

COSMIC HANDBOOK



ADVENTURES IN THE
VASTNESS OF SPACE FOR
**MUTANTS &
MASTERMINDS**
THIRD EDITION

COSMIC HANDBOOK

WRITING AND DESIGN: JAMES DAWSEY, STEVE KENSON,
PROF. CHRISTOPHER MCGLOTHLIN, M.ED., AND JACK NORRIS

DEVELOPMENT: JON LEITHEUSSER **EDITING:** GLENN HALL

PROOFREADING: JAMES DAWSEY, GLENN HALL, NATHAN KAHLER, PROF. CHRISTOPHER MCGLOTHLIN,
M.ED., ADRIAN SMITH, AARON SULLIVAN, ALEXANDER THOMAS

GRAPHIC DESIGN & ART DIRECTION: HAL MANGOLD

INTERIOR ART: CHRIS BALASKAS, TAZIO BETTIN & ENRICA EREN ANGIOLINI, DARREN CALVERT,
STORN COOK, TALON DUNNING, ALBERTO FOCHE, TONY HARRIS, SEAN IZAAKSE, MIKE-LITO,
DOMENICO NEZITI, RAMON PEREZ, CRAIG TAILLIFER, AND ERIC WIGHT

PUBLISHER: CHRIS PRAMAS



Green Ronin Staff: Joe Carriker, Steve Kenson, Jon Leitheusser, Nicole Lindroos, Hal Mangold, Jack Norris,
Chris Pramas, Donna Prior, Evan Sass, Marc Schmalz, Owen K.C. Stephens, and Barry Wilson

Christopher McGlothlin's Dedication: To Tom & Mary Bierbaum, Keith Giffen, Julius Schwartz,
the savior Jesus Christ, and most of all, my wonderful wife Tanith.

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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

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INTRODUCTION

The *Cosmic Handbook* is a sourcebook for the MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS roleplaying game. It covers the some of the most popular and most powerful types of superhero stories... those dealing with space-faring adventure, aliens, primal entities, science fiction, and anything else falling into the vast cosmic realm. In the following pages the past, present, and future of the cosmos are laid bare so you can explore the galaxy, save entire alien races, face down planet eaters, and discover how important a lone human from Earth is in the battle for the soul of the universe!

Cosmic heroes uncover and put a stop to alien menaces, keeping not just a neighborhood, city, or country safe, but the entire planet. Often these battles play out across the sky for everyone to see and marvel at, while other times they're handled in secret, so as not to cause a panic. But no matter what, the forces unleashed during such conflicts typically go far beyond what terrestrial heroes are capable of handling. They keep the streets safe, you keep the planet safe. Scratch that. You keep the *planets* safe.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The *Cosmic Handbook* covers a lot of ground and can be used in a number of different ways. It provides information on the different types of cosmic series. From Earthlings caught up in something much larger than themselves (and really, larger than their planet) and thrust into intergalactic conflict to aliens who have taken a vow to protect life in the universe from threats from beyond the stars.

The ideas covered in this book can be used to run a cosmic series, or they can be used as inspiration for injecting some "cosmic energy" into the game you're already running. Gamemasters are free to change and adapt the material in this book as they see fit. After all, not every idea fits perfectly well into every series.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Beginning with the history of the cosmic superhero genre and working its way through information for GMs and players alike, the *Cosmic Handbook* includes archetypes and enemies, equipment and adventures, advice and examples, as well as ideas to fuel new characters and plot lines for your series.

Chapter 1: Infinity (& Beyond) is an overview of cosmic stories in superhero comics along with common storylines and genre tropes, perfect for GMs looking for inspiration. This chapter provides context for the rest of the book

while also diving into information on the challenges of surviving in space and dealing with cosmic entities wielding cosmic powers... even if that entity is your hero!

Chapter 2: Cosmic Heroes is all about creating characters, but the information is for players and Gamemasters alike. It includes tips and tricks for designing a cool and effective character no matter what sort of setting your series features. Also included is a discussion on the abilities, skills, advantages, equipment, and powers common to cosmic heroes, including rules options to adapt a few powers for use in a cosmic series. Finally, this chapter also features a number of character archetypes you can use as player characters or adapt as you see fit to create a custom hero.

Chapter 3: The Cosmic Series provides the Gamemaster with all the information needed to create compelling stories for space-faring heroes to interact with. This chapter includes sections covering themes central to cosmic series, including aliens, invasions, space travel, ancient mysteries, and more. It also gives the GM tips on starting their series and keeping it fresh over time. Lastly, there are villainous archetypes, including multiple options for using them, along with some typical alien races.

Chapter 4: The Freedom Cosmos looks at the Freedom City universe. The history of the universe is covered, including the impact of the Preservers, Earth's history with extraterrestrials, the other great alien empires, and how things have been changed by the re-emergence of Tellax the Redeemer and Collapsar, the destruction of Magnalor, the rise of the Stellar Imperium, and the appearance of new galactic organizations intent on their own goals. It also sets the stage for your new cosmic series by shaking up the *status quo* and giving GMs and players an exciting new universe to explore.

Chapter 5: Freedom City 2525 revisits the future of Freedom City first presented in the *M&M Annual*. The setting is the far future, when Freedom City is at the center of the peaceful Galactic Confederation. But even in the 26th century, there are threats to peace, justice, and freedom across the known galaxy. Fortunately, the Freedom Legion is there to face these threats and give your heroes a place to call home... among the stars!

Whether you and your group are looking to play in a modern-day series mainly set on Earth with frequent travel out amongst the stars, focus on a galaxy-spanning group of aliens finding a way to avoid imperial entanglements out in the universe, or assemble a team of young, enthusiastic heroes-of-the-future from across the cosmos to defend the people of the Confederation of Planets, the *Cosmic Handbook* has everything you need!

CHAPTER 1: INFINITY (& BEYOND...)



Outer space as a wide-open frontier ripe for exploration and adventure. Strange extraterrestrial life that reflects and comments on mankind's foibles. Godlike power in a mortal person's grasp. Love, Death, Hate, Life, Chaos, and Order embodied and amongst us. Hyper-evolved beings existing at the very limits of human understanding. Ideas like these are crazy, wild, far out, trippy, *outré*. In short, they're *cosmic*.

Long before people began chemically altering their minds to experience them firsthand, cosmic themes found a home in the pages of superhero comic books. This section of the *Cosmic Handbook* provides you with a temporal gateway back to the Big Bang beginning of the cosmic sub-genre, then casually space-walks you through its history and most archetypal expressions. What a long, strange trip it's been—the kind a true superhero fan won't want to miss.

A COSMIC HISTORY OF SUPERHERO COMICS

By 1936, ten-cent comic books had established themselves as an inexpensive source of highly imaginative entertainment—cheap and escapist things being most welcome during the Great Depression. While taking a break from leaping out of Wall Street skyscraper windows or selling apples on street corners, comic-book readers enjoyed a wide variety of colorful tales, including Westerns, science fiction, adventure, and humor. The medium's Golden Age had begun, but at that early point in its development was limited to aping the types of stories found in the newspaper comic strips from which it had evolved. That year, however, saw a first attempt at genre splicing that eventually gave comic books a milieu all their own.

