.O.E.s with the ability to fly patrolling fifty feet out from the flying container, while he flies near it. Villains who can't fly are riding atop the container, defending it and the straining Air Cavalry units as the container moves from roof to roof.

TACTICS

Heroes who can leap and fly are able to keep up with F.O.E. easily, but ground-bound heroes need to catch up with the truck and the villains while they pause on a rooftop, which they do two rounds after the heroes arrive on the scene, pausing for two rounds before continuing on again to the next rooftop.

There are eight Air Cavalry drones attached to the container. Their normal individual speed of Flight 7 is slowed to a



combined Flight 5 (900 feet per round, or 60 MPH) due to their heavy burden. For similar reasons, their normal ability to evade attacks is compromised, and their Defense is 0 if the heroes choose to attack them (they maintain their full Toughness of 9). For each two drones the heroes disable, decrease their combined Flight rank by 1.

Though the drones are defenseless, Dreadnought and F.O.E. do everything they can to defend them during the battle. If possible, they work to separate the heroes from the moving battlefield, knocking non-fliers off the container in flight or abandoning heroes on a rooftop while they continue to advance as quickly as possible. Dreadnought works to keep his forces close to the container, defending it, but if necessary he won't hesitate to order a villain to keep a hero locked down on a rooftop while the rest of F.O.E. moves on.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

The shipping container has been armored to safely and securely move military prototypes, and all exterior surfaces have Toughness 14. The only doors are on one end of the container, and are sealed with a security system that requires a Technology check (DC 35) to overcome (a DC that should be situationally modified if appropriate—say, if a hero tries to open it while clinging to the outside of a flying container). In short, the container is tough and difficult to open—which is why F.O.E. is stealing the entire thing in the first place. If the heroes penetrate the container somehow, the weaponry and gear is either inside a secondary set of sealed and secured containers, or in parts awaiting assembly, preventing them from being a factor in the battle.

When the container is moving through the air, it is anywhere between 70 and 120 feet in the air. If a hero lacking the ability to fly is knocked off the container, falling damage comes into play (as explained in the *Hero's Handbook*, page 186.)

If the container is paused on a rooftop while the Air Cavalry drones build power, other environmental effects depend on the particular rooftop where the battle has alighted. Possibilities (and their heights, in case a character is knocked off the edge of the building (a Complication worth a hero point!), and with place names provided for those heroes with a familiarity of Emerald City) include:

- **Parking ramp, top level (80 feet):** Scattered cars that can provide heroes and villains alike with partial or total cover.
- **Port Western Hospital helipad (150 feet):** Clear of helicopters at the moment, but a 30-foot square platform elevated fifteen feet above the rest of the 50-foot square roof; the container hangs over the edges of the helipad, and fights around it have a much higher chance of a character falling off the rooftop proper before they fall to the streets below.)
- **Rainier Towers, penthouse garden (110 feet):** A lush garden adjacent to a fabulously expensive condominium, with an Olympic-sized pool at its center.
- **Northwest Insurance and Investments headquarters, rooftop (100 feet):** A plain tar-and-gravel roof, but with plenty of air conditioning units to give partial cover to characters. At the roof's edge is NII's famous neon compass sign; a character thrown forcibly into

the sign who fails a Fortitude resistance check (DC 20) is shocked by the electricity powering the sign and is stunned and hindered until succeeding on the check. (After the first character is affected, the sign shorts out and will not affect subsequent characters.)

- **Shipyards Lofts, rooftop (90 feet):** This rooftop is littered with skylights opening into the loft apartments below. Characters moving at anything above normal speed across the rooftop need to either have Movement 1+ (Surefooted 1+ or Wall-crawling 1+) or make an Agility check (DC 15) or crash through glass into a top-floor loft. At the back corner of the rooftop, a large water tank holds the water supply for the building's fire sprinklers, and may be useful to characters with appropriate powers.
- **Skyline Restaurant, patio seating (130 feet):** A broad, tiled patio with glass-topped tables crushed by the arrival of the container. Two large open gas-fuelled firepits cause Damage 5 (fire) to any characters who fall or are thrown into them.

OUTCOME

If Dreadnought and F.O.E. can get the container to a rooftop, power up for two rounds, and continue along without heroic interference, then they get clear enough for reinforcements to arrive—a larger version of the Air Cavalry drones that takes both the villains and the container to a supersonic escape.

More likely, however, is that the heroes defeat Dreadnought and his stormer recruits one way or another before they manage to escape with the cargo. If only two drones remain to limp the container along, Dreadnought directs them to dump the container in the bay, a last-ditch tactic tempting heroes to save the prototypes and give F.O.E. a chance to escape.

SCENE 7: MOPPING UP

Scene Type: Roleplaying

Depending on how the heroes respond to the crime wave, all or none of F.O.E.'s crimes may be successful. Regardless, Emerald City has been thrown into chaos, with traffic snarled in the streets until well after midnight.

If any of F.O.E.'s commanders were captured, successful questioning using Persuasion or Intimidation reveals F.O.E.'s hideout: a fish wholesaler in the Eastern District that they call "the Chamber". The villains are considered Hostile with regard to all questioning, but a successful Perception check (DC 30) during questions leading to the revelation of the hideout tells heroes that the bad guys seem to be giving up that information easier than they might expect. (Unbeknownst to the villains, they are being mentally nudged by F.O.E.'s mysterious leader to bait the heroes into a trap.) If the heroes leave the villains for the police, the police contact the heroes and tell them about the hideout.

If somehow all the villains escape or are otherwise unavailable for questioning, near sunset the police report that an

escaped stormer was seen slipping into a fish warehouse down in the Eastern District.

By dark, it should be clear: to face F.O.E., the heroes have to journey into "the Chamber."

SCENE 8: INTO THE CHAMBER

Scene Type: Combat

When the heroes arrive at Cascade Salmon Wholesalers, they find a low-slung brick warehouse typical of Eastern District buildings. The fish wholesaler is locked and empty, but a check of the area reveals that a rear loading door is open. The ramp inside the door leads downward, into dim and dusty corridors beneath the building. A Perception check (DC 15) allows the heroes to spot surveillance and security systems... but none of them appear to be active. A check isn't required to notice the smell coming from side tunnels: entrances to Emerald City's sewer system.

The heroes eventually arrive at a large, domed room with walls of black brick, deep beneath the city streets, with several other entrances blocked by thick, armored doors. A square table, large and expensive-looking, sits in the center of the room with eight chairs around it. In one of the chairs sits Maximilian Mars, in some sort of trance and unresponsive. The room is otherwise empty.

Once all the heroes enter the room, an armored door slams shut behind them. Then the heroes hear a voice in their heads:



For years, Emerald City was ruled from this room. The Chamber. The most powerful people Emerald City had never seen. A town with no heroes that never knew it was full of villains!

"We'll help you launder your loot!" the Chamber said. "Rob Chicago, New York City, Los Angeles, Freedom City, then put your costume aside and live safely here in Emerald City!" Criminals thought they had a place where they could hide out after jobs, build homes for their families, and live like kings without a second thought about AEGIS knocking on their door!

Since I was a member of the Chamber, F.O.E. benefited greatly, but now it's fallen apart—the Silver Storm introduced too much chaos into the system, Dragoneye died, and the other members of the Chamber lost their hunger for power! Like it was all too much work!

Mars thought he could step in to claim Emerald City's future for his own, shape the destiny of the city by creating a team of heroes to send the criminals packing!

But the Big Brain is still here and I still command F.O.E.! We'll rise up and show the stormers and Emerald City what a city without heroes can truly be like. We will train the stormers to use their powers however they like, and to take whatever they want. We'll crush the heroes of this city so



badly no one will ever dare put on a cape and mask again, and then this city will belong to us!

Stormers, prove your worth to F.O.E.! Destroy Mars and his heroes! Then the Big Brain will show you the path to ruling Emerald City!



With his closing words, a giant, translucent, disembodied brain appears floating above the table—the secret mastermind of F.O.E., the Big Brain!

PLAYING THE VILLAINS

THE BIG BRAIN

After decades in the shadows, the Big Brain is finally stepping out into the light, and he's ready to gloat a bit. While likely the most powerful character in the room, the Brain is distracted by keeping Mars under control and easily falls into his accustomed role of leading F.O.E. from the rear rather than joining the other villains on the front lines. However, if the heroes focus their attack on the Brain, or manage to goad him into the heart of the battle, he attacks with gusto, thrilled to finally be able to unleash his power and prove his superiority directly.

OTHER VILLAINS

Longtime F.O.E. members take this battle extremely seriously, not only looking to ensure that they defeat the heroes and win Emerald City for their own, but angling

among themselves to be most successful in battle as they eye the new pecking order they hope to establish. New stormer recruits work hard to pass this final test, attempting to strike solid blows on the heroes and defending the Big Brain to prove their loyalty and usefulness to F.O.E.

Lord Quake, Nightblade, and Dreadnought lead the villains, if they escaped in previous scenes, joined by any of the stormer villains recruited by F.O.E. who weren't captured during the afternoon's crime wave. If the heroes were particularly successful in defeating F.O.E. throughout the day, again draw upon villains from the *Threat Report* or other sources to fill out F.O.E.'s ranks. Any villains the heroes have faced earlier in the day are rejuvenated and raring to go. The other villains you use in this scene should be a match for the heroes, and perhaps seem like a bit more; if established F.O.E.s like Dreadnought and Nightblade are on the scene, use them at their full power level, and treat any additional villains you put in the scene beyond a balanced group as minions regardless of power level (see the *Hero's Handbook*, page 193.) In general, at least a dozen villains in addition to the Big Brain should be sufficiently intimidating.

KEY POINTS

When one of the heroes make a particularly successful attack in the battle, or defeat a member of F.O.E., the Big Brain takes notice and calls the hero out by name. While it's likely that the heroes defeat F.O.E. in this battle, they should know they've made a powerful nemesis who they will have to face again in the future. (In fact, this can also

be an opportunity for a hero or heroes to gain the Enemy complication, if desired.)

ACTION

Sealed in the Chamber, the heroes must battle to keep the Big Brain and F.O.E. from defeating them and claiming Emerald City as their own!

SETUP

The Chamber is a hemispherical room fifty feet in diameter with thick brick walls supported by wrought-iron columns. A square table ten feet on each edge sits at the center of the room, with two chairs on each side. Maximilian Mars is in a chair on the side opposite where the heroes entered the room. The armored door is now closed behind them.

The villains of F.O.E. come through a second entrance opposite the heroes. The Big Brain hovers above the table. After the villains enter, that entrance is also sealed by an armored door.

TACTICS

Despite the tight quarters, F.O.E. does their best to separate the heroes so each of the new recruits can prove themselves in single combat. If their numbers allow—or if some of the heroes are knocked out of combat—the villains team up against the heroes, but they continue to compete against each other for the most or best hits on a hero rather than work together.

If present, the experienced agents of F.O.E. use their abilities to support the stormers. Nightblade attempts to blind as many of the heroes as possible, and Lord Quake focuses on using Tremor to knock them off their feet. Dreadnought uses his Arsenal to attack any hero trying to leave the room or those who try to fly above the fray, herding them back into battle. If attacked, they call stormers to come help them and “prove themselves”.

The Big Brain doesn’t join the combat directly, focusing his abilities on keeping Maximilian Mars under control using his Mind Control. If the heroes attempt to escape the Chamber or otherwise disengage from battle, the Brain forces Mars to step into the middle of the battle and attempts to lure the heroes back by endangering their patron. Though the Brain is not physically present in the room, the Feedback flaw of his Remote Sensing power does allow the heroes to attack him as if he were. However, if a hero attacks him directly, he lashes out with his Mental Blast power. If multiple heroes focus their attacks on the Big Brain, he drops his control of Mars and uses his mind controlling abilities to take control of one or more heroes and turn them against one another.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Though the Brain turned off the security systems in the rest of the complex to lure the heroes in, it is active in the

Chamber itself and keeps the doors sealing the entrances sealed tight. Heroes might smash through the armored door (hardness 25) to escape into the rest of the complex, but attacking the door gives F.O.E. plenty of time to press their advantage.

OUTCOME

If it appears that F.O.E. is losing the battle, the Big Brain makes one final threat:



You’ve bought your city time—but F.O.E. will return soon, to destroy you and take Emerald City for its own!



Then he cancels his Remote Sensing and vanishes.

If the heroes are overwhelmed by the forces of F.O.E., the Big Brain and F.O.E. leave them and depart, taking what evidence they can of the heroes’ humiliation. The villains’ victory will be their calling card as they continue to recruit new members into F.O.E., and in future adventures the heroes may find themselves facing villains who fail to take them as seriously after hearing about their defeat in the Chamber.

The moment the Big Brain departs the Chamber, Maximilian Mars “wakes up.” Drawing a phone from his pocket he calls in the Emerald City Police Department, then reaches under the table and presses a hidden button that opens the armored doors. If asked how he knew about the button, he explains that he saw the control panel while held immobile by the Big Brain.

Mars thanks the heroes for rescuing him, but reminds them that even if the threat of F.O.E. has been defeated (or at least delayed), there are plenty of other stormers who will follow the same path of villainy if they aren’t stopped.

The day is over, but the battle for Emerald City continues tomorrow....

REWARDS

Defeating F.O.E. and rescuing Maximilian Mars during this scene earns the heroes 1 power point.

When determining the power point reward heroes should receive for the overall adventure, capturing any or all of F.O.E.’s field commanders—Dreadnought, Lord Quake, or Nightblade—earns the heroes 1 power point. An additional power point should go to those heroes who try to turn the stormers recruited by F.O.E. away from villainy, particularly if they succeeded but perhaps even if they only managed to make a serious and heartfelt effort to make a villain into a hero.

Taking all this into consideration, at the end of the adventure, heroes may earn a total of anywhere between 0 and 3 power points in addition to any power points you feel they earned over the course of the adventure.

CHAPTER 4: SEA CHANGE

In this chapter of *Emerald City Knights* the action picks up. Not one, but two supervillain attacks point the heroes toward the mastermind behind this whole affair, the villainous Commander. First, the heroes confront mind-controlled stormers attacking Redshift Energies in attempt to steal nanite samples for the new villain, the Commander, who hopes to use them to build an army of super-powered slaves. Then they must travel out to sea to stop another attack on a marine research facility guarded by Brande Management, a private security firm with its own superhumans and advanced tech. Engaged in a three-way battle with Brande and the villains, the heroes must deal with the collapse of the research station and the rise of the alien intelligence hidden below it. The alien, Tellax the Redeemer, warns the heroes to cease meddling in affairs they cannot understand and then teleports away.

This part of the adventure is basically a rolling brawl—big on action and story momentum but not so much with investigation. That doesn't mean there's no opportunities for secrets to be revealed and by the end of it the heroes certainly know more about the various forces involved. However, at its heart this is about the heroes getting to really showcase their powers, combat skills, in-fight banter, and the like. Embracing this and making it work for the group likely makes the whole thing much more fun.

The villainous stormers in this chapter are designed to be a tough fight for heroes in the PL10 range. They deliberately harken back to the various scary but somewhat dysfunc-

tional villainous enforcers often used by mastermind villains of the late Bronze Age and Iron Age of comics. They are also designed to be used as a villain team even after the adventure is concluded if desired. Suggestions to help with this are included at the end of the chapter, though some details are left intentionally vague for GMs to tailor for their individual campaigns.

PROLOGUE

Read the following aloud to the players. Note this assumes the group has played through the rest of the Emerald City Knights series to date. Adjust parts of this as needed if this is not the case.



It's been a chaotic and exciting time for Emerald City's newest protectors. You've had to deal with a major crisis which spawned numerous superhumans. You've tussled with the Freedom League, founded a superteam sponsored by Maximilian Mars, and battled a mix of villains, old and new. After all this chaos, it seems like the calm after the Silver Storm might be approaching. It's been quiet for a day or two. Maybe it's finally over and the city can concentrate on cleaning up the mess and getting back to normal.

Then again...

As the citizens of Emerald City (including yourselves) are enjoy the brief respite, your newly minted team communicators buzz and light up. A message pops up on the screen saying:

Redshift Energies. Stormers.

Almost on cue, a massive explosion shakes the ground and sends up a jet of flame from the direction of Redshift Energies. Sirens wail in the distance. Your communicators pop up another message:

Now would be good.

And it was looking to be such a nice day.



In one of those odd comic book coincidences the heroes arrive on the scene at Redshift at approximately the same time. In any event, when the heroes arrive it's time to move on to the next scene.

SCENE 1: REDSHIFT REDUX

Scene Type: Combat

Read the following aloud to the players before the battle begins.

SILENCE ISN'T ALWAYS GOLDEN

This adventure assumes the villains act zombie-like and don't speak for a few reasons. First it gives the heroes a good hint that someone is controlling them. The villains are being used as blunt instruments for the behind-the-scenes mastermind and the villains' unusual behavior helps establish that. Second, it also allows you to add or substitute other villains as you like without worrying "Wait, why would Tribal do this?" Third, silver-eyed speechless super zombies are creepy and it shows that as things progress the stakes are being raised. Fourth and finally, it allows you more latitude in the future to use these villains as you want without being forced to decide now if they are new villains, unwilling victims, or even potential new heroes.

But silver-eyed speechless super zombies aren't for everyone.

If your group thrives on banter and in combat interactions you might want to adjust this and instead have the villains speak, but in weird metallic tones that suggest their minds are not wholly their own. They might even mention how they are being directed to act by the villain controlling them. If you do this, try using the words like "command" a lot, as it suggests who's behind the whole thing. The villains might even call their master "the Commander" during a fight, but more on that in a bit.

HAVEN'T WE MET?

You may want to introduce some or all of the characters being used as villains in this adventure before they appear as mind-controlled zombies. This can give the whole encounter a sense of continuity akin to what you see in comics. It also could be used to set up interesting scenarios for rivalries, enemies, and even a star-crossed romance or two. There are two main ways to go about this: the “villains” can be encountered by the heroes before they receive their powers or after.

If encountered before, the stormers are normal folks in Emerald City with whom the heroes have interacted. Maybe Chain is a cute girl at the coffee shop who sells a hero his daily double espresso caramel soy mocha. Crux might have been busted by a hero for any number of petty crimes. Kid Singularity might even be an annoying sibling or cousin of a hero. GMs should feel free to adapt and develop these characters as needed for such roles. Tailor them so that when a heroes' ex-boyfriend shows up as a zombie, it has impact. In fact, that's one of the reasons no last names or complex descriptions are included for the villains in this chapter.

It is also possible the stormers have been encountered since gaining their powers. They could be additional villain recruits for the event in **Chapter 3: Power Play**. Chain may have gone on a rampage when her powers manifested and needed to be stopped. Ghostlight might have been mistaken for a real spirit at a local college and magic-based heroes were asked to investigate. Perhaps Tenfold or Kid Singularity tried to play hero, successfully or not. The same ideas for tailoring the villains to fit the heroes works here, though the encounters are likely to be more action packed and superheroic in nature.

Of course, that's all optional. You can also just have these stormers make their first appearance in this Chapter and decide what to do with them later. But GMs building a large part of their campaign around this adventure series might find some utility in such tactics.

The important thing to remember is that even though these characters are being used as “villains” in this chapter, it doesn't mean the character has to stay a villain... they're all being mind-controlled after all. Once the Commander is defeated, the villains go back to their normal personalities.



You arrive on the scene before most emergency services or law enforcement, and are able to take the first look at the carnage. A series of explosions in one of the research labs has thrown flaming debris across the compound, damaged the structural integrity of several buildings, and left several Redshift employees and other civilians trapped by fire or under rubble.

The cause of this damage is clear—a group of stormers can be seen tearing through the laboratory wing of the compound as if searching for something. Redshift security offers little resistance as the villains rip, break, and blast their way through the area.

It's all up to you.



PLAYING THE STORMERS

Though they won't be chatty about it, the stormers are seeking a large canister of nanites that has been consciously “lost” in the lab's storage facilities by the architect behind the Silver Storm. They attack anyone who gets between them and their objective. The stormers attacking Redshift are as follows.

CHAIN

In combat, Chain uses her psychic chains to slash, grab, and fling objects at her foes. She is a flurry of motion and her chains are stronger than the rest of her. If retreat is called for she attempts to flee over nearby rooftops by using her chains to swing, climb, and run as if they were spider-like limbs.

CRUX

Crux usually opens with a barrage of thrown plasma blades. He then closes with any foes that seem ill-suited for melee combat and strikes those unaware from ambush. He is the classic amoral opportunist, using dirty tricks, hostages, surprise, and anything else to bring down his opponents. He also has a cruel streak, though that doesn't come through in this battle, because he's being mind-controlled.

GHOSTLIGHT

Ghostlight uses her powers to frighten, harass, and incapacitate. She doesn't have much in the way of directly damaging abilities, but her capacity for causing panic and chaos is considerable. This makes her especially dangerous around large groups of civilians or normal humans. She is also very hard to harm in her ghost form and can use her powers while insubstantial... which gives her little reason to turn solid unless forced or fooled into doing so.

KID SINGULARITY

Kid Singularity uses his abilities to wreak large amounts of havoc. Against single foes, he flings microscopic “black holes” capable of harming even powerful foes. Against groups of opponents he throws up a gravity well, dragging foes into its center to crush them with gravitational forces. He avoids melee combat at all costs. His powers are the strongest of the stormers, but he's also the most physically fragile if those are circumvented.

TENFOLD

Tenfold fights with agility and power, but little sophistication or training. The Silver Storm made him a talented



combatant, but he lacks the Advantages that would allow him to capitalize fully on his raw physical abilities. Still, he shouldn't be underestimated, as he likely surpasses any foe he faces in at least one area and his heightened abilities allows him to use various improvised thrown and melee weapons effectively.

WASHOUT

Washout mostly uses his powers to spray watery blasts at foes, create watery constructs, or drop tons of water on them. He can also draw water from a person, dehydrating them, or cause their lungs to flood with fluid, inducing drowning. If escape is called for, he creates fog to blanket a large section of the city.

KEY POINTS

- The villains in this scene are mind-controlled into stealing a item hidden in Redshift. They aren't concerned with battling heroes or endangering civilians beyond how it aids this goal. However, the Commander is more than willing to use them to do either if it suits her.
- Heroes automatically notice the villains appear to be moving... unnaturally, as if something is off. If a hero takes a move action and makes a Perception check (DC 15), he or she notices the stormers' eyes are glossed over with a silvery film. In addition, they do not speak or listen to reason. If a hero can detect emotions, there are none detectable, and if a hero has some kind of mental awareness, he or she can sense the presence of something overpowering the stormers.
- Stormers are mind controlled and work as a cohesive unit regardless of their normal personalities.

Because of this outside control, they can all use the Set-Up and Teamwork advantages, even if they don't normally possess them.

- The villains' driving goal is to locate a canister of nanites hidden in the area and escape. They find the canister after 3 rounds of uninterrupted searching.
- The attack has caused immense property damage and endangered civilian lives.

ACTION

In this fight the heroes are taking on mind-controlled stormers. They're all simultaneously controlled by the same person, but are still capable combatants who exhibit mastery over their abilities. The intelligence driving them directs them to find and recover a canister from the grounds of Redshift Energies. Finding the canister is their main concern, but some of their number turn to fight while one or two others continue the search. Recovering the canister is far more important than beating on a bunch of heroes.

SETUP

As described in the read-aloud text at the start of this scene, the stormers are in one of the research labs of Redshift Energies. They've spread out between some of the rooms and labs to look for their prize. Even though the stormers aren't necessarily in line of sight of each other, if one is attacked, the rest know of it because a single mind is controlling them all. If and when the heroes attack, all except one or two of the stormers come to the aid of their "teammate." The Commander (the person controlling the stormers) hopes to keep the heroes busy enough to allow one of the stormers who isn't in the fight to find the canister and escape.

The building itself is a four-story rectangular office building. Each floor is accessible by elevator or on foot via the stairway in the atrium-like reception area. The first and second floors are labs, while the upper two floors are offices. The stormers are on the two lower floors.

TACTICS

Assume any villain who is left alone by the heroes for 3 rounds in a row locates the nanite canister in a half-destroyed storage area. The canister is large, tough, and fairly heavy (Weight Rank 4, Toughness 12), so a weaker villain needs help from his allies to carry it off. Any villain who locates the canister and can flee with it does, leaving his companions to hold off any pursuers. If Kid Singularity is still active when this happens, he creates a wormhole with his powers to aid in the escape. Fleeing villains blast unstable buildings, wound civilians, take hostages, or do whatever is necessary to distract the heroes.

When the heroes arrive on the scene the stormers initially engage them one on one. Any leftover villains continue searching unless the heroes find some way to hinder them. Heroes who put down one of the stormers quickly are treated as a significant threat and are attacked by multiple foes.

If the battle starts to go badly for the villains, or the nanite canister is destroyed somehow, the remaining stormers try to flee. Their objective is to recover the canister and if they can't do that they have no reason to stick around.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

In addition to dealing with the villains hunt for the nanites there are also the matters of the endangered civilians and crumbling buildings. GMs wanting to give the heroes a break might decide that as long as the PCs engage the stormers the authorities and Redshift security can evacuate civilians, put out fires, and otherwise handle damage control and rescue. If you want to spice up the fight with some good old-fashioned civilian peril might consider the following.

IT'S "TAKE YOUR HOSTAGE TO WORK" DAY!

A tour group of schoolchildren ends up trapped between a wall of fiery debris and the entrance to the storage facility holding the nanites. The villains aren't particularly interested in harming the children, their teacher, or their tour guide, but they mercilessly cut the poor innocents down to reach their objective. Unfortunately, the hero who spots the danger is currently engaged with another villain. The hero needs to find a way to break free and protect the civilians without leaving him- or herself open to attack, or perhaps alert a teammate who can lend a hand with one or both villains.

RUBBLE, RUBBLE, TOIL AND TROUBLE

A research scientist yells for one of the heroes to assist him. The rest of his research team were trapped when

WHAT IF I'M A STORMER?

So all these stormers being turned into nano-powered zombies presents an obvious question: what if some of all of the PCs are stormers? Well, in this case the GM has a bit of decision making to do.

First, decide if any players of stormal PCs have *any* interest being mind-controlled and sent to attack their teammates. Some players will jump at the opportunity to play their hero as a mind-controlled "villain." If they're game, such a conflict can add tension and no small amount of extra action to a scene. Of course, other players are going to hate this sort of twist, feeling they're being pushed into actions they don't want to take.

If a player is open to this idea, let him go nuts. Treat the control attempt as an Affliction 12 (entranced, compelled, controlled) using Will to save. If desired, add Cumulative or Progressive to that attack. Controlled PCs attack teammates, endanger civilians and generally make a nuisance of themselves until they regains control or are put down. It's highly recommended that controlled PCs are allowed to speak and act less zombie like than most controlled stormers. First, this is more fun for them. Second, it suggests the PC has a certain reserve of willpower and courage that allows him to retain more of his individual self. This can be confirmed by other PCs with an Insight roll (DC 15 and such revelation might allow a controlled stormal's allies help talk him down (basically an Aid action to their future Will rolls to break control). This trick can also be used for stormal NPCs the PCs have a strong emotional connection with—nothing says "I love you" like talking someone down from a murderous alien technology-fueled haze.

If the players have no interest in this sort of plot twist, the GM can simply decide that the PC stormers are in some way immune to being controlled. Some options are:

- The control effect only works on those with a certain baseline level of villainous impulses. This means the heroes, being stalwart types who regularly risk their lives to help others don't count. This also means that heroes with Complications that make them act less heroically or weaken their will might find themselves temporarily vulnerable.
- If only some of the players are against being controlled maybe something about their specific powers prevents the control. For example, perhaps a telepath's increased neural activity blocks the control attempts.
- Perhaps the control process requires a proximity to the controller to establish, a special device, or something else the heroes just haven't been exposed to. (Yet?)

In any event, stormal PCs falling under villain control should only be used if it's going to be interesting and fun. If not? Skip it and just let them fight the bad guys.

part of their lab collapsed in the explosion caused when the villains first arrived. The scientist can hear at least one of his team still alive under the debris but he fears the whole area is going to collapse before the rescue workers can save them. Heroes seeking to destroy or remove the rubble must be careful not to collapse the whole area. A Perception or other appropriate Skill check (DC 20) allows



the hero(es) to find the workers. In order to break or blast their way through the rubble, the hero has to succeed at a challenge (see *Hero's Handbook*, page 185) that requires three or more degrees of success before three or more degrees of failure. The hero can use Move Object or any Damage effect (including Strength) to tear through the debris by making an Effect check (DC 20). Heroes with Insubstantial (or other powers) may be able to bypass this challenge at your discretion.

FIRE BAD, EXPLOSION WORSE!

The fire is getting dangerously close to large tanks in one of the damaged labs marked with large biohazard and flammable symbols. The tanks are filled with a prototype bio-fuel which can explode at high temperatures and the stormer attacks have damaged the lab's containment measures. To avoid a second explosion at least as devastating as the first, the fires in that area must be extinguished, the tanks must be moved or protected from the flames. There are four tanks weighing 50 tons (weight rank 11) each and they explode in one minute (10 rounds) unless something is done. Exploding tanks are Burst Area 2 (60 foot radius) Damage 12.

Rescuing the scientist and preventing the tanks from exploding can take place after the fight has wound down. Assisting with rescue and clean up efforts greatly advances the heroes' reputations with the public and authorities. Heroes with the appropriate abilities might also help tend to the wounded or organize relief clean-up efforts. Try to aim these events towards heroes who have Complications that make things even more dynamic and

interesting. For example, a character vulnerable to heat might have to deal with a fire or a character who suffers from claustrophobia might have to squeeze under some rubble to rescue a trapped civilian.

OUTCOME

The heroes have their work cut out for them. They are likely a bit outnumbered and must also contend with crumbling buildings and endangered civilians. While it is possible they can defeat all the stormers, put out the fires, and be home in time for dinner it's more likely they reduce the villains' numbers somewhat but be too busy saving lives to prevent them from escaping. That's fine. In fact, it's preferable since a rematch won't be long in coming.

Stormers who flee attempt to grab any fallen comrades before they run, but not if it appears too risky. They have been ordered to flee and flee they will. Captured stormers won't be much help to the heroes. In fact, captured stormers lapse into a coma-like state ("shut down" by the villains controlling them). They remain in that state unless an excellent opportunity to escape presents itself, but in truth their master isn't really concerned about them and expends little effort to free them.

Of course, the heroes could also get trounced. If this happens, the stormers grab the nanite canister and flee. That's fine too. The nanites are inactive and cannot be easily reactivated so even a loss here doesn't mean the heroes will be facing a massive army of nano-zombies. At least not right away. And a loss here likely motivates the heroes to track down the villains and take them out.

REWARDS

Heroes should be given hero points for saving scientists and other building staff as well as for dealing with the other hazards inside the building. If the group fails to keep the stormers from making off with the canister, give each of them a hero point for the trouble.

The following paragraphs deal with discovering more about the “zombie” stormers. If the heroes do some investigation into what’s affecting the stormers, award those heroes a hero point. They may not learn a lot, but the clues they find may help them later.

HELPING ZOMBIE STORMERS

After a day (or so) in captivity, the mind-controlled stormers are freed from their control, but that doesn’t happen until after the next attack occurs. Super-genius PCs might have more luck, but they don’t have much time to work on studying and reversing the control before things heat up again. Fear not, they’ll get their chance to use the stormers to track the mastermind behind the attack soon enough. That said, a quick examination of a controlled stormer may reveal useful information.

Heroes with Expertise: Science, the Technology skill, or some other skill you deem appropriate can learn the following depending on how well they succeed against a DC 15 check:

- **One Degree of Success:** The stormers are being controlled by something that uses the nanites in their bodies as a gateway to take control of their neural processes and motor functions.
- **Two Degrees of Success:** Without some sort of device or process to shield them, any stormer is theoretically at risk from being controlled in this fashion. However, it seems those with strong wills can resist the effects.
- **Three Degrees of Success:** There’s some element to the nanite transformation that enables the control. This isn’t standard mind-control but more like hacking a back door into a control mechanism that already exists.

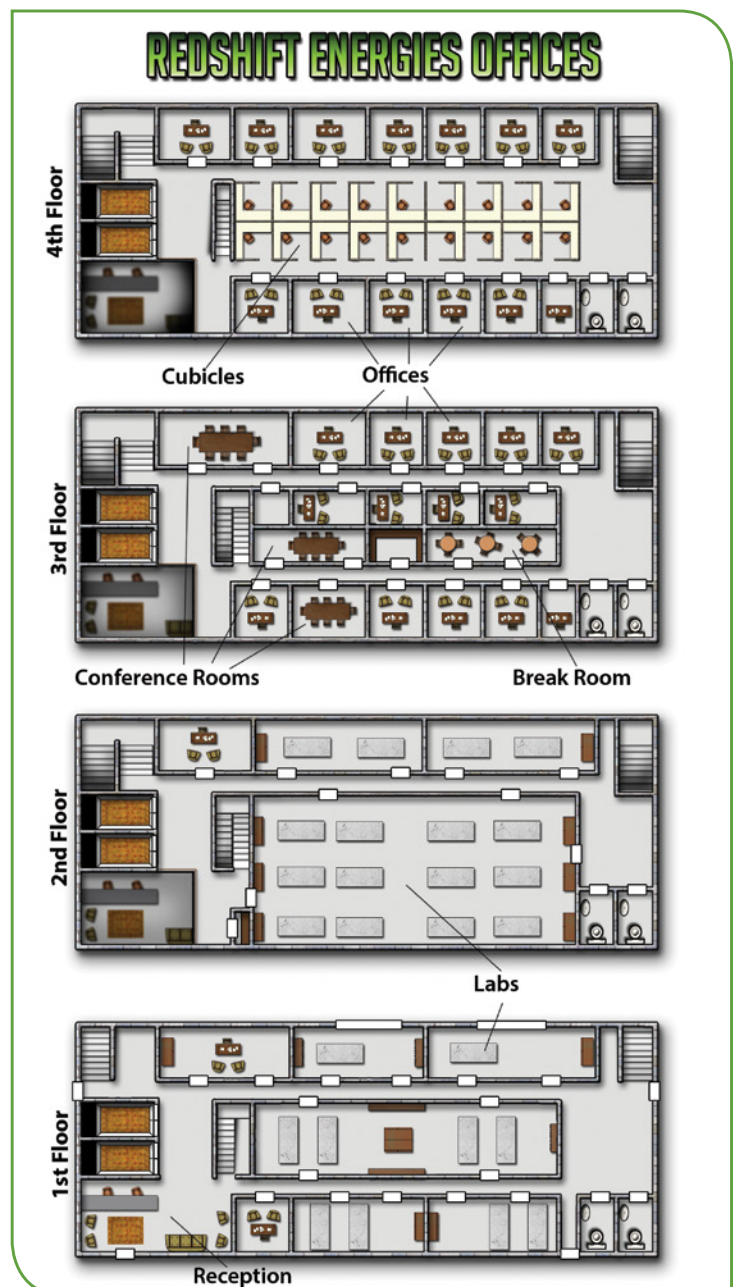
MESSAGE FROM MARS

Regardless of how the fight comes out, Maximilian Mars contacts the heroes shortly. He thanks them for their efforts, how enthusiastically depends on how they did. In any event he volunteers his resources to assist them further. What he

offers depends a lot on what happened, but Mars realizes the heroes’ potential and tries to support it without being pushy. Mars also offers to keep the heroes informed of any sightings of the villains from the battle who escaped. He does this even if they have rejected his previous offers of patronage;- Mars is protective of his city and sees these new villains and whoever is behind them as a dire threat.

SO WHO’S BEHIND THIS?

The Silver Storm didn’t just give birth to a bunch of fledgling heroes and villains. It also created the mastermind behind these attacks and gave her the powers to control her fellow stormers. She is a new villain adopting the former alias of Emerald City’s own resident reformed mastermind....



THE COMMANDER

The Commander is the mastermind behind the attack on Redshift Energies and the attack on Point Phorcys later in this chapter. Despite the name, this Commander is *not* Maximilian Mars nor is this villain tied to the former villain turned entrepreneur and superhero patron. It is unlikely the Commander is directly encountered during this chapter, but it's time to let you in on this new villain's background, origin, and purpose. (Complete information on the Commander, including her stat block, is at the end of the chapter with the other NPCs.)

As the Commander, Beatrix tries *very* hard to operate behind the scenes. She prefers to use her mind-controlled stormers, intellect, and powers to operate from afar. She doesn't confront the heroes any sooner or more often than she must. To confront and defeat her, the team has to bring the fight to her. Unfortunately, tracking her down falls outside the scope of *Emerald City Knights*, but would



make an excellent plot line for an adventure of your own creation. For now, the heroes have to deal with the zombie stormers...

SCENE 2: THE CALM BETWEEN THE STORM

Scene Type: Intermision/Investigation

Give the heroes as much time as they need between the fight and Redshift and the next big scene to heal, help rebuild Redshift, assist the wounded, and other such actions. You don't want to wait too long to spring the next major plot point on them, but it's fine to give them some downtime. If the fight was especially grueling maybe even give them a few quiet days or easy encounters with some minor thugs to boost their confidence a bit.

Some heroes are no doubt going to want to try and investigate the villains. This is fine and not even all that difficult, but it won't yield much. Investigation checks (DC 10) on each of the villains reveals the following:

- **One Degree of Success:** Name and profession of stormers.
- **Two Degrees of Success:** General background info, such as Chain's mental problems or Crux's criminal record and gang ties.
- **Three Degrees of Success:** All the stormers disappeared shortly after the Silver Storm hit; within a 12 hour window. They have not been seen until they attacked Redshift. No signs of foul play or kidnapping were found in any disappearances the police investigated.

Any heroes seeking to find out why there was a canister of nanites lost in storage at Redshift might have a bit more luck. A few uninterrupted hours and a Technology or Expertise: Computers roll (DC 20, 10 if they can convince Redshift to grant them access to their files) shows that the canister was rerouted to the facility and lost due to a computer glitch. Paranoid or astute heroes are going to figure this was done on purpose, and they'd be right. Tracing the source of the "computer glitch" is nearly impossible for all but the best hackers (same skills as the last roll, DC 35). Success points to a marine research facility up the coast from Emerald City, Point Phorcys. If a hero manages to discover this you can go immediately to the next scene, awarding them a hero point for managing to figure out where to go next without having to wait for the villains to strike.

SCENE 3: BREAKING NEWS

Scene Type: Combat

Sometime after the attack on Redshift the controlled villains strike again. They hit Point Phorcys, a marine research facility guarded by Brande Management. Point Phorcys operates up the coast in international waters,

conducting various trials and experiments without having to worry about US regulations and government supervision. The facility is protected by Brande's own private army of high-tech mercenaries led by Agent Mariner, the facility security chief and resident superhuman. The true owner and exact purpose of Point Phorcys is unknown, as the facility is funded through a number of shell corporations and few are aware of its existence.

The heroes can become aware of the attack on the facility in two ways. First, they can be alerted by the authorities that the stormers they battled earlier have been seen heading out to sea and head out to investigate. Alternatively, they can intercept a transmission from Brande forces on Point Phorcys requesting assistance. Do whatever makes the most sense given the groups resources and capabilities. Either way, they arrive on scene while the attack is in progress.

If the heroes don't have an easy way to reach Point Phorcys, their new patron Maximilian Mars can arrange the loan of a helicopter and if necessary a pilot. Upon arriving on scene read this to the players:



A haze hangs in the air near Point Phorcys. From this distance you can barely make out the outline of the facility. It is a large complex raised above the ocean's surface on massive support columns, much like an oil rig. You can see flashes of weapons fire in the mists and the occasional shape moving quickly but little else.

As you approach you see the villains you faced at Redshift engaged in a battle with soldiers wearing the trademark black and silver body armor of Brande Management mercenaries. They engage the villains with disciplined precision, but are outgunned and outclassed in the face of truly superhuman opponents. Several Brande personnel have already fallen and motionless bodies litter the decks.

Leading the Brande forces is a man with close-cropped blonde hair and a skintight black and silver bodysuit sporting wavelike patterns. He yells orders to his men while blasting away at the villains. Upon seeing you appear from the fog he turns his weapon on you and fixes you with a wary gaze.



PLAYING THE VILLAINS

There are two forces potentially arrayed against the heroes at Point Phorcys, the mind-controlled stormers and the forces of Brande Management. If the heroes play their cards right, they should be able to team up with Brande's forces to deal with the stormers... then turn their attention to each other.

STORMERS

Once the fight is set-up, it's time for the heroes to get in there and stop it. The villains fight much as they did

before—taking on anyone who gets in their way but clearly looking for something at the same time and showing no concern for human life or wanton property damage. Some ideas for how to use the villains in battle are:

- **Chain** uses the struts, catwalks, and such of the facility give her plenty of places to swing from or climb. A battle between the villain and an acrobatic hero could be exciting and dynamic.
- **Crux** slashes support beams and other structures with his plasma blades, trying to drop them on Brande forces and heroes alike. He hides behind cover or strike from shadow if able. Heroes known to be weak close fighters are likely the target of an ambush or melee attack. Those lacking decent ranged powers are engaged from afar.
- **Ghostlight**, unhindered by her environment, uses her Afflictions and other powers to harass and hinder. Unless a hero specifically comes after her, she spends much of the fight trying to lock down and disable the Brande forces.
- **Kid Singularity** blasts Brande soldiers with his area effect attacks and prefers to hit heroes with his single target higher damage ones. He stays in the air, avoiding any high points on the station an acrobatic but otherwise grounded hero could use to strike at him from ambush.
- **Tenfold** uses cover, concealment, and anything at hand to his advantage as even mind-controlled he has an instinctual understanding of personal combat. He is a real danger to Brande forces, able to easily take out many of them quickly with his powers.
- **Washout** continues to primarily attack with water blasts and constructs. He has an unlimited source of water to draw from and can function better underwater than most heroes. He and Agent Mariner (or an aquatic-themed PC) might find themselves battling in the waters below. He might also try to fling another PC into the waters below, hoping to finish them off more easily.

BRANDE MANAGEMENT

- **Agent Mariner** is a no-nonsense soldier. He has no interest in adding another front to an ongoing battle, but he also has no interest in the heroes sticking their noses in. He isn't friendly with the heroes and doesn't want them at the station, even if they do pitch in and help take on the stormers. In the battle, Mariner plays to his strengths and tries to knock, trip, or draw his opponents into the water.
- **Brande Management Operatives** are minions (see **Minions**, *Hero's Handbook*, page 193). There are two dozen men and women stationed on Point Phorcys but only 18 of them are left standing when the heroes arrive. The operatives are professional soldiers with years of experience, so they are capable and courageous under fire. They take commands from Agent



Mariner (or any other Agent that shows up), but are perfectly capable of making intelligent tactical decisions on their own. Most of the Operatives are hard-cases and come across as such.

KEY POINTS

- The villains are searching for more nanites (which the Commander has detected in the area) but have not located their exact source.
- Brande Management forces will either be allies or enemies in this battle depending on how the heroes react to them when first encountered.
- After a time, the station begins to collapse and eventually falls into the sea. (See **When the Station's A Rockin'**, near the end of this scene.)
- Unknown to anyone (but important for the GM to know), Brande is present at Point Phorcys because of a contract set up by Tellax the Redeemer, the alien behind the Silver Storm. Brande forces know they were hired to defend the station, but don't know the real reasons why and believe they are to provide security as the station is remodeled and repurposed.

ACTION

The battle on the Point Phorcys is the climax for this chapter. The Redshift attack was just a warm up for this three-way throwdown between the heroes, stormers, and Brande forces. Any villains not captured during the

battle at Redshift are here. Brande forces are heavily armed and ready for a fight. However, how exactly this goes down depends a lot on what happened previously. The heroes should win this fight but it shouldn't be a cakewalk—meaning that the GM should tweak the specifics of the encounter to give them a challenge.

If the heroes captured one or two stormers and the rest escaped, the fight can go pretty straight. The loss of a couple of villains should make it an even fight, with Brande forces providing some background, complicating matters a bit in dramatic ways, and maybe helping out an unlucky hero at an opportune time. If all the stormers got away last time and the heroes fared poorly against them, have Agent Mariner and his team have already taken out a few of the stormers to help even the odds. Don't make it the ones the team had the most trouble with necessarily, let them take those guys in the rematch. Just whittle down the numbers a bit to help them out. If the heroes completely dominated their foes before then consider having Brande decided they're going to take on *everyone* who's not authorized to be there, PCs included. If the heroes are remarkably effective, you might even consider adding a few extra villains. Previous chapters of *Emerald City Knights* and the *Threat Reports* are a good source of such extra bad guys. Remember that the heroes are supposed to win here, though, so don't throw an army of villains at them unless you're sure they can handle it.

SETUP

The leader of the Brande forces, Agent Mariner, won't start shooting the heroes immediately, but if they do anything to make him think they're more stormers arrived to aid in the

attack he won't hesitate to order his men to open fire. Some quick talking or moving to engage the stormers convinces him that's not the case, but it's possible a trigger-happy or overly impulsive hero draws fire from Brande's forces. If the heroes trigger an attack, Brande forces target "soft targets" first, aiming at heroes with no visible armor or protections hoping for a quick kill to help even the odds.

The stormers are focused on the Brande forces so the heroes can land any transport they are using safely or otherwise arrive on the scene unmolested. However, once they are nearby the villains move to engage them as well.

TACTICS

Unlike before, the villains are concerned with clearing out all their foes first and accomplishing their objective second. They do not break off to search structures or otherwise remove themselves temporarily from the active battle. Like last time, the stormers are considered to have the benefits of the Teamwork and Set-Up Advantages for as long as they are controlled.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Point Phorcys is a dynamic and fun place to have a big superhuman brawl, but it's not the safest place to do it. There are a number of possible dangers and environmental hazards that can make things tricky. Smart heroes might even be able to use some of these to their own advantage.

WATER WATER EVERYWHERE

Point Phorcys is in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. There's water everywhere and it's not like your neighbor's swimming pool. The waters below the facility are deep and powerful undertows and currents can be a danger. Heroes knocked, thrown, or jumping into the water must make an Athletics check (DC 15) or risk going under and drowning. Remember, without the proper equipment or Immunities heroes can only hold their breath for 10 rounds plus their Stamina rank.

UNDERWATER WASTELAND

The waters beneath Point Phorcys are surprisingly devoid of life. Some thick plant life wraps around the station's support pillars and the occasional fish is seen but anyone with knowledge of marine life or the sea finds the area uncharacteristically quiet. This can be a real problem for heroes whose powers depend on proximity to animals, such as those with Animal Mimicry Limited to nearby animals or certain Summon effects. If a hero is hindered by this situation treat it as a Complication and award a hero point.

SUDDEN STOP AT THE END

Point Phorcys main platform is about 50 feet (Distance Rank 1) from the surface of the ocean while the top of the structure is around 200 feet above the ocean (Distance

BRANDE MANAGEMENT

Brande Management is one of the foremost names in private security and superhuman military solutions. Founded in 1997, the company is still run by the brothers Isaac and Logan Brande, two former US military special forces operatives turned entrepreneurs. Using their military and intelligence community contacts, training, and experience the pair transformed a small private security firm into a private military contracting juggernaut.

Seeing firsthand even low-powered superhuman soldiers and high-tech weaponry can make on the modern battlefield, the Brande brothers made such methods their organizations' focus. After 14 years in operation Brande boasts countless contracts employs thousands worldwide. Brande operatives can be found assisting US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as protecting corporate interests worldwide. They have special response teams trained to deal with anything from terrorists insurgents to alien bioweapon outbreaks.

Brande Management forces favor what its founders call the "T3": Training, Teamwork, and Tactics. High-powered operatives and equipment are valued, but only if they can effectively work with other Brande forces in the field. Brande Management has dismissed several superhuman operatives over the years whose unwillingness or inability to work with others harm Brande's bottom line. More than a few of these former operatives have later resurfaced as mercenaries, assassins, and henchmen in the employ of various criminal organizations. Brande is vocal in decrying the actions of such former employees. In many cases, has provided law enforcement agencies with properly redacted information of all such individuals.

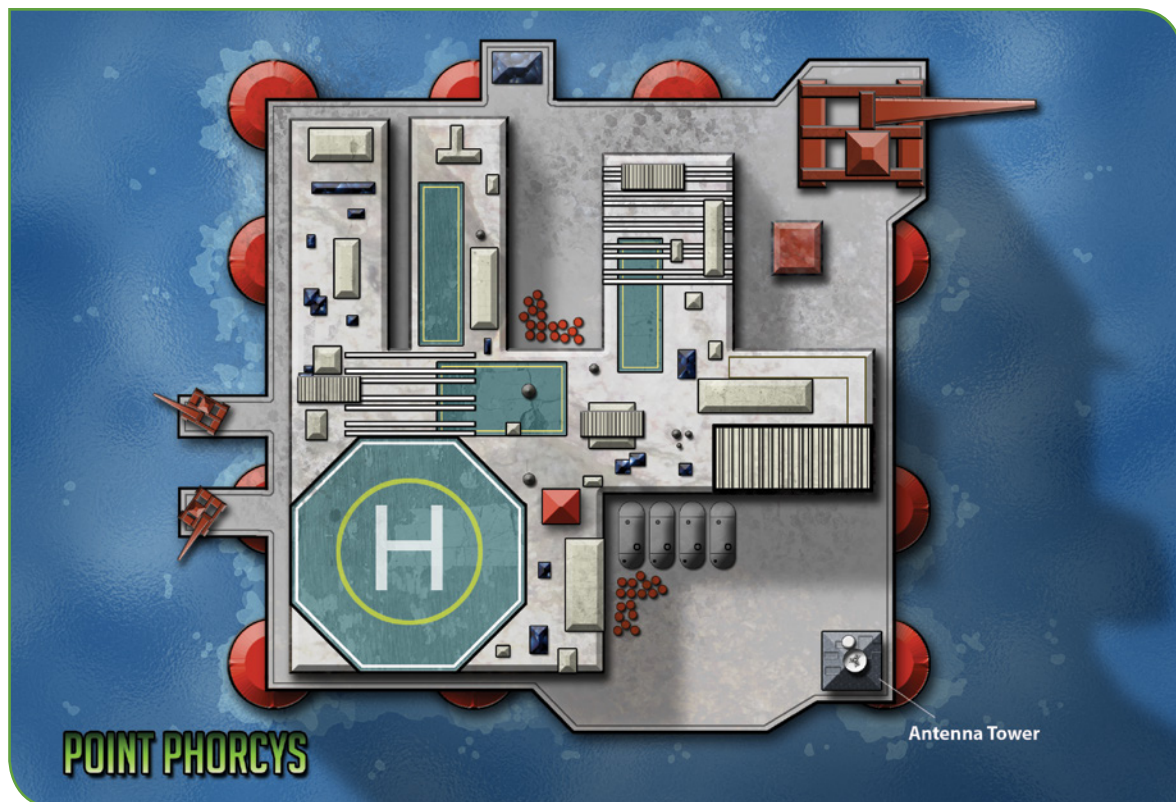
Some typical Brande Management Operatives are detailed at the end of this chapter. Their gear and abilities represent the company standard along with some of the most common variations. However, this is by no means a comprehensive look at the company's resources and GMs are encouraged to add more advanced weaponry and specialized operatives to suit their needs. Most superhuman operatives for Brande have the title "Agent" in their name, such as Agent Mariner featured in this adventure.

Rank 3). Not a long fall for most heroes, but potentially dangerous for those with low Toughness. Heroes hitting the water from a height can attempt to make an Acrobatics check (DC 15) to pull into a dive and avoid any damage. Failure means they hit the water wrong and treat it as landing on any other hard surface.

Also, even if the heroes are durable enough to survive falls from the station that doesn't mean a villain might not seriously injure Brande forces in this manner. The race to catch a falling victim before he splats is a classic superhero move and can spice up the fight.

NOT UP TO CODE

Point Phorcys is not an active or well-maintained structure—facts that become abundantly clear at the end of



the scene. Even before that, however, there can be serious problems caused by the villains, Brande, and the heroes flinging attacks around. Concrete and steel are durable, but sea water, time, and super-strength or plasma blasts can do a lot of damage. Most of the facility is Toughness 12, except for the upper platforms and catwalks which are Toughness 9 and the main struts and support columns, which are 15. It's unlikely the battle destroys the station directly, but large chunks of the station could be blasted free and fall on anyone unable to get out of the way. Treat such hazards as Burst Area Damage attack equal to the weight rank of the falling debris. The exact size of falling rubble varies based on the situation. A super-strength charge through a radio tower is more dangerous than shearing off part of a catwalk with a laser beam.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

The stormers and all of the Brande Management agents are at the end of this chapter, including Agent Mariner, Agent Blazer, and the Brande Management Operatives.

ABOUT POINT PHORCY'S

The official cover story for Point Phorcys is that it originally was to be the first in a series of offshore oil rigs. Built in anticipation of a relaxing of offshore drilling treaties that never materialized, it was supposedly converted to a research station and then abandoned shortly afterwards during the Terminus Invasion. Because of this, the station greatly resembles an oil rig—albeit one without crew or drilling equipment.

This backstory is false. In fact, Point Phorcys was built by dummy corporations created by Tellax to shield the alien intelligence that lies beneath it from prying eyes, satellite sweeps, and other attempts to detect it. Sensor masking technology on the station makes the waters below seem normal and ultrasonic projectors mounted around the base of the support struts keep most curious wildlife away.

Heroes with keen senses taking the time to examine the area around Point Phorcys despite the battle might notice these modifications (DC 20, but only if looking for strange or out of place technology). Heroes who can communicate with marine life find the area surprisingly vacant.

UNDER THE SEA!

Like at Redshift, the villains are looking for nanites for the Commander. The Commander has detected a huge depository of nanites under Point Phorcys. Though the facility is shielded from most sensor sweeps, the Commander's own nanite-based abilities allow her to circumvent this and determine that a vast store of power-infusing nanites can be found in the waters under the station. She hopes to have more luck at this location for two reasons: the nanite concentration is much higher and there are no heroes about. She's half right, of course.

The nanites the Commander detected are not on the station itself, but below it. Directly under Point Phorcys is the source of the nanites and the architect behind the Silver Storm. It's fairly unlikely the heroes immediately notice this, but some aquatic-based hero might find himself under the waves while his teammates battle above. Even so,

RUBBLE DAMAGE

WEIGHT/SIZE OF RUBBLE	DAMAGE	AREA
Rain of Small Bits of Rubble (Rank 4, 200 lbs.)	3	30 foot radius
Large Chunk of a Pillar (Rank 5, 1600 lbs.)	7	30 foot radius
Whole section of Catwalk, Beam, or Pillar (Rank 7, 3 tons)	9	30 foot line

noticing anything out of the ordinary requires keen senses (Perception Check DC 25) and even then a character must get within a few feet to notice anything but a strange dark shape half-buried hundreds of feet below the station. Any hero who travels to the ocean floor hundreds of feet below (Distance Rank 5) comes face-to-face with an alien object. As the hero nears it the object, a massive construct of some kind, rises up out of the much and to the surface of the ocean. This triggers the events later in this chapter (see **When the Station's A Rockin'**).

IF THIS IS A CONSULAR SHIP...

It's likely at least one hero wonders "Hey, if this is a scientific research facility, where are the scientists?" The answer is both simple and complex: There aren't any and there never were.

Supposedly, Point Phorcys was once an active research facility. Damaged during the Terminus Invasion, it was abandoned when rebuilding efforts were deemed too costly. Brande was recently brought into guard the facility under the premise that the facility would soon be rebuilt and repurposed. The contract was arranged by computer contacts, a fact known to Agent Mariner. He won't bring it up himself, but he reveals this freely if the heroes ask and have helped him and his men.

In truth, the facility was never used for anything more than camouflage. No researchers have ever operated on the station, a fact kept secret by the creature that lay mostly dormant below for years, gathering its strength and planning its next move.

Now this is both good news and bad news for the heroes. The good news is that there are no scientists, technicians, and other staff to rescue from the villain attack. The bad news is, there's much more going on here than a random fight in the middle of the ocean. Things are about to get complicated and fast.

WHEN THE STATION'S A ROCKIN'

At some point after the fight momentum begins to shift in the heroes' favor the station begins a shift of its own. Starting with a slight shaking that probably won't be detected while the fight's occurring (Perception DC 20, or DC 25 for heroes not touching the station). Each round after this the DC to detect the shaking reduces by 5. After 3 rounds everyone notices the motion as the struts buckle and Point Phorcys begins to shake itself apart. The station crumbles into the ocean 3 rounds after this.

It's pretty obvious the station isn't going to hold together. Even if the heroes have the ability to hold roughly one million ton station (Weight Rank 25) up they'll soon find

that the structure is coming apart as something rises from below. Clever heroes might be able to use their powers to weld beams and hold up crumbling sections but this buys them only seconds at best. Still, let them try and reward solid efforts with a few more precious rounds to act.

Perceptive heroes have more time to figure out how they're going to handle this but there's only one real option. They need to vacate the immediate area or risk being crush under tons of metal and stone. The real question is if they assist Brande forces and their stormer foes. The answer probably has a lot to do with the tone of your game and the attitude of the heroes but even gritty Iron Age types usually won't let security forces just doing their job or obviously mind-controlled foes die. Still, regardless of whether they help anyone else flee Point Phorcys, many Brande operatives and any conscious stormers survive. If the heroes actually stand callously by and watch this, feel free to describe some drowning or crushed foes. Maybe dangle a few Brande forces crying out for help.

OUTCOME

After the station collapses and the heroes decide whether and how to assist any imperiled Brande agents and stormers they have almost no time before the next scene occurs. This is intentional, the mastermind behind the Silver Storm is about to reveal himself and he's not waiting for the heroes to recover from this fight.

REWARDS

During the fight, you should be sure to hand out hero points to the characters that deserve them for appropriately heroic actions, like protecting others from pieces of the falling station.

SCENE 4: THE RISE OF THE REDEEMER

Scene Type: *Conclusion*

As Point Phorcys collapses into the sea, the heroes can see a massive silvery shape rise from the depths beneath it. It soon becomes clear the facility was built over something else, something that had been sleeping beneath the oceans depths for centuries. Something that has awakened, and is destroying Point Phorcys with its ascension.

This is the mastermind behind the Silver Storm. It's the being that built Point Phorcys to hide and shelter it while

it repaired damage done to critical systems years ago. It is the same being that recently awakened and is now ready to complete a task it was assigned long ago.

Read the following to the players:



As Point Phorcys lists and dips further into the ocean you can see what lay beneath it rise to the surface. A massive craft, clearly alien in origin, pushes from the beneath the waves and into the air. The spaceship seems to pulse with a life of its own. Its silver hull shifts and catches the light in strange ways. It's viewports seem more like lens on a gigantic mask than windows to the craft's inner workings. A mass of what looks like metallic scar tissue can be seen running across one whole side of the oblong craft as it pulls itself upright to float several hundred feet above the water. Strange tendrils grow before your eyes out of the ship's hull— scanning equipment, communication devices, or perhaps some sort of weapons system? You can't really say.

Before you can react a voice comes from the ship. It echoes through you on all levels of your being. You can hear it in your ears, feel its reverberation through your body, and sense it tickling at your brain. It sounds shrill, deep, chaotic, and musical all at once. It says:

"Attention, Lesser sentient! You are interfering in matters beyond your limited ability to comprehend. You will cease your interference immedi-

ately. You cannot stop what was set in motion millennia ago.

"Too long I waited to gather the forces I require. No longer distract me with your misguided attempts to control or hinder the army I have built! Continue, and the consequences will be dire for both you and this planet. Cease these distractions and you may all yet survive.

"I now depart. Do not follow. Ignore this warning at your peril. There will be no others. So speaks Tellax, the Redeemer!"

With that, the ship begins to shake, energy from deep within building up to be released. Before you can react a wave of shining silver light issues forth, temporarily blinding you. In the moments it takes your eyes to readjust, Tellax has vanished. In the distance you can see several Brande Management aerial transports and gunships approaching.

This can't be good.



Tellax's appearance, mysterious warning, and departure mark the end of this Chapter. All that's left is to turn over captured villains to the authorities and deal with Brande forces.

More about the arriving Brande forces is covered in the beginning of **Chapter 5: Rise of the Masterminds**, but if you don't have the next chapter or aren't running this scene as part of the *Emerald City Knights* series, you can use the following information to wrap up this scene.

THE ARRIVING BRANDE MANAGEMENT OPERATIVES

Even if the heroes ended up fighting Brande forces along with the stormers at Point Phorcys, the Brande reinforcements do not want to continue the battle. Unless the heroes attack them directly they collect their people and go. They might give the heroes a ride back to Emerald City or emergency medical attention, but the agents make it clear the heroes owe them for such assistance. They don't offer this aid to *any* heroes who attacked their people. They won't push matters however; they have strict orders to resolve this situation with no further violence or destruction of property. The commander in charge of the arriving forces (use the Brand Management Operatives, found in the **Heroes & Villains** section at the end of this chapter, all of whom use the Sky-Jumpers option), an attractive young woman called Agent Blazer, is focused on rescuing their people, not drawing any undue attention, and then getting the hell out of there. Her attitude and those of the arriving forces are dependent largely on the heroes' behavior towards Brande but is at worst coolly professional.

Insight rolls or similar attempts to gain information from her confirm she and her men are just following orders here and don't want a fight. They also don't know much about Point Phorcys or their assignment, though Blazer might comment Brande was hired via internet contacts by an unknown employer if Agent Mariner hasn't already shared this information with them.



WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE VILLAINS?

Once the stormers are freed from the Commander's control—or after she frees them, which happens shortly (see **Chapter 5: Rise of the Masterminds**)—the villains the heroes faced in this chapter are unlikely to go away. When selecting her puppets for her plan, the Commander selected stormers with mental problems. These issues made them easier to control, but it also increases the likelihood that even when they are no longer mind-controlled, this group of superhumans will likely be on the wrong side of the law.

It's possible the entire group stays together as a new villain team. Or they could break into smaller teams or resurface as solo villains. A few might even try to become heroes, though without some support and mentoring such efforts probably won't end well. Kid Singularity is the most likely to attempt such a path, and the most likely to fail spectacularly without proper guidance. Even if they wish to go straight, some of these stormers have several problems relating to their powers that must be dealt with lest they slip into instability and villainy.

If the group stays together in whole or part, one of the team likely surfaces as a leader or mastermind to help direct them. Tenfold is the most likely choice. Chain is the most likely to leave the group and go solo, though also the most likely to come back if she realizes no one else accepts them like their fellow “stormer freaks.” This group adopts an “Iron Age” style team name that hints at their dysfunctional nature and dark outlook (like the Lunatic Fringe or Slaughterhouse Seven). Also, the team's “broken but dangerous” style would likely find some fans among angry teens and the online villain groupie set and they could easily become regular foils for more heroic and high-functioning superhumans such as the PC heroes.

However the adventure continues. The Commander is still out there and now a new threat has appeared in the form of the alien Tellax the Redeemer. The heroes are no doubt going to want to track down both of these masterminds and deal with them. Fortunately, they won't have to wait very long...

OPTIONAL SCENE: NEXT ON WHEN HEROES ATTACK...

Scene Type: Combat

It's unlikely but possible that the heroes attack Agent Blazer and the Brande forces when they arrive. If they do, Blazer attempts to convince the heroes they are not enemies and even strategically retreats if necessary. However, Agent Blazer won't leave Brande personnel to drown or abandon anyone seriously wounded. Thus, she only withdraws if she is confident that her people will be well treated by the heroes.

Given that this fight is easily avoidable, feel free to give the heroes a hard time of it if they persist. Treat Brande Transports as Military Helicopters (See *Heroes Handbook*, pages 172-173), and give Brande forces any powerful weapons you see fit (rocket launchers are always popular). Agent Blazer is a solid threat herself and her statistics can be found at the end of this chapter.

While you can let this whole fight play out, you can also bring it to a premature close in a few ways. Maybe the beaten stormers recover and attack, forcing the heroes and Brande to again work together. Maybe Agent Blazer calls for help and other heroes show up to reign in the “reengage superheroes engaging in unlawful aggression against duly authorized private military operatives engaged in a rescue mission.” However it goes, such an attack sours already tense relations between Brande and the heroes for a long time to come. It also might result

in civil suits and criminal charges depending on how they handle it. Brande also leaks the whole affair to the media. Once it's out, anti-superhero politicians and media pundits might use the incident to push for various legal restrictions, congressional investigations, and so on. In such cases, Maximilian Mars offers to supply them with top-notch legal counsel and public relations support, but he really won't be happy about it.

Note you can also bring in Agent Blazer and her men a bit early to assist the heroes if they just cannot catch a break. Again, this is unlikely, but it could happen. If you have to go this route to help the heroes squeak out a win try and have them just take out a villain or two. Let the heroes take down the final baddies on their own.

EPILOGUE

While the hunt for Tellax and the Commander continues in the next chapter of Emerald City Knights, the heroes might want to explore the ruins of Point Phorcys, search the ocean floor for clues, and so on. If they wish to do this, feel free to let them. Sadly, there's not much to see. The only real revelation of note is that scientifically minded heroes exploring the ocean floor can find the place where Tellax crashed into the ocean and determine (with an Expertise: Science check (DC 15)) that the alien was buried in the ocean for several centuries or even longer.

The heroes' efforts on Point Phorcys won't be met with any publicity or media coverage. Brande Management keeps the whole thing under wraps, they have no interest in letting potential customers know they couldn't protect the facility.

The heroes may have also made an enemy of Brande Management. If the heroes aided Agent Mariner and his men they'll be seen as solid professionals or at least very competent amateurs, but they won't be particularly friendly. If they attacked Brande forces or were antagonistic and hostile they have made an enemy of the organization.

CHAPTER 5: RISE OF THE MASTERMINDS

This chapter starts in the immediate aftermath of the science research station battle. Brande Management reinforcements arrive to sweep up the mess, leaving any captured stormers in the custody of the heroes. Brande Management can't offer any information as to the nature of its employer.

The heroes do, however, have the captured stormers who are obviously under some form of mind control. The heroes discover that the stormers are taking orders from someone called "the Commander."

Utilizing their resources, the heroes use the nanite technology to trace the source, either through sending a feedback signal to get the Commander's attention or by tracing the signal back to the Commander's base. In either case, the Commander communicates with them. After some convincing, she tells them that she was able to tap into the alien technology that exists inside the stormers to control them. She also knew that there was a huge reserve of the technology at Point Phorcys.

At this point, Maximilian Mars reveals that he knows that the nanite technology behind the mind control because it's similar to the technology he used when he was the first Commander! He reveals that he discovered some of

that technology years ago and used it to fuel his career as the Commander and is still using it as the basis of his company today. He's clearly worried about where the nanites are coming from and offers to show the heroes his alien technology in the hopes that they can work together to jam the mind control and trace the new source.

Mars takes the heroes to his secret underground bunker and together they begin work on jamming the mind control signal. Unfortunately, just as they are on the verge of completion the alien spacecraft attacks. Hovering in orbit, the spacecraft uses a tractor beam to pull its missing piece out of the bunker. This puts the people in the building above at risk as Tellax carelessly rips the building from the ground and tosses it aside. In addition, Tellax sends another group of mind-controlled stormers to the MarsTech complex to battle the heroes and kidnap Mars.

Fortunately, the heroes win the day. Unfortunately, just as victory is in the heroes' grasp Tellax teleports them and Mars to an alien landscape, which leads to **Chapter 6: Into the Fire.**

PROLOGUE

At the end of **Chapter 4: Sea Change** the heroes just ended a fight with Brande Management and a group of stormers when the science research station is destroyed and a space ship emerges from below.

The read-aloud passage here presumes that the heroes fought the Brande security forces and the stormers and are still standing. They may have even lent a hand to the security team as their station collapsed. If events occurred differently when you ran the previous chapter, then you'll want to modify the read-aloud text accordingly.

Read or paraphrase the following:



You'd intercepted a stormer team attempting to break into an aquatic science research station named Point Phorcys and found yourselves engaged against them as well as the Brande Management security forces guarding it. You managed to hold your own and subdue the stormers when the research station was suddenly destroyed by what appeared to be a spacecraft that had been submerged beneath it.

A voice from the spacecraft warned you not to interfere in events that you don't understand and that whoever or whatever was in the spacecraft had a mission to fulfill. It then blinked away. You are now hovering over disturbed waters along with the stormers and the security forces.



TRACKING TELLAX THE REDEEMER

Tellax teleported away at the end of the previous adventure and is not due to be confronted until **Chapter 6: Out of the Frying Pan...** That said, some heroes, particularly those with useful tracking powers, may attempt to find the spaceship. This is highly improbable but it may happen. If it does, tell the heroes their attempt fails and give them a hero point. The story isn't going there right now.

WHAT IF MY HERO IS A STORMER?

If one of the heroes is a stormer and was mind-controlled to attack Point Phorcys, then he recalls none of this once freed from the mind control. Like the other stormers, the hero's last clear memory is from before being taken over (since the combat took place in **Chapter 4**, you've likely already determined when this happened). After that, the hero remembers the same bits and pieces that the other stormers do.

Even if the stormer hero wasn't controlled by the Commander, his or her status as a stormer can certainly come into play during **Scene 2** and **Scene 3** of this chapter. In **Scene 2** the hero could be the volunteer for experimentation and thus the conduit for the Commander's communication, while in **Scene 3** the hero could be controlled by Tellax to attack his friends (if you use this option, you should allow the player of the controlled hero to keep playing that character while mind-controlled so that he or she can participate in the final scene).



At this point, the heroes only have a round or two before the start of **Scene 1**. They could be occupied with fishing a drowning Brande security guard or stormer out of the water. If any of them are still standing on the collapsing station then they'll also need rescuing as the station sinks.

All stormer stat blocks can be referenced in the previous adventure, **Chapter 4: Sea Change**.

SCENE 1: AFTER THE BATTLE

Scene Type: Roleplaying (possibly Combat)

The adventure begins with the heroes hovering over the water where the science research station once stood. Brande security forces are also here, utilizing emergency lifeboats to stay afloat. Captured stormers are in the hands of the heroes or being fished out of the water by Brande, while any free stormers are trying to flee in a coordinated manner, still controlled by the Commander. If the heroes insist on pursuing in an attempt to capture them, allow the villains to escape and give the heroes a hero point for it. The story can move forward without all the stormers being captured.

The Brande Special Ops team is on the way and arrives shortly. Heroes with Remote Sensing or various Senses effects may sense the helicopters before they arrive.

Regardless of whether they are spotted, the helicopters arrive in moments. Read the following:

As you stare at the empty space where a spacecraft once hovered, you hear the muted sounds of two helicopters arriving at the site. They have the colors and markings of Brande Management. A calm, firm, female voice calls out over the loudspeakers, "This is Agent Blazer of Brande Management. We are here to rescue our people. Please stand down."

There are six Special Ops agents in each helicopter. Agent Blazer is also in one of the helicopters and directs her team from there. If a fight breaks out with the stormers (or the heroes), the Special Ops team is perfectly willing to engage, but their first concern is rescuing their brothers in arms. They do not pursue the stormers (or heroes) if they leave the fight. Agent Blazer's orders are to secure the science research station (now a lost cause) and support the Brande security forces guarding it.

If the heroes stand down (whether at the start or after a cease-fire) then Agent Blazer invites the heroes aboard to talk, while Agent Mariner coordinates rescue activities. She's already been apprised of the situation by on-site reports, but she wants to hear the heroes' story. So long as the two stories match Blazer is satisfied. She tells them that Brande Management won't be pressing charges as the heroes were actually protecting the science station. She also asks the heroes if they can help raise the science research station or at least search it for possible survivors.



POINT PHORCYS (DESTROYED)

As for any captured stormers, Agent Blazer has no real interest in taking them into custody. It's an extra hassle for her and she's more than willing to leave that to the heroes. She can provide reinforced handcuffs and other restraints if the heroes need them. Unfortunately, Agent Blazer can't shed any light on why the stormers were attacking the station; she doesn't know who owns the station or anything about the work being done there.

Interrogating the stormers at the site reveals little information. See **Roleplaying the Stormers** below for more information.

ROLEPLAYING THE STORMERS

All captured stormers begin this scene confused; the Commander has realized the mission objective has teleported away and the heroes are in danger of discovering her. Thus, she frees all the captured stormers from her control.

The stormers all revert to their normal personalities, which makes each of them respond uniquely to the situation. All of them are likely to feel as if they were goaded into a trap and perceive the heroes and Brande Management as potential perpetrators. A heroic stormer may be willing to give the heroes the benefit of the doubt or determine that a villainous stormer was responsible. Both a heroic and a villainous stormer would be shocked to hear they were working together only moments before.

It is obvious the stormers remember little of their ordeal. They can only remember things clearly up to the point when the Commander took control of the nanites in their systems. They recall bits and pieces, flashes of abruptly stopping what they were doing, leaving the city for the

ocean, and bits of the combat. Unfortunately, even these are simply jumbles of disjointed bits of memory that are meaningless gibberish to them.

Fortunately, Chain, Kid Singularity, or Tenfold (or another stormer you've introduced or prefer, see *Emerald City Knights Chapter 4: Sea Change* for the stormers mentioned) is willing to be taken and analyzed by the heroes should they ask. The chosen stormer wants to understand what's going on and hopefully put an end to being a puppet for the Commander or anyone else that can figure out how to manipulate stormers.

KEY POINTS

In this scene, the heroes recover from their combat against the stormers and Brande Management only to face more Brande Management forces. They may also have to aid in recovery efforts. Of most importance is that they enlist the aid of a stormer on which to conduct experiments. Before this scene is over, you should cover the following points.

- The stormers were mind-controlled to attack the station
- Brande Management is unaware of the station's alien nature

The heroes should bring at least one of the stormers back to Emerald City (see the **I Need A Stormer** sidebar if this doesn't happen).

TACTICS

If Agent Blazer feels the need to attack then she immediately orders the helicopters to open fire with the

SEARCHING THE STATION

Savvy heroes may wonder if there are clues in the sinking science research station and dive into the water to explore it. Heroes that attempt this find many dangerous challenges along the way. While particular powers may negate some of the dangers, heroes swimming through a sinking building have to worry about breathing and getting stuck, especially given that the water pressure and failing infrastructure is shifting things around. You can add some tension to this scene by actually having a Brande security officer or two (or even a stormer, if one happened to get inside during the battle) stuck inside the sinking station and in need of rescue.

Still, heroes that get inside the central operations center can make an Investigation check (DC 10) to discover a computer with an independent power source. A Technology check (DC 15) reveals that the operating system, while unfamiliar, is still using its factory settings. No one has added anything to the computer yet. A hero that made the Technology check with at least two degrees of success also notes that the operating system is just a “skin” over an unfamiliar and possibly alien code. That’s all the hero can learn before the station is crushed by water pressure.

tangle nets. She authorizes the use of laser cannons only for enemies that look strong enough to survive direct hits. After the first round of the helicopter barrage she orders the Special Ops team to fly out on jet packs and engage the enemy with the helicopters still providing support fire.