That year, writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster attempted to save their middling-popular creation “Doctor Occult, The Ghost Detective” (published by industry leader National Comics) from being dropped from the pages of *New Fun Comics*. To keep the precious Depression-era paychecks coming, Siegel and Shuster redressed the mystical, trenchcoat-wearing ghost-buster in a much gaudier costume, complete with red cape.

The new colorful wardrobe and his magical abilities made Doctor Occult comic books' very first costumed superhero. However, since this fact was little noted at the time and didn't save his feature from cancellation, it left the Ghost Detective little more than a killer trivia question. Undeterred, Siegel and Shuster held on to the idea of a

superpowered hero wearing a red cape, and later on, with some cosmic touches added to the concept, went on to revolutionize the medium.

THE MAN OF TOMORROW

Back in 1933, Siegel and Shuster published a fanzine story entitled “The Reign of the Superman,” about a bald, telepathic meanie bent on world domination. They later salvaged the title, made their protagonist a dark-haired good guy, and added a colorful red-caped costume to complete their pitch to publishers... then proceeded to rack up an impressive number of rejections from newspaper syndicates. No one, it seemed, wanted to take a chance on this off-the-wall “Superman” character.

Siegel & Shuster’s luck seemingly improved in 1938, as National Comics—searching for a splashy feature with which to launch their new title, *Action Comics*—bought the rights to Superman for the princely sum of \$130. And no, that wasn’t really “a lot of money back then.”

Thanks to Superman (prominently featured on the book’s iconic cover), *Action Comics* #1 (cover-dated June 1938) became a smash hit as soon as it appeared on newsstands, and in time the Man of Tomorrow became one of the most famous fictional characters ever created. In doing so, Superman proved the new cosmic elements added to the recycled “superpowered hero wearing a red cape” idea made the difference. While they took time to fully germinate, all the seeds of the cosmic superhero sub-genre are present in the very beginnings of the Superman mythology.

The Man of Tomorrow, born Kal-L on the distant alien planet Krypton, worked as a newspaper reporter, crusading against great social evils in and out of costume (commenting on the human condition, by word and deed). Already “faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound,” Superman’s unmatched powers grew over time until they became literally world-shattering. With the coming of the Second World War, Superman—by then frequently depicted with Old Glory and bald eagles—became the fictional embodiment of his adopted country’s abstract ideals, fighting “a never-ending battle for truth, justice, and the American way.”

FAILURE TO LAUNCH

Then as now, comic books were an imitative medium, especially when a competing publisher came up with a big-time money-maker. Once Superman demonstrated the greatest of his many powers is super-sales, the inevitable mimics began to appear, replete with the cosmic elements that made the Man of Tomorrow groundbreaking. Had the copycats been allowed to flourish, the cosmic superhero sub-genre might have become predominant in the Golden Age.

It was not to be. Superman’s rights-holder, National Comics, revealed a superpower of its own: the ability to file lawsuits at lightning speed. Most of the targeted imitators, like Fox Feature Syndicate’s “Wonder Man” and

Fawcett Comics’ “Master Man” (which, to be fair, were pretty clear rip-offs of the Man of Tomorrow) were quickly litigated into a judicial Phantom Zone.

While cosmic elements like alien life forms and space travel never disappeared from Golden Age comic books, the effect from National Comics’ legal death-ray was noticeable throughout most of the era. The weird powers, heroes, and fantastic plots depicted were thus commonly ascribed to magic (like All-American Comics’ the Green Lantern), spirits and ghosts (Quality’s Uncle Sam), or mythological figures (Fawcett’s Captain Marvel). Even more commonly, heroes were highly talented and trained but otherwise normal folk (like Marvel’s Captain America), battling against a succession of standard-issue gangsters, run-of-the-mill enemy agents, and other assorted mundane crooks.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

In the years following World War II, the superhero genre seemed increasingly played out, with sales, characters, titles, and even the publishers themselves all in a gradual decline. Comic-book companies supplanted superheroes with more commercially viable genres such as Westerns, “funny animals,” horror, romance, and crime until, by the mid-1950s, the costumed crowd had dwindled to National Comics’ cornerstones Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and a handful of supporting features.

With the superhero genre’s continued abeyance and publishers still searching for alternatives, pulp science-fiction comic books like National’s *Strange Adventures* (August-September 1950), *Mystery in Space* (April-May 1951), and EC Comics’ *Weird Science* (May-June 1950) rocketed onto newsstands. Features like “Interplanetary Insurance, Inc.,” “Space Cabbie,” and “Space Museum” came into vogue, however briefly.

The tenor of the times is best illustrated by the most notable sign of new life evinced by the superhero genre during this period, National Comics’ Captain Comet, who first appeared in *Strange Adventures* #9 (June 1951). Born Adam Blake, he was the “first man of the future,” a person 100,000 years more evolved than present-day humanity (but debuting about fifteen years too soon to be called a “mutant”). Captain Comet’s hyper-strength, resistance to harm, and ability to fly recalled Superman’s world-breaking powers and cosmic influences. However, the two characters’ contrasting thematic emphases are quite telling.

Superman stories had largely preoccupied themselves with bank robbers, mad scientists, and other Earthbound menaces. Captain Comet, on the other hand, battled alien invaders here and—via his trusty personal rocket-ship—in outer space. While Superman was a touch of the cosmic sub-genre added to superheroes, Captain Comet was a *souçon* of superhero added to the more prevalent cosmic themes of the day.

Pulp sci-fi’s comic-book heyday was relatively short. EC Comics merged the money-losing *Weird Science* with a sister title in 1953 and focused instead on its more lucra-

tive horror comics. Captain Comet's feature was discontinued in 1954, and the character remained lost in space for two decades afterwards. National's second trip to the "strange visitor from another planet" well, J'onn J'onzz the Martian Manhunter, debuted in *Detective Comics* #225 (November 1955) to a perpetually tepid response. Clearly, the Golden Age approach to the cosmic sub-genre had tarnished, and a new thematic metallurgy was called for.

SILVERTONE

Fittingly enough, just as former sci-fi fanzine publishers Siegel and Shuster launched the Golden Age at National Comics, editor Julius Schwartz—likewise a fellow sci-fi fanzine publisher and National employee—began the Silver Age that followed. Their common backgrounds in cosmic science fiction figured prominently in the creative epochs they initiated.

Schwartz had been a literary sci-fi agent before getting into comic books, representing cosmic-minded authors such as Ray Bradbury, H.P. Lovecraft, and Alfred Bester. Schwartz later entitled his autobiography *Man of Two Worlds* in reference to his dual long-term vocations, and accordingly many of the most memorable characters he helped create during the early Silver Age reflect a true balance between the traditional superhero genre and the cosmic sub-genre.

The Silver Age began in 1956 with a relaunch of 1940's super-speedster the Flash as a more modern, more sci-fi influenced character. When that reboot proved successful, the obvious next steps were to give Space Age makeovers to the rest of National's languid library of characters. Green Lantern, formerly empowered by a magic lamp, returned next (courtesy of writer John Broome and artist Gil Kane) in October 1959's *Showcase* #22 as Hal Jordan, a test pilot/intergalactic policeman more than *slightly* influenced by E.E. "Doc" Smith's literary sci-fi Lensman series.