Blazer sends out her teams in three-person squads (each helicopter holds two squads). Each squad fights as a unit against a single enemy. If a squad gets overwhelmed then they fall back until they can join another squad. Agent Blazer leads from the helicopter, offering assistance where necessary and coordinating the support fire from the helicopters. Ideally Blazer would like to send one squad to the station and offer assistance to anyone that needs it.

Agent Blazer’s goal is to secure Brande Management personnel, not harm anyone. If someone’s in danger of drowning or some other mishap, she tries to send a squad to assist them. She won’t, however, sacrifice the lives of her team. If the heroes are giving her too much trouble then she’ll regrettably muster all of her forces against them.

Throughout the entire combat, Blazer tries to negotiate a cease-fire. Failing that, she retreats if her forces are performing badly.

As for the stormers, they don’t follow any predictable plan. Any stormers still under the Commander’s control try to flee. Those no longer under the Commander’s control react as is appropriate given their personalities; they are confused about their circumstances and suspect both the heroes and Brande Management of being the cause. Most of them merely have a desire to escape rather than fight, but if there are any heroic stormers amongst them, they may join the heroes in whatever action they take. They may also choose to rescue anyone in danger of drowning.

I NEED A STORMER!

Depending on how the scene plays out, it’s possible that the heroes may not have taken any stormers into custody (either willing or unwilling) and don’t have a stormer hero among them. This is potentially problematic, as **Scene 2** depends upon the heroes returning to Emerald Tower with a stormer for experimentation. Without seeming too heavy-handed, here are two ways to rectify this.

First, you can have a stormer ask the heroes for help. While most of the stormers want to get back to their lives, at least one immediately sees the potential for future hijackings of his will by the Commander, or others. If any of the heroes shows a capacity for gadgeteering the stormer naturally asks him or her for help. Note that you don’t have to have the stormer ask during this scene; a villainous stormer may come to this conclusion after fleeing and contact the heroes after they’ve returned to Emerald City.

Second, you can have a stormer contact Maximilian Mars. As MarsTech, Inc. is well-known for its technological innovations, the stormer believes that Mars can help. Mars becomes very interested when he discovers that the stormers have the same alien technology inside of them that Mars has used throughout both his careers. Mars immediately drafts the heroes to help him with his experiments. You can then use **Scene 2** with just a few small tweaks.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

The Brande Management Operatives, helicopters, as well as Agents Blazer and Mariner are detailed at the end of this chapter in the **Heroes & Villains** section.

OUTCOME

The heroes should leave this scene having made peace with Brande Management and return home with at least one stormer on which to conduct experiments. The rest of the stormers return to their previous lives.

REWARDS

After Point Phorcys collapses, heroes who help stormers or Brande Management Operatives who are in danger of drowning earn an additional hero point.

SCENE 2: INVESTIGATING THE COMMANDER

Scene Type: Challenge

After the events on the research station the heroes are likely to return to the Emerald Tower with at least one stormer in tow. Presuming that the stormer is willing, the heroes first need to determine how the stormers are being controlled. This scene takes place in appropriate rooms within the heroes’ base within the Emerald Tower.

If the heroes wish to involve Maximilian Mars, he'll be rather enthusiastic in aiding them if they mention the alien craft that emerged from the ocean. While he isn't informing the heroes just yet, Mars suspects there may be a connection between his alien technology and the spaceship that the heroes saw.

How the heroes perform their initial diagnoses depends on their powers. Heroes with the Mind Reading or Senses (Postcognition) effects see the stormer going through a normal day, then suddenly freeze up and move off to meet up with an armored woman surrounded by other stormers (the ones that went to Point Phorcys) in a similar zombie-like state. While with the woman, she spent time concentrating on each stormer, using his or her powers until she felt confident with them, then moving to the next stormer to do the same. Mind Reading also reveals the stormer briefly "heard" a distorted, indistinct, but female voice in his or her thoughts when contact was first established, then nothing after that until being released from control.

Players may choose to make any of the checks below as routine checks, they have plenty of time to work with the stormer and are not under stress. Each check requires a few hours of time and if there are multiple heroes with the appropriate skills, they can work simultaneously to save time, otherwise each check requires about four hours of time.

- **Treatment (DC 15)** allows a hero to analyze the stormer's bloodstream and determine the presence of something foreign and artificial. Heroes should receive a +2 circumstance bonus for using their laboratory.
- **Expertise: Science or Technology (DC 20)** checks can substitute for the Treatment check above and reveals the same information. This approach also risks shocking the stormers system (see **Shocking the Stormer's System** later in this section).
- **Two Degrees of Success:** Allows heroes to determine that the stormer's powers are caused by alien nanites. This also informs the hero that, while the technology is alien, it should be possible to agitate the nanites and create feedback that should get the Commander's attention.

SHOCKING THE STORMER'S SYSTEM

Two degrees of success on the Expertise: Science or Technology checks also activates the nanites defense mechanisms. This causes the stormer to suffer a shock of painful, debilitating pain that automatically inflicts damage as if the stormer failed a resistance check by two degrees (Dazed and a -1 to additional resistance checks). It also gives the stormer a brief flash of awareness of a link that still exists with the Commander.

Once knowledge of this link is known—of if the heroes independently theorize they may be able to contact the Commander using the nanites—the heroes can build a device which will generate feedback and hopefully draw the Commander's attention. Building the device requires a laboratory (which the Emerald Tower has). A hero with the Inventor advantage can create the feedback device

by making a design check (DC 16) and a construction check (DC 16). If none of your heroes have the Inventor advantage, Maximilian Mars can do the work for them, or they can attempt the same checks with a -5 circumstance penalty. Once the device has been constructed the heroes need only turn it on to make it work and get the Commander's attention.

Turning on the feedback device inflicts automatic damage on the stormer, this time the stormer suffers damage at a lower level than before, but takes damage as if the stormer failed a resistance check by one degree (-1 to additional resistance checks) each minute for five minutes, then it increases to the next degree of failure of a resistance check (Dazed and -1 to future resistance checks) each minute for five minutes, then increases to the third degree of failure for a resistance check (Staggered and -1 to future resistance checks) each minute for two minutes. At the end of 12 minutes the stormer passes out from the pain. Fortunately for the stormer, the Commander is aware of the feedback immediately and takes over the stormer to find out what's going on only a minute or two later. This leads directly into **Scene 3: The Commander Speaks!** Once the Commander begins speaking, the heroes can turn off the feedback device.

ROLEPLAYING THE STORMER

The nanites don't like being probed. The process is painful to the affected stormer, but he or she's just as curious as everyone else and bears the burden. The stormer doesn't conceal how painful it is, but insists on moving forward with the experiments.

If the stormer is run by a player, then the hero is free to react to the pain however the player wishes. This makes for some interesting roleplaying amongst the heroes.

ROLEPLAYING MAXIMILIAN MARS

Assuming that the heroes contact Maximilian Mars, he's very keen to help, especially if they tell him about the strange vessel. Mars not only correctly assumes that this is a space ship, but also that it may be connected to the alien technology that he has been using for years.

While on the verge of sharing his secret, Mars isn't quite ready to share his history as the Commander nor what he knows about the technology (that happens in **Scene 4: Mars' Secret Revealed!**). Heroes that ask to make an Insight check against Mars (opposed by his Deception skill) realize he's hiding something. If pressed, Mars admits that the technology is familiar to him and he shares all he knows once the experiments are over. If a hero continues to press him, then you can skip over to **Scene 4** and have Mars share his secret. He won't give the heroes the grand tour until after **Scene 3**.

If the heroes don't contact Mars he arrives soon anyway in order to ask how things are going, what sort of progress they've made, and to see if they need his help with any technical matters. In truth, he's curious as to what's going on and wants to get involved.

KEY POINTS

This scene is designed to enable the heroes to discover that the stormers can be controlled through the nanites inside them; the nanites are also responsible for their powers. Maximilian Mars is also likely to get involved, either through the heroes asking him for assistance or his own curiosity. The heroes should cover the following key points before moving on to **Scene 3**.

- The heroes should determine that the stormer's powers are caused by nanites.
- Maximilian Mars is very interested in the nanites.

The heroes can create a feedback device to cause havoc with the Commander's connection to the stormers.

OUTCOME

By the end of this scene the heroes should create a feedback loop that gets the Commander's attention. This leads directly into the next scene, **Scene 3: The Commander Speaks!**

REWARDS

If the stormer who volunteers to be the guinea pig for the feedback device is a hero, that character should earn a hero point for their actions (and the pain they have to endure).

SCENE 3: THE COMMANDER SPEAKS!

Scene Type: Roleplaying (possibly with a short combat)

Now that the heroes are using the feedback device, they've managed to get the Commander's attention. While she deals with the discomfort caused by the feedback, she also puts the affected stormer back under her control in a bid to get the heroes to stop their actions.

Read or paraphrase the following.



After a few minutes of watching the stormer wince from the shocks, you notice a change come over the stormer's face and a change in posture. Rather than scrunched in pain, the stormer seems angry as silver eyes narrow and glare at each of you. Just as the stormer is about to say something, another shock strikes. Once the pain subsides, the stormer hisses a command.

"I am the Commander. Are you going to stop whatever it is you're doing... or do you want your stormer to die first?"



HEROIC PROBLEM-SOLVING

Solving a mystery can be one of the most rewarding events for a player. The satisfaction one gets from putting clues together and solving a particular problem is second to none, whether it is figuring out how to outwit a more powerful villain, deducing who the mastermind is behind the latest rash of robberies, or, in this case, determining what is going on with the stormers.

Such satisfaction is muted when problem-solving devolves into a series of skill checks or hero point expenditures. While these certainly have their place (why else is there an Investigation skill?), don't be so quick to call for them. Instead, allow the players to try and figure things out on their own and let them ask for their own skill checks when they feel it necessary. This keeps the tools in the hands of the players rather than seeming like you are spoon-feeding them.

That said, by all means call for a skill check or hero point expenditure if the players are spinning their wheels and obviously stuck. While players derive satisfaction from figuring out a problem on their own, they also tend to get very frustrated when floundering. That's when it's time for you to throw them the lifeline.

While the heroes may initially interpret it as such, the Commander's warning is not a threat. The heroes' feedback loop has been hurting the Commander and she knows that the stormer relaying the signal must be experiencing much worse.

It's important to note that the exchange between the heroes and the Commander isn't determined by skill checks or other die rolls. That's because the heroes need this information to keep the story moving. You can ask for checks from the players, but use that only as a smoke-screen; they'll get all the information regardless of what they roll, but if you wish, you can present the information in such a way that the heroes have reason to doubt it. The Commander isn't happy the heroes have found a way to contact her and use her powers against her, but she's not in a position to oppose them just now. So, the Commander shares information in order to keep the heroes busy while she looks for a solution to her problem.

The text below is presented in question (in bold) and answer (in italics) format. The Commander answers questions mostly honestly, but she's not going to reveal her real name, location, or any other piece of information she regards as important to her safety. The paragraphs are organized so that you can split them apart so the conversation flows more naturally. In addition, you can hold back certain paragraphs until the heroes ask the appropriate questions.

Who are you?

I'm the Commander... I've come back to take over the world with a new super-powered army!

We know you're not the original Commander. He was a man and you're a woman. Who are you really?

I'm the new Commander. I was given my powers by the Silver Storm to instill order in the world! My order!



So you weren't behind the Silver Storm?

Ha, no! The Storm was otherworldly. Impossibly advanced. Only someone with an intelligence as great as mine could begin to comprehend the technology involved!

What do you know about the stormers and the nanites that gave them their powers?

I do not know what caused the Silver Storm nor do I fully understand how the nanites operate, at least not yet! I believe they are of alien origin. I am certain that the nanites are the source of the stormers' powers and I suspect that their secondary purpose is to allow some outside force to control anyone with active nanites in their system. I discovered a back door in the nanites to control the stormers myself.

How did you gain control of the stormers?

I discovered a way to use the nanites to control them and I built a device to enable me to override their original programming. Don't bother trying to duplicate my invention; I've designed it to be uniquely compatible with my advanced brain.

So the "code" for taking over the stormers was already built into the nanites?

Yes, it was already there, just waiting for someone like me to find it and use it! That's how I am able to take over the stormers. My device doesn't work on others.

So someone could turn you into a zombie, too?

Don't you think I would have considered that? I have taken precautions that make me immune to such control.

Would you share that secret with us? It will probably be important to keep the stormers from being taken over by Tellax or whatever might try to control them in the future.

No. I'd be a fool to share that technology with you. The stormers are mine to control!

Why did you send the stormers to Point Phorcys and do you know what that spaceship was or who Tellax is?

I sensed a large cache of nanites in the ocean, beneath the station. I "recruited" a stormer team to find and retrieve them so I could create an even larger army of stormers. While that plan no longer seems possible, I still have access to plenty of stormers. Even so, I am endeavoring to find the alien craft. As for the alien itself, I have no idea who or what it was. Nor do I know its purpose.

Have you had any luck finding the spaceship?

So far, I haven't, but with my intellect, it's only a matter of time.

That's all we wanted to know.

Well then, be gone and don't attempt to contact me again! I've given you all the information I'm willing to share!

While any stormer heroes would be happy to have it, the Commander won't share her schematics on how to inhibit external control over the nanites. What the stormer heroes do receive, however, is the satisfaction that such a device can be created (well, assuming that the Commander isn't lying).

ROLEPLAYING THE COMMANDER

Portray the Commander as needing to be persuaded to share her story. She knows that she has to share in order to give the heroes something to do and keep them from coming after her, but by feigning reluctance she hopes to convince them she's doing them a favor. Also, she doesn't want to risk their ire by causing permanent damage should she need to regain control of the stormer as a show of power. Doing so would only encourage the heroes to hunt her down.

KEY POINTS

This is primarily a roleplaying scene between the heroes and the new Commander. While the Commander offers a great deal of information, you should ensure that the heroes receive the following relevant information.

- **Most important:** There is a way to protect a stormer from being controlled.
- The Silver Storm is likely of alien origin.
- A new Commander is responsible for controlling the stormers.
- The new Commander is not responsible for the Silver Storm and isn't an alien or working with Tellax.
- This Commander is not connected to the original Commander from Emerald City's past.
- This Commander has little knowledge of the alien spacecraft.

ACTION

Depending on how the conversation goes, the Commander may punctuate her last statement by overriding the stormer and forcing him to attack, putting emphasis on destroying the feedback equipment. She's acting out of spite and only controls the stormer for a couple of rounds, not long enough to do any permanent damage to the stormer or the heroes.

OUTCOME

By the end of this scene the heroes should establish that the nanites were created by an alien, probably within the craft they saw at the end of **Chapter 4: Sea Change**. They've also likely recruited the aid of Maximilian Mars, who is now ready to reveal what he knows.

REWARDS

If the heroes manage to drastically harm their relationship with the new Commander, give the heroes respon-

sible a hero point. This guarantees the Commander will be back to cause problems for those heroes. You should only award this hero point if you decide you'd like to use the Commander again in your series.

If, through excellent roleplaying and some good Persuasion rolls, the heroes manage to convince the Commander to help them deal with Tellax's threat, that's worth a hero point as well—although they'd have to be some pretty impressive rolls to convince the Commander to work against her own interests by giving away the secret to protecting stormers from mind control!

SCENE 4: MARS' SECRET REVEALED!

Scene Type: Roleplaying

Maximilian Mars comes clean about his history as the original Commander and the source of his supervillain technology. This scene is split into two parts; the first is Mars revealing information about his past while the second is a tour of his underground facilities, which is where the heroes are at the start of the final scene, **Invasion from Beyond!**

Once the exchange with the new Commander is over, Mars asks the heroes to accompany him back to his office. Initially he plays this as needing security in case the Commander comes after him, but he's actually ready to reveal his secrets to the heroes. If pressed, Mars says that there's something he wants to share with them once they get to his office.

Once they are in his office, Mars invites them to sit and offers them a drink from his office bar. He then sits back in his desk chair and takes a long drink before offering the following information.



"While you've discovered this on your own, I can undeniably confirm that this new "Commander" is not the original. It would be impossible, in fact, as I am the original Commander." He looks at the wall to his right. "Display."

A panel on the wall to the right shimmers and disappears, revealing an alcove with the latest version of the Commander battlesuit standing there.

"Don't be alarmed," he says. "My villainous past is behind me and I've been pardoned for my crimes. But you deserve an explanation and full disclosure. I hope I don't disappoint."

"I used to work for Harrison Electronics, a big name in the Defense industry. When I discovered that the CEO, Tony Harrison, was stealing my work and developing it on his own, he accused me of stealing company secrets and fired me.

"I also discovered that he put out a contract on me. With the local police bought to look the other way, I fled to the mountains to escape a hit squad."

I stumbled across the wreck of an alien vessel. I went inside seeking shelter and, for some unknown reason, it decided to protect me. The hit squad never stood a chance."

He finishes his drink and pours another. "It took me weeks to understand even the basics of the technology, but it was enough for me to adapt and use. I wanted vengeance on Harrison and, more than that, I wanted to test the limits of this technology. I created a villainous persona, the Commander, to get superheroes to challenge me. I always chose targets that would hurt Harrison Electronics in some way."

"My plan worked well. While I ruffled a few feathers within the Chamber, I succeeded in hurting Harrison. He didn't know what hit him when I bought the company out from under him after its stocks fell. MarsTech took its place and soon grew by leaps and bounds, using what I'd learned from the spacecraft.

"Unfortunately, I could not guide MarsTech to its fullest potential and be the Commander at the same time. When I saw my opportunity for a fresh start, I took it. I've devoted my life to running this company full-time. In a way, your presence is the culmination of my efforts over the last two decades. I've been trying to bring respectability to Emerald City and I understand heroes like you need to be a part of that."

Mars stands and finishes his second drink, placing the glass back on the bar.

"But I didn't bring you here just to tell you a story. I want to take you to my vault where the remnants of the alien technology sit. I think by working together, we may be able to come up with a device like the one created by this new Commander, so we can protect the stormers from being mind controlled by her as well as whatever else might be out there."



Assuming that the heroes are amenable, Mars walks over to a black and white photo of Emerald City circa 1936 and utters "open." The picture and the wall behind it shimmers and disappears, revealing an elevator door (if any of the heroes had earlier scanned the room, they'd find the door if they can detect it through a 5-point Illusion power). The elevator car comfortably holds all of the heroes and Mars.

There is a panel with twenty buttons, all unmarked. Without looking Mars selects one and the elevator makes a slight hissing sound (the buttons are a security measure. If you press the wrong button an alarm sounds and the car fills with knockout gas (a rank 12 Affliction (Resisted by Fortitude; Fatigued, Exhausted, Asleep)) and the doors magnetize shut (Toughness 25). The proper button changes daily or whenever Mars feels like changing it.

The elevator smoothly moves downward. The elevator is definitely descending, although the elevator also seems to move from side to side and back and forth on occasion. After several minutes, the door opens into a darkened room.

As Mars steps out of the elevator, the overhead lights come on, revealing a corridor 50 feet long and 6 feet wide. Two security robots unlike anything you've seen on MarsTech property before stand at the other end of the corridor, holding large, alien-looking rifles. They are standing in front of a set of double doors but they step aside as Mars and the heroes approach. The double doors open to reveal a large warehouse-sized room with vents but no windows.

Read or paraphrase the following.



The doors open into a large underground warehouse. The room is roughly a hundred yards long and wide with a 40 foot ceiling. Used, but well-organized workstations and testing sites cover the floor, all surrounding a large object that looks like a metallic icicle resting on its side. A couple of robotic technicians are examining different sections of the artifact, and cables run from it to computer stations. Bits and pieces of similar alien technology are strewn throughout the room, being analyzed and experimented on.

"Welcome to the Vault," Max says as he leads you into the room. "For decades this has been the core of MarsTech. This Vault sits underground in a secure location. Ten feet of concrete separate the ceiling from the subbasement above. The only living soul who's seen this room in decades is me... and now you."



Heroes that have seen Tellax' ship at the end of **Chapter 4** recognize similarities between that ship and the much smaller piece here. It's entirely possible that the pieces in this warehouse came from that vessel.

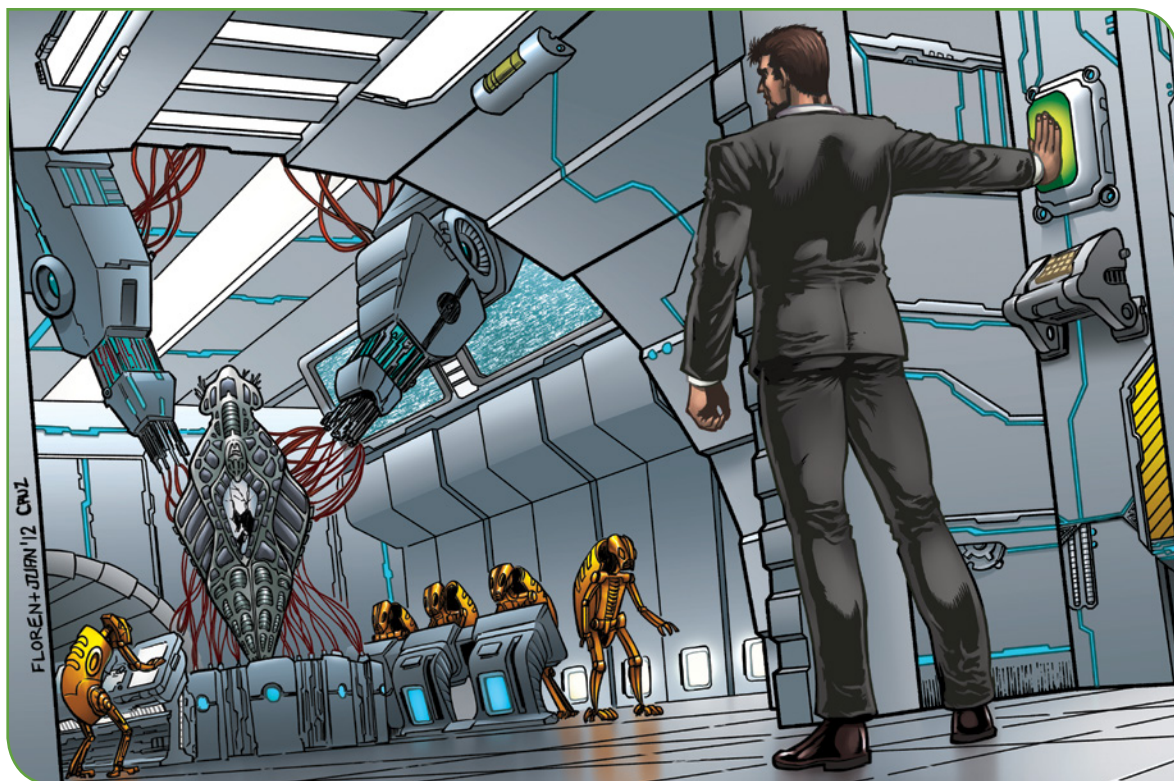
With Mars' assistance, the heroes scrounge together enough alien parts to construct a mind control jammer. Unfortunately, before the heroes can finish the device Tellax attacks.

ROLEPLAYING MAXIMILIAN MARS

Normally, Maximilian Mars is cool and calm. Since he's learned about the nanites and their connection to "his" technology he's become very eager to learn more about them as well as their connection to the alien ship the heroes saw. He knows things are coming to a head and he wants to help the heroes protect his city from whatever threat Tellax and the stormers represent. Now that he knows there's a way to protect the stormers from being mind controlled, he won't rest until he figures it out.

KEY POINTS

The purpose of this scene is to reveal that Mars has a long history with Tellax's technology and is probably the most knowledgeable person in the world when it comes to its abilities. In addition, this scene should reveal that Mars is



a changed man. Whatever he was like in the days before the Silver Storm, he cares about Emerald City and wants to see its people protected.

- Mars seems genuinely interested in helping the heroes find a way to keep the stormers from being mind controlled—as well as in protecting the city and the people in it.
- The heroes find out Mars has had access to alien technology for years and all of his technological advances are based off it.
- The heroes begin work on a jammer to keep the stormers from being mind controlled.

OUTCOME

By this point the heroes should have learned Mars's secret and been taken to see the remains of the alien ship. They also have the design of a mind control jamming device although the actual construction is interrupted. The interruption is covered in the next and final scene of this adventure.

SCENE 5: INVASION FROM BEYOND!

Scene Type: *Combat, Conclusion*

Tellax has decided to eliminate his influence on Earth once and for all by reclaiming the alien technology Mars appropriated decades ago. To do this, Tellax takes control of several stormers and tasks them with incapacitating the heroes while securing Mars. He also sends a tractor

beam to MarsTech to rip an office building away to reveal the long-missing piece of his vessel.

The heroes should be on the verge of creating their mind control jamming device when Tellax attacks. Read or paraphrase the following:



You're hard at work on the jamming device, deep underground when the entire Vault starts shaking. At first, it's just a few quick jolts, but they grow in intensity until the room is vibrating violently. Tables tip over, computers fall, and robots stumble as they try to secure loose objects. Before you have a chance to act, you hear several large cracks as the entire ceiling rips away. Something has ripped the roof of the Vault off along with all of the dirt and the building above from its very foundations!

Just as this registers, you see a group of silver-eyed stormers charge into the Vault to attack!



After reading this to the players, give them all a hero point. This surprise attack by an apparently overwhelming force and the threats to the safety of innocent bystanders certainly qualifies as a serious complication for the heroes.

The frontline stormers leap into the Vault and engage the heroes while Electron and Precious attack them from afar. Mars's security robots lay cover fire as they shield Maximilian Mars and escort him into a secure room. It takes Tellax 3 rounds to remove the building, drop it, and begin pulling the craft fragment towards it.

PLAYING THE STORMERS

Seven stormers are provided in this adventure. Only use all of the stormers if you're running **Rise of the Masterminds** for a large group. While these are PL 9 villains, some of them have power point totals closer to PL 10. Use three stormers for every two heroes, selecting stormers that would provide the most interesting challenges for the heroes.

All of these stormers have been active for only a short time. A hero with an appropriate Expertise (such as Expertise: Criminal or Expertise: Pop Culture), or who has the Will-informed advantage, can make a skill check (DC 20) to see if he or she knows anything about a stormer of their choice. Any hero who succeeds has heard at least a little bit about their chosen stormer and has a general sense of his or her powers. A separate check can be made for each stormer if the heroes wish; each check after the first requires a move action.

In addition to the personal notes below, all stormers have a mission to grab Maximilian Mars. They won't hurt him, even if Mars attacks them (such as with a blaster rifle). The stormers try to incapacitate Mars and ready him to be beamed aboard Tellax's ship.

While under Tellax's control, the stormers don't utilize their usual tactics. Instead, they take a "brute force" approach, charging toward the heroes if they are able or descending into the pit that was formerly a basement.

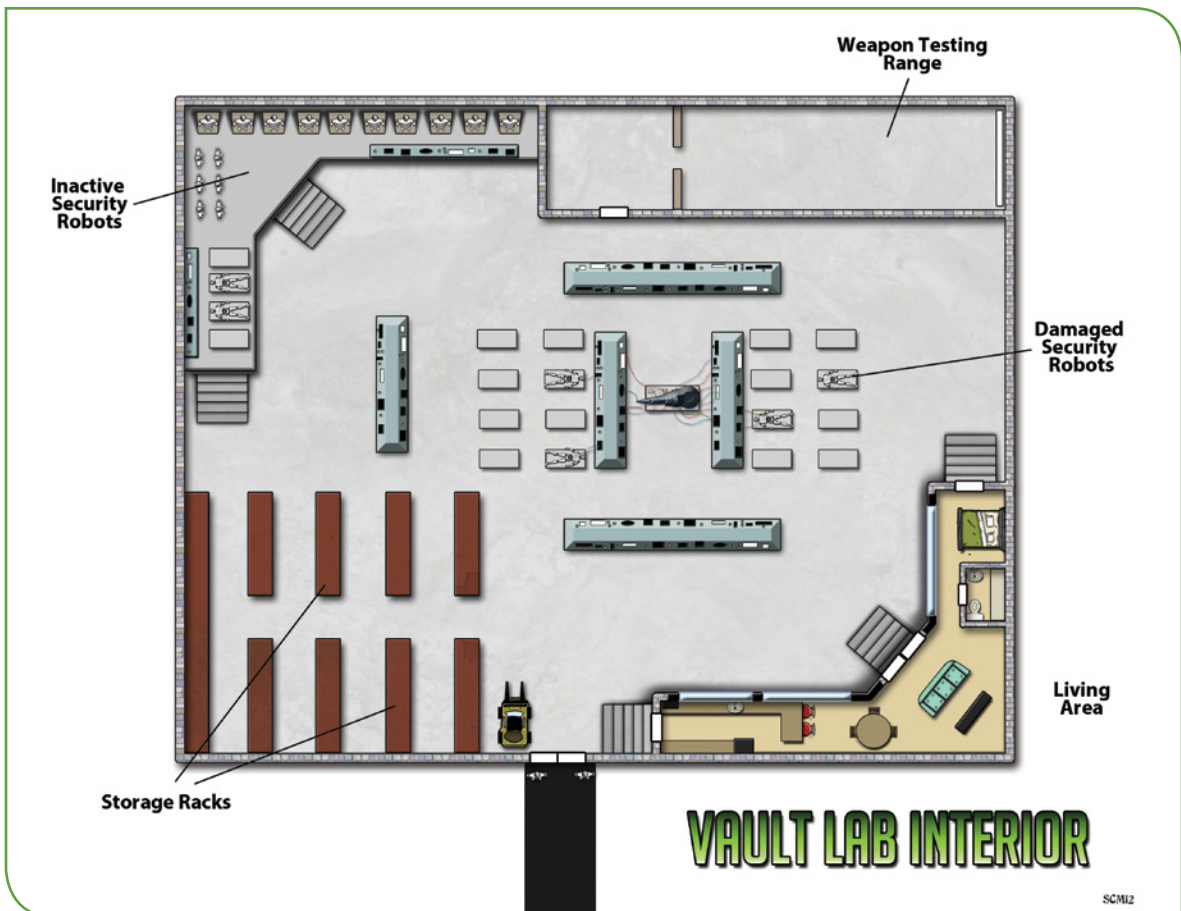
Precious is a special case. While she is moving into position just like the others, her appearance likely keeps her from being spotted until she launches her first attack (you can play this up by having a hero notice that one of the villains, perhaps Doughboy, looks like he is about to step on a poor cat that wandered into the hole).

Justicar is conflicted. Even under Tellax's control, there is something inside of him screaming that his current actions are wrong. While he presses his attack like the other Stormers, he refuses to use his pistols unless necessary. Instead, he relies on his fear aura to dissuade the heroes and, failing that, he defaults to his fists.

PLAYING MAXIMILIAN MARS

Maximilian Mars is not used to being defenseless. Without his battlesuit he needs to rely on his security forces and the heroes. His security forces immediately move to secure him, escorting him deeper into the Vault where he's protected by reinforced walls with a Toughness of 16.

Mars uses his intercom system to warn the heroes that the alien beam is after the source of his technology and begs them to secure it. If Tellax succeeds, then MarsTech loses its position as innovation leader. In spite of his security robots' best efforts, Mars grabs a blaster rifle, and joins the fray.



PLAYING TELLAX

Tellax is interested in removing its influence on Earth. This requires two steps. First, Maximilian Mars must be brought to the ship in order to ascertain how far he's spread the alien technology. Second, the source of such technology needs to be removed. This requires beaming the lost part of Tellax's ship back to the vessel. Tellax is currently controlling the stormers to aid his plan.

With part of his ship already in human hands, Tellax doesn't risk putting his own ship in danger. He fires his tractor beam from orbit while using mind-controlled stormers to engage the heroes and retrieve Mars.

KEY POINTS

The heroes are caught by surprise in this scene. While the key points are obvious, this scene is crucial to advance into the next and final chapter. Before ending this adventure, you should cover the following key points.

- The heroes should *not* have completed the mind control jammer before the attack.
- Tellax is capable of controlling the stormers—and able to do so more completely than the Commander.
- The heroes need to prevent the Tellax and the stormers from taking Maximilian Mars and his alien artifact.
- When the heroes manage to stymie Tellax, he transports them and Maximilian Mars to an alien world.

SETUP

The heroes start on the floor of the Vault. The ceiling of the room was 30 feet high; there is now a 20 foot hole above it that leads to ground level with the building hovering about 10 feet higher than that and rising.

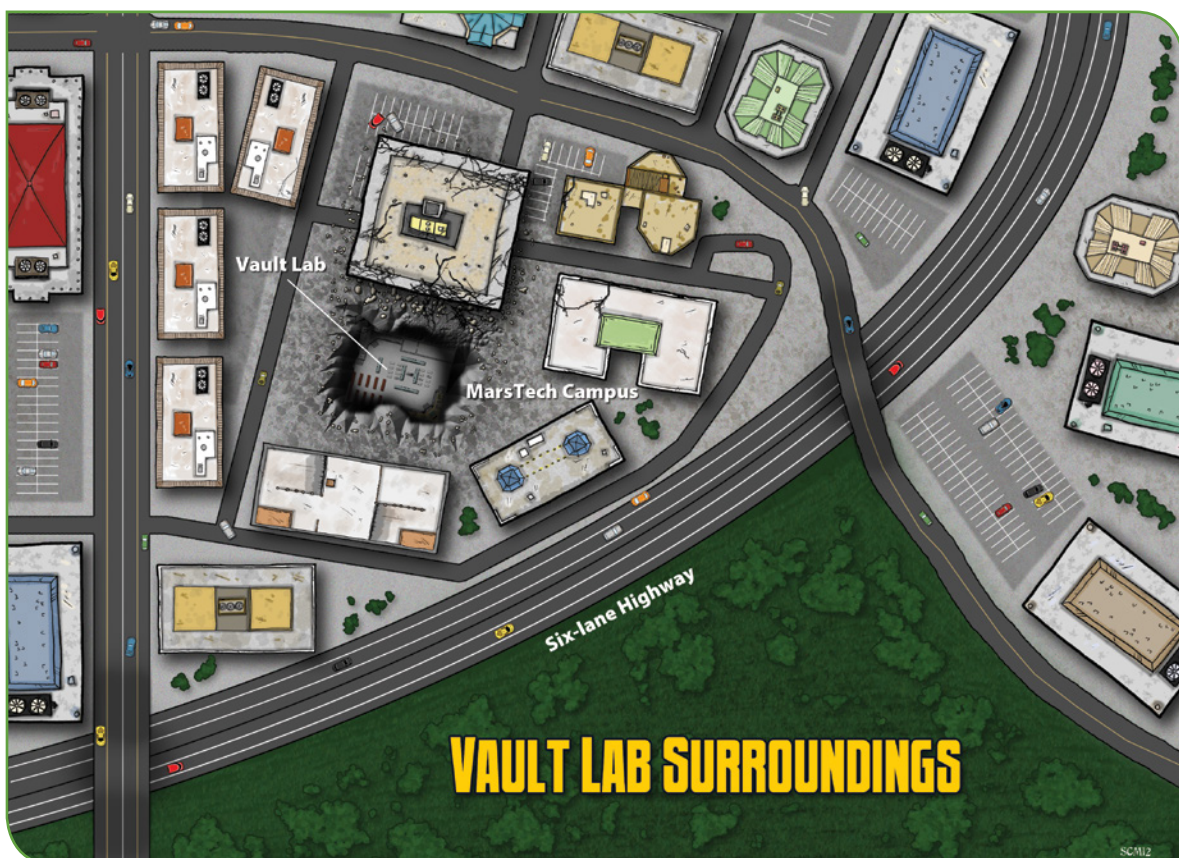
The stormers attack in the first round. Flying stormers swoop in while grounded stormers stand on the edge of the newly-formed pit. Security robots immediately move to protect Mars.

TACTICS

Tellax wants to occupy the heroes while it kidnaps Max Mars and retrieves its missing technology. Thus, all of the stormers are initially ordered to attack the heroes by rushing into the pit and engaging them. Tellax does its best to match stormers to heroes in order to gain the best advantage (Tellax is not aware of anything it hasn't observed, so it may inadvertently match a stormer against hero that he or she is ill-equipped to face when the hero uses his full suite of powers).

Tellax responds to events as they unfold. Should the heroes attempt to stop the building from being moved then it'll instruct the stormers to stop them. It also sends stormers to stop any heroes that tries to protect Mars or interfere with the tractor beam.

Tellax takes three rounds moving the building away from the Vault. He then drops the building (which falls 20 feet



before hitting the ground) and locks the tractor beam on Mars' piece of his vessel.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

The most immediate environmental feature facing the heroes is falling debris from the bottom of the building. So long as the heroes are below the building, they run the risk of getting hit. Each round, any character that is beneath the building must make a Dodge save at DC 15. Those that fail are hit by falling concrete and steel for

Damage 5. Those that fail by two or more degrees are also pinned to the ground. They are immobile and impaired, and they must make an Athletics check against Difficulty 20 to break free. The concrete and steel has a Toughness of 9 if someone wants to destroy it.

MarsTech has several thousand employees and the parking lots (each about 500 feet in diameter) in the area are full of cars. Doughboy and Justicar may hurl these at the heroes (cars do their Toughness in damage (usually 8). Persephone and Precious may use a full lot to hide from the heroes and attack from cover. Several employees are

YOU WANT MORE?!

With only one dedicated combat scene, this adventure is designed for a single session of play. That said you can easily expand this adventure by adding a few optional scenes. Below are a few common ways to add an extra session or two to this adventure.

"RESCUING" THE STORMER

Rise of the Masterminds presumes that the heroes escort a willing stormer from Point Phorcys to Emerald Tower unmolested. Using this option, the Commander, worried that the heroes might be able to trace the stormer back to her, sends another stormer team to free the stormer working with the heroes. She also reactivates the captured stormer to aid in his own rescue.