Silver Age Green Lantern stories neatly display Schwartz' thematic balance. Hal Jordan's exploits included classic superhero fare like battling Earthly jewel thieves and facing Chuck Yeager-like occupational hazards. In equal measure, his stories also segued into more cosmic themes, such as interacting with extraterrestrial civilizations (like his blue-skinned bosses the Guardians of the Universe) and resolving interstellar crises wielding a nigh-omnipotent alien weapon.

Likewise under Schwartz' direction, in March 1961's *The Brave and the Bold* #34 writer Gardner Fox and artist Joe Kubert refashioned the long-dormant character Hawkman from the magically reincarnated Egyptian prince he was during the Golden Age into an extraterrestrial cop hailing from the planet Thanagar. Again, here was a cosmic hero whose adventures alternated between mundane museum heists and orbital slugfests with evil invading aliens.

LEGION

While other Golden Age characters were being re-imagined with a higher sci-fi content, the seminal cosmic hero

Superman continued along the increasingly outlandish and kid-friendly path set for him by editor Mort Weisinger. As an unintended consequence of their general strangeness, Silver Age Super-tales embraced the cosmic sub-genre to an even greater degree than his Golden Age yarns. This included the creation of National Comics' most exemplary expression of the cosmic sub-genre, as well as one of its most fervently beloved and resilient concepts, the Legion of Super-Heroes.

The Legion's debut in *Adventure Comics* #247 (April 1958)—scripted by literary sci-fi author Otto Binder and drawn by Al Plastino—reflects National's Superboy stories (the Man of Steel's teenage exploits) Silver-Age shift to juvenile weirdness. *Adventure* #247's cover shows the Legion's teen superhero members from the 30th-century—Saturn Girl, Lightning Boy, and the tellingly named Cosmic Boy—who have crossed the millennia just to tell Superboy he's just not good enough to join their "super-hero club." All is eventually resolved by the story's end... except for the unexpectedly popular response to the Legion, originally intended as one-shot characters.

The positive fan reaction led to a number of encore Legion appearances over the next few years, with the team eventually becoming a regular feature in 1962's *Adventure Comics* #300. Over time, the Legion membership and the scope of its galaxy-spanning adventures grew, as did its delightful mythology incorporating comical Substitute Heroes, a benevolently governing United Planets, and the splendidly named Science Police.

To be sure, the Legion wore colorful costumes, adopted code names, and had its share of superhuman villains—plenty enough trappings to remind readers it was part of the superhero realm. However, with the entire universe as its setting, a roster replete with extraterrestrial members, and a seemingly inexhaustible plethora of amazing powers, it remains the purest expression of the cosmic superhero sub-genre National Comics ever published.

"Going cosmic" ultimately served the concept well. Not only has the Legion of Super-Heroes survived its original planned obsolescence, it has remained in more or less continuous publication (under various titles) right through to the present day, and likely on into its native 30th century.

TALES TO ASTONISH

National's eternal rival Marvel Comics enjoyed its own Silver Age renaissance under writer/editor Stan Lee and a supremely talented group of artists, beginning with the publication of *Fantastic Four* #1 in 1961. A staggering plethora of popular titles and characters followed in its wake: Spider-Man, the X-Men, Thor, Iron Man, and the Avengers, to name but a few. All displayed Lee's innovative storytelling trademark of flawed, relatable superheroes in a setting that was, to a noticeable degree, the readers' real world.

Lee's emphasis on increased realism slightly limited—but by no means eliminated—the cosmic elements in Silver Age Marvel stories. To be sure, the *Fantastic Four* made

trips into space to thwart the nefarious alien Skrulls and face the challenge of the nearly omnipotent extraterrestrial entity Galactus. However, these cosmic elements were more the exception than the rule, as the FF spent just as much time on down-to-Earth problems like their eviction-minded landlord or President Nixon's paranoia as they did interstellar threats.

Most prominent Silver Age Marvel characters, like Spider-Man, Captain America, and Daredevil remained Earth-bound. Others like Doctor Strange and Thor were firmly mystical and mythological, rather like Golden Age throwbacks, and decidedly un-cosmic as a result. When Marvel Comics at last more fully embraced the cosmic sub-genre, the Silver Age was nearly done.

EXILE ON MAIN STREET

Springing from the mind and pencil of the incomparable Jack Kirby, the Silver Surfer (alias Norrin Radd of the planet Zenn-La) debuted in *Fantastic Four* #48 (March 1966). In this initial guest appearance, the Surfer was using his demigod-like abilities (tellingly referred to as “the power cosmic”) to sail across the galaxy, looking for planets for his incalculably powerful boss Galactus to dine upon. Finding Earth caused the Surfer to have a change of heart, as he was moved by the noble potential of humankind. In the end, the Surfer joined with the Fantastic Four to save Earth, but at the price of permanent imprisonment there. His only reward was becoming an immediate hit with readers.

This led to several reappearances in the *Fantastic Four*'s book, and then his very own title in 1968. Its premise of “godlike being exiled to Earth” was, on the surface, not much different than Marvel's more mythologically orientated *The Mighty Thor*. However—in addition to featuring a bonafide extraterrestrial—the Surfer's stories remain distinct and memorable by incorporating a key element of the cosmic sub-genre: using the alien outsider to remark on humanity's foibles.

Saddened by his lost freedom to roam the universe and missing his beloved wife back on Zenn-La, the Surfer was understandably morose (as all Marvel heroes were wont to be). What made him positively angst-ridden was his constant frustration with the greed and folly of humanity, a species the Surfer (and writer Stan Lee) knew was capable of far better. The cogent, ever-present “What fools these mortals be!” in the narrative made the Surfer a critical (though not financial) hit, and the most cosmic lead character Silver Age Marvel Comics produced.

The Bronze Age that followed, however, was to be a different matter. Marvel Comics—and the medium as a whole—was to be tripping out to more space-y locales all the time in the '70s.

FOURTH WORLD

Legendary artist Jack Kirby was instrumental in making Marvel an industry leader, and his acrimonious departure from the company in 1970 was a true landmark in



the medium's history. National Comics—soon to be in business under its more familiar moniker “DC Comics”—lured Kirby into its employ by essentially offering him *carte blanche*. With the freedom to do as he pleased, the co-creator of the fairly cosmic *Fantastic Four* opted to go full-on cosmic.

In *The New Gods* #1 (February/March 1971), Kirby introduced readers to the “Fourth World” of the warring, immensely powerful alien denizens of the mirror-planets New Genesis and Apokolips. The benevolent Highfather and malefic Darkseid led their respective cultures in a truly mythic clash that regularly spilled over to Earth.

The story Kirby set out to tell was epic, spawning three additional titles (*Forever People*, *Mister Miracle*, and—anchoring it to the larger DC universe—*Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen*). In it, all of Kirby's vast skills as an artist are on display, as is his sincere desire to produce something better than typical funny book fare, showing how great the medium can truly be.

Unfortunately, this ambition yielded something too different for audiences of the day, and as great as Kirby the artist is, Kirby the writer was not quite as talented. Poor sales led to *The New Gods'* cancellation after only 11 issues, and with DC refusing to finish up the saga with the charac-



ters' deaths as Kirby had intended (though DC later killed off the Fourth World denizens—at least temporarily—in 2008's *Death of the New Gods*).