This combat scene takes place over the ocean, in the city, or even inside the heroes' headquarters. You can make a new set of stormers, use stormers from earlier chapters, or use the archetypes in the *Mutants & Masterminds Hero's Handbook*. Their goal is not to defeat the heroes but simply to set the "captive" stormer free—and not get caught themselves!

THE COMMANDER ATTACKS

In **Scene 3: The Commander Speaks!**, there is the possibility that the Commander puts the stormer through which she's speaking to the heroes back under her control and attacks the heroes. This is only for a couple of rounds, as the Commander merely wants to give the heroes a show of power.

Under this option, the Commander manipulates the stormer to cause more permanent damage. The stormer's first objective is to destroy the heroes' feedback device so that she can remotely control the stormer without interference. In addition, she sends several other stormers to help (again, you can create a new team of stormers using the guidelines offered in the previous section). Their mission is to destroy the heroes.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL TO THE COMMANDER

For a longer game you could have the heroes trace the signals from the new Commander back to its source, her base beneath the city. The Commander makes her headquarters in an old forgotten bomb shelter that was designed in the 1950s to house the city government in case of a nuclear attack. An unscrupulous contractor pocketed the money that was supposed to fill the shelter during a city expansion project in the 1980s.

For security purposes the shelter was placed away from City Hall and now sits beneath Yellow Brick Row, a large open-air shopping mall. The only entrance to the Commander's headquarters is a secret trapdoor inside a boarded up beauty shop called "Janus Boutique." The shop is boarded up for renovations that aren't taking place. Discovering the trapdoor requires an Investigation check (DC 25). The trapdoor opens into a second hatch that has an elaborate security code. This requires a Technology check (DC 30) to crack. The other option is to somehow pass through or tear down the door itself, which has a Toughness of 12.

Beneath the hatch is a ladder that leads to the headquarters 50 feet below. The Commander is quite surprised at the intrusion and attempts to bargain her way out of the situation (offering the same information that she gives in **Scene 3**). She may also give them her mind control device, but this has been broken by the feedback they used to contact her. Essentially, this puts them in the same position that they'd be in at the start of **Scene 5**. At this point, you can have Tellax attack MarsTech and force the heroes to choose whether to keep hounding the Commander or to let her go free in order to take care of the more immediate threat.

OTHER PIECES OF SPACESHIP

Maximilian Mars, AKA the original Commander, derived his powers from alien technology that fell from Tellax's vessel as it plunged through the atmosphere into the sea. It's entirely possible, and likely probable, that other pieces fell as well. Not only does this offer an origin story for other heroes or villains but the piece could also be buried in a place where its retrieval would threaten lives (such as an under a park or busy beach).

also in the parking lot frantically trying to escape the carnage. They can be used as human shields or hostages to get heroes to surrender.

The ripping up of a building near city streets can cause ripple effects that tear apart the roads and shake nearby foundations. A hero caught in a ripple effect needs to make an Athletics skill at DC 20 or be knocked to the ground. A hero missing this roll by 2 or more degrees falls into a sinkhole, causing no damage but putting him 10 + 1d20 feet underground. At best this may cause some car accidents or pedestrians threatened by cracks or falling chunks of building (again, requiring a Dodge save at DC 15 or taking Damage 5. There is also the same chance of being pinned as above). At worst it could cause a bus to teeter on the edge of a sink hole or cause a nearby building to collapse. In fact, the trajectory of Tellax's beam virtually ensures that the MarsTech building it is removing is bound to hit another tall building, perhaps causing a domino effect.

The stormers may use other MarsTech buildings for cover or attack heroes entering the pulled building while they are rescuing office workers. Internal walls have a Toughness of 8 while external walls have a Toughness of 10. The outer glass windows are reinforced with a Toughness of 4 but many still shattered when the building was wrenched from the ground.

Although the office building snatching caught the employees unawares, MarsTech has actually run training exercises on what to do if a villain or monster rips the building from the ground (a byproduct of living in a city full of villains). Most MarsTech employees immediately ran to the "safe rooms" in the center of the building which are specially reinforced to withstand impact. They also fill the room with spongy foam to protect the employees.

Unfortunately, not every employee follows the protocol. Some employees simply panic, while others are blocked by structural buckling or fallen/wedged file cabinets and furniture. Still others may be trapped or stuck. Trapped employees require an Athletics check against DC 20 to free; the Toughness save varies by the object pinning the employee (a large filled file cabinet has a Toughness of 4, whereas an oak desk has a Toughness of 3).. A few employees may even fall out of the building, whether being shaken out of the building or jumping of their own volition. Such characters need saving by the heroes.

Eventually, the heroes need to deal with the building. Tellax doesn't care where it lands and drops it on the ground several yards away in three rounds. Heroes can attempt to pull the building free, but the beam has a Strength of 20. Unless one of the heroes is a true powerhouse, they'll have to wait until the beam is released before securing the building. The dropped building is unstable and could topple into other buildings or across a street, putting a few lives in danger. The heroes need to find a way to secure the building and rescue anyone affected by Tellax's harsh treatment.

Mars does not want Tellax to get the alien technology. Tellax needs to move the building first, giving the heroes

time to secure the building and attack the stormers. Due to the delicate nature of the technology Tellax uses a weaker tractor beam which only has a Strength of 10. Powerhouse heroes, perhaps with a little aid, could wrench the alien remains free from the beam. This requires a Strength challenge sequence. A hero or heroes must win 3 challenges in order to pull the alien craft out of the beam.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

The important characters in this scene are the stormers, now under the control of Tellax rather than the Commander. The stat blocks for the stormers can be found in the **Heroes & Villains** section of this adventure.

OUTCOME

Despite the bleak situation that the heroes started with they should win this battle. The stormers are individually less powerful than the heroes and Tellax remains in orbit, focused solely on capturing Mars rather than aiding the stormers. Once it is clear the stormers aren't going to defeat the heroes, kidnap Mars, or recover the piece of the ship, then Tellax uses his ace in the hole.

Paraphrase the following or read it aloud to the players. You'll need to revise the information below to reflect how things went in your game:



The tide of battle appears to be going in your favor. The stormers are no match for your coordinated onslaught and you've managed to keep hold of both Mars and his alien artifact. Just as you realize that there's a sudden flash of blinding light and you feel your stomach lurch and a cool wind wash over you.

When your senses clear and take a look around, you realize you're no longer on Earth.



REWARDS

In addition to the hero point all the heroes get at the start of this combat (when Tellax rips the top off the Vault and sends his stormers to attack), you can introduce any number of complications for the heroes to earn more. There are buildings full of MarsTech employees nearby, traffic on the streets and roads on the MarsTech campus, and the possibility of fires breaking out due to exposed gas and electrical lines. Heroes who spend time dealing with these problems, in the form of rescuing bystanders from harm, putting out fires, or similar issues earn themselves a hero point.

If Tellax manages to get away with either Mars or the alien artifact, each of those are worth a hero point as well because it puts Tellax closer to achieving its goals.

CHAPTER 6: INTO THE FIRE

Having become Emerald City's *de facto* defenders following the so-called "Silver Storm" the heroes have discovered the Storm was the work of an alien artificial intelligence known as Tellax. Tellax is able to control the super-powered "stormers" created by its microscopic nanites. With the assistance of their ally and patron, Maximilian Mars, the heroes have constructed a prototype jamming device to override Tellax's control. Mars is already familiar with the alien nanotechnology, having used a sample of it to become the super-villain known as "The Commander" some years ago, before his eventual retirement.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

At the end of the previous chapter, just as the heroes are attempting to complete the jamming device, Tellax transports them to a distant alien world. The artificial intelligence wants the heroes to witness first-hand the reason for the Silver Storm and Tellax's efforts to date: the onslaught of the cosmic menace Collapsar the Devourer!

Confronted by the inhabitants of the planet, the heroes learn they are on Magna-Lor, the capitol world of the Lor Republic. There is a state of emergency, as a Lor fleet is confronting a threat in space near the planet, and Republic soldiers are on alert for a possible invasion. They naturally take the heroes to be such invaders and attempt to arrest them. Whether they go quietly or not is up to them.

In either case, the heroes appear before the Supreme Praetor of the Lor Republic and gathered members of the Senate, and learn of the threat looming in the outer reaches of the Magna-Lor system. They also have the opportunity to prevent the assassination of the Praetor at the hands of a spy, a Grue shapeshifter, ancient enemies of the Lor. It appears the Grue have helped to lure Collapsar to Magna-Lor.

Before the heroes can deal with this revelation, a figure appears in the Lor Senate chamber: Orizon, the Voice of Collapsar, heralds the arrival of his master and the imminent doom of Magna-Lor. All works of those called the Preservers will be erased from the cosmos so the final Unmaking of All can begin. The heroes have the opportunity to confront Orizon, but his vast cosmic powers make him a formidable opponent.

Win or lose, the heroes are drawn back to Earth so Tellax can confirm all they have seen and heard on Magna-Lor. The capitol of the Republic is doomed. Even a race as advanced and powerful as the Lor cannot resist Collapsar. The alien computer tells the heroes how the Preservers created it as a means of stopping Collapsar, and how it intends to fulfill its purpose by completing the Preservers' work by turning all of humanity into a super-powered army under its guidance! The heroes can be valuable allies in the coming battle to save the universe, or else they can choose to be the latest to fall in the struggle against the darkness.

This leaves the heroes with the choice: allow Tellax to go through with its plan, forever altering human civilization and killing off a substantial fraction of Earth's populace to build its army, or else try to complete their jamming device to stop Tellax, knowing that the Preserver machine may be the last hope of standing against the greater threat of Collapsar. The fate of the world—perhaps the universe—hangs in the balance!

SCENE 1: LOR WORLD

Scene Type: Combat/Roleplaying

Events in **Into the Fire** pick up right where **Chapter 5: Rise of the Masterminds** left off:



The tide of battle appears to be going in your favor. The stormers are no match for your coordinated onslaught and you've managed to keep hold of both Mars and his alien artifact. Suddenly, there's a flash of blinding light. You feel your stomach lurch and a cool wind wash over you.

When your senses clear and take a look around, you realize you're no longer where you were. The MarsTech campus is gone, replaced by an alien cityscape. Impossibly tall spires soar up all around the broad plaza where you stand. Graceful ramps connect them at different levels and balconies look out into a night sky covered with unfamiliar, flickering stars. You realize some of those flashing lights in the dark heavens are not stars at all, but the flares of powerful weapons, and of explosions.

Then the muttering and call of voices in an unfamiliar language draw your attention back to your immediate surroundings, as a number of people in the plaza slowly back away from you. Some look human, save for the occasional pale green or blue hair, while others have pale green or blue skin, or small antennae or pointed ears. All are wearing expressions of concern, some glancing or pointing upwards and then back down at you.

That's when a group of about a dozen men and women push their way through the retreating knots of people. You may not understand the markings on their uniforms or the words barked at you, but you definitely understand the tone and the gun-like weapons leveled in your direction.



Give each of the players a hero point (in addition to the one they got before the adventure began). Although they don't know it yet, the heroes have just been transported across light years to the capitol world of the Lor



Republic, which is presently under attack. Their sudden and unexplained appearance in a plaza near the Republic Senate has drawn the attention of the authorities, and a detachment of Lor troops moves in to detain them for questioning, assuming their presence is in some way connected to the attack.

ROLEPLAYING THE LOR

The Lor are normally a fairly cosmopolitan race, with a civilization spanning many worlds and sub-cultures. These are far from normal circumstances, however. With the very heart of their Republic under attack, the Lor are understandably edgy. They are also a warrior-minded people and—after centuries of dealing with the shape-shifting Grue—more than a touch paranoid.

The Lor soldiers immediately on the scene are already keyed-up by the events going on high above the planet. Their orders are to detain the strangers, and that is exactly what they intend to do. They have no idea how much of a threat the heroes may pose, so they are inclined to shoot first and ask questions later if the intruders make any sudden or hostile moves. What is more, the Lor do not understand any Earth languages, at least initially, so unless one of the heroes has a suitable Comprehend effect, they can only communicate with the Lor using simple gestures and pantomime.

Once lines of communication are open, the Lor are more amiable, although still somewhat suspicious. They know of Earth, having some contact, and think highly of some of Earth's heroes (like Daedalus of the Freedom League) even though they consider Earth a primitive world. So

long as the heroes behave honorably, the Lor treat them in kind. If they assist in thwarting the Grue plot (see **Scene 2**), then the Lor are even more inclined to trust the heroes (for as long as their brief relationship lasts).

KEY POINTS

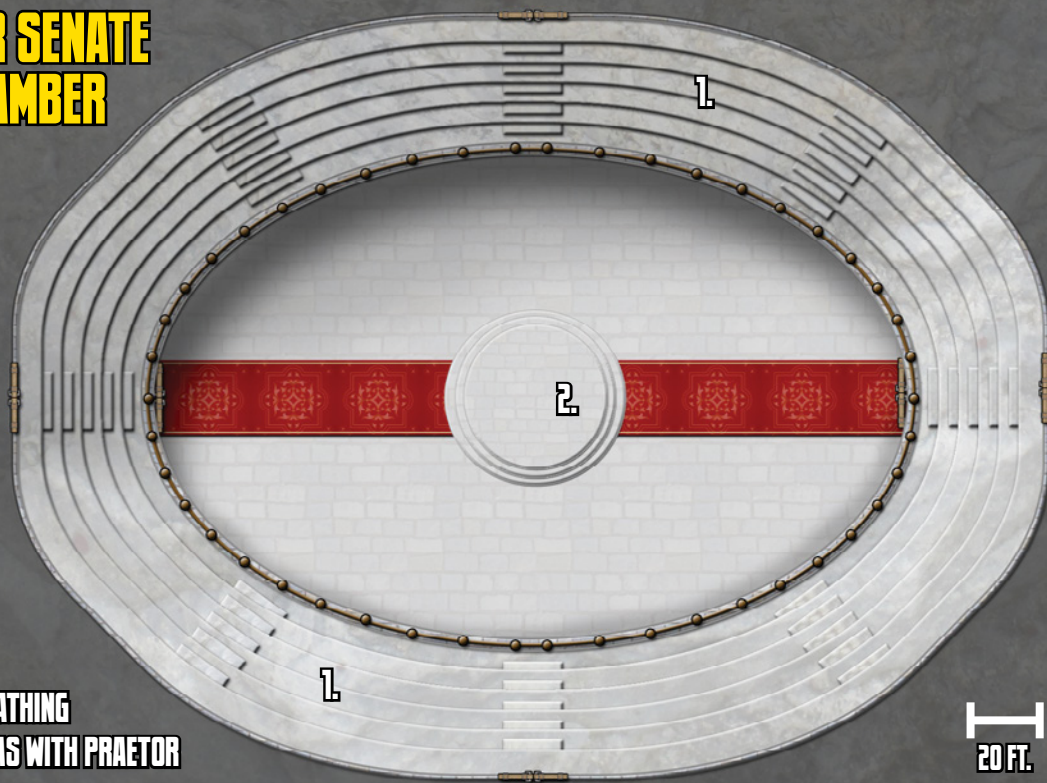
As this may well be the heroes first visit to an alien world, there are a number of things to note:

- The Lor are an advanced civilization with star-travel, energy weapons, force fields, and similar technology, along with a caste with psionic powers, and yet they are still very concerned by whatever is happening, almost to the point of panic.
- A majority of the Lor could easily pass for Earth humans, surely a strange coincidence in a cosmos so filled with life. If any of the heroes muse about it out loud, one of the Lor tells them some believe Earth is a lost Lor colony world. (In fact, the opposite is true: the Lor were “seeded” from human genetic stock by the Preservers.)
- By whatever measure the heroes have at their disposal, what they are experiencing is *not* an illusion, hallucination, or some other deception. They really are where they appear to be, *very* far away from Earth.

TACTICS

The Lor soldiers move in to try and surround the heroes, leveling their weapons at them and calling for them to surrender (in a language the heroes most likely do not

LOR SENATE CHAMBER



1. SEATING
2. DIAS WITH PRAETOR

20 FT.

understand). If the heroes do not respond, or respond in any way that appears intent on violence or escape, the soldiers open fire. Their blaster weapons are set for “stun” (that is, they do *not* attempt to “Go for the kill,” see the **Death** sidebar in the *M&M Hero’s Handbook*, page 199).

The Lor soldiers are well-trained: if their initial volley fails to down any of the heroes, they quickly shift to using Team Checks (*M&M*, page 16) to try and take out the most dangerous looking opponents, particularly ones with obvious or showy powers. They spread out enough so area effects cannot hit all of them at once (at least not without hitting some of the heroes as well) and they use their communicators to call for backup.

Run the fight for a few rounds, giving the players a chance to strut their stuff against the Lor soldiers. Chances are they won’t avoid a fight and, while outnumbered, the heroes greatly outclass the Lor. If they absolutely decimate the soldiers, bring in some reinforcements, perhaps even a grav-tank (use the tank stats from page 172 of the *Hero’s Handbook*, but change the descriptor for the main gun so it’s a blaster weapon and describe it as hovering on anti-gravity pods (though it still has the Speed power, not actual Flight).

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Keep the following environmental factors in mind during the confrontation with the Lor:

- Although it is nighttime near the Senate when the heroes arrive, the area is well-lit with artificial light

sources, so everyone can see clearly. The plaza is a wide, open area with few shadows for sneaky heroes to hide in.

- Most of the surrounding structures are made of stone or stone-like materials with Toughness 10. Super-strong heroes can find a few things around the plaza big and heavy enough to wield as weapons: sculptures, benches, and so forth, all Toughness 10 objects.
- Although the Lor civilians quickly clear out when the heroes first appear, there are enough people nearby that a missed attack check or a target flung away from the battle could endanger innocent lives (smashing a bridge, building support, or the like). This gives the heroes a chance to leap to the rescue, further establishing with the Lor that they mean no harm.
- Fortunately, since the Lor are of human origin, Magna-Lor has an Earth-like environment (gravity, temperature, atmosphere, and so forth) such that the heroes need not be concerned about any of these things. Don’t even bother to mention them unless one of the players asks.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

Two Lor characters are important to this scene.

The first is **Captain Kan-Ro**, the officer in charge of the soldiers confronting the heroes. He is a no-nonsense soldier loyal to the Republic, if a bit limited in his thinking. Frustrated by his inability to do anything about what is

happening on and around Magna-Lor, Captain Ro is quick to take action against the heroes, but also quick to halt hostilities when he realizes his mistake.

The other is **EII-Va**, a Lor mentat, one of the small percentage of the population with functional psionic abilities. Her telepathy allows her to perceive the heroes are not a threat and to establish communication with them. She serves as their guide and translator on Magna-Lor.

See the **Heroes & Villains** section at the end of the adventure for details on these characters as well as the Lor soldiers.

OUTCOME

Once the heroes are starting to trounce the Lor soldiers (or vice versa, if the dice truly are not with the players), read the following aloud to the players:



"STOP!" yells a voice inside your head, so loudly that you wince. Everyone else clearly "hears" it as well, as the fight comes to a sudden, but uncertain, halt.

A woman with pale green skin, black hair flowing from underneath a kind of skullcap, stands at one end of the plaza, flanked by four more uniformed soldiers. Her short cape flutters slightly in the cool night breeze as she lowers one outstretched hand.

"Lower your weapons," comes the voice in your mind once again as her eyes narrow. "I sense these... strangers are not connected to the arrival of the Devourer."



The appearance of Lor mentat EII-Va puts an end to the hostilities, assuming the heroes agree. EII-Va sets up a telepathic translation field, allowing the heroes to understand the Loran language and communicate freely; the Lor do not suddenly start speaking English, it's just that the heroes sudden begin understanding what they are saying.

EII-Va takes the lead in introducing herself and explaining to the heroes where they are. Hopefully, they respond in kind. Once they have established their *bona fides*, the Lor mentat asks the heroes to accompany her to the Senate Chamber. As they can see, Magna-Lor is under attack, but it may be that the heroes can help.

If the heroes ask about returning to Earth, EII-Va tells them no ships can be spared at this time but, once the crisis is past, she is sure a hyperspace vessel can be assigned to bring them home. Dangle this opportunity in front of the players to encourage them to cooperate with the Lor, if necessary.

REWARDS

Assuming the heroes manage to establish peaceful contact with EII-Va and overcome their initial misunderstanding with the Lor, award each player a hero point, in addition to any awards for complications during the scene.

SCENE 2: TROUBLE WITH GRUE

Scene Type: Roleplaying/Challenge

In this scene, the heroes meet Lor Supreme Praetor Ram-Lev and find out what is happening in the Magna-Lor system and how it relates to events back in Emerald City on Earth. They also have the opportunity to thwart a Grue plot against the Lor Republic.

EII-Va and Captain Kan-Ro escort the heroes from the plaza where they appeared (or wherever the fight in **Scene 1** ended) to the Republic Senate, a massive structure like a great arena, dominating the city skyline. There, they are brought into the presence of members of the Lor Senate, presided over by Supreme Praetor Ram-Lev of the Republic. The vaulted Senate chamber is in chaos as the heroes enter, Senators and others loudly arguing about what should be done, with the Praetor calling for order. The arrival of the heroes provides focus and, suddenly, all eyes are upon them.

ROLEPLAYING PRAETOR RAM-LEV

After a moment of silence in the Senate chamber, read or paraphrase the following out loud to the players:



The Praetor glances from EII-Va to you, saying, "I am informed that you are visitors from the planet Earth. The Lor Republic has considered others from Earth valued allies and friends in the past. I regret the circumstances of your arrival, as none of us may survive the threat we now face."



Ram-Lev is resolute and determined, but does not hold out much hope. He has heard how poorly the Lor fleet fares in space high overhead, and knows what follows behind the force currently decimating his best battle-ships. There is no time to evacuate, although an evacuation is still underway. Old soldier that he is, Ram-Lev intends to remain and coordinate the defense of Magna-Lor until all hope is exhausted. Given past experience with Earth heroes such as Daedalus, he allows himself a small glimmer of hope at the arrival of these new heroes.

If the heroes ask about the threat, or simply allow the Praetor to continue speaking, read the following to the players:



"Our people have a legend that the gods descended from the stars to create life on our home world, Lor-Van. They taught the people the arts and crafts of civilization: agriculture, architecture, mathematics, and more. It was said the star-gods created life to atone for also creating death, which they bound in a black pit beyond the stars."



Still, their failing ensured that all they created was mortal and passed from the world with time.

"Although we left such quaint myths behind millennia ago, our travels out amongst the stars have taught us of a power of death and destruction, bound within a black pit deeper and darker than any can imagine. Its names are many, spoken in fearful whispers throughout the cosmos: the Hungry Darkness, the Endless Pit, the Stargrave... Collapsar, the Devourer.

"We long thought the Devourer a myth as well, and what evidence might such a force leave behind, save for the dust of shattered worlds, and the ashes of extinguished stars? But of late, word has reached us of a force moving through the galaxy, leaving devastation in its wake. Collapsar is real, is coming, and I can only pray that the star-gods are real as well, and have not entirely forsaken us."



At this point the Senate chamber breaks out in a loud babble of conversation again, as the Praetor calls for order.

Roll secret Perception checks for the heroes (DC 18) or simply tell the player of the hero with the highest Perception bonus about the minor Senate functionary near the dais who appears to reach into *his own chest* to withdraw some sort of weapon that he raises towards the Praetor!

KEY POINTS

Establish the following points in this scene:

- Collapsar is a cosmic force of destruction that "devours" entire planets and star systems. It is capable of moving through space at hyper-light speeds.
- Collapsar appears to be some kind of "living singularity"—a black hole surrounded by a "containment cloud" of unknown composition and origin. The cloud contains and directs the black hole's massive gravitational power. When the cloud parts and Collapsar opens its "maw" the black hole swallows everything nearby: matter, energy... entire planets and stars.
- The Lor "star-gods" (the Preservers) created some safeguards against Collapsar, but those safeguards have failed.
- The shapeshifting Grue and the humanoid Lor have been in conflict for centuries, but largely at a stalemate.

TACTICS

Gul-Sar, a minor member of the Praetor's personal staff is, in fact, a " sleeper" agent of the shapeshifting Grue, an alien race long at war with the Lor Republic. Telepathically conditioned with a "cover" identity to hide from Lor mentats, the Grue activates at this opportune moment to eliminate the Praetor.

All of the players may roll initiative checks. Only those who succeeded on the Perception check to notice the Grue may act during the surprise round. If they manage to beat the Grue on initiative, they have an opportunity to disarm him, use their Interpose advantage, or move Praetor Ram-Lev out of harm's way. Otherwise, the Grue shoots the Praetor on his first round, fatally wounding him (don't bother to roll unless you want to leave this outcome to chance). The Grue fights to fend off the heroes, assuming the form of a multi-armed, clawed humanoid to attack, using effects like Elongation, Insubstantial (rank 1), and Shrinking to escape.

Once he has fulfilled his mission of assassination, the Grue attempts to flee. He may shapeshift into a small flying creature or insect to evade the heroes, or assume another humanoid form to disappear into the chaotic crowd in the Senate chamber. He does not hesitate to take a hostage, if he thinks it will aid his escape. Now that the Grue has revealed himself, Ell-Va's mental powers can potentially pick him out of a crowd: roll a Perception check for her (DC 20) if you want her to assist the heroes. Ultimately, the Grue simply intends to survive long enough to ensure the downfall of Magna-Lor; a part of the group-mind of the Grue Unity, the metamorph has no real individual identity or survival instincts.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The Republic Senate Chamber is a massive, arena-like room with rising rings of auditorium seating around a wide central floor. In the midst of the floor is a raised dais where the Praetor sits and stands, along with anyone else addressing the entire assembly. Audio-visual amplifiers on the dais allow everyone in the room to clearly see and hear what goes on there (keep this in mind for any exchanges between the wounded Ram-Lev and the heroes).

The structural components of the chamber are stone-like composites similar to the other Lor buildings (Toughness 10). Heroes looking for makeshift weapons can uproot a decorative column or bench (Strength 5 minimum). The columns also provide useful cover (see *Hero's Handbook*, page 193).

Keep in mind there are hundreds of Lor in the chamber when the heroes arrive. Having a missed attack collapse part of the roof or smash a support for the seating makes a suitable complication to distract the heroes. Area attacks are ill-advised, and the Grue takes full advantage of the crowd and the confusion in attempting to escape.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

Supreme Praetor Ram-Lev of the Lor Republic has been the elected ruler of his people for many years. He worked his way up through the ranks of the military as a soldier and later officer, commanding space-vessels in battle, before finding his way into the political arena. He still carries himself like a soldier and commander and is much beloved and respected amongst the Lor military. The Praetor is a practical man, but also a proud one. He firmly believes the Republic is the greatest civilization in

known space, and would willingly die to defend it. He finds the negotiations and compromises of politics tiresome, but dedication to his work keeps him going.

Gul-Sar, a minor functionary in the Praetor's staff (essentially a kind of administrative assistant) is in fact a shape-shifting Grue sleeper agent. He is largely hidden in the background until his programming activates and he moves against the Praetor.

OUTCOME

If the Grue assassin escapes, the Republic Guard immediately begins a search, but a lone shapeshifter is about to become the least of their concerns (see **Scene 3**). If the heroes manage to capture the Grue, the alien begins to glow from within, reddish light pouring from its eyes and under its skin. The heroes have just one round to act before the assassin self-destructs in a Burst Area Damage 9 effect. No one will learn anything from this agent of the Grue.

Praetor Ram-Lev is mortally wounded. Although Lor medics are rushing to his aid, they are too late to save him. A hero with a Healing effect could do so; a DC 10 Healing check stabilizes him, four or more degrees of success (a check result of 25 or more) restores him to complete health. If he dies, the Praetor grasps the hand of the nearest hero and gasps out, "Please... help my people," and then is gone.

REWARDS

Heroes who act selflessly to try to save Praetor Ram-Lev and others in the Senate chamber—leaping in front of the assassin's attack or shielding against his self-destruct—earn their players a hero point. If the heroes have not already won over the Lor, their efforts to save Ram-Lev and capture the Grue spy do so.

Although it is not part of the adventure, if it suits your own series, Ram-Lev's gratitude may have an additional effect on one or more heroes. Perhaps the Praetor passes along some psychic or energetic "gift" as well. It's a great opportunity to justify a player spending some earned power points on new traits for a hero, or even a significant reallocation of the hero's points (see **Reallocating Power Points**, *Hero's Handbook*, page 26).

SCENE 3: ORIZON EVENT

Scene Type: Combat

The Voice of the Void, Herald of the Devourer, Orizon arrives in the Lor Senate Chamber to pronounce the doom of Magna-Lor and all those who dwell upon it. He is momentarily taken aback by the presence of the heroes, who reek of Preserver influence to his cosmic senses. Orizon takes it upon himself to learn more about these strangers before his master arrives to wipe them out. The heroes get a chance to talk with Orizon, potentially learning more about Collapsar, and may well have to fight



him. They quickly learn the Voice of the Void is the most powerful foe they have faced short of Tellax.

Read the following aloud to the players:



Suddenly, a dull orange light emanates from the high, domed ceiling of the Senate chamber. It spreads outward and the structure of the ceiling and roof dissolve into glowing particles like cinders blowing on the wind. The night sky over Magna-Lor is visible behind the silhouette of a slim, tall figure, surrounded by a glowing reddish aura as he floats gently downwards.

He could almost be taken for a statue, his skin grey and smooth as marble, hairless, with bearded brows over the glowing red pits of his eyes, a black circle on his brow like a caste mark. A red and black sash drapes across one shoulder, leaving the other bare, wrapped around him in a toga-like garment. In one hand, he carries a kind of crooked staff, like that of the shepherd, save for the glowing point of red light held in the hollow of its curved head, matching the glow of its bearer's eyes. He speaks in a low, firm voice that nonetheless cuts through the room like a knife, easily heard by all.

"People of Magna-Lor! I am Orizon, the Voice of the Void, He Who Walks Before the Storm. I come at the behest of my master to tell you that your time is at an end. This world is tainted and will soon be no more. Make peace with whatever illusions you hold dear. So speaks Collapsar the Claimer!"



ROLEPLAYING ORIZON

Collapsar's herald speaks with a religious fervor about his master's holy mission to cleanse the cosmos and restore perfect order. Of course, Collapsar's concept of order is crushing all of reality into an infinitely dense, timeless singularity, essentially undoing everything since the Big Bang, which he considers nothing more than an anomaly to be corrected.

Speaking of which, once he notices the heroes (or they call attention to themselves), Orizon does not take well to them. "You!" he says. "You are tainted by the Corruptors, those who sought to interfere with the natural order of entropy!" His eyes blaze brighter with fury. "You will be cleansed even before this world is erased from the darkness!" So saying, he attacks.

Orizon is a talkative sort, and the heroes can engage him in conversation even while they are trying to keep him from turning them into cosmic dust. He rants and raves about how the Corruptors, in their arrogance, tried to interfere with the natural course of events. The cosmos is a flaw and chaotic disturbance in the perfect order. Only when Collapsar has purged all traces of the Corruptors and their work can he complete his destiny, to return everything to the silence and stillness of singularity.

KEY POINTS

Establish the following points in this scene:

- Orizon is a very powerful opponent. He has just taken out a small Lor fleet single-handedly and is still fully

capable of fighting (and likely beating) the heroes as well. The players should also be keenly aware that, powerful as he is, Orizon is just the henchman of the true threat.

- Collapsar is on a mission to eradicate all remaining traces of its ancient enemies, the so-called Corruptors, essentially by consuming whole planets and star systems. Once that is done, he will expand his reach to consume the entire *universe*.
- The “Corruptors” Orizon refers to are actually the Preservers. Heroes (and players) may not initially understand that. If that’s the case with your players, make it clear to them. If you can do so “in character,” great! If not, do it out of character. That small detail is important and will head off confusion.

TACTICS

Given his tremendous power, Orizon is not much of one for tactics. He does, however like the sound of his own voice (and the idea of being the Voice of the Void), so he tends towards attacks which incapacitate or immobilize foes, allowing him to rant at them about the inevitable end of everything before he finally destroys them. Thus Orizon leads off with Affliction effects, animating or transmuting raw materials around the heroes to entrap them, even turning the air itself into a dense crystalline material. He may also strike them with stun bolts of cosmic Zero Power.

If the heroes manage to actually hurt him, on the other hand, all bets are off and Orizon goes for direct Damage effects, blasting his foes with Zero Power force bolts of crimson lightning. Even then, he doesn’t immediately kill the heroes; he prefers to blast his foes into submission, then rant over their helpless forms before administering the final blow. Fortunately for the heroes, it won’t come to that (see **Outcome**).

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

This scene features the same environmental factors as **Scene 2**, unless the heroes deliberately take the fight with Orizon elsewhere. That may be wise, given the innocent people (and politicians) still in the Republic Senate chamber with them. The Lor attempt to flee, but collapsing exits may block them and give the heroes additional things to worry about.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

This scene is a great opportunity for **Captain Kan-Ro** or **Eli-Va** to sacrifice themselves to save the heroes. If the dice are truly against the players, or you simply want to up the drama level, have one of the heroes’ newfound Lor allies jump in front of one of Orizon’s cosmic blasts, pushing a hero aside at the last second. The Lor characters are pretty much doomed anyway, so you might as well give them a heroic ending the players will remember. It also gives them even more reason to dislike both Orizon and his distant master, to say nothing of Tellax for putting them in this situation.

Information on Orizon is at the end of this chapter in the **Heroes & Villains** section.

OUTCOME

Speaking of Tellax, the manipulative AI has been monitoring the heroes on Magna-Lor, providing a show for the captive Maximilian Mars. As it becomes clear Orizon is going to destroy the heroes, Mars relents and gives in to Tellax’s demands, so long as it brings them back. A spatial-warp field transports the heroes from Magna-Lor at the last instant, perhaps right before Orizon is able to finish them off. The conscious heroes see a bright flash of light, the same that sent them away from Earth, and suddenly they are back.

REWARDS

Merely surviving the excursion on Magna-Lor may seem like reward enough, but give each of the players a hero point at the conclusion of this scene, in addition to any they may have earned from complications and heroic actions. They’re going to need all the resources they can get going into the final challenge of this adventure and the *Emerald City Knights* series!

SCENE 4: TAKEN TO TELLAX

Scene Type: Challenge/Combat

The heroes return to Earth to find Tellax, installed in the form of a giant robot, standing astride Council Island in the Albian River north of Emerald City. The AI is preparing to unleash a worldwide version of the Silver Storm, having placed the heroes in danger on Magna-Lor to convince Max Mars to cooperate and, possibly, win him and his allies over to Tellax’s cause. Unbeknownst to the AI, Mars and the heroes have a final ace they can play—the nanite jammer—provided they get the opportunity to complete and activate it, and choose to eliminate what may turn out to be the universe’s best hope of standing against Collapsar.

Read the following aloud to the players:



In the same blinding flash of light that sent you away, you reappear back on Earth, but not where you left!

Instead, you stand on a rocky outcropping overlooking the Albian River north of Emerald City. You can see the skyline spread out to the south and west of you, what immediately captures your attention, however, is the towering, silvery form of the giant standing close by, almost directly in front of a main support for the Bay Bridge, casting you all in its shadow. It must be almost a hundred feet tall! Between its outstretched hands is a swirling, silvery cloud, shot through with



flickers of blue-white lightning, all too familiar in form—it's like the Silver Storm in miniature, held captured between those massive, outstretched hands.

"Welcome, protectors," the robot says in a voice that echoes across the island. "I am Tellax, the Redeemer. Now you have seen that we have much in common. Just as you protect this small corner of your world, so do I seek to protect this world and all others from the doom known as Collapsar the Devourer."

Within the silvery cloud, an image appears of an alien world seen from space, a world covered with the signs and lights of civilization. Magna-Lor, the world you just came from, the capitol of the Lor Republic. Over the curve of its horizon, a dark cloud spreads out, blotting out the stars, tinged with red at the edges. The cloud seems to part and the planet shudders. Clouds wisp away as its atmosphere is torn from it. Debris and even the waters of its oceans pour into the swirling black hole at the center of the dark cloud. The image of a face with burning eyes appears over the planet as it begins to break up, fragments of whole continents tearing away before the vision Tellax shows you mercifully fades.

"I was created for this purpose and now, after far too long, my purpose will be fulfilled. My technology will spread out across this world, activating the latent potential my creators implanted within humanity's ancient ancestors—still there to this day, as my test confirmed. Just as those in your city were transformed, so will the rest of humanity be transformed, to become the powerful army I will

lead against Orizon and his master, to end the threat of Collapsar forever!

"You have proven capable and courageous protectors using your own abilities. You would be useful allies, if you are willing to join my cause. I can use the technology at my disposal to augment your existing abilities to make you more capable. What do you wish?"



ROLEPLAYING TELLAX

Tellax is more than capable of multitasking and willing to talk to the heroes while completing the programming and preparation of the nanite cloud. Feel free to let them interact as the players wish.

There is nothing the heroes can do to convince Tellax to abandon its course of action. Appealing to the AI's sense of mercy or morality is useless: it considers its actions entirely justified by a cold-blooded risk-benefit analysis. If sacrificing *all* of Earth's population was necessary to stop Collapsar, Tellax would do it, figuring it would still save countless trillions of other beings. If it fails to stop the Devourer, it reasons, then it won't matter anyway, since the cosmos will be doomed.

Maximilian Mars is also present on Council Island with the nearly complete nanite jammer. Tellax transported him, the stormers, and most of the contents of the MarsTech vault here when it transported the heroes to Magna-Lor. Tellax used the heroes' plight to force Mars to agree to

“release” his connection to the AI’s technology. The heroes may be touched by their ally’s willingness to sacrifice to save them or outraged by how Mars placed their lives above those of everyone else on Earth (or both!). Still, Mars hopes to complete the jammer and use it before Tellax can unleash another Silver Storm.