MEET THE NEW BOSS

The onset of the Bronze Age in the early 1970s originated in a generational change within the comic-book field itself, as the pioneers of the Golden Age gave way to their Baby-Boomer successors—many of whom had become comic fans during the Silver Age. Combining their early comic-book schooling with the prevailing liberal social consciousness of the day, these newcomers defined the Bronze Age literary aesthetic. Part of this new paradigm included greater relevancy and acceptance of expanded human consciousness.

These personnel changes went all the way to the top of the major publishers. Over at Marvel, Stan Lee was promoted to publisher in 1972, leaving the hands-on work of editor-in-chief to Roy Thomas. Thomas, like Siegel, Shuster, and Schwartz before, had a long-standing love of science fiction. Under his auspices, Marvel books more frequently incorporated elements of the cosmic sub-genre, as well as more of the thoughtfulness found in the best literary sci-fi.

Just prior to taking over Lee's old gig, Thomas thrust *The Avengers*—typically New York City-based—into the center of the interstellar Kree-Skrull War, creating an epic story spanning the stars and issues 89-97 of the title. While the fate of Earth is a key plot point, the critical events occur mostly in outer space. To a degree not much seen in previous Marvel Comics, what happened out in the galaxy mattered at least as much as what happened in Manhattan. It was a harbinger of where Bronze Age Marvel was heading creatively.

Indicative of this, Thomas, inspired by *Jesus Christ Superstar*, re-christened a character portentously dubbed "Him" in *Fantastic Four* #66 five years later as Adam Warlock, a fully fledged messianic figure. To avoid unwanted controversy, Thomas set his allegory on a manufactured "Counter-Earth," diametrically positioned to our own, making Warlock's story cosmic from the start.

THERE'S A STARMAN WAITING IN THE SKY

During that oh-so-cosmic (for Marvel) year, 1972, writer/artist Jim Starlin took over the creative reigns of one of Stan Lee's less-loved creations, Captain Marvel. He had been introduced back in 1967, an alien warrior/spy from the interstellar Kree Empire turned heroically traitorous by a burgeoning love for Earth-folk. A quick character revamp bound his molecules with a human teenager and rendered the good Captain Earthbound, as well as very similar to the Silver Surfer. However, lacking the Surfer's thrilling godlike powers and compelling social consciousness, Captain Marvel struggled to find an audience and was cancelled in 1970.

With his '72 newsstand resurrection, Capt. Marvel became Starlin's vehicle for cementing and expanding the existing elements of the cosmic superhero sub-genre. Under Starlin, excursions into space became the order of the day for the Kree alien, giving the book a more cosmic scope and setting. The previously unspectacularly powered Captain gained the more suitably godlike ability of "cosmic awareness"—becoming one with the cosmos and "Protector of the Universe."

Captain Marvel developed this expanded consciousness thanks to Eon, the guardian of universal evolution itself and one of several embodiments of abstract concepts to appear in Starlin's work. Most memorably, the Captain came into conflict with the mad, murderous alien Thanos, as he sought to destroy all life and thereby impress his would-be girlfriend, the very personification of Death.

Leaving *Captain Marvel* in 1975, Starlin went on to restart Adam Warlock's adventures. Continuing Thomas' messianic allusions, Warlock found himself confronting the Magus, head of the star-spanning Universal Church of Truth. While the series was relatively short-lived, it demonstrated the increasing presence of the cosmic sub-genre and social relevancy in superhero comics.

CROSSING OVER

The cosmic superhero sub-genre's increased storyline prominence during the '70s and '80s coincided with a contraction in the comic-book marketplace as a whole. Times had changed—the economy was shaky, and comics had fled the mass youth marketplace to become a niche item. Faced with a shrinking audience increasingly made up of older, longtime readers craving new thrills, comic books had to go big or go home.

In 1984, Marvel Comics, led by editor-in-chief Jim Shooter, launched the first modern crossover series *Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars*. Big and ambitious by design, *Secret Wars* had to be more cosmic than anything previously published. Beginning with a sentient universe called “the Beyonder” who could reshape reality like Play-Doh, an Official Handbook's worth of the company's most powerful (and popular) characters were forced to do battle as the embodiments of Good and Evil on a distant planet. *Secret Wars* was grand, cosmic storytelling, truly awesome, and sold better than anything had in years.

In its aftermath, the comic book market became increasingly driven by such massive crossover events, many of them deriving their hugeness from revisiting cosmic-theme stories from the company's past, beginning with the inevitable *Secret Wars II*. Similarly, an even-more-omnipotent Thanos—again opposed by Adam Warlock—was back to his old tricks, threatening all reality and wooing Death herself in 1991's *The Infinity Gauntlet*, appropriately scripted by Jim Starlin. Starlin, Warlock, and still more cosmic elements returned for the sequels, 1992's *Infinity War* and 1993's *Infinity Crusade*.

IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD (AS WE KNOW IT)

Even prior to the runaway success of 1984's *Secret Wars*, DC Comics had been planning something suitably huge for its upcoming 50th anniversary, a tale so huge it would take every comic in its publishing queue to tell it all. Having been harder hit by the late '70s/early '80s market shrinkage than rival Marvel, DC consequently felt even more pressure to produce something bigger than the huge success of Marvel's *Secret Wars*.

A decision was then made to commemorate DC's golden anniversary by blowing up everyone and everything ever seen in its comic books since 1935, but afterwards DC would start fresh with revamped heroes in a re-tooled universe.

The 1985 miniseries that laid waste to everything from *New Fun Comics* #6 to *Action Comics* #583 was entitled *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. As its storylines crossed over into every DC title, entire universes were done away with as regularly as Silver Age Lois Lane suspected Clark Kent just *might* be Superman. Featuring nearly every character and fictional world created during its first half-century of publishing, and with the nigh-omnipotent Monitor and Anti-Monitor—personifying creation and destruction—obliterating and reconstituting reality itself, it's difficult to conceive of anything being more definitely cosmic than *Crisis on Infinite Earths*.

Just as Marvel had done, DC Comics then mined its cosmic past for future company-wide crossovers. DC repeated *Crisis on Infinite Earths'* continuity re-boots in 1994's *Zero Hour*, 2006's *Infinite Crisis*, and 2011's *Flashpoint*. Jack Kirby's Fourth World inspired 1986-7's *Legends*, 1997's *Genesis* crossover, and 2008's *Final Crisis*. Green Lantern's associated mythology figures prominently in 1988's *Millennium* and 2009-10's *Blackest Night*. The good, old-fashioned alien invasion epics *Invasion!* (1989) and *Our Worlds at War* (2001), though featuring costumed superheroes, harkened back to the pulp sci-fi stories of the early 1950s.

THE FUTURE IS NOW

As NASA's Curiosity rover explores the surface of J'onzz' Mars and comics are read on computers scarcely larger than the pages they were once exclusively printed on, classic cosmic superhero themes remain alive and well. DC Comics' “New 52” titles include the adventures of Superman, the Legion of Super-Heroes, and Darkseid remains a threat forty years later. The stalwart Marvel Comics heroes, fresh off their victory over the evil alien Skrulls in 2008's *Secret Invasion*, still include the likes of the Fantastic Four, the Silver Surfer, and the Guardians of the Galaxy.