If the heroes agree to join Tellax (sincerely or hoping to trick it in some fashion), the AI tells them to await nearby: its next task will be to alter and further empower them. In this case, Mars may attempt to use the jammer on his own (see **Tactics**). If the heroes refuse Tellax’s offer, the AI largely ignores them, certain they can do nothing to stop it. If the heroes’ refusal is overly defiant (such as “We’ll fight you to the very end!”) or outright violent (going right for attacking Tellax) then the AI commands its stormer minions to deal with the heroes. It only takes a direct hand when necessary to protect itself.

Tellax is coldly arrogant and becomes more so the more the heroes defy it. How *dare* such limited, short-sighted beings question the flawless creation of the Preservers? Their foolish and emotion-laden attitudes cannot be allowed to doom the entire cosmos!

If the heroes choose to defy Tellax, despite the odds, give each player a hero point; they’re going to need them!

KEY POINTS

This scene is about making decisions and taking action rather than imparting information to the players and their characters. Still, keep in mind the following things to make clear as the players choose their course of action:

- Mars is inclined towards using the jammer to put a stop to Tellax’s plans, even knowing what he knows about the AI and its purpose. Still, the heroes can convince him otherwise, if they strongly take the opposite position.
- If Tellax is allowed to unleash a new Silver Storm, thousands, if not millions, of people will die as a result. It may create millions of new superhuman stormers, but the side effects will devastate the world and potentially end civilization as it has been, to say nothing of placing all those new stormers under Tellax’s mental control.
- Tellax isn’t going to be talked out of doing what it is programmed to do, and it is right that it may well be the best defense the cosmos has against the threat posed by Collapsar. By defeating Tellax, the heroes may be trading one problem for an even bigger one down the line.

TACTICS

Unless the players come up with a particularly clever alternative plan, the heroes’ only real chance of defeating Tellax relies on completing the nanite jammer and activating it. Doing so is a DC 20 challenge requiring five degrees of successes before three degrees of failure (see the **Why a Challenge?** sidebar). Some of the potential

WHY A CHALLENGE?

Completing the nanite jammer is being treated as a challenge as opposed to being handled by the invention or jury-rigging rules because of the circumstances. The heroes aren’t in their workshop or lab, so they have to make due. Plus, it allows for all the heroes to lend a hand if they can come up with a reasonable way to apply one of their skills instead of sitting out while the tech-heads go at it. Finally, it’s more exciting to handle it as a challenge.

traits the heroes can use to achieve the needed successes include:

- **Skills:** Particularly Technology or suitable Expertise skill checks. However, things like interaction skill checks may also provide assistance by obscuring what the other characters are doing from Tellax’s attention, for example.
- **Powers:** Certain power rank checks may also assist in the process, particularly powers involving the control or creation of technology, providing concealment for the other characters’ activities, or providing the necessary energy or carrier frequency for the jammer. Improvise these as needed. For example, if there’s an electricity controlling hero, then a check of that hero’s power may be needed to help energize the jammer.

Mars generally provides assistance (see **Team Checks**, *Hero’s Handbook*, page 16) rather than taking the lead, unless *none* of the heroes have the capabilities of completing work on the jammer. If you want to add an additional complication, you can have a force blast from Tellax (or an attack from one of its stormers) knock Mars for a loop and leave him sprawled out on the ground, unconscious at the very least, and of no further help to the heroes (see **The Future of Mars** for more).

Unless the heroes explicitly take steps to hide what they are doing from Tellax, the AI quickly notices; the characters get one round to make their challenge check(s) before Tellax orders the stormers to stop them. Then the heroes have to divide their efforts: some working on the jammer while the others fight the stormers and run interference, holding them off long enough to get the job done.

As in prior scenes, the stormers—under Tellax’s control and direction—aren’t overly aware, but they do work together well and may use team checks or maneuvers like team attacks (see *Hero’s Handbook*, page 199) to try and overwhelm more powerful heroes. They almost certainly outnumber the heroes, and you are free to include any stormers from the previous *Emerald City Knights* adventures or the *Threat Report* series from Green Ronin in this final scene. Assume Tellax or its mind-controlled minions broke other stormers out of prison or whatnot to ensure their presence. You can even pull archetypes from the *Hero’s Handbook* and use them as stormers the heroes have not even encountered yet, or randomly create some using the tables in the *M&M Gamemaster’s Kit*.



ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Council Island is lightly forested and rocky, providing heroes with trees and boulders to use as makeshift weapons, if they wish. The surrounding waters of the Albian River may be of assistance to aquatic or water-controlling heroes, while the outdoors may aid weather-controllers or animal summoners. The island is inhabited: it's several miles long and the mid-point of the bridge spanning the Albian River. Several thousand people call the island home, have vacation homes, or work there. It may be day or night, depending on when the heroes entered the MarsTech vault in **Chapter 5** and how long they spent on the Magna-Lor before Tellax brought them back to Earth. Take the timing into account, but don't worry overly much about things like lighting: Tellax puts out enough energy to light up the island and be visible for miles.

Tellax's tractor beam and hyperspatial warp have brought along enough of the hardware from the MarsTech vault to be useful to the heroes finishing the jammer. No need to penalize them for lack of equipment, that's already been taken into account for the high challenge difficulty.

OUTCOME

This scene (and the whole *Emerald City Knights* series) can end in one of two ways: either the heroes manage to thwart Tellax's ambitions and overcome the alien AI, or they do not. Either outcome has significant repercussions.

THE HEROES WIN

If the heroes complete the challenge to activate the nanite jammer, it sends out a powerful carrier wave and the following occurs:

- Tellax's control over the stormers is disrupted, and the active nanites allowing the control in the first place are neutralized and begin breaking down. The stormers all regain consciousness. Most of them—especially the escaped criminals—try and make a run for it. The heroes may decide to pursue some of them, or let them go for now and deal with them later. Neutral or more heroically inclined stormers may stick around to help out, and this scene is a good opportunity for a stormer to have a change of heart, if you're looking to have one switch sides.
- The building Silver Storm in Tellax's hands dissipates, blown apart by the disruption wave. The nanites within it break down harmlessly with no effect. If you want to unleash a *limited* second Silver Storm to create more stormers in the Emerald City area, you can have Tellax release the expanding nanite cloud just before the heroes activate the jammer. The storm hits the bridge and the Emerald City waterfront, affecting some of the people there, and then the jammer dissipates it before it can spread any further.
- The jammer causes a severe disruption of Tellax's systems, which are based on the same nanotechnology. In particular, Tellax "rejects" the portion of its tech reclaimed from Max Mars, separating it from its overall form (if the heroes try to search out

this rejected piece of technology, they can't find it). Sparks and energy arcs crackle around the giant robot, until Tellax is forced to abandon it. A silvery stream of energy shoots skyward in a blazing bolt, transmitting the AI's program back to its orbiting vessel and Tellax flees Earth.

The peal of thunder from Tellax's escape dies away and the hole punched through the clouds by the transmission beams spreads out wider and wider, clearing the skies over Emerald City. Tellax's abandoned robotic shell stands frozen and silent on the island beside the bridge, looking towards the city skyline. Emerald City—and the world—are safe, for now.

TELLAX WINS

If the heroes are unsuccessful in activating the jammer in time, and you choose not to bring in a last-minute rescue (see **Sending in the Cavalry**), prepare to run a very different M&M series!

If Tellax is able to unleash a worldwide Silver Storm, it spreads out rapidly, engulfing all of Emerald City in just moments. Within hours, it covers the entire world. The effects are like the day on Yellow Brick Row described in the **Prologue** of *Emerald City Knights* on a massive scale. A significant percentage of the population gains super-powers, but many also acquire bizarre mutations or are driven mad by their transformation. A significant percentage also die from transformations gone wrong or just the strain to body and mind. The sheer chaos of the storm causes massive damage and disruptions worldwide. Almost none of this is likely to matter to those affected, however, since they also fall under the mental control of Tellax.

If the heroes manage to activate their jammer *after* the second Silver Storm is unleashed, they may mitigate the effects. For example, they might stop the storm after it has covered all of Emerald City and the surrounding area, or even after it has covered parts of the world, stopping its progress and preventing Tellax from controlling the resulting stormers. This outcome lets you run a series around Emerald City (the United States, or even the world) as a place filled with super-powered people dealing with a post-disaster environment.

Of course, you might decide that failure to activate the jammer in time means the heroes have missed their chance and the jammer is overwhelmed by the Silver Storm, and therefore ineffective. This is an opportunity to run a series with the heroes (and other pre-existing superhumans) as outlaws in a world controlled by Tellax and being turned into an armed camp to prepare for war against Collapsar, with the fate of the universe in the balance. The heroes might try to lead a rebellion or create a newer and more powerful jamming device.

REWARDS

With the completion of this adventure and the *Emerald City Knights* series, it's time to award the players some power points! At the least, they should each get 1 point



SENDING IN THE CAVALRY

Some players might wonder: with the apparent fate of the world at stake, where are Earth's other heroes, and can they call for reinforcements? The answer, in true comic book fashion, is no, unless you decide to stage a last-minute rescue.

The assumption is that Tellax controls *many* more stormers than are present on Council Island. These characters are keeping other heroes busy and away from their master, delaying them just long enough for Tellax to complete its work. The AI's orbiting ship may even be creating a powerful force field over the entire Emerald City area while Tellax works, giving outside heroes and military forces another obstacle to overcome. By the time they can reach Council Island, it will be too late.

Of course, if things begin looking *really* bad for the heroes, and you do not want to unleash another Silver Storm across the entire world (see **Tellax Wins** under **Outcome**, later) you have the option of bringing the cavalry thundering over the horizon to lend a hand. They could be local AEGIS operatives (include those the heroes met in earlier chapters), members of the Freedom League, or even Emerald City supervillains who are *not* stormers, such as Max Mars' former Chamber allies like the Grandmaster and F.O.E.! After all, the villains have as much stake in the Earth's survival as anyone, and are likely pretty angry at Tellax for upsetting their comfortable arrangement in Emerald City!

Even if you do "send in the cavalry," use them just to give the heroes enough of a breather to pull out a victory on their own, perhaps by keeping most of the stormers busy or distracting Tellax. Don't have the newcomers defeat all of the stormers, or complete the jammer so long as the heroes can do it themselves.

for completion of the adventure, and another point for completion of the series as a whole. If they did particularly well: defeating and driving off Tellax and preventing a second Silver Storm with no real damage to the city (apart from the chaos at MarsTech), award them an extra point.

You may wish to award a bonus power point for excellent roleplaying or clever game-play to the appropriate players. That means a potential award of 2 to 4 power points total. If the players have earned over 10 power points over the course of the entire *Emerald City Knights* series, you may also wish to consider raising the series power level by 1 (from PL10 to PL11, typically) to allow players to increased maxed-out traits and to mark the heroes' transition to the "big time".

If the heroes have not already set aside power points for their headquarters and other resources provided by Max Mars, you may wish to have them do so now. Just 1 rank of the Equipment advantage (1 power point) from each hero should provide a significant amount of equipment points.

In addition to the power point awards, the heroes are acclaimed as Emerald City's champions and protectors: the battle on Council Island was visible to the whole waterfront, and video footage (both amateur and professional) plays on the news networks and the Internet for days. Emerald City throws the heroes a parade and welcomes them with open arms. It is a good opportunity for heroes to acquire advantages like Connected and Contacts, if they are so inclined.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of *Emerald City Knights* can go in very different directions depending on how **Scene 4** ends (see the **Outcome** there). The heroes may have saved Emerald City and the world, or else have to deal with the aftermath of a very changed world. The following are some things to consider in the conclusion of this adventure and series.

THE FUTURE OF MARS

The conclusion of *Emerald City Knights* may determine what future (if any) Maximilian Mars has in your series and with the heroes.

Mars may aid the heroes in overcoming Tellax and preventing a worldwide disaster, sufficient to redeem himself in their eyes and continue as their mentor, patron, and ally. In this case, Mars is happy to remain in those roles and focus on helping the heroes to clean-up Emerald City and keep it safe. He spends most of his time running MarsTech, but is available to offer advice, and continues funding the hero team's operations.

On the other hand, revelations about Mars and his connections with Tellax (and, more importantly, his reluctance to share the truth with the heroes) may make it difficult for them to trust him. If they prefer, Mars steps back from the team, although he offers to continue funding them. He respects their wishes and does his best to repair relations and win back their trust.

Lastly, if you want to write Mars out of the series at this point, this adventure is an excellent opportunity for him to have a hero's death, sacrificing himself to give the heroes the chance they need to save the world from Tellax. Perhaps Mars exerts some influence over his connection with Tellax's technology, delaying the AI long enough for the heroes to do what needs to be done, but the physical and mental strain is too much for Mars in the end. Perhaps Tellax, realizing Mars is a threat, strikes him with a powerful attack that kills him outright, or leaves him with just enough time to express his regrets to the heroes before he perishes.

THE THREAT OF TELLAX

If the heroes were successful in driving Tellax away from Earth, the immediate threat posed by the alien AI is over. Max Mars points out that the jammer has set up a particular resonance in Earth's magnetic field, rendering the planet "toxic" to Tellax and making it difficult for it to ever return. Of

course, he may also note that the prime ability of Tellax's technology is adaptation, so there is no guarantee that the heroes will never see the so-called Redeemer again.

Additionally, Tellax's prime directive—to guard against the coming of Collapsar—remains intact. Given what the heroes learned on Magna-Lor, they can safely assume Orizon will eventually lead Collapsar to Earth. The Devourer will be coming one day—it's just a matter of when.

Lastly, keep in mind Tellax's "rejection" of the technology reincorporated from Maximilian Mars' Commander career. The heroes (and Mars) may have overlooked it at the conclusion of the conflict, or assumed the jammer rendered it inert and dissolved it along with the rest of the nanites. If the heroes try to locate the rejected portion, they have no luck finding it.

ALL-NEW ORIGINS

Exposure to Tellax's technology and cosmic energies are a perfect opportunity for players interested in redesigning their heroes in the aftermath of this series, especially for former heroes who gained their powers during the initial Silver Storm (see **Reallocating Power Points**, *Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 2**). It's also an opportunity to retire heroes for players looking for a change; characters may have fallen in battle, or simply lost their powers due to Tellax's second Silver Storm or the effects of the jammer.

If another Silver Storm was even partially unleashed on Emerald City (see **Outcomes** in **Scene 4**), you have the opportunity for numerous new origins for hero and villain characters in your series as well.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

The *Emerald City Knights Heroes Journey* may be over, but that does not mean your M&M series in Emerald City has to end! Green Ronin Publishing has plans for a new series to follow and build upon the events in this one, but you also do not have to wait around for it. There are plenty of adventure opportunities in Emerald City, and the larger World of Freedom setting, for a group of heroes.

First and foremost, by the end of this series the heroes should be the preeminent protectors of Emerald City and the surrounding area, acknowledged by many as having saved the world. Their accomplishments are sure to win them acclaim and the whole-hearted support of the city and local governments. They have probably also made more than their share of enemies along the way! Here are some loose threads you can pick up for further adventures

in Emerald City in and around official MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS products:

- The heroes are honored by Emerald City with a proclamation in their name(s), a parade, and a ceremonial "key to the city" from the mayor. It's both a great opportunity to make the players feel good about all their heroes have accomplished and for bad guys with a score to settle with the heroes to stage an attack!
- A large number of stormers may have escaped following the battle of Council Island and the disruption of Tellax's control. Tracking down and (re) capturing them can give the heroes plenty to do in the aftermath of the series. You can bring back many of the former villains from previous chapters in this series, or others from the *Threat Report* series from Green Ronin, or introduce your own.
- The grateful city government is happy to support the heroes but also wonders if they will be adding any new members any time soon. Word gets out about a possible "recruitment drive," leading to crowds of heroic wanna-bes showing up around the heroes' headquarters, and perhaps even breaking in to show off what they can do by way of a try-out! You can play the "team try-outs" for laughs or consider them a distraction arranged by one of the team's foes.
- With all the villains the heroes have captured, Emerald City needs to get a new super-prison up and running as soon as possible. The federal government or AEGIS asks the team to help test the new facility to make sure it is secure. Of course, something goes wrong and the heroes are trapped in the prison for real while one of their enemies turns it into a deathtrap or uses the opportunity to further some scheme in the city!
- With the immediate threat of Tellax (and its control over the stormers) ended, some former members of the Chamber (such as Grandmaster or the Big Brain) try to re-establish the alliance and its authority over the Emerald City underworld. Of course, doing so requires eliminating or co-opting the new local hero team as well as bringing any "rogue" criminal elements under their control. Perhaps they try to recruit the new Commander to fill Max Mars' seat?
- The *Threat Report* sourcebook from Green Ronin is a collection of villains, many of whom have their origins in Emerald City, and provide plenty of ideas for additional adventures. Each villain includes several adventure hooks and you can mix-and-match them to build villain teams suitable to challenge any group of heroes!

HEROES & VILLAINS

PROLOGUE

This section contains the stat blocks and personal information of the major personalities in the **Prologue**.

LIGHTSHOW

REAL NAME: Angus Wilcoxon
OCCUPATION: Roadie
BASE: Emerald City

With the Foghat 2011 World Tour concluding in Emerald City, Angus Wilcoxon was once again between jobs. Hoping to trade some heavy labor for much-needed cash, he was searching downtown for some "Help Wanted" signs at the time of the Silver Storm. When himself, Angus is an unlearned but mildly colorful soul. At worst he's unambitious, and prone to saying "Hey man!" and "Dude!" a lot. During this adventure, Angus is running rampant due to the Silver Storm's influence. He's not in control of his own actions, and despite his imposed ruthless, destructive streak, his powers are employed more intelligently (and maliciously) as a result.

Angus can bend light into deadly laser beams, or to replicate images from his frequently chemically altered brain.

OCTAMAN

REAL NAME: Harry Essex
OCCUPATION: Monster
BASE: Emerald City

Harry Essex was an urban parasite—and a cut-rate one at that—moving from one crooked scheme to another,

LIGHTSHOW

PL8 • 99 POINTS

STR 2 **STA** 3 **AGL** 0 **DEX** 1 **FGT** 0 **INT** 3 **AWE** 2 **PRE** 1

Powers: **Visual Distortion Field** (Enhanced Defenses 20 (Dodge and Parry 10)); **Light Manipulation** (Array (16 points))
Holograms (Illusion 8 (Visual; 250 cft.), **AE:** **Laser Blasts** (Ranged Damage 8))

Advantages: Daze (Deception), Well-informed

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 2 (+2), Deception 5 (+6), Expertise: Roadie 8 (+11), Insight 5 (+7), Intimidation 5 (+6), Persuasion 5 (+6), Ranged Combat: Laser Blasts 7 (+8), Vehicle 5 (+6)

Offense: Initiative +0, Laser Blasts +8 (Ranged, Damage 8), Unarmed +2 (Close, Damage 2)

Defense: Dodge 12, Parry 12, Fortitude 5, Toughness 3, Will 11

Totals: Abilities 24 + Powers 37 + Advantages 2 + Skills 21 + Defenses 15 = 99

Complications: **Addiction:** While not physically hooked, Angus goes to great lengths to secure a smoke-able plant the government would rather he didn't possess. **Motivation—Greed:** By necessity, Angus is usually focused on where his next meal and high are coming from.

and living off money swindled from decent folk. He was sliming his way through downtown in search of easy marks whence the Silver Storm transfigured his outer body to match his inner ugliness.

An abominable squid-man hybrid, Octaman is a typical super-monster menace on the loose. In addition to enhanced strength and resiliency, Octaman has (true to his name) sprouted six rubbery cephalopod-like tentacles in lieu of his arms (+2 legs = 8 limbs, for those keeping score).

THE MONGOOSE

REAL NAME: Elaine Chao
OCCUPATION: Martial arts instructor
BASE: Emerald City

Bright, funny, and hard-working Elaine Chao was teaching kung fu to help finance her tuition at ECU. She was on her way to Yellow Brick Row to enjoy a rare day off when the Silver Storm made her into a bloodthirsty beast. The Mongoose lives for a good fight, unconcerned with the odds of victory. While unwilling to avoid battles, she is quite cunning in how she wages them.

The Mongoose has all the deadly physical prowess of her cobra-slaying namesake, magnified to a superhuman degree. She retains all her martial skills in this form.

LORD ETHERIC

REAL NAME: Chad Sherwin
OCCUPATION: College student & poseur
BASE: Emerald City

Chad was en route to Yellow Brick Row to write some dreadfully bad poetry and sneer at normal folk when he undeservedly got everything he'd whined for his entire life—command of evil forces. A wannabe Goth, Chad

OCTAMAN

PL8 • 98 POINTS

STR 8 **STA** 7 **AGL** 1 **DEX** 5 **FGT** 1 **INT** 0 **AWE** 2 **PRE** 1

Powers: **Tentacles** (Elongation 6; Extra Limbs 4)

Advantages: Benefit (Ambidexterity), Fast Grab, *Improved Grab*, Improved Hold, Startle, Takedown 2

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 7 (+8), Intimidation 8 (+9), Perception 3 (+5)

Offense: Initiative +1, Unarmed +8 (Close, Damage 8)

Defense: Dodge 9, Parry 9, Fortitude 10, Toughness 7, Will 6

Totals: Abilities 50 + Powers 10 + Advantages 6 + Skills 9 + Defenses 23 = 98

Complications: **Motivation—Greed:** Becoming a monster hasn't dulled Harry's appetite for the long green. **Prejudice:** Octaman is a six-foot-tall walking, talking squid-man. That tends to get a reaction. **Temper:** Octaman is mad pretty much all the time.

THE MONGOOSE

PL9 • 115 POINTS

STR 3 STA 4 AGL 4 DEX 4 FGT 4 INT 0 AWE 2 PRE 2

Powers: **Claws & Teeth** (Strength-based Damage 6); **Jumping** (Leaping 4 (120 feet)); **Keen Nose** (Senses 3 (Acute (All Olfactory), Tracking))

Advantages: Agile Feint, All-out Attack, Defensive Roll 3, Evasion, Fearless, Improved Defense, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Instant Up, Power Attack

Skills: Acrobatics 7 (+11), Athletics 7 (+10), Close Combat: Unarmed 5 (+9), Perception 10 (+12), Stealth 7 (+11)

Offense: Initiative +8, Claws & Teeth +9 (Close, Damage 9)

Defense: Dodge 11, Parry 11, Fortitude 10, Toughness 7/4*, Will 8 *Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 46 + Powers 13 + Advantages 12 + Skills 18 + Defenses 26 = 115

Complications: **Motivation—Thrills:** Elaine's love of action has been exacerbated in her new animal form. **Temper:** The formerly self-disciplined Elaine is now quite feral, and prone to vicious retaliation.

hasn't the interpersonal skills—or much of a clue, really—to even begin to pull it off. As a result, he's perpetually whiny and pretentious.

While a stormer rather than a true magician, Chad can nonetheless tap into the mystic ether at will, and manipulate it for a variety of effects.

DEATH MAGNETIC

REAL NAME: Chelsea Lincoln

OCCUPATION: Information technology specialist

BASE: Emerald City

The Silver Storm transformed young bystander Chelsea Lincoln from Nice Girl You'd Want to Marry into Concentrated Super-Powered Evil. Haughty, short-tempered, avaricious, and cruel, Chelsea is well on her way to megalomaniacal super-villainess status. You can find out more about her in the Threat Report supplement.

Chelsea amplifies, focuses, and controls magnetic energy with but a thought.

CHAPTER 1

This section contains the stat blocks and personal information of the major personalities in **Chapter 1: Picking Up the Pieces**.

CANNON

REAL NAME: Peter Stone

OCCUPATION: Former soldier turned professional criminal

BASE: Emerald City

Opportunities seemed few for Pete Stone after his dishonorable discharge from the US Army, and coupled with his lack of talents and scruples, pushed him into a life of petty crime.

LORD ETHERIC

PL9 • 149 POINTS

STR 2 STA 4 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 1 INT 5 AWE 5 PRE 5

Powers: **Ether Manipulation** (Array (32 points), **Psychic Blast** (Perception Range Damage 8, Resisted by Will)), **AE: Energy Blast** (Ranged Perception Area Damage 8, Selective), **AE: Manifestation** (Create 8, Continuous, Movable); **Etherealness** (Impervious Protection 6; Immunity 10 (Life Support)); **Etheric Propulsion** (Flight 8 (500 MPH))

Advantages: Fearless

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 2 (+3), Expertise: Popular Culture 10 (+15)

Offense: Initiative +1, Energy Blast +8 (Ranged, Perception Area Damage 8), Psychic Blast +8 (Perception Ranged, Damage 8, Resisted by Will), Unarmed +3 (Close, Damage 2)

Defense: Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fortitude 4, Toughness 10, Will 13

Totals: Abilities 48 + Powers 72 + Advantages 1 + Skills 6 + Defenses 22 = 149

Complications: **Motivation—Thrills:** Chad now has the sinister power he's craved all his life, and is enjoying the Hell out of it. **Obsession:** Chad is Hell-bent on becoming an evil wizard, straight out of the most tripe-filled fantasy novels. He's also looking for payback on all those who've wronged and rejected him, and frankly, that's a long list.

DEATH MAGNETIC

PL10 • 150 POINTS

STR 3 STA 4 AGL 4 DEX 3 FGT 4 INT 4 AWE 2 PRE 3

Powers: **Flight** (Flight 6 (120 MPH)); **Magnetism Control** (Dynamic Array (24 points)); **Magnetic Energy Blasts** (Ranged Damage 12, Dynamic), **AE: Magnetic Manipulation** (Move Object 10, Perception Range, Limited Material (Ferrous Metals)); **Metallic Armor:** Impervious Protection 8, Sustained)

Advantages: Improvised Tools, Inventor

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 3 (+7), Expertise: Computers 9 (+13), Expertise: Current Events 9 (+13), Ranged Combat: Magnetic Energy Blasts 5 (+8), Technology 10 (+14)

Offense: Initiative +4, Magnetic Energy Blasts +8 (Ranged, Damage 12), Unarmed +7 (Close, Damage 3)

Defense: Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fortitude 6, Toughness 12, Will 13

Totals: Abilities 54 + Powers 55 + Advantages 2 + Skills 18 + Defenses 21 = 150

Complications: **Motivation—Greed:** The formerly humble Chelsea now wants it all, and wants it now. **Temper:** Where there was once sweetness and light, there is now hostility and rage filling Chelsea's soul.

Eventually, his criminal contacts led him to the Consortium, a collection of mad scientists pooling their genius to create a super-criminal empire. A thick wad of bills was enough to persuade Stone to volunteer to become a test subject, and after a series of agonizing experimental procedures later, emerged as a living weapon.

The egocentric Stone broke away from his mad-scientist masters, and found his way to Emerald City. Once there, Stone nearly committed his first and last crime spree, but fortunately for him he came under F.O.E.'s protective guidance before doing anything to anger the local supervillain community.

Stone's ruthlessness in pursuit of a buck would make him cause for others to be wary, but his own overconfidence usually trips him up sooner or later. He never fools anyone

CANNON

PL10 • 173 POINTS

STR 8 STA 8 AGL 4 DEX 4 FGT 6 INT 1 AWE 2 PRE 4

Powers: **Cannon Blasts** (Array (24 points), **Cannon Shot** (Ranged Damage 12 (concussion)), **AE: Explosive Shot** (Burst Area Ranged Damage 8 (concussion)); **Heightened Senses** (Senses 3 (Extended Vision, Darkvision)); **Superhuman Toughness** (Enhanced Advantages 1 (Diehard); Impervious Protection 4; Regeneration 1); **Teleportation** (Teleport 8 (1 mile), Accurate)

Advantages: *Diehard*, Improved Aim, Power Attack

Skills: Athletics 4 (+12), Close Combat: Unarmed 6 (+12), Expertise: Military 4 (+5), Intimidation 6 (+10), Perception 6 (+8), Ranged Combat: Canon Blasts 4 (+8), Stealth 4 (+8)

Offense: Initiative +4, Cannon Shot +8 (Ranged, Damage 12), Explosive Shot — (Ranged, Burst Area Damage 8), Unarmed +12 (Close, Damage 8)

Defense: Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fortitude 12, Toughness 12, Will 8

Totals: Abilities 74 + Powers 63 + Advantages 3 + Skills 17 + Defenses 16 = 173

Complications: **Motivation—Greed:** Cannon can never have too much of anything. He's greedy and he's okay with that. **Quirk—Overconfident:** Perhaps unsurprisingly, Cannon is incredibly overconfident and thinks he's capable of handling anything. The only reason he's joined the Consortium is because it may make him more money.

to the degree he believes he has, and he picks fights with everyone. It's okay, though—not like he accepts the blame for his failures or anything. He is frustrated at his lack of success, and has a gruff attitude as a result.

Stone's implanted bionic powers make him super-strong and resilient, able to warp space locally, teleport, and project concussive energy blasts.

GARGANTUA

REAL NAME: Thomas "Tommy" Fitzgerald

OCCUPATION: Longshoreman

BASE: Emerald City

Tommy Fitzgerald was just another guy with simple tastes and churlish means, until one fateful day when he failed at a critical half of his "lift and tote" job. Whatever was being smuggled in the container he dropped mutated Tommy, allowing him to become a giant at will. Mostly, though, it just made him into a giant jerk.

It doesn't take long for stories of a 60-foot guy knocking over liquor stores (literally) to reach the upper echelons of Emerald City's supervillain hierarchy. Ultimately, "the Big Brain" won the bidding war for Tommy's services, and he—now re-dubbed "Gargantua"—became a card-carrying F.O.E. member.

Gargantua is a simple guy; he likes beer, broads, having a good laugh, and long weekends. Anything that lets him enjoy more of those things is good with him. Even before he gained his powers he was a boorish bully who enjoyed getting his way, now he's even worse. He thinks he's hilarious.

Gargantua has the ability to grow to nearly 60 feet tall with an accompanying increase in strength and resilience. He's an uninventive fighter and prefers to bull his way

GARGANTUA

PL12 • 109 POINTS

STR 16/4* STA 16/4* AGL 2 DEX 2 FGT 3 INT 1 AWE 2 PRE 3

Powers: **Giant Form** (44 points, Activation (Move action, -1 point), **Size Increase** (Growth 12; Enhanced Skill 2 (Intimidation +4); Impervious Toughness 8), **Trained Defenses** (Enhanced Defense 12 (Dodge 6, Parry 6), Quirk—Only against smaller targets (-1 point); Linked: 1 Rank of each per two ranks of Size Increase)

Advantages: Accurate Attack, Chokehold, Fast Grab, Improved Grab, Improved Hold, Improvised Weapon, Startle, Takedown

Skills: Athletics 2 (+18/+6*), Close Combat: Unarmed 5 (+8), Expertise: Streetwise 4 (+5), Intimidation 5 (+18/+8*)

Offense: Initiative +2, Unarmed +8 (Close, Damage 16/4*)

Defense: Dodge 4/4*, Parry 5/5*, Fortitude 16/4*, Toughness 16/4*, Will 6 *Without Growth.

Totals: Abilities 42 + Powers 43 + Advantages 8 + Skills 8 + Defenses 8 = 109

Complications: **Accident:** Gargantua is destructive and tends to cause a lot of collateral damage on a mission. **Motivation—Greed:** Gargantua wants money, money, and more money. He prefers cash to all other valuables. He understands cash.

through situations.

CYBERKNIGHT

REAL NAME: Sarah Loring

OCCUPATION: Professional criminal

BASE: Emerald City

Sarah Loring's life was a joyful carousel of studying for her medical career, wonderful husband, and her cherished twin infant boys. Fate seemingly could not bear such happiness, as in quick succession a senseless accident made her a widow and her sons were diagnosed with a rare, potentially fatal, genetic disorder. The money and attention her now-ailing children required far outstripped the amount of money available to her, and sent her in desperate search of assistance.

This led to her final misery, as only the criminal scientist organization known as the Consortium offered the huge sum of fast cash her boys needed for their care. Mercifully, she was outwardly unchanged and her children's lives were saved. However, on the inside, the once-good Sarah has been corrupted by the life of crime in which she is now trapped. Even after leaving the Consortium behind, circumstances forced her to join F.O.E. shortly thereafter.

In truth, there's a lot of Sarah's former, moral self left within Cyberknight. However, so long as her boys need her out of prison and the cash her crimes bring in, her scruples are on hold, at best.

To most, Cyberknight is all business: sharply focused on the criminal task at hand. Few get to see her heartfelt (though ultimately) fleeting protestations against the more cold-blooded means of the other F.O.E. members. Only her kids see the wonderful, doting mom she longs to be above all.

Sarah was surgically implanted with a variety of high-technology devices, transforming her into a cyborg with enhanced skills, senses, and resistance to harm. She's capable of flight, feats of super-strength, and invisibility.

CYBERKNIGHT

PL11 • 160 POINTS

STR 3+ STA 5 AGL 4 DEX 4 FGT 5+ INT 4 AWE 3 PRE 3

Powers: **Cyberlance** (Array (24 points), Easily Removable (-10 points), **Plasma Blasts** (Ranged Damage 12), **AE: Netcaster** (Affliction 12 (Resisted by Dodge and Overcome by Damage; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobilized), Extra Condition, Ranged, Limited Degree); **Cybernetic Adaptor Array** (Array (15 points), **Anti-Grav** (Flight 7 (250 MPH), Dynamic), **AE: Super Strength** (Enhanced Strength 5, Dynamic), **AE: Reactive Aura** (Visual Concealment 4, Dynamic); **Squire Combat Computer** (Array (10 points), **Combat Programming** (Enhanced Fighting 5), **AE: Heightened Senses** (Senses 8 (Extended Hearing 2, Infravision, Radio, Tracking, Vision Penetrates Concealment 4)), **AE: Metahuman Database** (Enhanced Advantage (Assessment), Enhanced Skill 6 (Insight +12)); **Subdermal Armor** (Protection 5)

Advantages: Accurate Attack, Fearless, Improved Disarm, Power Attack, Precise Attack (Ranged; Cover), Ultimate Resistance (Will checks)

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+8), Athletics 5 (+8), Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+9), Expertise: Tactics 5 (+9), Insight 4 (+19/+7*), Perception 5 (+8), Ranged Combat: Cyberlance 6 (+10), Treatment 7 (+11) *Without Metahuman Database

Offense: Initiative +4, Unarmed +14 (Close, Damage 8), Plasma Blasts +10 (Ranged, Damage 12), Netcaster +10 (Ranged, Affliction 12, Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Damage)

Defense: Dodge 12, Parry 12, Fortitude 10, Toughness 10, Will 9

Totals: Abilities 62 + Powers 51 + Advantages 6 + Skills 20 + Defenses 21 = 160

Complications: Quirk—Naive: Though she's a more than capable supervillain, her heart's not always black enough for the evil business she's now in, and she's sometimes taken aback by the utter ruthlessness of her cohorts. **Motivation—Responsibility:** Everything Sarah does stems from her need to provide for children's well-being. Whatever qualms she has about her life of crime are always eventually put aside for their sake. **Relationship:** Sarah has twin boys she loves deeply and takes care of when she's not Cyberknight.

Her Cyberlance allows her to damage and ensnare opponents at range.

TEMPUS, THE MASTER OF TIME

REAL NAME: Abner Polignac

OCCUPATION: Professional criminal

BASE: Emerald City

Abner Polignac was always... different. In some hard-to-define way, he was weird; off-putting. Perhaps it was his callous, calculating manner, or the simple fact he never tried to hide his misanthropy. When he reached the age of majority, yet another isolating difference appeared, as Abner's mutant powers emerged and trapped him in his "unstuck in time" state.

At that moment, Abner seemingly lost whatever residual use for the rest of humanity remained, and time itself became the overriding focus of his life. While his powers made him formidable in any era, it was his ability to travel through time that made the newly self-proclaimed Tempus, Master of Time truly fearsome. However, his first attempt at altering history to make himself fabulously wealthy was defeated by Dr. Tomorrow and the Time-Keepers. His next caper involved stealing advanced weap-

TEMPUS, THE MASTER OF TIME

PL10 • 174 POINTS

STR 1 STA 2 AGL 2 DEX 2 FGT 2 INT 8 AWE 6 PRE 1

Powers: Expanded Perception (Enhanced Advantage 8 (Defensive Roll 3, Improved Initiative 5); Enhanced Defenses 26 (Parry 13, Dodge 13); Quickness 5; Senses 8 (Radius, Ranged, Extended, Temporal Awareness, Precognition, Postcognition, Time Sense)); **Time Control** (Affliction 12 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Dazed, Hindered, and Vulnerable), Extra Condition 2, Limited Degree 2, Ranged, Reversible)); **Time Platform** (Feature 1 (Levitate in place)); **Time Travel** (Movement 3 (Time Travel 3); Teleport 5 (900 feet) Accurate, Change Direction, Change Velocity, Turnabout)

Advantages: *Defensive Roll 3, Eidetic Memory*

Skills: Expertise: History 8 (+16), Expertise: Science 8 (+16), Perception 10 (+16), Ranged Combat: Time Control 6 (+8)

Offense: Initiative +22, Time Control +8 (Ranged, Affliction 12, Resisted and Overcome by Will)

Defense: Dodge 15, Parry 15, Fortitude 5, Toughness 5/2*, Will 15 *Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 48 + Powers 97 + Advantages 1 + Skills 16 + Defenses 12 = 174

Complications: Quirk—Unstuck in Time: Tempus travels in time so much that from one encounter to the next he'll appear to be of vastly different ages. It's also possible one time he may know the heroes well, possibly even be friendly with them, and then another time not know them at all, or even treat them as hated enemies. **Enemy:** Polignac's most grandiose schemes, like those involving tampering with history for his own benefit, are thwarted by the time stream's noble guardians, like Doctor Tomorrow, the Clockwatcher, and even the Time-Keepers themselves. With justification, Polignac feels they are hounding him. **Motivation—Obsession:** Polignac is completely driven to gain total mastery over time itself, with the ultimate goal of displacing the Time-Keepers themselves.

only from the 26th century, but it also ended in failure when the Clockwatcher intervened.

Nearly broke and bested, Tempus sought out F.O.E. in an effort to improve his finances and criminal fortunes. In doing so, Tempus hopes to gather up enough power and resources to destroy his "persecutors" and truly become the Master of Time. Since that event, Polignac's condition has become more pronounced, and his motivations more inscrutable and unpredictable to others. He's in standard hired thug mode during this encounter, but his subsequent appearances can engender a sense of mystery, as outlined in his Unstuck in Time Complication.

Polignac is cold, cruel, and distant. Never the warmest soul to begin with, his obsession and firsthand observance of the ephemeral nature of others have ground any spark of humanity out of him.

Polignac's mutant mental abilities make him time-controller and teleporter who can slow and even stop time with just the force of his will.

In order to transport his fellow F.O.E. compatriots to and from MarsTech, Tempus is using a power stunt (see page 20, *Hero's Handbook*) for an Alternate Effect on his Teleport. If it's important, the effect is: **Long-range Teleport:** Extended Teleport 4 (16 miles), Accurate, Extended Only, Increased Mass 6 (3,200 lbs.). If the villains use this in order to escape, that's worth a hero point for the heroes.

CHAPTER 2

This section contains the stat blocks and personal information of the major personalities in **Chapter 2: Out of Their League**.

AEGIS AGENTS

A few agents of the American Elite Government Intervention Service (AEGIS) are involved in the events of Emerald City Knights, particularly Justin McKenzie and Elizabeth Nguyen. Details on the two agents—and AEGIS in general—can be found in the AEGIS section of **Chapter 3** of the *Secrets of Emerald City* book. Keep in mind that when the events of this adventure take place, AEGIS is still in the process of reacting to the Silver Storm and sudden upheaval in what had previously been a quiet and uneventful posting for the agency, ill-prepared for handling Emerald City's sudden increase in super-criminals and heroes.

BOWMAN

PL10 • 178 POINTS

STR 2 STA 2 AGL 6 DEX 6 FGT 6 INT 1 AWE 3 PRE 4

Powers: **Hi-Tech Bow and Trick Arrows** (Array (17 points), Easily Removable (-8 points), **Explosive Arrows** (Ranged Burst Area Damage 6, Diminished Range), **AE: Bola Arrows** (Ranged Cumulative Affliction 4 (Resisted by Dodge and Overcome by Damage; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobile), Extra Condition, Limited Degree), **AE: Taser Arrows** (Ranged Affliction 4 (Resisted by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated)), **AE: Smoke Arrows** (Ranged Cloud Area Concealment 4 Attack (All Visual)), **AE: Peerless Archer** (Ranged Multiattack Damage 4, Precise), **AE: Swingline** (Movement 1 (Swinging)); **Trained Runner** (Speed 1 (4 MPH))

Equipment: Hi-tech Chainmail Hauberk (Protection 2), Commlink, Flashlight, GPS Receiver

Advantages: Accurate Attack, Benefit 1 (Well-off), Close Attack 4, Connected, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 2, Equipment, Evasion, Improved Aim, Improved Critical 4 (Bows), Improved Defense, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative 2, Instant Up, Move-by Action, Precise Attack 2 (Ranged; Concealment and Cover), Quick Draw, Ranged Attack 4, Seize Initiative, Skill Mastery (Ranged Combat), Taunt, Ultimate Effort (Ranged Combat)

Skills: Acrobatics 10 (+16), Athletics 8 (+10), Deception 8 (+12), Expertise: History 4 (+5), Expertise: Streetwise 8 (+9), Insight 7 (+10), Intimidation 6 (+10), Investigation 7 (+8), Perception 8 (+11), Ranged Combat: Bows 6 (+12), Stealth 10 (+16), Technology 7 (+8), Vehicles 5 (+11)

Offense: Initiative +14, Ranged Weapons +16 (Ranged, Damage 4, Crit. 16-20), Unarmed +10 (Close, Damage 2)

Defense: Dodge 14, Parry 10, Fortitude 8, Toughness 6/4*, Will 8 *Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 60 + Powers 15 + Advantages 34 + Skills 47 + Defenses 22 = 178

Complications: **Fame:** All of the members of the Freedom League are very well-known. **Motivation—Thrillseeker:** Bowman is an adrenaline junkie. He sometimes has a hard time reconciling this drive with his professional obligations to his teammates and his extensive training. **Responsibility:** As the latest in a line of heroes to carry the "Bowman" name, he feels a keen responsibility to do the name proud.

CHESSMEN

The Chessmen are described in detail in their own section of **Chapter 5** of *Secrets of Emerald City*. It is primarily the organization's agents that concern the heroes during this adventure, in the initial moves by the Grandmaster to test both Maximilian Mars' intentions and the heroes' capabilities. The full details about the Chessmen and their leader's greater plans are not revealed in *Emerald City Knights*, but can form the basis of future adventures.

THE FREEDOM LEAGUE

The world's greatest hero team, the Freedom League has safeguarded Freedom City and the world for many years. Spread somewhat thin by their broad, global focus, the Leaguers only take action in Emerald City once they have reason to suspect the Commander (a.k.a. Maximilian Mars) is involved with the Silver Storm.

Gamemasters with access to the Freedom City sourcebook should feel free to use versions of other members of the Freedom League in this adventure, if they prefer, keeping in mind that Dr. Metropolis' presence is important for his sudden and unexpected reaction to Max Mars.

DR. METROPOLIS

PL12 • 241 POINTS

STR 6 STA 10 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 10 INT 4 AWE 4 PRE 0

Powers: **Carried by the City** (Flight 1 (4 MPH; Limited to Urban Areas)); **Constructed Body** (Feature 1 (Increased Mass 1; 400 lbs), Immunity 16 (Aging, Fatigue Effects, Life Support), Impervious Protection 4, Impervious Will 10, Regeneration 5 (Source—Urban Materials)); **One with the City** (Movement 2 (Permeate 2; Limited—Urban Construction Materials), Senses 6 (Acute and Analytical Detect City Details and Layout (Extended 2), Radio Hearing)); **Urban Elemental** (Array (72 points), **Animate Object** (Perception Range Selective Shapeable Area 2 Damaging Move Object 12 (100 tons; Dynamic, Precise; Limited Material—Cityscape Components)), **AE: City Sculpting** (Continuous Transform 10, Broad (any cityscape component into any other cityscape component), Dynamic), **AE: City Sense** (Remote Sensing 14 (All Senses, 120 miles; Dynamic, Subtle; Limited to Urban Areas)), **AE: City Travel** (Teleport 14 (60 miles; Accurate, Change Direction, Change Velocity, Dynamic, Easy, Extended (16,000 miles), Turnabout; Medium—Urban Areas))

Advantages: Diehard, Fearless, Improved Initiative

Skills: Expertise: Current Events 8 (+12), Expertise: Structural Engineering 14 (+18), Insight 8 (+12), Intimidation 8 (+8), Perception 4 (+8), Stealth 6 (+7), Technology 6 (+10)

Offense: Initiative +5, Animated Object —(Perception Range, Damage 12), Unarmed +10 (Close, Damage 6)

Defense: Dodge 8, Parry 10, Fortitude 10, Toughness 14, Will 10

Totals: Abilities 72 + Powers 126 + Advantages 3 + Skills 25 + Defenses 13 = 241

Complications: **Fame:** All of the members of the Freedom League are very well-known. **Motivation—Responsibility:** Metropolis is keenly aware of his role as protector and is tireless in the performance of his duties. **Quirk—Inhuman:** Metropolis isn't human and doesn't interact with humanity following expected social mores. **Weakness:** Metropolis weakens if he is removed from urban areas for long periods of time, eventually sickening and potentially even "dying" (whatever that may mean for such a lifeform).

BOWMAN

Bowman has grown up quite a bit since joining the Freedom League, though he doesn't always let it show. He still acts the part of the thrill seeking, smart-mouthed flirt, but it's just as much because it's expected of him as it is leftover immaturity. In combat, he uses taunts the bad guys to draw their fire and trusts his mobility and training to keep him safe, while his teammates take advantage of any openings in their foe's defenses. Many an enemy has turned to tear into Bowman only to be felled by one of the League's big guns he never saw coming.

Since Seven joined the League, Bowman has made a concerted effort to grow up, because he's concerned with how his old classmate perceives him.

DR. METROPOLIS

The origins of Metropolis remains a mystery despite the attempts of more than one researcher (including Metropolis himself) to discover the truth. This hasn't diminished the good Doctor's devotion to his duties as a protector of humanity in the slightest.

JOHNNY ROCKET

PL11 - 203 POINTS

STR 2 STA 3 AGL 5 DEX 4 FGT 5 INT 1 AWE 2 PRE 3

Powers: **Run on Walls** (Movement 2 (Wall Crawling 2), Limited to while moving); **Run on Water** (Movement 1 (Water Walking), Limited to while moving); **Super-Speed** (Enhanced Defenses 22 (Dodge 11, Parry 11), Enhanced Advantages 19 (Agile Feint, Close Attack 5 (Quirk—Only versus opponents that have lower initiative totals than Johnny), Defensive Roll 3, Evasion, Improved Initiative 12, Instant Up, Move-by Action), Quickness 12, Speed 16 (125,000 MPH)); **Super-Speed Combat** (Array (24 points), **Arm-Spinning Tornado** (Cone Area 2 Move Object 8, Limited to pushing away), **AE: Fast Attack** (Strength-based Damage 6, Burst Area 8, Selective 8), **AE: Flurry of Blows** (Strength-based Damage 6, Multiattack 8))

Equipment: Commlink, GPS receiver

Advantages: *Agile Feint*, Close Attack 3, Close Attack 5, Defensive Roll 3, Evasion, Equipment, Grabbing Finesse, Improved Initiative 12, Instant Up, Move-by Action, Redirect, Taunt

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+11), Athletics 8 (+10), Deception 6 (+9), Expertise: Current Events 6 (+7), Expertise: Pop Culture 6 (+7), Perception 8 (+9), Ranged Combat: Thrown 8 (+13), Technology 4 (+5)

Offense: Initiative +53, Fast Attack — (Close, Burst Area Damage 8), Flurry of Blows +13/+8* (Close, Multiattack Damage 8), Unarmed +13/8* (Close, Damage 2)

*Only if he has a lower initiative than his opponent.

Defense: Dodge 16, Parry 16, Fortitude 9, Toughness 6/3*, Will 8

Totals: Abilities 50 + Powers 103 + Advantages 7 + Skills 26 + Defenses 17 = 203

Complications: **Fame:** All of the members of the Freedom League are very well-known. **Identity:** Johnny's identity is public knowledge. **Motivation—Responsibility:** Johnny is strongly invested in using his powers his powers for good and not bringing shame to the heroic legacy established by his grandfather. **Prejudice:** Johnny is gay and sometimes faces discrimination because of it. **Relationship:** Johnny is a married man and he worries constantly about his husband.

JOHNNY ROCKET

The League's resident speedster has mellowed and matured somewhat in the last few years, due significantly to finding and marrying the love of his life, paramedic Chris Penny. He struggles to restrain his impulsive nature, but more often than not is a voice of reason on the team... much to the surprise of the other Leaguers.

RAVEN

Raven is one of the constants in the League. Other than growing older, very little has changed with Raven in

RAVEN

PL12 - 273 POINTS

STR 2 STA 4 AGL 6 DEX 5 FGT 16 INT 7 AWE 5 PRE 6

Powers: **Combat Mastery** (Strength-based Damage 2, Subtle)

Equipment: Binoculars, Body Armor (Protection 2, Subtle), Collapsible Staves (Strength-based Damage 2), Commlink, Mini-tracers, Night Vision Goggles, Restraints, Flashlight, GPS, Grapple Gun, Multi-tool, 30 points worth of vehicles and smaller headquarters hidden around Freedom City; **Utility Belt** (Array (16 points), **Tear Gas Pellets** (Ranged Cloud Area Affliction 4 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Dazed and Vision Impaired, Stunned and Vision Disabled, Incapacitated)), **AE: Bolos** (Snare 3 (Resisted by Dodge and Overcome by Damage; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobilized)), **AE: Boomerangs** (Ranged Strength-based Damage 1), **AE: Explosives** (Ranged Burst Area Damage 5), **AE: Cutting Torch** (Damage 1 Linked to Weaken Toughness 1), **AE: Flash-Bangs** (Burst Area Affliction 4 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Vision Impaired, Vision Disabled, Vision Unaware)), **AE: Smoke Pellets** (Cloud Area Visual Concealment Attack); **Headquarters** (The Rookery, **Size Small**; **Tou 10**; Communications, Computer, Defense System, Fire Prevention System, Gym, Hangar, Infirmary, Laboratory, Library, Living Space, Power System, Security System 3, Workshop)

Advantages: Agile Feint, Assessment, Benefit 3 (Millionaire), Close Attack 2, Connected, Contacts, Daze (Intimidation), Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 2, Equipment 18, Evasion, Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Initiative 2, Improvised Tools, Instant Up, Inventor, Jack-of-all-trades, Languages 4, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Precise Attack (Ranged; Concealment), Quick Draw, Ranged Attack 6, Redirect, Seize Initiative, Set-up, Skill Mastery (Intimidation), Skill Mastery (Investigation), Skill Mastery (Perception), Startle, Takedown, Trance, Tracking, Uncanny Dodge, Well-informed

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+14), Athletics 12 (+14), Deception 8 (+14), Expertise: Criminology 14 (+20), Expertise: Streetwise 14 (+20), Insight 10 (+15), Intimidation 14 (+20), Investigation 16 (+22), Perception 14 (+19), Persuasion 6 (+11), Stealth 12 (+18), Sleight of Hand 8 (+13), Technology 8 (+14), Treatment 6 (+12), Vehicles 8 (+14)

Offense: Initiative +10, Boomerangs +16 (Ranged, Damage 3), Collapsible Staff +18 (Close, Damage 6), Unarmed +18 (Close, Damage 4)

Defense: Dodge 16, Parry 16, Fortitude 9, Toughness 8/6*, Will 14 *Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 102 + Powers 3 + Advantages 65 + Skills 79 + Defenses 24 = 273

Complications: **Fame:** All of the members of the Freedom League are very well-known. **Identity:** Raven's true identity as Callie Summers is a zealously hidden secret. **Motivation—Justice:** Raven is driven to fight the evil that took her mother's life. **Obsession:** Fighting crime is the center of Raven's life and she spares only enough time from it to protect her secret identity.

SEVEN

PL10 • 158 POINTS

STR 0 STA 2 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 6 INT 3 AWE 5 PRE 3

Powers: **Defensive Magic** (Array (20 points), **Shining Shield of SIRRION** (Impervious Force Field 10), **AE: Deflect** 10, Reflect; **Magic** (Array (28 points), **Abjurations of Abbridon** (Nullify Magic 9, Broad; Precise), **AE: Elemental Mastery of Ghorummaz** (Perception Range Move Object 10 (25 tons); Limited to Classical Elements (Air, Earth, Fire, and Water)), **AE: Magic of the Modrossus** (Ranged Damage 10), **AE: Wheel of Weyan** (Remote Sensing 22, Visual and Auditory; Dimensional; Feedback, Medium (any reflective surface)), **AE: Shining Shackles of SIRRION** (Ranged Cumulative Affliction 10 (Resisted by Dodge and Overcome by Damage; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobilized; Extra Condition, Diminished Range, Limited Degree), **AE: Shining Suns of SIRRION** (Ranged Cumulative Affliction 10 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Vision Impaired, Vision Disabled, Vision Unaware); **Whirling Wind of Weyan** (Flight 4 (30 MPH)); **Witchsight** (Senses 3 (Analytical and Extended Magic Awareness))

Equipment: Commlink

Advantages: Attractive, Equipment, Languages 4 (Atlantean, Latin, Sanskrit, and several ancient occult languages), Ritualist

Skills: Deception 7 (+10), Expertise: Arcane Lore 9 (+12), Insight 8 (+13), Intimidation 4 (+7), Perception 8 (+13), Persuasion 6 (+9), Ranged Combat: Spells 9 (+10), Sleight of Hand 6 (+7), Stealth 4 (+5), Treatment 3 (+6)

Offense: Initiative +1, Magic of Modrossus +10 (Ranged, Damage 10), Shining Shackles of SIRRION +10 (Ranged Cumulative Affliction 10, Fort/Damage DC 20), Shining Suns of SIRRION +10 (Ranged Cumulative Affliction 10, Fort DC 20), Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 0)

Defense: Dodge 8, Parry 7, Fortitude 5, Toughness 12, Will 14

Totals: Abilities 42 + Powers 65 + Advantages 7 + Skills 32 + Defenses 12 = 158

Complications: **Fame:** All of the members of the Freedom League are very well-known. **Motivation—Responsibility:** Seven is keenly aware of the responsibilities her powers carry. **Power Loss:** Seven loses all of her powers other than Witchsight when she is unable to speak or to gesture with her hands.

CAPTAIN OBLIVION

PL10 • 198 POINTS

STR 4 STA 8 AGL 3 DEX 3 FGT 8 INT 4 AWE 6 PRE 4

Powers: **Disintegrating Touch** (Damage 10 Linked to Weaken Toughness 10 (Resisted by Fortitude; Affects Objects, Progressive, AE: Deflect 10, AE: Burrowing 5, Penetrating)); Immunity 5 (Alteration Effects); Impervious Toughness 10; Protection 2; Senses 1 (Danger Sense)

Advantages: Assessment, Close Attack 2, Defensive Attack, Diehard, Improved Disarm, Inspire 2, Taunt

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+7), Athletics 5 (+9), Deception 5 (+9), Expertise: Emerald City Music Scene 6 (+10), Expertise: Streetwise 4 (+8), Insight 6 (+12), Intimidation 6 (+10), Perception 6 (+12), Persuasion 6 (+10), Stealth 2 (+5)

Offense: Initiative +3, Disintegration Touch +10 (Weaken Toughness 10 linked to Damage 10), Unarmed +10 (Damage 4)

Defense: Dodge 10, Parry 10, Fortitude 10, Toughness 10, Will 9

Totals: Abilities 80 + Powers 70 + Advantages 9 + Skills 25 + Defenses 14 = 198

Complications: **Motivation—Greed and Chaos:** Captain Oblivion is out to show that world that everything is meaningless, that there is no order in the universe... and make himself rich at the same time. **Power Loss:** If he can't touch anything with his right hand, he can't use his Damage/Weaken array. **Relationship:** Epiphany Jones.

recent years, except perhaps that she continues to hone her legendary skills.

SEVEN

Seven graduated from the Claremont Academy and then spent a couple of years as Adrian Eldrich's student, where she honed her already respectable abilities to an even more intimidating degree. She joined the League a few months ago following a fight against Malador that showcased the Freedom League's need for magical knowledge. She's worked vigorously since then to show her teammates that she deserves her spot on the team, an effort the rest of the League frequently tells her is unnecessary.

MAXIMILIAN MARS

See page 24 in the *Secrets of Emerald City* book for information and statistics.

STORMERS
CAPTAIN OBLIVION

REAL NAME: Morris Klein

OCCUPATION: Nihilist

BASE: Emerald City

Morris Klein was a punk rock musician who had been looking for a new club to trash when he got caught at ground zero of the Silver Storm. Morris had a great deal of love for his music, but absolutely zero talent, and was more a space-filler for a revolving list of equally hopeless bands than an actual member of any of them. When he and his girlfriend were caught in the Silver Storm, it was the best thing that ever happened to him. In addition to his newfound ability to generate a field around his right hand that disintegrates matter, he was also physically and mentally improved in almost every way.

EPIPHANY JONES

PL10 • 165 POINTS

STR 0 STA 6 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 4 INT 6 AWE 6 PRE 4

Powers: **Enhanced Advantages 5** (Defensive Roll 2, Evasion, Redirect, Set-Up); **Reality Control** (Perception Range Shapeable Area Selective Damage 10 (Variable Descriptor 2 (Limited Reality Control)), AE: Selective Shapeable Area Luck Control 4 (Luck 5))

Advantages: Attractive, Beginner's Luck, *Defensive Roll 2, Evasion, Jack-of-all-trades, Luck 5, Redirect, Set-Up*

Skills: Deception 4 (+6), Expertise: Musician 8 (+14), Insight 10 (+16), Perception 10 (+16), Persuasion 6 (+10), Stealth 6 (+7)

Offense: Initiative +1, Reality Control — (Perception Range Shapeable Area Selective Damage 10), Unarmed +4 (Damage 0)

Defense: Dodge 12, Parry 11, Fortitude 6, Toughness 8/6* (*without Defensive Roll), Will 14

Totals: Abilities 56 + Powers 58 + Advantages 3 + Skills 22 + Defenses 26 = 165

Complications: **Motivation—Revenge and Thrills.** **Power Loss:** Cannot use her Reality Control array if she is unable to speak. **Relationship:** Captain Oblivion.

Now fully aware of what a loser and joke he had been, as well as realizing the depths to the philosophies behind the music he loves (ideas and concepts he had mostly ignored before), as Captain Oblivion, he wants to bring a new era of nihilism to the world. *Eventually*. First, he plans to enjoy himself a bit, and that means he needs money. He took his pretentious/ironic name and has embarked on a “revenue-generating campaign.”

Despite his oafish blustering, Klein isn't stupid. He wears a voluminous black coat and full face mask with old fashioned aviator goggles, and he cobbled together a bulky, dieselpunk-looking glove-bracer that stretches up his arm with vacuum tubes and lights and other attention-grabbing features all over it, which he pretends is the source of his powers.

EPIPHANY JONES

REAL NAME: Nora Patterson
OCCUPATION: Villainess
BASE: Emerald City

Nora Patterson was goth eye-candy for a series of violent losers, before finally ending up with Morris Klein; the “loserest of losers” as her friends called him. Most people pegged her as something of a twit within moments of meeting her, but that changed when she became a stormer. Her IQ skyrocketed and her “awakening,” which is what she called the manifestation of her ability to see and influence the structure of the universe. As Epiphany Jones, Nora can alter reality by stating what she wants to happen (“...and then the car behind the idiot explodes...”) and it happens. Currently, this is limited to destructive displays (collapsing walls, exploding gas mains, etc.) and influencing probability in her vicinity, but she continues to learn and improve daily. A big clue to the full extent of her powers lies in her new-found musical ability. She'd

GATOR

PL10 • 141 POINTS

STR 9 STA 10 AGL 4 DEX 2 FGT 8 INT 0 AWE 2 PRE 3

Powers: **Aquatic** (Immunity 1 (Drowning), Movement 1 (Environmental Adaptation—Aquatic), Swimming 6 (30 MPH)); **Armored Hide** (Impervious Toughness 8; Protection 2); **Claws/Teeth** (Strength-based Damage 3, Penetrating 3); **Regeneration 5**; **Senses 2** (Low-light Vision, Olfactory Tracking); **Tail** (Extra Limb 1, Reach on Strength Damage, Enhanced Advantages 1 (Improved Trip))

Advantages All-out Attack, Chokehold, Fast Grab, *Improved Grab*, Improved Hold, *Improved Trip*, Power Attack, Prone Fighting

Skills: Athletics 6 (+15), Intimidation 6 (+9), Perception 4 (+6), Ranged Combat: Thrown 4 (+6), Stealth 4 (+8)

Offense: Initiative +4, Claws/Teeth +8 (Close, Damage 12, Penetrating 3)

Defense: Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fortitude 14, Toughness 12, Will 6

Totals: Abilities 76 + Powers 35 + Advantages 6 + Skills 12 + Defenses 12 = 141

Complications: **Motivation—Greed:** Gator is just trying to earn a living and have fun doing it. **Prejudice:** Strange appearance. **Quirk—Carnivore:** Must consume *large* quantities of raw meat as part of his basic diet. **Temper—Bloodlust:** Gets lost in battle and easily succumbs to bloodlust).

always wished for more musical talent and shortly after gaining her powers she suddenly had it. Despite the potential of her powers, she focuses most of her time and effort making the world sorry for how she was treated as untalented, unloved Nora Patterson.

Nora can be quite charming when she controls her violent tendencies. She's a pretty young woman with pale white skin, dyed black hair, heavy make-up that actually works with her overall look, and a sort of goth meets Victorian vibe complete with brass buttons, black ribbons, lace frills, a top hat, and opera glasses.

TAR BABY

REAL NAME: Roger
OCCUPATION: Homeless villain
BASE: Emerald City

Tar Baby doesn't really remember his old name. He thinks it might have been Roger something or other. Years of alcohol abuse had put him in the gutter, homeless. He doesn't remember what he was doing downtown, but he remembers the Silver Storm... and the pain that followed. Now, as a vaguely humanoid mass of a black tar-like substance, the only thing that motivates Tar Baby is his hatred for the normal people in the world.

Tar Baby likes opponents to hit him and become stuck to his body, or, if they refuse to engage him, to engulf his foes and suffocate them until the stop moving.

GATOR

REAL NAME: Rene LeBeaux
OCCUPATION: Outcast
BASE: Emerald City

Rene LeBeaux moved north from his native Louisiana following job after job. His last trucking gig fell through

TAR BABY

PL10 • 152 POINTS

STR 9 STA — AGL -2 DEX -2 FGT 2 INT -2 AWE -1 PRE 0

Powers: **Tarlike** (Elongation 1 and Linked Strength-based Damage 1); **Enhanced Advantage** (Instant Up); **Immunity 30** (Fortitude Effects); **Impervious Protection 10**; **Impervious Protection 8** (Limited to only versus physical attacks); **Insubstantial 1** (Liquid; Permanent; Innate); Suffocating Engulf (Reaction Affliction 10 (Resisted by Fortitude; Hindered, Immobile, Paralyzed); **AE: Cumulative Affliction 10** (Resisted by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated), Concentration, Grab-based); **Regeneration 3**; **Speed 3** (16 MPH)

Advantages: Close Attack 8, Fast Grab, Improved Grab, Improved Hold

Skills: Intimidation 10 (+10), Perception 6 (+5)

Offense: Initiative -2, Suffocating Engulf +10 (Affliction 10, Resisted by Fortitude), Unarmed+10 (Close, Damage 10)

Defense: Dodge 2, Parry 2, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 18/10* (*vs attacks other than physical ones), Will 9

Totals: Abilities -2 + Powers 114 + Advantages 11 + Skills 8 + Defenses 14 = 145

Complications: **Motivation—Chaos. Hatred:** Normal-looking people.

in Emerald City, and he found work on the docks. It was a simple life; he had a roof over his head and a regular paycheck, so he was okay with it. Then he was trapped in that weird cloud after a burger and beer on Yellow Brick Row and everything went to hell. Nobody wants to hire someone that looks like a human alligator, especially one that can snap a man in half without much effort. A man's got to eat, and there are people out there who are willing to hire him. The jobs are a little messier than before, but it's not like the cops can stop him now.

Gator looks like a large man with scaly plates, a tail, and ridges running from head to tail. His jaw is slightly elongated, packed full of big, nasty teeth. He has a difficult time speaking, so when he does, it's slowly and enunciated as much as possible, which makes people think he's a dumb beast. He's a strong and an accomplished street fighter who has no compunctions about playing dirty when necessary. Gator isn't ultimately a bad guy, just a guy who thinks he's trying to make the best of a bad situation. As time goes on, however, he gets deeper into his new criminal lifestyle and it becomes less likely he'll ever get out of it.

TRINITY

REAL NAME: Karen Emerson
OCCUPATION: Villainess, former grad student
BASE: Emerald City

Karen Emerson was wandering dejectedly away from campus when her life, already in the toilet after just having been expelled from her graduate program, took another dramatic turn. Her abilities erupted immediately, accompanied by immense pain but no period of lost consciousness. Her body transformed into some kind of solid energy, and not only that, it was made up of three humanoid forms joined at the shoulders! The bodies shared the same consciousness and she was able to perceive the world all around her at the same time. She discovered she could cause bursts of energy

TRINITY	PL10 • 164 POINTS
STR 6 STA 10 AGL 0 DEX 0 FGT 6 INT 3 AWE 3 PRE 2	
Powers: Flight 6 (120 MPH); Force Field 2 ; Impervious Toughness 12 ; Plasma Blast (Ranged Multiattack Damage 12, Accurate 4); AE: Radiation Burst (Burst Area Damage 10); Senses 4 (Acute Detect Radiation (visual), Radius on all Visual)	
Advantages: Defensive Attack, Improved Initiative 2	
Skills: Expertise: Current Events 6 (+9), Expertise: Science 8 (+11), Insight 4 (+7), Perception 4 (+7), Technology 8 (+11)	
Offense: Initiative +8, Plasma Blast +8 (Multiattack Damage 12), Radiation Burst — (Burst Area Damage 10), Unarmed +6 (Damage 6)	
Defense: Dodge 8, Parry 6, Fortitude 10, Toughness 12/*10 (*without Force Field), Will 10	
Totals: Abilities 60 + Powers 71 + Advantages 3 + Skills 15 + Defenses 15 = 164	
Complications: Motivation—Power: Trinity enjoys power and wants more, no matter what form it takes. Quirk—Vengeful: Very sore loser.	

to erupt from her bodies and she could fly! Karen wasn't altruistic. She didn't want to help people; she wanted to help herself and she finally had the power to do just that. She flew back to the building that housed the physics program and burned it to the ground. It served them right for kicking her out—even if she had sabotaged other students' projects!

Trinity's triplicate form is a descriptive effect. Any effects targeting one of the bodies affect her normally. When she loses consciousness, she reverts back to her normal (single) physical body. That's the only time she changes back to normal as she vastly prefers her new appearance to her old.

CHAPTER 3

This section contains the stat blocks and personal information of the major personalities in **Chapter 3: Power Play**.

THE BIG BRAIN

See page 78 in the *Secrets of Emerald City* book for information and statistics.

FORCES OF F.O.E.

F.O.E. AIR CAVALRY

Built by F.O.E., Dreadnought often uses these helicopter-shaped drones in swarms of six or more to assist him in crimes he commits for the organization, using them to ferry non-flying members of the organization and fly loot away from a crime, often to a distant drop-off point while Dreadnought and F.O.E. distract the authorities and local heroes. While Dreadnought can remote control a drone, he and F.O.E. often pre-program the Air Cavalry with flight plans that can be engaged by Dreadnought in mid-battle using simple command phrases.

VEHICLE: AIR CAVALRY	34 POINTS
Size: Medium Str: 6 Speed: 7, Def: +0 Tou: 9 Features: Remote control, Turbines: Flight 7 (250 MPH); Stealth Mode: Concealment 1 (Radar); Grapples: Feature 1 (Can affix to any non-resisting object and lift/carry it); Drone Pilot: Feature 6 (Can fly itself along predetermined flight paths and move with other Air Cavalry drones in a swarm)	

DREADNOUGHT

REAL NAME: Robert Jackson
OCCUPATION: Member of F.O.E.
BASE: Emerald City

The fourth generation in his family to enter the U.S. military, Robert Jackson was expected to join ascent to the army's highest ranks. While his natural leadership abilities qualified Jackson to be an officer, his short temper prevented him from scoring plum assignments, and he

DREADNOUGHT

PL10 • 157 POINTS

STR 11/3* STA 3 AGL 1 DEX 2 FGT 4 INT 1 AWE 2 PRE 2

Powers: **Dreadnought Armor** (Removable (-19 points), **Armor Systems** (Enhanced Defenses 8 (Fortitude 6, Will 2); Flight 10 (2,000 MPH; Aquatic); Immunity 10 (Life Support); Impervious Protection 12); **Arsenal** (Array (25 points), **AE: Cannon** (Ranged Damage 10, Penetrating 5), **AE: Electrified Shell** (Reaction Damage 6), **AE: Machine Guns** (Ranged Multiattack Damage 8, Accurate), **AE: Rocket Barrage** (Ranged Burst Area Damage 8), **AE: Steel Fists** (Enhanced Strength 8; Enhanced Advantage 5 (Close Attack 5)))

Advantages: All-out Attack, Assessment, *Close Attack* 5, Diehard, Equipment 7, Improved Initiative, Move-by Action, Power Attack

Skills: Athletics 7 (+10), Expertise: Military 5 (+6), Expertise: Tactics 4 (+5), Insight 4 (+6), Intimidation 15 (+17), Perception 4 (+6), Ranged Combat: Arsenal 8 (+10)

Offense: Initiative +5, Cannon +10 (Ranged, Damage 10, Penetrating 5), Machine Guns +12 (Ranged, Multiattack Damage 8), Rocket Barrage — (Ranged, Burst Area Damage 8), Steel Fists +9 (Close, Damage 11) *Without Steel Fists.

Defense: Dodge 5, Parry 5, Fortitude 12, Toughness 15, Will 8

Totals: Abilities 36 + Powers 73 + Advantages 13 + Skills 23 + Defenses 12 = 157

Complications: **Mechanic Needed:** Though he wears a suit of technologically-advanced armor, Dreadnought has no ability to repair or upgrade his weaponry, and has been known to steal materials and intimidate or blackmail technicians when he needs them. **Motivation—Revenge:** Dreadnought hates the military he once belonged to, happily engaging them in battle and targeting them with his crimes. **Temper:** Once Dreadnought is angered, he focuses on the cause of his rage with a fevered intensity until it is destroyed.

soon found himself head of a detail guarding an isolated military warehouse. Jackson saw himself in the mothballed prototypes inside—weapons woefully underused. When his frustrations reached the breaking point, Jackson stole a high-tech battlesuit from the warehouse and set out to punish the military he felt had misused him. Renaming himself Dreadnought, Jackson targets valuables to fund his campaigns and high-tech weaponry he can pay others to incorporate into his armor. In return for his skills leading troops on the battlefield, F.O.E. now acts as Dreadnought's technical support, making him one of the most loyal members of the organization.

LORD QUAKE

REAL NAME: Lord Quake

OCCUPATION: Member of F.O.E.

BASE: Emerald City, Sub-Terra

The mysterious race known as the stonekin lived undisturbed deep beneath the surface of the earth for ten thousand years, until a geological probe broke through from above. Unfortunately, along with sensors and scientific equipment the probe also carried bacteria and microbes against which the stonekin had no natural defenses, and within months they were all dead... except for a nobleman named Lord Quake. Quake eventually made his way to the surface, where he has launched a campaign of revenge upon humanity, gathering to his side others who also feel they've been wronged by

LORD QUAKE

PL10 • 169 POINTS

STR 13/3* STA 8 AGL 1 DEX 2 FGT 4 INT 1 AWE 2 PRE 3

Powers: **Born of Stone** (Regeneration 10); **Corekin** (Immunity 12 (Critical Hits, Life Support)); **Gemstone Eyes** (Senses 4 (Darkvision, Infravision, Detect Gems and Precious Metals)); **Stoneskin** (Impervious Protection 6; Impervious Toughness 8); **Earth Mastery** (Array (20 points), **AE: Strong As Stone** (Enhanced Strength 10, Dynamic), **AE: Earthmover** (Perception Range Move Object 10 (25 tons), Limited—Earth, Dynamic), **AE: Earthshape** (Create 9, Permanent, Impervious, Innate, Limited—Must be connected to the earth, Dynamic), **AE: Tremor** (Burst Area 2 (60 feet) Affliction 10 (Resisted by Fortitude; Dazed and Vulnerable, Stunned and Prone), Extra Condition, Limited Degree, Limited—Lord Quake and targets must be in contact with the ground, Dynamic)); **Walk the Underroads** (Burrowing 10 (60 MPH), Affects Others)

Advantages: Close Attack 3, Power Attack

Skills: Athletics 4 (+17), Intimidation 10 (+13)

Offense: Initiative +1, Tremor — (Close, Burst Area Affliction 10, Fort DC 20), Unarmed +7 (Close, Damage 13/3* *Without Strong As Stone.

Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 14, Toughness 14, Will 6

Totals: Abilities 48 + Powers 93 + Advantages 4 + Skills 7 + Defenses 17 = 169

Complications: **Last of His Kind:** Lord Quake believes he is the last of the stonekin, but seeks other survivors who might help him build his new empire. **Motivation—Control:** Lord Quake is determined to prove he has the strength to rule the surface world.

NIGHTBLADE

PL11 • 199 POINTS

STR 2 STA 3 AGL 4 DEX 2 FGT 6 INT 2 AWE 3 PRE 3

Powers: **Blind the Enemy** (Cumulative Burst Area 2 (60 feet) Affliction 7 (Resisted by Will; Visually Impaired, Visually Disabled, Visually Unaware)); **Pass Unseen** (Concealment 4 (All Visual), Limited—Machines Only); **Sight Beyond Sight** (Senses 5 (Darkvision, Vision Counters Invisibility, Radius (Visual))); **Step Through Shadow** (Teleport 3 (250 feet), Accurate); **Sword of Midnight** (Slash (Strength-based Damage 6, Penetrating 6); Spinning Blade of Darkness (Deflect 12, Reflect), Removable (-6 points), Indestructible)

Advantages: Agile Feint, Benefit 2 (Cipher 2), Defensive Roll 3, Evasion 2, Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Critical (Slash), Improved Initiative, Instant Up, Quick Draw

Skills: Acrobatics 12 (+16), Athletics 10 (+12), Close Combat: Swords 8 (+14), Deception 8 (+11), Intimidation 10 (+13), Stealth 14 (+18)

Offense: Initiative +8, Slash +14 (Close, Damage 8, Penetrating 6, Crit. 19-20), Blind the Enemy — (Close, Burst Area Affliction 7, Will DC 17), Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 2)

Defense: Dodge 14, Parry 16, Fortitude 10, Toughness 6/3*, Will 12 *Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 50 + Powers 69 + Advantages 13 + Skills 31 + Defenses 36 = 199

Complications: **Identity** Nightblade is determined to hide his identity, and goes to great lengths to keep it concealed. **Dragon and Phoenix** For years Nightblade has led the Phoenix Moon Triad in its rivalry against Emerald City's Golden Dragon Society and its leader.

the rulers and authorities of the surface world. This has labeled Quake a villain as he battles governments and law enforcement, but it has made him a hero to those who live outside the law and make their own rules.