Indeed, the cosmic superhero sub-genre will happily remain with us for the foreseeable future. Only our reality becoming as fantastic and wonderful as the stories it inspired seems capable of altering that fact.

THE COSMOS: SUB-GENRE CONVENTIONS

A genre or sub-genre simply is defined by a combination of themes, tropes, and other recurring elements. This section outlines the major elements of the cosmic sub-genre: the space-y things that make it distinct from “mainstream” superheroes. The following pages break down the typical plots, story elements, and characters into tools for players and Gamemasters to create their own cosmic *M&M* games.

You can't have “cosmic” without the vastness of the cosmos: the universe and all of its worlds, dimensions,

and times beyond Earth. This section looks at outer space and other worlds from a *comic book* perspective: in other words, while it does occasionally bump into modern astrophysics (by pure accident), this part is *not* about “hard” science, or even hard science fiction.

What this section *does* provide Gamemasters is a galaxy-load of ideas and options to populate and describe a comic-book cosmos. We have to warn you: it does get weird... which leads to creativity!

BEING ALIEN AND WHAT IT MEANS

Comic-book characters of extraterrestrial origin have been around nearly as long as superheroes have existed, since 1939's *Superman #1* revealed the Man of Steel was born on the planet Krypton. For some (like the Golden Age Superman), their alien origins are nothing more than a way to account for their superhuman abilities. In that respect, they're not substantially different from a mutant human, a living mythological figure, a wizard, or a previously regular person accidentally exposed to some beneficial radioactivity.

Being an alien means profoundly more in the cosmic superhero sub-genre. In an *M&M* series with a similar theme, an extraterrestrial presence can carry with it major implications for future storylines. What kind depends on the precise taxonomy of the alien presence in question....

A FACE IN THE ALIEN CROWD, OR THE ONE

Having an extraterrestrial on a super-team means that member's home planet has—or *will* have—a major effect on events in the series' setting. A character's native people may be one of the (if not *the*) galaxy's great powers when it comes to peace, war, or trade. The presence of one of their own then heightens the heroes' ability to influence matters involving that race, putting them in a key posi-

tion to affect interstellar events. Thanks to their extraterrestrial buddy, the heroes alone may know the words and deeds needed to persuade an alien culture that humanity means them no harm, or the fatal weakness of their war machines if their alien pal's countrymen go the usual route and try to conquer Earth.

Being the sole living remnant of an alien race—an extant cousin, dog, and bottle city notwithstanding—also carries with it certain burdens in this sub-genre. Traumatic memories of their civilization's end, survivor's guilt, or loneliness often lead to complications like Acceptance, Phobia, Prejudice, Quirk, or Temper. Those guilty of the genocide may be an Enemy, looking to eliminate the character and finish their dirty job, as well as inspiring Hatred (of those responsible) and/or Obsession (with revenge).

Being the last of your kind isn't all bad, however. Since you're the last survivor, it means your character had something the others didn't. It might be luck, intelligence, or extraordinary powers, but the hero is something truly unique—and perhaps a power level (or more) higher than his or her colleagues because of it. Naturally, being the most powerful character in the room comes with a price. Typically, the cost is extra complications like Power Loss, Weakness, or both, all stemming from some annoyingly easy substance for super-villains to acquire, like fire, lead, or radioactive chunks of what used to be the hero's home planet.

TEACHER OR STUDENT

Inherited from the broader science fiction genre, aliens interacting with cosmic superheroes can be around to serve as a vehicle for the writer to impart a moral lesson or express some social commentary to the audience. Depending on the story, the featured extraterrestrial may be around to learn from the humans, or offer some interplanetary constructive criticism.

In the first instance, the alien's culture regularly engages in a practice anathema to most human. It might be slavery, racial intolerance, sexual prejudice, religious persecution, or serving humans for dinner. Whatever the aliens' failings are, the heroes feel compelled to show the extraterrestrials a better way. By *being* heroes—doing heroic things, giving heroic speeches, and modeling good heroic behavior—the characters can affect at least the beginnings of a positive change towards a more humanistic alien world.

Settings that are cosmic yet contemporary often include extraterrestrials that are here on Earth to teach us foolish mortals a thing or two. Characters of this ilk typically have the Doing Good motivation, or—if their disdain for human folly includes legal systems—Justice. They frequently express their surprise and disappointment that humans still have poverty, war, and bigotry, and in addition to expounding on the superiority of their culture and heritage, engage in super-heroism to help human society progress. Underneath their scolding, these alien characters believe in mankind's potential. As outsiders, they see



it better than most, and this exacerbates their frustrations when humanity fails to realize it.

LITTLE GREEN MEN

Creating interesting and fun new alien races for a cosmic *M&M* series is a vital part of capturing the sub-genre's charms and imparting it to the players. A good start in this process is for Gamemasters to consider some basic questions about what niches and roles extraterrestrials are to occupy in their series. This section presents a few to get Gamemasters started on their "first contact" with aliens of their own design.

ALIEN

How "crowded" with aliens a setting is—and destined to become—is a prime consideration. If *We Are Not Alone* in an *M&M* series' universe but contact with alien life remains scarce, human society is nonetheless not as the players know it, to one degree or another. A world already accustomed to weird mutants, mystic wizards, fantastic technology, and humans transformed by chemicals or radiation just has one more thing to worry about.

By contrast, certain knowledge of alien life may fray the already tenuous bonds of civilization. Panicked fear of invasion may trigger desperate acts of survival, leading to violence, destruction, and a breakdown of essential services like electric power and food transport. Others may welcome their "new alien overlords" with religious devotion, certain they will soon arrive to bestow a utopia upon mankind. Both reactions may persist to a lessened degree even after the heroes help restore order, with extraterrestrials regarded with prejudice and hatred, and various cults arising to worship the beings from the stars—extremists who are bound to cause interplanetary incidents requiring the heroes' intervention.

ALIENS

Other *M&M* series portray humans as but one of countless other species in an infinite—but still seemingly crowded—cosmos. Earthly knowledge of this can lead to social disorder (as described in the preceding section), but this is comparatively rare in published comic-book universes. More typically, humanity somehow doesn't know or care how very *not* alone it is (as in both DC and Marvel's prime universes).

In many future-era series, mankind has acclimated and integrated itself into a truly universal community where alien worlds and civilizations mirror the relations between different countries and nations on present-day Earth. Such a setting is wide open for potential stories (if it's in the universe, it's available) and for commentary on contemporary situations. Wars and famines involve whole star systems, illegal aliens really are, and racial prejudice includes differences in telepathic ability, number of tentacles, and corporeality. In such a setting, heroes (despite their noble intentions) may find themselves the hideous invaders with unfathomable customs, and dealing with life forms to whom they are as amoebae.

MONSTROUS ALIENS OR ALIEN MONSTERS

Players weaned on money-conscious sci-fi TV shows may expect alien life forms that are humans with only slightly differing prosthetic bumps on their heads to tell them all apart. Comic books, on the other hand, are imagination unbound by budgets, and Gamemasters of cosmic *M&M* series should embrace the limitless possibilities of extra-terrestrial beings.

The best literary sci-fi (a key influence on comic books) uses a diverse—bordering on bizarre—array of aliens to explore themes that nicely intersect with those of superhero comics. For example, what's the difference between a civilized alien race and an otherworldly monster? To most Earthlings, that's a call made on the basis on how similar they are to humans, but that short-sighted way of thinking is something heroes should be above. A good Gamemaster should give them every opportunity to show off their wisdom, and impart it to others as they save strange-looking but good-hearted aliens from harm visited upon them by ignorant humans.

With the power of unfettered imagination, the Gamemaster is able to introduce aliens so very weird they beggar the heroes and players' conceptions of What Life Can Be. Non-corporeal creatures who cannot conceive of life governed by the petty demands of flesh or super-intellects who see the heroes as little more than pleasant entertaining monkeys, so dirty and foul—fit the bill nicely. The galaxy may host machine-beings who, perhaps without feeling, still think and aspire, as well as energy beings who only intermittently perceive our dimension. Heroes empowered and transported by high technology may similarly find their world-views challenged by alien magic-users, with abilities to rival their own. The possibilities are as limitless as space itself.

THIS ISLAND EARTH

All but the most cosmic of cosmic *M&M* series focus on groups of (mostly) human beings from the planet Earth, and at least from time to time their homeworld figures importantly into the star-spanning storylines. While normally we try to limit reality intruding into all the comic-book fun, it's bound to be asked why exactly Earth—out of (typically) countless inhabited worlds—matters quite so much, or really, even at all. The question is even more baffling in series set in the present day, when Earth is just a primitive backwater nobody in the greater cosmos normally chock-full of space-faring alien races.

Iconoclastic Gamemasters may simply decide the Earth really isn't "all that" in galactic terms, and use the heroes' mocked status as interstellar hillbillies as a recurring series element. More traditional GMs follow the example of most superhero comics and devise at least one compelling cause why, sooner or later, the plot-lines always seem to lead to Earth. It may be a reason long-known among space-faring civilizations, or something recently discovered—perhaps by an alien ship that got *really* lost and blundered right into our very own Sol system. In either case, Earth's oh-so-attractive "It" Factor may be something *humans* don't even know about... yet.

Perhaps it's our real estate that makes aliens so jealous. Earth may have the best interstellar highway access in the sector, or we may have resources and substances scarce elsewhere in the universe. It may be our women, water, or waffles, but whatever it is, the extraterrestrials are ready to beg, borrow, or steal for it. This makes the otherwise insignificant Earth matter, and periodically puts it at risks (invasions, mass kidnappings, interplanetary heists) only the series' heroes can extricate it from—especially if humanity's technology isn't up to intergalactic snuff.

By the same token, the special something that's attractive to extraterrestrials just might be human beings themselves. Concealed within our primitive monkey-brains might be secrets untold, like how to unlock the capacity for truly extraordinary abilities (which the series' central superpowered heroes may in fact be the harbingers of). Perhaps, in all the universe, only humanity created music, Picasso, Hostess Fruit Pies, charitable giving, or a never-say-die attitude. Whatever it is, the rest of inhabited space is impressed—and not a little jealous—and Earth will never again want for alien attention. It's the heroes' job to make sure the interest remains healthy for all involved, and be prepared to intervene when it doesn't.

NEW LIFE & NEW CIVILIZATIONS

Comic books typically evince a different attitude about extraterrestrial civilizations than a lot of popular science fiction in other media. Some film and TV space explorers wander the galaxy, sipping their tea and regularly fretting over somehow interfering in an alien culture along the way. Cosmic superheroes, on the other hand, are *all about*

interfering in alien cultures, especially those that, frankly, *need* some interference.

As noted in the section **Being Alien and What It Means**, extraterrestrials are often present in a story as a vehicle for social commentary. Combining that with the cosmic sub-genre's core trope of "interacting with the infinite," the heroes are sometimes confronted with entire societies engaging in various unsavory practices. It might be forcing others into gladiatorial games, environmental irresponsibility destroying their biosphere, or planning an attack against their peaceful galactic neighbors. Forget lecturing the neighborhood kids on the dangers of drugs—cosmic superheroes have to make *entire worlds* mend their ways.

The tendency in comic books is to resolve global problems such as these via incredibly simple methods. Similar Earth woes remain immune and intractable, but once in space, instant miraculous changes become possible. Warlike extraterrestrial cultures can turn pacifist after the heroes smash up their invasion fleet. Long-winded heroic speeches can change the alien ruler's mind about sexism (or slavery, or racial hatred, or whatever his prejudice), and his entire civilization immediately then falls into line behind him. In truly cosmic series, heroes are capable of resolving a world's ills in mad, beautiful Silver Age fashions, such as fixing global warming by nudging the planet away from the sun just enough to cool things down acceptably.

HIGHLY ILLOGICAL

It would be hard to fault anyone for thinking how ridiculously easy and/or outlandish these solutions are for in-



calculably complex problems. The simple answer for such concerns is to ask oneself, what *doesn't* strain credibility in superhero comic books? Once your imagination has accepted, say, cosmic radiation overdoses giving people super-powers, one has in large part surrendered the right to question believability.

The more substantial reply involves possibly making the solutions more in line with the scale of the problems at hand. Instead of altering an ancient culture overnight, the heroes may be in for a more long-term struggle, winning one battle at a time, and changing minds only gradually. The tactics don't necessarily have to change—they can still punch out the aggressive alien soldiers—but the rewards are scaled down and doled out over time.

CHANGES

If pondering the vastness of our own universe ever becomes *passé* or *jejune*, consider the possibility of *other* universes: ones where history took a different course, or where reality adopted a different set of physical laws. See, *now* we're talking cosmic!

REWRITING HISTORY

Alternate universes where the Nazis won World War II, or apes evolved from man, or good is evil (and evil, good) naturally open up a whole new range of interesting villains and storylines, starting with how the heroes get there and home again. They allow for social commentary like alien-inhabited worlds, even if the statement is simply "Nazis are evil."

What *really* makes this sub-genre element enticing is the ills the Gamemaster wishes to comment upon are visited upon the heroes and all they value to a degree rarely possible in the series' normal setting. The heroes, their beloved supporting characters, their cherished objects and locations can all be turned evil, killed, maimed, or destroyed without the "originals" being affected. Thus, the players experience the dramatic impact of these changes, but—as a reward for successful heroism in the alternate universe—get to return to familiar, comforting surroundings in time for next week's game session.

REWRITING SCIENCE

Gamemasters who aren't satisfied with just forcibly exporting their players' characters into a universe where history took a turn for the worse are free to increase the jeopardy level by sending them to an even more thoroughly changed reality. A universe where magic is as common as technology (and the latter may exist only rarely, or not at all) presents a challenge to characters normally spoiled by their smart phones and powered armor. An anti-matter continuum where superpowers don't work at all (or perhaps only temporarily, after expending a hero point) is an even sterner test of the players' ingenuity—in devising a way back to their home universe, for a start.

INFINITE POWERS & ULTIMATE TESTS

As the name implies, one of the cornerstones of the cosmic superhero sub-genre is its sense of infinite scale, particularly with the threats involved. Exploding buildings and jewel thieves don't measure up in cosmic stories—even world conquerors are small potatoes here. This sub-genre is the realm of imploding universes (note the plural), the embodiment of Death itself extinguishing all life, and godlike villains subjugating reality itself.