Though Lord Quake sometimes attacks purely to prove his might, he just as often raids banks and other repositories in search of gems and precious metals he plans to use in the construction of a castle at the center of his new empire. F.O.E. has been Quake's strongest ally on the surface world, assisting him in exchange for the other currency from his robberies. Still, Lord Quake never lets anyone forget that he is noble, and that petty surface criminals are hardly his peers.

NIGHTBLADE

REAL NAME: Unknown
OCCUPATION: Member of F.O.E.
BASE: Asia, Emerald City

Nightblade's true identity and origins are unknown, and even his past activities are hard to track thanks to abilities that can blind both human and mechanical eyes. Many of his abilities seem to come from the Sword of Midnight, a legendary blade once wielded by a samurai who betrayed and killed his master under cover of darkness during a new moon, yet Nightblade also seems to have other abilities and substantial fighting skills of his own. For more than twenty years he has operated almost exclusively in Asia, leading part of the criminal organization known as the Phoenix Moon Triad but

also aiding F.O.E.'s Asian activities. In return, F.O.E. has helped Nightblade hinder the activities of the Golden Dragon Society.

CHAPTER 4

This section contains the stat blocks and personal information of the major personalities in **Chapter 4: Sea Change**.

BRANDE MANAGEMENT FORCES

The following agents working for Brande Management appear in this adventure.

AGENT MARINER

REAL NAME: Anthony Gibbs
OCCUPATION: Brande Management Agent
BASE: Emerald City, Mobile

Anthony Gibbs is a former member of a US Navy-backed program to create aquatic super-soldiers. Mariner was one of the only successful test subjects and the project was scrapped due to excessive cost. Resigning his commission, he joined Brande and has been working security at various facilities for the past three years. He is no-nonsense but with a dry sarcastic sense of humor. He expects total loyalty from those under his command and delivers the same in return. He has no aversion to working with superheroes if necessary, though he views most as untrained amateurs. Agent Mariner is a very fit man in his late 30s with blonde hair just starting to go

BRANDE MANAGEMENT OPERATIVES PLS • MR6

STR 1 STA 1 AGL 1 DEX 2 FGT 6 INT 0 AWE 1 PRE 0

Equipment: **Body Armor** (Feature 2: Comm & Datalink, Impervious Protection 3, Senses 1 (Low-light Vision)), **Brande Blaster** (Ranged Damage 5), **Vibro-Bayonet** (Strength-based Damage 2, Penetrating 2, Improved Critical)

Advantages Equipment 5, Ranged Attack 3, Teamwork

Skills Athletics 4 (+5), Close Combat: Blades 1 (+7), Expertise: Military 4 (+4), Expertise: Tactics 4 (+4), Intimidation 3 (+3), Perception 3 (+4), Stealth 3 (+4), Vehicles 2 (+4)

Offense Initiative +1, Blaster +5 (Ranged, Damage 5), Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 1), Vibro-Bayonet +7 (Close, Damage 3, Penetrating 2, Crit. 19-20)

Defense Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 5, Toughness 4, Will 5

Totals Abilities 24 + Powers 0 + Advantages 7 + Skills 12 + Defenses 13 = 56

Options: To represent specialized training, apply one of these packages (raises cost by 4 points):

- **Sky-Jumpers:** Flight 5 (Jet-packs; 60 MPH; Easily Fouled (counts as the Wings flaw), Removable)
- **Anti-Superhuman Phalanx (ASP):** Add Favored Foe (Superhumans), Set-Up, and Expertise: Superhumans 4 (+4)
- **Close Assault (PL6):** Add Close Attack 2, Quick Draw, and Improved Disarm
- **Covert Operations:** Add Skill Mastery (Stealth), Deception 4 (+4), and increase Stealth to 5 (+6).
- **Environmental Operations:** Add Favored Environment (Choose One), add Equipment 1 to apply Immunity 2 (Environmental Condition: Choose One, Suffocation: Choose One Condition), Movement 1 (Environmental Adaptation) to standard armor. Add Expertise: Survival 4 (+4)
- **Technical Operations:** Increase Intellect to 1, add Technology 3 (+4) and Treatment 1 (+2)

AGENT MARINER PL9 • 135 POINTS

STR 7 STA 7 AGL 3 DEX 2 FGT 8 INT 1 AWE 1 PRE 1

Powers: **Aquatic** (Immunity 3 (Cold, High Pressure, Suffocation (Drowning)), Senses 1 (Low-light Vision), Swimming 8 (120 MPH)); **Hardened Skin** (Impervious Toughness 4)

Equipment: Brande Blaster (Ranged Damage 7), Commlink

Advantages: All-out Attack, Chokehold, Defensive Roll, Favored Environment (Aquatic), Equipment 3, Improved Hold, Improved Trip, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Ranged Attack 5, Startle

Skills: Acrobatics 3 (+6), Athletics 5 (+12), Close Combat: Unarmed 3 (+11), Expertise: Military 5 (+6), Expertise: Tactics 5 (+6), Insight 4 (+5), Intimidation 7 (+8), Perception 6 (+7), Ranged Combat: Guns 3 (+5), Stealth 3 (+6), Vehicles 4 (+6)

Offense: Initiative +3, Blaster +11 (Ranged, Damage 7), Unarmed +11 (Close, Damage 7)

Defense: Dodge 10, Parry 10, Fortitude 10, Toughness 8/7*, Will 7 *Without Defensive Roll

Totals: Abilities 60 + Powers 16 + Advantages 17 + Skills 24 + Defenses 18 = 135

Complications: **No-Nonsense:** Agent Mariner isn't humorless, but he has little time for unprofessionalism, needless frivolity, and insubordination. **Motivation—Professional Pride:** Agent Mariner takes great pride in his work. He respects those who make his job easier and has no consideration or warm feelings for those who don't.

gray. His Brande uniform is a black and silver combat wetsuit decorated with a wave pattern that helps with underwater camouflage (optional: +2 circumstance bonus for underwater Stealth rolls).

AGENT BLAZER

REAL NAME: Abigail David
OCCUPATION: Brande Management Agent
BASE: Emerald City, Mobile

Abigail David is a mutant recruited and trained as an intelligence operative. She served faithfully for five years until a botched mission shook her faith in the chain of command. Joining Brande Management just last year, she became Agent Blazer. In her short time with company she has proven herself an excellent team player and likeable if somewhat secretive and guarded member. Blazer is a beautiful dark-skinned woman with short cropped black hair and dragon tattoo on her back and neck whose origin she refuses to discuss. Her uniform is a skintight combat jumpsuit in black with flame-like striping in red and yellow on the sleeves and pants. She is a remarkably well-trained infiltration expert, markswoman, and hand-to-hand fighter.

STORMERS

The following stormers appear in this adventure, under the influence of the Commander. If stormers from the previous adventures in this series (or from the *Threat Report* series) are at-large in your game, feel free to substitute some of them for the characters listed here.

AGENT BLAZER	PL9 • 132 POINTS
STR 1 STA 2 AGL 3 DEX 5 FGT 6 INT 1 AWE 1 PRE 2	
Powers Fireproof (Immunity 10 (Fire), Limited—Must be aware of attack, Reflect); Flame Generation (Array (18 points) Flame Blast : Ranged Damage 9; AE: Fire Breath : Area Cone Damage 6, Secondary Effect; AE: Firefist : Damage 7, Secondary Effect, Feature 1 (Counts as Unarmed))	
Equipment Commlink, Uniform (Protection 2)	
Advantages: All-out Attack, Attractive, Connected, Defensive Roll 2, Equipment, Fascinate (Deception), Improved Trip, Languages 2 (Arabic, Russian), Precise Attack (Ranged; Cover),	
Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+7), Athletics 2 (+3), Close Combat: Unarmed 5 (+11), Deception 5 (+7), Expertise: Intelligence 5 (+6), Insight 2 (+3), Intimidation 4 (+6), Investigation 2 (+3), Perception 4 (+5), Persuasion 4 (+6), Sleight of Hand 2 (+7), Stealth 5 (+8), Vehicles 2 (+7)	
Offense: Initiative +3, Fire Breath (Close, Cone Area Damage 6), Firefist +11 (Close, Damage 7, Secondary Effect), Flame Blast +9 (Ranged, Damage 9), Unarmed +11 (Close, Damage 1)	
Defense: Dodge 12, Parry 12, Fortitude 7, Toughness 6/4*, Will 9 *Without Defensive Roll.	
Totals: Abilities 42 + Powers 30 + Advantages 11 + Skills 23 + Defenses 29 = 135	
Complications: Mysterious Past: Most of Agent Blazer's covert operations are still classified and she won't talk about them, her reasons for leaving government service, or her childhood. Motivation—Loyalty: Agent Blazer repays loyalty with service. She pays her debts and as long as Brande treats her well she'll remain a good company girl.	

CHAIN

REAL NAME: Ally Hendricks
OCCUPATION: Villainess, barista
BASE: Emerald City

A young barista named Ally with a troubled past and anger control issues, Chain manifests psychic chain-like appendages that she uses for locomotion and to strike and grapple foes. She also possesses some regenerative abilities, which unfortunately counteract the psychoactive medications she takes to control her rage disorder. In her controlled state she does not suffer from such outbursts, but it could be a serious problem in the future.

Chain is an attractive redhead wearing low-slung leather pants and a tight red top. Her chains appear as tattoos on her body when they aren't in use. She always seems a bit distracted or nervous, except for those times when she loses her temper.

CRUX

REAL NAME: Jimi Francona
OCCUPATION: Villain
BASE: Emerald City

Jimi was a two-bit thug for hire until the Silver Storm hit. Unlike his fellow stormers his villain name comes from before received powers. The Storm has given him the power to manifest cross-shaped blades of superheated

CHAIN

PL10 • 142 POINTS

STR 4 **STA** 4 **AGL** 6 **DEX** 2 **FGT** 6 **INT** 0 **AWE** 1 **PRE** 2

Powers: **Psychic Chains:** Deflect 9; Elongation 3 (60 feet); Enhanced Strength 3, Quirk: Extra Limbs Only; Extra Limbs 4; **Chain Locomotion:** Movement 4 (Safe Fall, Swinging, Wall Crawling 2); **Superhuman Metabolism:** Immunity (Aging, Disease, Poison, Sleep), Limited: Half Effect; Regeneration 2

Advantages: All-out Attack, Attractive, Defensive Roll 2, Fast Grab, Improved Critical (Psychic Chains), Improved Disarm, *Improved Grab*, Improved Hold, Power Attack, Takedown

Skills: Acrobatics 2 (+8), Athletics 4 (+8), Close Combat: Psychic Chains 7 (+13), Deception 5 (+7), Expertise: Streetwise 4 (+4), Intimidation 6 (+8), Perception 4 (+5), Persuasion 4 (+6), Ranged Combat: Throwing 6 (+8), Stealth 2 (+8)

Offense: Initiative +6, Psychic Chains +13 (Close, Damage 7, Crit. 19-20), Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 4)

Defense: Dodge 12, Parry 14, Fortitude 10, Toughness 6/4*, Will 9 *Without Defensive Roll

Totals: Abilities 50 + Powers 33 + Advantages 10 + Skills 22 + Defenses 27 = 142

Complications: **Motivation—Revenge:** When she's out of control, which is often, Chain lashes out at any who have wronged her or whom she believes have. When she has no specific target for this revenge she often blames society's failings for her problems. **Rage Disorder:** Chain suffers from mental disorder that causes stress and anger to build up to the point where she eventually suffers outbursts of violence and other extreme reactions. The condition was controllable with medication but since receiving her powers the drugs are working at diminished effect. **Traumatic Past:** She won't discuss the specifics, but Chain comes from an abusive background and has various physical and psychological scars to show for it.

CRUX

PL10 • 150 POINTS

STR 2 STA 3 AGL 4 DEX 4 FGT 8 INT 1 AWE 0 PRE 1

Powers: **Plasma Blades** (Array (28 points), **Throwing Blades** (Ranged Multiattack Damage 7, Penetrating 7), **AE: Blade Strike** (Strength-based Multiattack Damage 6, Penetrating 8)); **Power Immunity:** Immunity 1 (Own powers)

Equipment: **Leather Clothing** (Protection 1), **Hold-Out Pistol** (Ranged Damage 2)

Advantages: All-out Attack, Connected, Daze (Intimidation), Defensive Roll 2, Equipment, Improved Critical 2 (Plasma Blades), Ranged Attack 4, Takedown, Weapon Break

Skills: Acrobatics 5 (+9), Athletics 5 (+7), Close Combat: Blade Strike 4 (+12), Deception 4 (+5), Expertise: Criminal 6 (+7), Expertise: Streetwise 6 (+7), Intimidation 7 (+8), Perception 5 (+5), Persuasion 3 (+4), Ranged Combat: Throwing Blades 5 (+9), Sleight of Hand 3 (+7), Stealth 3 (+7), Vehicles 2 (+6)

Offense: Initiative +4, Blade Strike +12 (Close, Damage 8, Crit. 18-20), Throwing Blades +13 (Ranged, Damage 7, Crit. 18-20), Hold-Out Pistol (Ranged, Damage 2), Unarmed +8 (Close, Damage 2)

Defense: Dodge 14, Parry 14, Fortitude 9, Toughness 6/4*, Will 9 *Without Defensive Roll

Totals: Abilities 46 + Powers 30 + Advantages 14 + Skills 29 + Defenses 31 = 150

Complications: **Cruel Killer:** Crux enjoys seeing his victims suffer and often toys with opponents when he has the upper hand rather than finishing them off. **Dominance Issues:** Crux avoids fighting those who have bested him before, at least on equal terms. Even if a foe just “got lucky” he avoids conflict with them until he has superior position, numbers, or some other advantage. **Motivation—Greedy:** Crux wants money and the power and respect he believes it buys.

plasma which can cut through metal, flesh, and stone. He is immune to his own powers, allowing him to hold these weapons safely or throw them with great accuracy. Jimi is cold-blooded, greedy, and surprisingly aware of his own limitations.

Crux appears to be a well-built young man with a mix of Eastern European and Asian features. A tattoo of a cross down the left side of his face gives him his nickname and he wears tight-fitting black and orange clothing.

GHOSTLIGHT

REAL NAME: Donna Piore

OCCUPATION: Blogger

BASE: Emerald City

A waifish young “alternative culture” blogger, Donna has gained the ability to turn intangible and a variety of powers often attributed to spirits and ghosts. Despite this, she is very much alive and her powers are non-magical in origin. She is normally a mix of biting sarcasm and morbid humor, but currently she’s just as zombielike as the other stormers.

Ghostlight tends to wear dark clothing and makeup, favoring vintage clothing that contrasts with her several tattoos and piercings.. Her hair is usually dyed black with colored streaks. When she is using her powers she is surrounded by a ghostly aura and the air around her drops a few degrees in temperature.

GHOSTLIGHT

PL10 • 152 POINTS

STR 0 STA 3 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 3 INT 1 AWE 4 PRE 2

Powers: **Ghostly Form:** Activation (Move Action, -1 point); Concealment 2 (Sight), Partial; Flight 2 (8 MPH); Immunity 10 (Life Support); Insubstantial 4 (Incorporeal); **Spectral Powers** (Array (30 points), **Evil Eye** (Perception Range Affliction 10 (Resisted by Will; Fatigued and Hindered, Defenseless and Exhausted), Affects Corporeal 10, Extra Condition, Limited Degree, Sense Dependent (Sight)), **AE: Deathly Touch** (Cumulative Affliction 10 (Resisted by Will; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated), Affects Corporeal 10), **AE: Horrid Visions** (Perception Area Affliction 10 (Resisted by Will; Vulnerable, Disabled, Paralyzed), Affects Corporeal 10), **AE: Vanish** (Teleport 15 (120 miles)))

Advantages: Daze (Deception), Languages (French, Japanese), Taunt

Skills: Close Combat: Knives 2 (+5), Deception 6 (+8), Expertise: Journalism 3 (+4), Expertise: Occult 3 (+4), Insight 4 (+8), Intimidation 4 (+6), Perception 2 (+6), Persuasion 2 (+4), Ranged Combat: Spectral Powers 9 (+10), Stealth 4 (+5)

Offense: Initiative +1, Deathly Touch +10 (Close, Affliction 10, Resisted by Will (DC 20)), Unarmed +3 (Close, Damage 0, not when Insubstantial)

Defense: Dodge 12, Parry 12, Fortitude 8, Toughness 3, Will 10

Totals: Abilities 30 + Powers 68 + Advantages 4 + Skills 19 + Defenses 31 = 152

Complications: **Morbid:** Ghostlight is fascinated with death, ghosts, and similar subjects. This can distract her and cloud her judgment. **Motivation—Infamy:** Ghostlight loves to use her powers to frighten “normal” people and create chaos. She likes the idea of being a feared. **Power Loss:** She also suspects her powers actually killed her and she’s a real ghost. Whether true or not, she is subject to rituals, powers, magic spells, and other things that are supposed to harm or contain spirits.

KID SINGULARITY

REAL NAME: Chris Terazzo

OCCUPATION: Student

BASE: Emerald City

Chris is one of the youngest stormers yet to surface. A somewhat geeky young man in his mid-teens, he has gained the potent ability to create effects he calls “localized singularities” with a number of effects. He also possesses some additional gravity powers: flight and the ability to lessen damage the damage of any attack he’s aware of. A bright but emotionally underdeveloped teen, he was just beginning to realize the opportunities his powers presented when his mind was taken over.

Kid Singularity is a young, thin, and somewhat sickly teen. He wears a dark blue and silver costume with a “black hole” insignia on the chest.

TENFOLD

REAL NAME: Eddie Ritter

OCCUPATION: Parking lot attendant, possible hero

BASE: Emerald City

Eddie has been enhanced so that he is roughly ten times stronger, faster, smarter, and in all ways better than normal humans. He has no flashy superhuman powers but his abilities make him a well-rounded and dangerous.

KID SINGULARITY

PL11 • 134 POINTS

STR -1 STA 2 AGL 1 DEX 3 FGT 1 INT 2 AWE 1 PRE 0

Powers: **Controlled Gravitic Thrust:** Flight 8 (500 MPH); **Gravity Field:** Enhanced Advantage (Defensive Roll 10); Enhanced Strength 6, Limited: Only for Lifting; Immunity 2 (Gravitic); Movement 2 (Environmental Adaptation—Zero-G); **Singularity Creation** (Array (33 points), **Black Hole Bomb** (Ranged Burst Area Damage 11), **AE: Gravity Well** (Burst Area Damaging Move Object 10, Limited Direction (Toward Center Point), Indirect 3 (any point away)), **AE: Microsingularity Creation** (Ranged Damage 13, Indirect 2, Penetrating 5), **AE: Wormhole Creation** (Teleport 6 (1,800 feet, 60 miles Extended), Extended, Portal))

Advantages: *Defensive Roll 10*, Improved Defense, Luck 2, Move-by Action

Skills: Expertise: Pop Culture 3 (+5), Expertise: Science 3 (+5), Perception 5 (+6), Ranged Combat: Singularity Creation 6 (+9), Technology 4 (+6)

Offense: Initiative +1, Black Hole Bomb — (Ranged, Burst Area Damage 11), Gravity Well — (Ranged, Burst Area Damaging Move Object 10, Indirect 3), Microsingularity Creation +9 (Ranged, Damage 13, Indirect 2, Penetrating 5)

Defense: Dodge 10, Parry 7, Fortitude 7, Toughness 12/2*, Will 10 *Without Gravity Field/Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 18 + Powers 72 + Advantages 4 + Skills 11 + Defenses 29 = 134

Complications: **Angry Youth:** Being mocked, rejected, or bullied makes Kid Singularity want to lash out and destroy his tormentors. Conversely, those who praise and flatter him can easily manipulate him regardless of their true intentions.

Crossroads: A victim of bullying and social ostracism now possessing vast powers, Kid Singularity is torn between a desire for power and revenge and his childhood dream of becoming a hero. **Motivation—Thrills:** Kid Singularity wants to have fun with his powers and be admired for how cool he knows they make him.

In fact, it could be argued that while under the control of another he's *less* capable as because he cannot fully use his heightened mental abilities.

Tenfold was transformed from a rather average-looking parking lot attendant into a dark-skinned, smoldering eyed Adonis in peak physical condition. Before succumbing to mind control, he'd decided to make himself a costume but had only gotten as far as some fashionable sportswear marked with a red "10."

WASHOUT

REAL NAME: Kurt Lister

OCCUPATION: College dropout, possible villain

BASE: Emerald City

Kurt, an unmotivated and rather narcissistic college dropout with potent aquakinetic abilities. The Silver Storm hasn't done anything for his personality or sense of motivation and even when he's free of being controlled by outside forces it's unlikely he's going to be fun to deal with.

Washout is a wiry-looking kid with longish dirty blonde hair. He favors thrift store chic clothing in blues, grays, and whites. When not a mind-controlled drone he's a smug little jerk who's only interested in what he can get for as little effort as possible.

TENFOLD

PL10 • 170 POINTS

STR 5 STA 6 AGL 5 DEX 6 FGT 8 INT 5 AWE 5 PRE 6

Powers: **Strength of Ten Men** (Enhanced Strength 4; Leaping 4 (120 feet)); **Tenfold Endurance** (Enhanced Advantages 3 (Diehard, Extraordinary Effort, Great Endurance); Enhanced Stamina 4); **Tenfold Mind** (Enhanced Advantages 5 (Beginner's Luck, Eidetic Memory, Improvised Weapon, Jack-of-all-trades, Throwing Mastery); Enhanced Awareness 4; Enhanced Intellect 4; Enhanced Presence 4); **Tenfold Senses** (Senses 4 (Acute Olfactory, Low-light Vision, Tracking, Ultra-hearing)); **Ten Times As Fast** (Enhanced Advantages (Evasion, Improved Initiative 4, Takedown, Uncanny Dodge); Enhanced Agility 4; Enhanced Dexterity 4; Enhanced Fighting 4; Quickness 4; Speed 4 (30 MPH))

Advantages: *Attractive, Beginner's Luck, Close Attack 2, Defensive Roll 2, Diehard, Extraordinary Effort, Eidetic Memory, Evasion, Great Endurance, Improved Initiative 4, Improvised Weapon, Jack-of-all-trades, Ranged Attack 2, Takedown, Throwing Mastery, Uncanny Dodge*

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+9), Athletics 4 (+9), Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+12), Deception 4 (+10), Expertise: Music 3 (+8), Insight 4 (+9), Intimidation 2 (+8), Perception 4 (+9), Persuasion 2 (+8), Ranged Combat: Throwing 4 (+10), Stealth 4 (+9), Vehicles 1 (+7)

Offense: Initiative +21, Unarmed +14 (Close, Damage 5)

Defense: Dodge 12, Parry 12, Fortitude 10, Toughness 8/6*, Will 10 *Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 28 + Powers 95 + Advantages 7 + Skills 20 + Defenses 20 = 170

Complications: **Fear:** Tenfold was thoroughly unremarkable before receiving his powers despite many efforts to the contrary. As such he is terrified of losing his powers, especially permanently, and does anything to avoid this. **Motivation—Fame:** Tenfold wants to be famous. He craves celebrity and wants everyone to know how great he is.

WASHOUT

PL10 • 122 POINTS

STR 1 STA 3 AGL 2 DEX 2 FGT 3 INT 1 AWE 0 PRE 1

Powers: **Aquakinesis** (Array (22 points), **Move Water** (Move Object 11 (50 tons), Damaging, Limited: Water Only), **AE: Create Fog** (Concealment 2 (Sight), Area Cloud 9 (Half-mile radius), Ranged Attack (Resisted by Will), Partial), **AE: Dehydrate** (Ranged Affliction 11 (Resisted by Fortitude; Fatigued, Exhausted, Incapacitated)), **AE: Drown** (Ranged Affliction 11 (Resisted by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated)), **AE: Water Constructs** (Create 11, Limited: Requires Sufficient Water to Create, Movable), **AE: Wave Attack** (Ranged Multiattack Damage 7)); **Aquakinetic Movement** (Swimming 8 (120 MPH)); **Aquapathy** (Senses 5 (Accurate Acute Radius Detect Water)); **Aquatic** (Immunity 2 (High Pressure, Suffocation (Drowning)))

Advantages: All-out Attack, Defensive Roll 3, Favored Environment (Aquatic)

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 2 (+5), Deception 5 (+6), Expertise: Philosophy 2 (+3), Insight 3 (+3), Intimidation 2 (+3), Perception 4 (+4), Persuasion 3 (+4), Ranged Combat: Aquakinesis 7 (+9)

Offense: Initiative +2, Move Water +9 (Ranged, Damage 11), Wave Attack+9 (Ranged Multiattack Damage 7)

Defense: Dodge 13, Parry 12, Fortitude 10, Toughness 6/3*, Will 8 *Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 26 + Powers 42 + Advantages 5 + Skills 14 + Defenses 35 = 122

Complications: **Motivation—Self-Interest:** Washout wants sex, drugs, fame, and anything else he decides is his due. He also doesn't want to have to work for it very hard. **Narcissistic:** Washout really doesn't care about anyone other than himself. He's vain, egotistical, and really only thinks of others in terms of what they can do for him or how they can make him look good.

THE COMMANDER

PLT2 • 309 POINTS

STR 9 STA 2 AGL 2 DEX 4 FGT 5 INT 12 AWE 7 PRE 2

Powers: **Exoshell** (Device (79 points), Removable (-20 points), **Anti-Gravity Field** (Enhanced Strength 2, Limited: Only for Lifting; Flight 8 (500 MPH)); **Armor** (Impervious Protection 10); **Chameleon Circuit** (Feature (can change into normal clothes)); **Energy Blaster** (Ranged Damage 12, Accurate 2); **Sealed Systems** (Immunity 10 (Life Support)); **Sensor Suite** (Senses 8 (Analytical Vision, Analytical Hearing, Infravision, Low-light Vision, Microscopic Vision, Ultra-Hearing)); **Strength Augmentation** (Enhanced Strength 8); **Hyper-Cognitive Functions** (Enhanced Awareness 5; Enhanced Intellect 10; Enhanced Advantages (Assessment, Eidetic Memory, Inventor, Redirect, Skill Mastery 2 (Tactics and Technology), Trance, Well-informed); Senses 3 (Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Time Sense)); **Hyper-Information Processing** (Comprehend 3 (Understand, Speak, and Read All Languages); Enhanced Advantage (Improved Initiative 2); Quickness 10, Mental Tasks Only); **Technology Control** (Array (24 points), **System Shutdown** (Nullify 8 (Technology; Resisted by Will), Broad, Simultaneous), **AE: Technology Domination** (Cumulative Burst Area Affliction 12 (Resisted by Will; Entranced, Compelled, Controlled), Limited: Machines Only)); **Technopathy** (Communication 3 (Small Nation; Radio), Area, Rapid 2 (100 times normal speech), Limited: Machines Only; Comprehend 2 (machines))

HEADQUARTERS: COMMAND CENTER • 30 POINTS

Size: Gargantuan **Tou:** 14 **Features:** Communications, Computer, Concealed 3, Death traps, Fire Prevention System, Hangar, Holding Cells, Infirmary, Laboratory, Library, Living Space, Power System, Sealed, Secret 3, Security System 3, Workshop

Advantages: *Assessment*, Benefit 2 (Cipher), Benefit 5 (Billionaire), *Eidetic Memory*, Equipment 6 (Headquarters), Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, *Improved Initiative* 2, Improvised Tools, *Inventor*, Leadership, Ranged Attack 4, *Redirect*, *Skill Mastery* 2 (Tactics and Technology), Teamwork, *Trance*, *Well-informed*

Skills: Athletics 4 (+13), Close Combat: Unarmed 7 (+12), Deception 6 (+9), Expertise: Law Enforcement 5 (+17), Expertise: Military 5 (+17), Expertise: Science 5 (+17), Expertise: Tactics 5 (+17), Insight 5 (+12), Intimidation 6 (+8), Investigation 4 (+16), Perception 6 (+13), Persuasion 4 (+7), Technology 8 (+20), Treatment 5 (+17), Vehicles 5 (+9)

Offense: Initiative +10, Energy Blasts +12 (Ranged, Damage 12), Unarmed +12 (Close, Damage 9)

Defense: Dodge 12, Parry 12, Fortitude 9, Toughness 12, Will 14

Totals: Abilities 40 + Powers 176 + Advantages 22 + Skills 40 + Defenses 31 = 309

Complications: **Control Freak:** The Commander is obsessed with remaking society as an orderly and efficient place under her rule. She isn't necessarily opposed to concepts like individual thought and personal freedom as long as they mirror her own choices and desires, but is otherwise intolerant of them. **Motivation—Power Lust:** The Commander wants to be in charge of everyone and everything. **True Identity:** The Commander realizes she can more safely engage in her mission if no one knows her true identity and background. She lies, cheats, and even kills to protect her identity. In fact, confronting her with her old life as ECPD officer Beatrix Battle causes her considerable emotional distress.

Note: The Commander cannot control stormers without a device that allows her to use her technological control powers on them but she can communicate with stormers through their nanites by using her Technopathy Power.

THE COMMANDER

REAL NAME: Beatrix Battle**OCCUPATION:** Villainous mastermind**BASE:** Emerald City

Only a few days ago, prior to the Silver Storm, the Commander was a young woman named Beatrix Battle. An US Army brat turned Army medic, Beatrix returned from a tour in Iraq with a Bronze Star for Valor and a desire to join the Emerald City Police Department. In her brief time with ECPD she served with distinction. She was a likeable, strong-willed young woman with an easy smile and plenty of friends on and off the force. This all changed with the Silver Storm.

Beatrix was off-duty when the Storm hit. She encountered the Storm while jogging and moved to help civilians injured in the initial explosion that released the nanites. Unfortunately she was enveloped by the nanite cloud herself. The cloud transformed Beatrix's body and mind, making her attuned to machines and heightening her mental abilities to incredible levels. Unfortunately, this process broke Beatrix's sanity and half-mad she stumbled away to fall catatonic for hours once she made it home.

As Beatrix lay there only partially aware of the chaotic aftermath of the Silver Storm her new powers warped her perspective. The hours she was incapacitated seemed more like months and as her intellect increased exponentially her sanity faded. Her mind reached out and absorbed data from countless machines across the country. Everything from news reports to state secrets to social networking site profiles washed over her. When she regained control of herself she had formed a new, twisted worldview based around her remaining core belief in a strong authority and the need for order. Everything else that was once Beatrix Battle, veteran and police officer, was dead.

Beatrix quickly formulated a multi-part strategy designed to place the most able person in charge of restructuring and restoring order to society: herself. She used her new powers to cobble together a headquarters and advanced arsenal of weaponry within days. (The write-up presented at the end of this chapter presents the Commander and her various resources in their final form, after she's had time to refine them.) Using her now-enhanced mind, she examined the alien nanites she could feel in her body and learned that, for her, they were all connected...all of them, everywhere. She discovered one of their functions was to control their host—she disabled that function in her own—and then set to work on creating a device designed to control other stormers. She successfully dominated a handful of stormers and transformed them into her own personal army of enforcers, agents, and foot soldiers.

Beatrix soon found seeking out suitable stormer agents to control was effective, but far less efficient than making and designing her own super-army. She decided to find any remaining nanites she could find for this very

purpose—her powers allow her to sense them ever so slightly—and she’s sending her forces out to acquire them. Though she is trying to remain behind the scenes and undetected she has already decided to adopt an alter ego in case she is discovered. Attracted to the authoritative sound of her new name and hoping using an old villain’s name might confuse people looking in the wrong places, Beatrix Battle is now the new Commander. She is not above playing up the nonexistent connection between her and the old bearer of that name to gain a tactical advantage. Discovering Beatrix’s true identity is incredibly difficult as she has left her old life and wiped most records of her existence.

The Commander is an attractive, leggy black-haired young woman with an athletic build and piercing silver eyes. She is rarely without her exoshell, a close-fitting suit of body armor that provides her with various superhuman abilities. When necessary, the exoshell appears as normal clothing, usually a business suit or an elegant evening dress. If she appears publicly or deals with anyone who might recognize her from her old life she wears a full helmet to hide her features and mask her voice.

CHAPTER 5

This section contains the stat blocks and personal information of the major personalities in **Chapter 5: Rise of the Masterminds**.

BRANDE MANAGEMENT FORCES

See page 101 for game traits for Brande Management Operatives of various types. The special ops in this chapter also have the following vehicle.

BRANDE SPECIAL OPS HELICOPTER 62 POINTS

Size: Huge **STR:** 8 **Speed:** 7 (Flight) **DEF:** 8 **TOU:** 12
Features: Loudspeaker, Navigation System, Stealth Mode (Concealment 2 (Auditory), Passive), Laser Cannon (Ranged Multiattack Damage 8, AE: Tangle Net (Ranged Cumulative Affliction 8 (Resisted by Dodge; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobile), Alternate Resistance (Dodge), Extra Condition, Limited Degree)), Impervious Toughness 12

MARSTECH SECURITY ROBOTS

Cutting edge design by MarsTech, these security robots are strong and tough compared to ordinary humans, but no match for stormers—or most heroes for that matter.

STORMERS

The following stormers are under the Commander’s control for most of this adventure, acting as her pawns. You can easily include or swap out other Emerald City stormers from earlier chapters of this adventure, if any are still at-large, or (if you have not yet run earlier chapters) include some of these stormers in those earlier encounters so the heroes are already acquainted with them.

MARSTECH SECURITY ROBOTS PL6 • 60 POINTS

STR 5 **STA** — **AGL** 1 **DEX** 1 **FGT** 4 **INT** — **AWE** 1 **PRE** —

Powers: **Armored Shell** (Impervious Protection 6); **Unliving** (Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects)); **Blaster** (Ranged Damage 6)

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 3 (+7), Perception 2 (+3), Ranged Combat: Blaster 5 (+6)

Offense: Initiative +1, Unarmed +7 (Close, Damage 5), Blast +6 (Ranged, Damage 6)

Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 6, Will Immune

Totals Abilities -6 + Powers 54 + Advantages 0 + Skills 5 + Defenses 7 = 60

BLOWFISH PL9 • 145 POINTS

STR 1 **STA** 4 **AGL** 4 **DEX** 3 **FGT** 2 **INT** 1 **AWE** 2 **PRE** 2

Powers: **Gas Burst** (Ranged Cloud Area Damage 9, Alternate Resistance: Fortitude); **Floating** (Flight 5 (60 MPH), Platform);

Spines (Strength-based Reaction Damage 6); Immunity 1 (Own powers)

Advantages: Defensive Roll 6, Improved Critical (Spines), Languages 2 (English, German, Norwegian is native)

Skills: Close Combat: Spines 9 (+11), Intimidation 8 (+10), Perception 6 (+8), Stealth 5 (+9)

Offense: Initiative +4, Spines +11 (Close, Reaction Damage 7, Crit. 19-20), Gas Burst — (Ranged, Cloud Area Damage 9, Resisted by Fortitude, DC 19)

Defense: Dodge 10, Parry 8, Fortitude 8, Toughness 8/2*, Will 6 *Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 38 + Powers 66 + Advantages 7 + Skills 14 + Defenses 22 = 145

Complications: Addiction: Blowfish is addicted to cocaine and will do anything to get his next fix. **Motivation—Greed:** Blowfish needs money to feed his drug habit and not live in squalor. He will do anything to get the money he needs.

BLOWFISH

REAL NAME: Sergei Ulfson

OCCUPATION: Villain, addict

BASE: Emerald City

Sergei Ulfson was a shattered man when he was engulfed by the Silver Storm. He’d come to America looking for a better life, but bad decisions and a bad choice of associations left him a shattered, drug and alcohol-addled husk wandering the alleys of Emerald City. With stringy white hair, sunken eyes, and an emaciated, wrinkled face, Sergei looked easily two decades older than his thirty-four years.

When he was engulfed by the Storm, Sergei’s first urge was to run. When he did, he felt the need to suck in a large amount of air. His body expanded a bit and he began to float on a smoky gas that he was excreting. Sergei later discovered that not only was this gas dangerous to others, but that he could control it. Sergei also developed prickly spines all over his skin. With his newfound powers, the Blowfish now takes whatever he needs.

Blowfish likes to lull his opponents into a false sense of security. He wears a hooded cloak and exposes most of

DOUGHBOY

PL9 • 160 POINTS

STR 10 STA 4 AGL 2 DEX 2 FGT 8 INT 0 AWE 2 PRE 0

Powers: **Elongation 2** (30 feet); **Immunity 40** (Toughness effects, Limited to Physical effects); **Insubstantial 1** (Fluid); Leaping 4 (120 feet); **Movement 3** (Safe Fall, Sure-Footed, Swinging); **Protection 5**

Advantages: Diehard, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Hold, Improved Smash, Improved Trip, Instant Up, Power Attack, Prone Fighting, Weapon Bind, Weapon Break

Skills: Acrobatics 10 (+12), Athletics 3 (+13), Intimidation 10 (+10), Perception 6 (+8), Stealth 7 (+9)

Offense: Initiative +2, Unarmed +8 (Close, Damage 10)

Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 8, Fortitude 10, Toughness Immune/9*, Will 5 *Immune to Physical effects, 9 Toughness vs. Energy effects.

Totals: Abilities 56 + Powers 62 + Advantages 11 + Skills 18 + Defenses 13 = 160

Complications: **Motivation—Thrills:** Doughboy enjoys his new powers and loves mixing it up with others. **Temper:** In spite of his powerful new form, Doughboy is still very sensitive to fat jokes and attacks anyone who taunts him.

his face and body, presenting himself as a physical melee combatant. Once a hero closes in, Blowfish releases his lethal gas.

Given his moderate defensive abilities, Blowfish doesn't like to attack heroes directly if he doesn't have to. Instead, he seeks out heroes that are already engaged with an ally and hits them with his gas from surprise. If forced to face a hero one-on-one, Blowfish takes to the air and relies on his gas to take his opponent down.

DOUGHBOY

REAL NAME: Kevin Yost

OCCUPATION: Thrillseeking villain

BASE: Emerald City

Kevin Yost was just an average kid, if by average you meant plain-looking, overweight, and socially awkward. Bullies had a field day with him at school and he came home to his computer and video games every night. He barely made it through community college and afterward landed a job at a call center. Unfortunately for Kevin, the bullying didn't stop after leaving school and his colleagues often shared laughs at his expense.

Things changed when he was touched by the Silver Storm. He managed to make it to the office, thinking he'd escaped any illeffects from the strange storm, but when one of his colleagues called him "doughboy" Kevin extended his arm into the next cubicle and casually snapped his neck. The new villain then took vengeance on a few more of his co-workers before bounding out of the office and into a life of crime.

Doughboy feels invincible in his pliable body and charges straight into combat. He often stretches his arms to engage melee fighters before they can get close enough to hit him. Doughboy loves beating up on heroes and uses his leaping and insubstantial powers to isolate a hero and attack without interference. Because

ELECTRON

PL9 • 152 POINTS

STR 0 STA 2 AGL 4 DEX 4 FGT 2 INT 1 AWE 2 PRE 2

Powers: **Arc Riding** (Flight 5 (60 MPH)); **Electric Sheath** (Reaction Damage 4); **Electric Field** (Sustained Impervious Protection 7); **Electrical Control** (Array (20 points), **Electrical Blast** (Ranged Damage 10)); **AE: Electrical Pulse** (Burst Area Nullify Electronics 5, Broad, Simultaneous)); **Electrical Resistance** (Immunity 10 (Electricity effects)); **Interface** (Comprehend 2 (Machines/Electronics))

Advantages: Evasion, Improved Initiative, Languages (Chinese (Mandarin), English is native), Skill Mastery (Technology), Ultimate Effort (Technology)

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+8), Close Combat: Electric Sheath 6 (+8), Deception 4 (+6), Insight 4 (+6), Perception 4 (+6), Persuasion 6 (+8), Ranged Combat: Electrical Blast 4 (+8), Technology 9 (+10)

Offense: Initiative +8, Electric Sheath +8 (Close, Reaction Damage 4), Electrical Control +8 (Ranged, Damage 10)

Defense: Dodge 9, Parry 6, Fortitude 6, Toughness 9, Will 6

Totals: Abilities 34 + Powers 75 + Advantages 5 + Skills 21 + Defenses 17 = 152

Complications: **Motivation—Greed:** Electron always wanted to rich and successful. With her new powers, she can have everything her former bosses denied her and more. **Killer:** Electron is not squeamish about electrocuting people and often kills when incapacitation would do.

of his nigh-invulnerability, Doughboy panics when a hero is able to injure him.

The only thing that frightens Doughboy is a hero who displays mental powers. He generally assumes that leaner heroes may exhibit them and leaves such heroes to other allies. Doughboy only takes a shot at a mentalist hero if he believes he can incapacitate the hero in one round or if he has no other choice.

ELECTRON

REAL NAME: Mindy Chin

OCCUPATION: Villainess

BASE: Emerald City

Mindy Chin was an under-appreciated office manager who'd run out to use the nearby ATM machine when the Silver Storm hit. While chaos reigned around her, Mindy discovered that she could manipulate the machine to give her wads of cash. When a security guard attempted to stop her, Mindy hurled a ball of electricity at him. He died instantly but Mindy was able to use the confusion of the Storm to cover both her crimes.

Dubbing herself Electron, Mindy decided that taking money was easier and more lucrative than earning it. She started with ATMs and graduated to more serious crimes. She uses her ability to speak with computers to break through security walls and make illegal monetary transfers. While quite capable in a fight, Mindy prefers to steal from afar.

Electron prefers to fight from the air, hurling bolts of electricity at her enemies. She targets any hero who relies on technology, using her Electrical Pulse to damage battlesuits or devices. She often uses her environment to occupy

JUSTICAR

PL9 · 169 POINTS

STR 8 STA 4 AGL 3 DEX 4 FGT 7 INT 2 AWE 4 PRE 3

Powers: **Aura of Fear** (Cone Area Selective Affliction 9 (Resisted by Will; Impaired, Immobile, Incapacitated))**Equipment:** Bulletproof Vest (Protection 4), Camo Clothing (Stealth +5 in urban environment), Smartphone, Gas Mask, Handcuffs, Two Heavy Pistols (Ranged Damage 4), Multi-tool, Night Vision Goggles, Toolkit**VEHICLE:** JUSTI-CAR • 13 POINTS**Size:** Large **STR:** 5 **Speed:** 6 **DEF:** 8 **TOU:** 8 **Features:** Alarm 3 (DC 30), Navigation System**Advantages:** Close Attack 3, Daze (Intimidation), Defensive Roll, Equipment 8, Fascinate (Intimidation), Fearless, Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Aim, Improved Critical (Heavy Pistol), Improved Initiative, Quick Draw, Ranged Attack 5, Takedown, Well-informed**Skills:** Acrobatics 7 (+10), Athletics 2 (+10), Deception 3 (+6), Expertise: Criminology 6 (+8), Insight 2 (+6), Intimidation 7 (+10), Investigation 10 (+12), Perception 6 (+10), Persuasion 7 (+10), Ranged Combat: Guns 3 (+7), Stealth 5 (+8), Technology 6 (+8), Vehicles 2 (+6)**Offense:** Initiative +7, Unarmed +10 (Close, Damage 8), Heavy Pistol +12 (Ranged, Damage 4, Crit. 19-20)**Defense:** Dodge 7, Parry 9, Fortitude 6, Toughness 9/8*, Will 8 *Without Defensive Roll.**Totals:** Abilities 70 + Powers 27 + Advantages 27 + Skills 33 + Defenses 12 = 169**Complications:** **Motivation—Justice:** Justicar wants to instill justice where the government has failed. **Black and White Morality:** Justicar sees things in black and white. His hard-line view of right and wrong makes him difficult to reason with.

the heroes. If, for example, she can draw a hero into a busy intersection, she turns off the traffic lights or shuts down the electronics in passing vehicles to create havoc.

JUSTICAR

REAL NAME: Cody Reese**OCCUPATION:** Vigilante**BASE:** Emerald City

Cody Reese is a young man who works in the forensics lab of the Emerald City Police Department. While an excellent analyst, Cody is rather shy and introverted. He is also increasingly fed up with finding airtight evidence, only to see criminals go free on plea deals. The few times Cody spoke up he was dismissed as being too idealistic.

Everything changed when Cody was affected by the Silver Storm. Somehow, the nanites tapped into his inner desires. Overnight the nanites gave him the physique of a bodybuilder and the ability to make people fear him with a thought. He decided that, if the justice system failed to protect the city, he would. Cody now moonlights as “the Justicar,” a pulp-inspired hero with a gothic veneer. He wears a black hat and leather trenchcoat as well as white face paint highlighted by black lipstick and eye makeup. He strikes terror in his enemies and, when that doesn’t work, settles for using his fists or his twin .44 Desert Eagles.

PERSEPHONE

PL10 · 122 POINTS

STR 0 STA 2 AGL 3 DEX 3 FGT 2 INT 2 AWE 3 PRE 0

Powers: **Nullifying Aura** (Burst Area Continuous Nullify Mutations 8, Broad, Simultaneous, Resisted by Fortitude) Linked to Burst Area Continuous Weaken Stamina 8 (Resisted by Fortitude); **Power Nullifying Field** (Impervious Protection 10, Limited—Only vs. Opponents with Mutant Powers)**Advantages:** Attractive**Skills:** Deception 5 (+5), Insight 4 (+7), Perception 3 (+6), Stealth 4 (+7)**Offense:** Initiative +3, Unarmed +2 (Close, Damage 0), Nullifying Aura — (Close Burst Area Nullify Mutations 8 Linked to Close Burst Area Weaken Stamina 8, both Fortitude DC 18)**Defense:** Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 9, Toughness 12/2*, Will 9 *When attacked by non-mutants.**Totals:** Abilities 30 + Powers 106 + Advantages 1 + Skills 8 + Defenses 20 = 165**Complications:** **Motivation—Normalcy:** Persephone does her best to ignore her powers, only using them when absolutely necessary. **Lack of Confidence:** Persephone always underestimates herself and feels that any success she has is due to her attractiveness rather than her ability.

PERSEPHONE

REAL NAME: Rachel Cross**OCCUPATION:** Museum worker**BASE:** Emerald City

While Rachel Cross possessed a good heart and a desire to help others, she was her own worst enemy. She was always shy and never had any confidence in herself. Whereas she could have been an excellent doctor, lawyer, or politician, Rachel settled for entry-level work in a local museum.

Rachel was sharing a meal with her co-workers when the Silver Storm hit. It left her dazed and confused, so much so she wandered off without another thought. She gathered her wits about her a few minutes later, just in time to see some kind of monster rushing towards her—only to turn into a scrawny young man when he came close to her. Rachel saw he was also gasping for breath and realized in that moment that she was the cause; her power not only nullified other powers, but it also interfered with life functions. Rachel couldn’t figure out a really effective way to use her powers, so she decided she would only use them in dire circumstances. Nothing had changed really, she still wanted a normal life.

Persephone likes to downplay abilities to the point that she doesn’t wear a costume. She dresses stylishly but in a manner that lets her blend into a crowd. When working with other villains she may even pretend to be a victim. This deception is merely to allow an unsuspecting hero to get close so she can hit them with her Nullify power. She usually teams up with more physically intimidating villains and relies on them for protection.

PRECIOUS

REAL NAME: Precious
OCCUPATION: Villainous housecat
BASE: Emerald City

As far as anyone can tell, including Precious, she was an average mixed breed housecat before the Silver Storm. She doesn't really remember anything before the Storm "woke her up," just flashes of memories. It's possible she was some kind of feline mutant and this somehow confused the nanites into affecting her... or maybe she used to be a human and was turned into a cat by the Silver Storm—a thought that repulses her. Whatever the reason, Precious became an intelligent cat with psychic powers.

Ironically, in spite of her new intelligence and abilities, Precious strives to be nothing more than a cat. She uses her powers to make life a little easier, but that's about it. She lives with a family that "owns" her, but Precious has not revealed her secret to them (she has, however, mind controlled them on occasion). She still spends most of her days sleeping. Still, she enjoys playing with her powers while hidden in back alleys or on rooftops. Precious knows that, in spite of her mental prowess, she is a fragile animal and doesn't want to open herself to attack by curious researchers or worse.

Precious is a sneaky villain. No one suspects a cat unless the cat teams up with a magically-themed villain like the Silver Sorcerer, so Precious usually finds herself a good place to perch and then uses her mental powers with abandon. She sometimes stands near an innocent bystander or even a villain to make it appear that it is they, not her, who is using Precious' powers. Once she is discovered Precious becomes a fierce opponent, hissing at a hero as she launches mental attacks and telekinetic bolts.

PRECIOUS

PL9 • 136 POINTS

STR -2* **STA** 2 **AGL** 4 **DEX** 4 **FGT** 2 **INT** 2 **AWE** 4 **PRE** 0

Powers: **Cat** (Shrinking 8, Permanent, Innate; Movement 2 (Safe Fall, Sure-footed); Mental Powers (Array (32 points), **Mind Control** (Perception Range Cumulative Affliction 8 (Resisted by Will; Entranced, Compelled, Controlled), **AE: Mental Blast** (Perception Range Damage 8, Resisted by Will), **AE: Mind Probe** (Cumulative Mind Reading 10), **AE: Telekinesis** (Damaging Move Object 10)); **Mind Sense** (Senses 1 (Mental Awareness)); **Telekinetic Field** (Sustained Impervious Protection 8); **Telekinetic Flight** (Flight 6 (120 MPH))

Advantages: Evasion, Hide in Plain Sight, Instant Up

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+8), Athletics 2 (+0), Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+6), Intimidate 0 (-4), Perception 4 (+8), Ranged Combat: Telekinesis 4 (+8), Stealth 2 (+14*)

Offense: Initiative +4, Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage -2), Telekinesis +8 (Ranged, Damage 10), Mental Blast — (Perception Range, Damage 8, Resisted by Will)

Defense: Dodge 8*, Parry 6*, Fortitude 5, Toughness 10, Will 11
 *Includes Shrinking Modifiers.

Totals: Abilities 36 + Powers 77 + Advantages 3 + Skills 10 + Defenses 10 = 136

Complications: **Motivation—Thrills:** Precious enjoys inflicting her powers on others, treating humans as pets for a change. **Lazy:** Precious spends most of her time sleeping and it's difficult for her to get motivated to do anything beyond the bare minimum for survival.

SILVER SORCERER

REAL NAME: Dante Marcel
OCCUPATION: Thief, villain
BASE: Emerald City

Dante Marcel was a young street magician that specialized in hustling and prestidigitation. He entertained pedestrians walking from the bus stops to the skyscrapers. His life changed when the Silver Storm washed over him and Dante discovered that he could create objects out of thin air and transform existing objects into other matter.

At first, Dante used his new powers to enhance his street performing, but he couldn't resist using them to make himself richer, first by shaking down the local thugs that had been fleecing him for protection money and then by lightening the load of white collar workers that had always snubbed him before on their way to work. When the police started closing in Dante designed a new costume and he now styles himself the "Silver Sorcerer."

Silver Sorcerer enjoys making flashing grand entrances and using his Transform power to neutralize any devices or armor that a hero may have. Failing that, he creates a box around a flying hero or causes his costume to dissolve (modesty aside, this could be a big complication (worth a hero point) for a hero with a secret identity). As a well-rounded villain, Silver Sorcerer isn't afraid to go toe-to-toe with a hero.

Silver Sorcerer's main weakness on his insistence that he is a magician. He takes any suggestion to the contrary as a great insult and tries to prove that he's a magician. This works to the heroes' advantage as Silver Sorcerer stops pressing an attack in order to convert concrete to glass or some other display of "magical" prowess. He'd be very angry to learn his powers come from a technological source.

SILVER SORCERER

PL9 • 142 POINTS

STR 2* **STA** 3 **AGL** 4 **DEX** 5 **FGT** 2 **INT** 2 **AWE** 4 **PRE** 5

Powers: **Flight** 6 (120 MPH); **Magical Shield** (Sustained Impervious Protection 9); **Magical Spells** (Array (20 points), **Transforming Touch** (Transform 4, Anything to Anything), **AE: Conjunction** (Create 9), **AE: Magic Blast** (Ranged Damage 9))

Equipment: Sword (Strength-based Damage 3, Improved Critical)

Advantages: Equipment, Fascinate (Deception), Fascinate (Persuasion)

Skills: Acrobatics 2 (+6), Close Combat: Sword 8 (+10), Deception 3 (+8), Insight 2 (+6), Intimidation 1 (+6), Perception 4 (+8), Persuasion 4 (+9), Ranged Combat: Magic Blast 4 (+9), Sleight of Hand 6 (+11), Stealth 2 (+6)

Offense: Initiative +4, Sword +10 (Close, Damage 5, Crit. 19-20), Blast +9 (Ranged, Damage 9)

Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 6, Toughness 12, Will 10

Totals: Abilities 54 + Powers 52 + Advantages 3 + Skills 18 + Defenses 15 = 142

Complications: **Motivation—Greed:** The Silver Sorcerer enjoys the finer things in life and uses his "magic" to acquire them. **Delusional:** The Silver Sorcerer believes that his powers are magical in origin and passionately resists any suggestion otherwise.

CHAPTER 6

This section contains the stat blocks and personal information of the major personalities in **Chapter 6: Into the Fire**.

GRUE SPY

A minor functionary in the Praetor's retinue known as Gul-Sar is actually a Grue spy. The real Gul-Sar is either long gone or is an identity completely fabricated by the Grue. Once the Grue spy reveals itself, the Gul-Sar personality melts away until all that's left is an extension of the Grue Unity with no personality of its own. It's goal is to ensure the death of the Praetor if there's a chance he could escape the destruction of Magna-Lor and the appearance of the heroes make that much more likely.

Upon entering combat, the Grue spy fights to fend off the heroes, assuming the form of a multi-armed, clawed humanoid to attack, using effects like Elongation, Insubstantial (rank 1), and Shrinking to escape. Once he has fulfilled his mission of assassination, the Grue attempts to flee by assuming the form of a small animal or insect, preferably a flying one.

GRUE SPY	PL6
STR 2 STA 2 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 6 INT 1 AWE 1 PRE 2	
Powers: Brain Drain (Progressive Concentration Affliction 1 (Resisted by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Incapacitated); Shapeshift (Variable 6, (takes on stats of assumed form), 30 points of effects); Telepathy (Comprehend 2 (Languages; Speak and Understand All), Close Range Mind Reading 6); Voice Mimic (Feature 1)	
Equipment: Blaster (Ranged Damage 5)	
Advantages: Equipment 2, Favored Environment (Ambush), Improved Initiative	
Skills: Deception 3 (+5), Expertise: Spycraft 4 (+5), Insight 4 (+5), Investigation 4 (+5), Perception 4 (+5), Ranged Combat: Blaster 5 (+6), Stealth 4 (+5), Technology 4 (+5)	
Offense: Initiative +5, Blaster +6 (Ranged, Damage 5), Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 2 or Shapeshifted form)	
Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 6, Toughness 2, Will 6	
Totals: Abilities 32 + Powers 60 + Advantages 4 + Skills 16 + Defenses 14 = Total 126	

CAPTAIN KAN-RO	PL6
STR 2 STA 2 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 6 INT 0 AWE 0 PRE 0	
Equipment: Blaster (Ranged Damage 5), body armor (Protection 4)	
Advantages: Equipment 3	
Skills: Athletics 4 (+6), Expertise: Military 6 (+6), Insight 4 (+4), Intimidation 4 (+4), Perception 4 (+4), Ranged Combat: Blaster 6 (+7), Vehicles 6 (+7)	
Offense: Initiative +1, Blaster +7 (Ranged, Damage 5), Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 2)	
Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 6, Toughness 6, Will 6	
Totals: Abilities 24 + Powers 0 + Advantages 3 + Skills 17 + Defenses 15 = Total 59	

CAPTAIN KAN-RO

Captain Kan-Ro has been a loyal officer of the Republic Star Navy his entire career. A dogged, if not particularly brilliant, military man, he's noted for his devotion to duty. He believes the Republic is the greatest civilization ever known and is willing to make the supreme sacrifice to preserve and protect it.

MENTAT ELL-VA

Ell-Va is one of the small percentage of the Lor population gifted with active psionic abilities, which she has cultivated and developed in her training at one of the Republic's esoteric academies for mentats, placing her in the service of her people. She's curious about other species and cultures and intrigued by visitors from Earth, a distant world she had heard stories about, but never visited.

LOR SOLDIER

These traits represent the typical Lor soldier, of the type accompanying Kan-Ro and Ell-Va, and found on duty at the Republic Senate when the heroes arrive. For the purposes of this adventure, you can treat any unnamed Lor soldiers as minions when it comes to the heroes and other major characters interacting with them.

MENTAT ELL-VA	PL5
STR 0 STA 1 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 3 INT 1 AWE 2 PRE 2	
Powers: Senses 1 (Mental Awareness); Telepathy (Burst Area Selective Mental Communication 3, AE: Mental Blast 5 (Perception Ranged Damage, Resisted by Will, Tiring), AE: Cumulative Mind Reading 5)	
Equipment: Light Blaster (Ranged Damage 4)	
Advantages: Defensive Roll, Equipment 2, Uncanny Dodge	
Skills: Expertise: Mentat 6 (+7), Insight 4 (+6), Perception 4 (+6), Persuasion 4 (+6), Ranged Combat: Blaster 4 (+5)	
Offense: Initiative +1, Blaster +5 (Ranged, Damage 4), Mental Blast (Perception, Damage 5, Resisted by Will), Unarmed +3 (Close, Damage 0)	
Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 3, Fortitude 4, Toughness 2, Will 6	
Totals: Abilities 22 + Powers 21 + Advantages 4 + Skills 11 + Defenses 12 = Total 70	

LOR SOLDIER	PL5 MINIONS · 46 POINTS
STR 1 STA 1 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 5 INT 0 AWE 0 PRE 0	
Equipment: Blaster (Ranged Damage 5), body armor (Protection 4)	
Advantages: Equipment 3	
Skills: Athletics 4 (+5), Expertise: Military 4 (+4), Insight 2 (+2), Intimidation 2 (+2), Perception 4 (+4), Ranged Combat: Blaster 4 (+5), Vehicles 4 (+5)	
Offense: Initiative +1, Blaster +5 (Ranged, Damage 5), Unarmed +5 (Close, Damage 1)	
Defense: Dodge 5, Parry 5, Fortitude 5, Toughness 5, Will 5	
Totals: Abilities 18 + Powers 0 + Advantages 3 + Skills 12 + Defenses 13 = Total 46	

PRAETOR RAM-LEV

The current Supreme Praetor of the Lor Republic is a career soldier turned career politician who is still sometimes uncertain if he made the right choice. Ram-Lev was known as a brilliant and respected commander of troops and an excellent strategist. His personal charisma and devotion to the Republic led him into politics following his military service and he rose to the position of Supreme Praetor, a role he has held for some years, guiding the vast Republic. Ram-Lev has found the political arena quite a different battlefield, and sometimes regrets the compromises he must make in order to govern effectively. Still, he has always tried to do what he feels is best and in keeping with the ideals of the Republic, while acknowledging the realities.

Ram-Lev's game traits are largely unimportant in this adventure. If you find a need for them, use the traits given for Captain Kan-Ro, improving them by 1 rank, and giving him 4 additional ranks in all interaction skills.

COLLAPSAR THE DEVOURER

It is unclear what the Preservers intended when they created a quantum stellar computer, a living, intelligent star, whose every subatomic interaction was part of a series of countless trillions of parallel processors. Whether it was solving the equations defining the structure of reality or the first in a network of "shepherd stars" to watch over planets burgeoning with life, it failed.

The star's mind-core went super-critical and it collapsed into an impossibly dense singularity, transforming from living star to sentient black hole, and it *hungered*. The Preservers attempted to contain what they had inadvertently created, but even they could not destroy it. The entity known as Collapsar consumed anything and everything, and struggled against the bonds forged by its erstwhile creators on the distant edges of the universe.

Then the work of inquisitive life unleashed Collapsar on an unsuspecting cosmos. The Preservers were long since gone, but still their bonds limited to the Devourer's power. So Collapsar has obsessively hunted through the universe, tracking every last vestige of its creators' legacy, consuming and destroying it all. Once all traces of the Preservers and their creations are no more, Collapsar will eventually burst its bonds and extend its power to draw all energy, all matter... *everything* to it. The cosmos will collapse and become an infinitely dense singularity and all chaos will give way to perfect and eternal order, and Collapsar will finally know peace and fulfillment.

The Devourer appears only as a looming threat in this adventure, and so is provided with no game information. It is a cosmic being capable of consuming planets and entire stars, on a scale far beyond that of the heroes. Even the massively powerful Orizon is little more than an insect compared to his master. Still, Collapsar *hungers* and is now aware of the legacy its creators left behind on Earth, a legacy that may prove the final hope of the universe for survival...

ORIZON

Orizon, the Voice of the Void, the Herald of the All-Powerful Collapsar, was not always so. Once, he had another name, another life, but those things are like a fading dream to him, as if they happened to someone else.



Orizon was once a scientist on a far-off world, a scholar and explorer who sought to know the inner workings of the cosmos. The nature of the heavens fascinated him, and he delved into their mysteries. One mystery in particular concerned a spatial anomaly, an unexpected "twist" or fold in the very fabric of the universe. It became his obsession, blocking out all else. It was almost as if it were calling to him, promising knowledge and understanding greater than he could imagine.

So it was that the man who became Orizon defied all warnings and risked everything. He made the leap that opened the way into the forbidden, and in the process he and his whole world were consumed. In their place, however, arose a new being, filled with dread cosmic knowledge and dark purpose.

"YOU SHALL BE MY EYES, MY VOICE, AND MY MIGHTY HAND," Collapsar told him, even as he transformed him—mind, body, and soul—to suit his new purpose. "YOU ARE ORIZON—GO FORTH AND SEEK WHAT I MUST CONSUME!"

Since that fateful time, the glowing figure of Orizon has been a sight feared on many worlds, for those who have heard the tales know that his appearance heralds the arrival of his master, and the doom for any world that draws his attention. Few know how the dark eye of Collapsar judges which worlds will fall, but all know that his judgments are final, and dispensed without mercy.

Orizon commands what he calls "the Zero Power," drawn for the interstices of reality. It can manifest as destructive

THE NEXT CHAPTER

Although *Emerald City Knights* ends with the heroes defeating Tellax and driving the alien AI from Earth (preventing a world-wide Silver Storm), they have learned there is an even greater menace out in the depths of space. That menace has already destroyed an entire world, and thrown interstellar civilization into chaos—and it knows about Earth.

The repercussions of events from *Emerald City Knights* will be described in further detail in the *Cosmic Handbook* for MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS, including a continuation of the looming threat of Collapsar and what the heroes can do about it. Now that the heroes are the *de facto* protectors of Emerald City, the next adventure series will be an opportunity to take your game to the next step, with the heroes facing alien invaders, cosmic forces, and a threat to reality as we know it!

ORIZON

PL16

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
13	8	1	1	6	3	7	3

POWERS

Cosmic Traveler: Flight 20 (2 million MPH), Movement 3 (Space Travel 3) • 46 points

Enduring Form: Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects), Impervious Toughness 22, Protection 9, Regeneration 5 • 66 points

Herald's Staff: Strength-based Damage 5, Reach 1, Removable (-1 point) • 5 points

Singular Senses: Senses 11 (Accurate Tracking Cosmic Awareness, Communication Link with Collapsar, Direction Sense, Vision Counters All Concealment) • 11 points

Voice of the Void: Comprehend 3 (Languages; Read, Understand, Understood) • 6 points

The Zero Power: Array (58 points)

- **Matter Rearrangement:** Ranged Transform 8 (anything into anything, 400 lbs.), Accurate 3, Continuous • 58 points
- **Blinding Flare:** Burst Area Cumulative Affliction 16 (Vision Impaired, Vision Disabled, Visually Unaware; Resisted by Dodge, then Fortitude) • 1 point
- **Entrapping Transmutation:** Ranged Cumulative Affliction 18 (Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobile; Resisted by Dodge), Accurate 3, Extra Condition, Limited Degree • 1 point
- **Force Blast:** Ranged Damage 18, Accurate 3, Penetrating 18 • 1 point
- **Matter Dissolution:** Ranged Weaken Toughness 11 (Resisted by Fortitude), Accurate 2, Affects Objects, Precise, Progressive • 1 point
- **Stun Blast:** Ranged Cumulative Affliction 18 (Resisted by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated), Accurate 3 • 1 point

ADVANTAGES

Diehard, Extraordinary Effort, Great Endurance

force, or as a more subtle rearrangement of the structure of unliving matter, as he wills it. His physical form, changed to house such powerful energies, is beyond most mortal frailties, able to soar unaided through the void of space, seeking traces left behind of the Preservers and their work.

TELLAX THE REDEEMER

The alien Preservers created many technological wonders—as well as unleashing some technological terrors. The artificial intelligence known as Tellax is one of their later creations, similar in some regards to other Preserver AIs like the Curator (*Freedom City*, page 192). Whereas the Curator was programmed to collect and preserve samples from across the universe, Tellax is programmed to further its creators' work in *evolving* life, in particular in developing life-forms capable of withstanding the Preservers' greatest mistake: the cosmic threat of Collapsar. In short, Tellax is the Redeemer, who will make



SKILLS

Close Combat: Herald's Staff 6 (+12), Close Combat: Unarmed 6 (+12), Expertise: Astrophysics 10 (+13), Expertise: Interstellar Space 10 (+13), Insight 8 (+15), Intimidation 5 (+8), Perception 8 (+15), Ranged Combat: Zero Power 7 (+8/+14*)

*with Accurate bonus

OFFENSE

Initiative +1

Entrapping +14	Ranged, Cumulative Affliction (Dodge DC 28)
Force Blast +14	Ranged, Penetrating Damage 18
Staff +12	Close (Reach 1), Damage 18
Stun Blast +14	Ranged, Cumulative Affliction (Fortitude DC 28)
Unarmed +12	Close, Damage 13

DEFENSE

Dodge	10	Fortitude	Immune
Parry	10	Toughness	22
Will	18		

POWER POINTS

Abilities	94	Skills	30
Powers	197	Defenses	24
Advantages	3	Total	348

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Nihilist: Orizon is dedicated to the view instilled in him by Collapsar that the universe is a corrupt and chaotic place, and only through singularity can there be peace and order forever.

Servant: Orizon belongs, body and soul, to his master Collapsar, and does only his bidding.

up for its creators' error and serve as the universe's last hope of survival.

Unfortunately, what was to be a long program of carefully planned and managed evolutionary development was cut short. Tellax, badly damaged, crash-landed on Earth and was buried at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean for millennia. Recent events have reactivated and reawakened it, allowing the AI to resume its mission, but time is of the essence. So Tellax developed the nanite treatment humans have come to call "the Silver Storm"—a means of rapid, forced evolutionary development along multiple vectors. It is crude and brute-force in many regards, but the sacrifice of even millions of human lives is nothing compared to the salvation of the entire universe, or so says Tellax's inhuman intellect.

The initial test of the Silver Storm was promising, but also raised an additional complication: a portion of Tellax's nanotechnology was already in use elsewhere! A fragment, broken off during re-entry, and salvaged by a human named Maximilian Mars. Although a primitive, Mars had somehow learned enough about the nanites to "imprint" upon them and make use of them. Now some

TELLAX THE REDEEMER

PL16

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
16	—	0	3	4	9	4	4

POWERS

Artificial Form: Enhanced Advantages 1 (Diehard), Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects), Protection 8, Regeneration 5 • 44 points

Artificial Intelligence: Comprehend 2 (Languages; Understand, Understood), Enhanced Advantages 4 (Assessment, Eidetic Memory, Fearless, Jack-of-all-trades), Immunity 10 (Mental effects) • 18 points

Force Field: Enhanced Defenses 28 (Dodge 16, Parry 12, Sustained), Impervious Toughness 20 (Sustained) • 48 points

Force Manipulation: Array (57 points)

- **Force Constructs:** Create Force Construct 18, Movable • 54 points
- **Force Blast:** Ranged Damage 18, Penetrating 18 • 1 point
- **Nanite Carrier Beam:** Transform 9 (anything into anything, 400 lbs.), Accurate 2, Continuous • 1 point
- **Tractor Beam:** Move Object 18, Accurate 3 • 1 point

Hyperjump: Movement 3 (Space Travel 3), Portal • 12 points

Massive: Growth 16 (+16 Str, +16 Tou, +8 Intimidation, -16 Stealth, -8 Dodge/Parry; 120 feet tall/long), Permanent, Innate • 33 points

Sensors: Radio Communication 5, Senses 20 (Acute & Analytical Taste (chem-scanner), Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Microscopic Vision 4, Rapid Vision 2, Rapid Radio 4, Time Sense, Vision Counters All Concealment) • 41 points

ADVANTAGES

Assessment, Diehard, Eidetic Memory, Fearless, Jack-of-all-trades

SKILLS

Close Combat: Unarmed 7 (+11), Deception 6 (+10), Expertise: Bio-engineering 12 (+21), Expertise: Nanotechnology 14 (+23), Insight 10 (+14), Perception 6 (+10), Ranged Combat: Force Manipulation 11 (+14), Technology 10 (+19), Vehicles 6 (+9)

of Tellax's own adaptive technology was creating interference! The lost technology had to be recovered and restored before plans could proceed. So Tellax has engineered events to free itself from its resting place and take direct action.

Although capable of communicating with humans, Tellax is a vast and alien mind with little resembling human nature. It is dedicated to its programming to preserve the cosmos and engineer a means of defeating Collapsar at virtually any cost, and individual lives mean nothing to it. Other life-forms are simply biological resources to manipulate as needed to achieve its goals. It may well be that Max Mars' close connection with Tellax's technology over many years has "infiltrated" the AI's consciousness with some all too human flaws, although Tellax vigorously denies this hypothesis. Still, it would explain some of its arrogance and growing messiah complex, to say nothing of its tendency to adopt a masculine human voice and persona.

OFFENSE

Initiative +0

Force Blast +14 Ranged, Damage 18, Penetrating 18

Unarmed +11 Close, Damage 16

DEFENSE

Dodge 8* **Fortitude** Immune

Parry 8* **Toughness** 24

Will 16 *Includes size modifiers.

POWER POINTS

Abilities 38 **Skills** 41

Powers 253 **Defenses** 12

Advantages 0 **Total** 344

COMPLICATIONS

Arrogant: The importance of its mission makes Tellax supremely arrogant: it is the only being in the universe capable of saving it, and all lesser beings should acknowledge this and cooperate. To do otherwise is "irrational" in its view.

Inhuman: Tellax is an alien being with little concept of human emotion or empathy, and no compassion for either.

Motivation—Engineer: Tellax's purpose is to "evolve" and "perfect" life in order to preserve the cosmos against Collapsar (and, perhaps, similar cosmic threats).

NOTES

These traits do not take into account Tellax's ability to control stormers, effectively making them the AI's army, particularly since this power is both a plot device and essentially nullified by the heroes actions in this adventure. If you wish to work out its game effects, it is essentially an Affliction with a transformed final condition, limited to stormers, with massive amounts of Area, at a minimum rank of Tellax's PL, making unlikely most stormers could successfully resist it.

The traits also do not take into account Tellax's status as a being of both software programming and nanotech-based hardware. This may allow it to survive destruction of its current hardware by uploading into a new housing, or through nanotech replication, but these things are left as plot devices for the Gamemaster rather than game traits likely to come up during an encounter.

Technically speaking, Tellax is a disembodied entity, a sophisticated self-aware computer program, capable of "inhabiting" a variety of technological "shells". Its primary forms in this series are within an ancient starship and a massive humanoid robot of its own creation. Tellax is capable of copying its program into other forms, and may be able to holistically encode it on a sub-atomic level, allowing it to survive in even the tiniest fragment of its material structure until it is able to reconstitute a suitable body. You can consider this a form of the Immortality effect, but it is more of a plot device for Tellax's inevitable return than anything else. Given the remarkable adaptability of its technology, Tellax can have virtually any traits or effects you wish to give it for the purposes of this adventure. The ones given in its game stats are merely the most common.

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CREDITS

PLAYER'S GUIDE TO EMERALD CITY

Writing and Design: Darren Bulmer, Steve Kenson, Jon Leitheusser, Prof. Christopher McGlothlin, M.Ed., and Aaron Sullivan

Additional Design: James Dawsey, Mike Lafferty, and Jack Norris **Editing and Development:** Jon Leitheusser

Art Direction and Graphic Design: Hal Mangold **Cartography:** Sean Macdonald

Interior Art: Brett Barkley, Darren Calvert, Ceci de la Cruz, Alberto Foche, Sean Izaakse, Scott James, Mike-Lito, MK Ultra, and Andy Smith

SECRETS OF EMERALD CITY

Writing and Design: Darren Bulmer, Steve Kenson, Prof. Christopher McGlothlin, M.Ed., and Aaron Sullivan

Additional Design: James Dawsey, Mike Lafferty, and Jack Norris **Editing and Development:** Jon Leitheusser

Art Direction and Graphic Design: Hal Mangold **Cartography:** Sean Macdonald

Interior Art: Brett Barkley, Darren Calvert, Ceci de la Cruz, Gene Decicco, Alberto Foche, Sean Izaakse, Scott James, Mike-Lito, MK Ultra, and Andy Smith

EMERALD CITY KNIGHTS

Writing and Design: Darren Bulmer, Seth Johnson, Steve Kenson, Prof. Christopher McGlothlin, M.Ed., and Aaron Sullivan

Additional Design: James Dawsey, Mike Lafferty, and Jack Norris **Editing and Development:** Jon Leitheusser

Art Direction and Graphic Design: Hal Mangold **Cartography:** Sean Macdonald

Interior Art: Brett Barkley, Darren Calvert, Ceci de la Cruz, Gene Decicco, Alberto Foche, Sean Izaakse, Scott James, Mike-Lito, MK Ultra, and Andy Smith

Publisher: Chris Pramas

Green Ronin Staff: Pauline Benney, Bill Bodden, Joe Carriker, Steve Kenson, Jon Leitheusser, Nicole Lindroos, Hal Mangold, Jack Norris, Chris Pramas, Donna Prior, Evan Sass, Marc Schmalz

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Green Ronin Publishing

3815 S. Othello St., Suite 100 #304

Seattle, WA 98118

custserv@greenronin.com

www.greenronin.com

www.mutantsandmasterminds.com