It's quite alright for the players to feel overwhelmed and insignificant in the face of such menaces; in fact, that's rather the point. There's only trouble if the Gamemaster is the one overawed by how to make his or her tiny group of puny superheroes matter when confronting the infinite.

They key is devising a way for the character's heroism—the things they *can* do—to deliver unto them the means to limit that which seems limitless. Doing so definitely shouldn't be easy, but it should be do-able. Their salvation might be an ancient alien MacGuffin device, shrouded in intergalactic legend and hidden on a distant and now hazardous world. If living entities are the galactic menace, they may possess exploitable character flaws, and all creation can be saved with some good role-playing plus (high DC) Perception, Deception, and/or Persuasion skill checks.

Whatever the means of deliverance, for it to feel thematically and dramatically right, it must involve the characters' heroism being ultimately tested to its utmost. Their particular motivations provide excellent guidelines for devising such supreme tests. The successful conclusion of a truly cosmic adventure can ask those moved by Doing Good or Responsibility to lay down their lives, or heroes craving Thrills and Recognition to give up their superhuman powers. Characters who seek Justice might have to let an archenemy go free to secure his help in saving the day, while a hero craving Acceptance might have to betray his friends—or a character with Patriotism, his country—to achieve the same end.

Sweet-natured Gamemasters can opt to have self-sacrificing heroes walk away unscathed, with their willingness to give all enough to pay the price for victory. More interestingly, the selfless heroes' attempts to regain whatever they lost can be the focus of the *next* game session.

HAVING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

In the cosmic superhero sub-genre, from time to time the Gamemaster has to make the players feel like space, the stars, and the planets are all trying to kill their characters. Drown them, burn them, melt them, suffocate them, or worse—in any case, there are times the whole world really is out to get them.

The *M&M Hero's Handbook* provides information on the conventional methods of murder-by-planet (see "Environmental Hazards" in the *Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 8**). This includes darkness (as on the dark side of the moon or a

planet constantly shrouded), heat and cold (desert and frozen worlds), starvation and thirst (due to many environmental factors on alien worlds), suffocation and poison (for non-oxygenated and toxic atmospheres), radiation (a classic!), and disease (see *The War of the Worlds*). Great starting points for hero endangerment, all.

But why stop there? The cosmic sub-genre offers up nearly limitless possibilities for inconvenient and nasty things alien worlds can do to the characters, just for visiting there. As the Gamemaster, all you need are the Affliction and Weaken powers plus the boundlessness of cosmic superheroic adventures. Worlds that change the characters into cavemen, senior citizens, apes, water-breathers, evildoers, toddlers, paranoiacs, or dinosaurs are guaranteed to be a change of pace from the usual game session of “punch the villain, save the day.” Even better for the Gamemaster, unlike more conventional environmental hazards, these effects can’t be avoided by a few points’ investment in Immunity, and can be explained away by “a factor unique to this planet” or the like.

Threatening hazardous environments work best as a bit of plot seasoning for another, larger story. They can provide an extra bit of complication, as—for example—the heroes struggle with an alien invasion of Earth while some friends and loved ones find themselves trapped on a world with a corrosive atmosphere (Progressive Weaken Toughness & Stamina, Affects Objects—things like life-preserving space suits and ship hulls).

FUTUREWORLD

Many superhero comic books (and *M&M* series) primarily focus on heroes keeping locales such as Manhattan or Emerald City safe, with only the occasional out-of-this-world element appearing in storylines. Those with a taste for the whole cosmic experience are better served by a setting in some far-off era, where space-y elements abound. There, travel across the galaxy is as common as catching a red-eye to Atlanta, and interacting with alien life, other planets, personified abstract concepts, and godlike beings becomes simpler to arrange and much more common. The heroes can go to the infinite, rather than making the infinite do all the work of coming to them.

At their core, futuristic series are much like the standard superhero setup; the main difference is again one of scale. The heroes are helping police their solar system and galaxy instead of home city and country, and moving from planet to planet rather than neighborhood to neighborhood. There are fewer street-gang members fighting over turf, and more interstellar alien empires warring over star systems. If you want to see a more fleshed-out example, check out **Freedom City 2525** in **Chapter 5**.

As in the Freedom City 2525 setting, future Earths in cosmic superhero settings tend toward the utopian, but it’s certainly not a hard and fast rule. Putting the prob-

lems mostly out in space *does* help keep things extra-cosmic, but bringing some genre tropes back down to Earth has possibilities as well. Future Earths experiencing environmental problems, commentary-worthy social ills, rule by sentient machines, or global war are all valid concepts with great story potential.

MACHINE HEAD

Technology is inescapable in a cosmic superhero series, and sometimes that fact of life can be extremely life-threatening. Very little that is cosmic happens in a series without faster-than-light spacecraft and other wondrous devices, and for that reason items like advanced supercomputers and non-polluting energy sources are understandably taken for granted. This section is about the more worrisome, autonomously murdering and conquering type of machine.

Cosmic-genre tropes do provide a clear warning its protagonists never heed. The caveat here is: Any machine that talks *will* eventually try to kill the heroes, usually with the aim of taking over the world shortly thereafter. Said homicidal device might overtly be a super-villain like the classic rampaging robot, the normally helpful artificial intelligence at the heroes’ base, or a well-intended scientist’s newly invented android gone haywire (see the Robot villain archetype in the *M&M Gamemaster’s Guide*, **Chapter 3**, for an example).

Whatever the nature of the enemy, the heroes are going to have to kill what isn’t truly alive (and, as the Gamemaster knows, is just a fast upload away from a future return appearance). The good guys are also almost certainly going to be outnumbered, as mechanical menaces are prone to replicating themselves, enslaving the tech devices around them, or both (see the Robot minions in the *M&M Gamemaster’s Guide*, **Chapter 3**, for some examples).

Traditionally, defeating the runaway technology hinges on something that validates the ultimate superiority of mankind. No matter how much murder and destruction the rampaging robots have perpetrated to that point, humanity *has* to have the last triumphant word. Whether it’s a once-surly android suddenly developing emotions it can’t cope with, a killer robot whose head explodes when immersed in illogic, or an alien master-computer crippled by running whatever virus-laden software the heroes upload, man’s humanity triumphs over machine.

CULT FOLLOWING

Wise people counsel against discussing religion in polite company, and still wiser people follow that advice. It’s also been the general rule in superhero comic books, put out by publishers not wanting to endanger sales for sectarian reasons. Cosmic superhero series are sometimes an exception, but even then creators are careful to move the setting way into the future, change all the names, and

“We are all interested in the future, for that is where you and I are going to spend the rest of our lives. And remember, my friend, future events such as these will affect you in the future.”

—Criswell, *Plan 9 from Outer Space*

place events on an alien planet so that no one takes present-day offense.

With any resemblance (or *most* of the resemblance, at least) to any religions living or dead safely removed, the way is clear for evil planetary (or galactic) cults to show up as implacable bad guys. Motivated by fear of their dark gods, all manner of evil can be ascribed to the alien cultists, and their great numbers can't be intimidated or reasoned with. There's also the added worry of any troubled or misguided loved ones of the heroes who might get their impressionable hands on some of the cult's literature, especially after they've had a good brain-washing (see the Cultist minions in the *M&M Gamemaster's Guide*, **Chapter 3**, for some examples).

The presence of evil cults in a setting fairly calls for a more balanced view of religion. Devising a benevolent faith (again, changing the name and making it safely alien if desired) is quite easily done, and makes for a good source of aid for heroes down on their luck on an otherwise strange world. If said benevolent faith is entirely pacifist in nature, it provides the characters a group of good, otherwise helpless people for them to protect as true heroes are bound to do.

Characters with religious beliefs of their own (and complications derived from them) potentially have some interesting challenges in a cosmic superhero setting. The sub-genre is prone to having godlike beings roaming the universe and interacting with the heroes—not to mention all the personified abstractions like embodied Life, Love, and Order. How such a character reacts to an entity that seems a lot like the god(s) he or she worships—but most decidedly *isn't*—has some hero-point worthy role-playing in store.

DIFFICULT CONCEPTS

Perhaps nothing epitomizes the boundlessness of the cosmic superhero sub-genre better than its conceit that abstract concepts are embodied in unimaginably powerful entities existing at the very limits of human ken. It's hard to get much more cosmic than the characters coming face to face with universal Death, Chaos, Avarice, or Time themselves.

By nature, these beings are Power Level X and can do whatever the Gamemaster needs to advance the plot. Game statistics are also unnecessary for entities the heroes really shouldn't have any hope of besting in a direct confrontation, the implications of which are too weird even for the cosmic sub-genre. (Can the characters actually punch Death dead? Is it possible to trip Hate itself?)

Abstract entities nonetheless serve three valuable purposes in cosmic superhero series. First, their very presence carries with it the proper sense of awe and "things just got *real*" for a cosmic series. They add gravitas to a game session simply by showing up.

Secondly, immensely powerful as they are, abstract entities are not immune to every Golden and Silver Age hero's stand-by weapon, the long-winded speech. By no means

should it be easy, but any player who invested heavily in interpersonal skills (like Persuasion or Bluff) almost certainly plays *M&M* in anticipation for the moment he saves the day by convincing the embodiment of universal Order to loosen up a bit, or conning Death itself into believing its shoes are untied.

Lastly, abstract entities invariably have an equal and diametrically opposite number checking most every one of their direct actions—e.g., Lord Hate can't do much Lady Love won't put a stop to. This sends scheming entities in search of minions they can imbue with a fraction of their nearly infinite power, creating new superheroes and super-villains in the process (the Jumped-Up Nobody archetype in the *M&M Gamemaster's Guide*, **Chapter 3**, is a good example of the latter). These grants of power can be permanent, if a continuing character needs a cosmic origin. They can also be temporary if the characters only need such awesome abilities long enough to resolve some great reality-threatening crisis.

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

In most every comic-book setting, sooner or later a great interstellar empire goes to war. If the aliens are old school, Earth is their target. They may be after our land or to make brunch of us, but whatever their aim, Earth is in for a sock to the planetary chin. Other times, Earth is just an innocent bystander as two alien dominions slug it out. From a human point of view, the conflict may begin wholly unnoticed or without much interest. However, events soon draw Earth into the conflict, perhaps as a sideshow battleground in the much larger galactic struggle.

Wars are notoriously tough to stop once started, and being a superhero doesn't make the task that much simpler. The cosmic sub-genre typically offers one of two possible solutions to the good guys.

Resolution Number One is a star-spanning detective story, as the heroes suspect a third party—thoroughly evil and standing to benefit from a war that kills countless billions—has orchestrated the whole conflict and tricked both sides into going to war. All the characters have to do is outwit and outfight an enemy clever and powerful enough to fool two interstellar civilizations, get definitive proof of the ruse, escape, then persuade two furious warring nations it was all a set-up.

Solution Number Two comes into play when Earth-based heroes are defending their home turf: beat up the aliens, destroy their weapons, and find their Achilles' heel in the process. This is one of those times when the optional Mass Combat rules in the *M&M Gamemaster's Guide* (**Chapter 6**) come in handy.

As noted in **Being Alien and What It Means**, any extraterrestrials in the series' hero team are very likely to see their brethren invade Earth at some point, and are even more certain to hold the key to saving Earth. This premise also holds great interest for aliens who—erroneously, as it turns out—thought they were the last surviving member of their race. They are still crucial to Earth's salvation, but their former allies may not look at them the same once



their people start nuking the planet from orbit. To make matters even more compelling, a heroic alien not entirely clear on how he or she came to Earth to begin with may really *have* been originally sent for nefarious reasons—reasons that might just become clear at the worst possible time for the good guys....

THE GREAT BEYOND

The cosmic superhero sub-genre isn't just about going to the furthest reaches of the mind and chatting it up with personified Life itself. To be truly cosmic, the distances traveled must also beggar the imagination. Faster-than-light journeys across the galaxy are a start, and from there other universes, alternate realities, and time travels await.

What happens once the heroes arrive at their far-flung destinations is discussed elsewhere in this chapter. The advice here is to never allow the trip itself to become routine. If a trip of a million light-years ever feels to the players like a cross-town bus ride, the awe and mystery of the universe that makes the cosmic sub-genre special and fun is lost.

The best way to prevent interstellar ennui from setting in is to periodically make the voyage itself the adventure, or at least a sizable plot point. However the heroes get around, the Gamemaster can make getting there half the fun... at least for the GM, at any rate.

Even in settings where space travel is commonplace, the number of things that can go wrong while wandering amongst the stars is large. Computer glitches, hull breaches, black holes, meteor showers, space pirates, rogue planets, and supernovae are just a few complications that can test the mettle of even the most jaded space jockey.

SPACE TRUCKIN'

The most "interesting" method of space travel involves heroes who are stuck with an inherently unreliable means of transportation. Their time/space machine may be old and defective, stuck in the shape of a phone booth, and frequently planting the characters in unexpected places (but still where the plot ultimately needs them to be). Perhaps space travel is possible in the series, but still employs technology that makes the journey a bit of a crap shoot. Alternatively, the heroes may rely on super-powers (e.g., Teleportation, an appropriate Movement effect) with the Uncontrolled flaw to get around, swapping the ability to appear light-years away in exchange for an occasional (plot-friendly) loss of accuracy (with the Gamemaster's consent, of course).

Some comic-book hero teams have a whole fleet of faster-than-light ships at their disposal, while more humble heroes have but a single means of transportation. In the latter case, players are kept more on edge, wondering if a wrong move might lead to difficult repairs, or leave them stranded on a distant world. Either way, the next week's adventure is set, Gamemaster.

Still other heroes teleport over vast interstellar distances. It's quite a time-saver for the good guys, but a headache for the Gamemaster whose villains can be ambushed at any second from light-years away. If the Gamemaster allows such a means into the series, he or she is strongly advised to build in some plot safeguards. Perhaps the teleportation is based on unreliable (and perhaps risky) technology and/or may be blocked at its destination by some relatively common means (e.g., energy or force fields). Whatever its Achilles' heel, it prevents heroes from saving the day too quickly and easily.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Another Gamemaster consideration is the relative speed of communication to travel across interstellar distances. Heroes in series where news travels faster than they do face the near-constant handicap of no element of surprise. Wherever they go, the bad guys are more than ready for them long before they arrive.

Alternately, the heroes travel more quickly than any means of communication. In these series, every game session begins with at least some amount of detective work, as the heroes acquaint themselves with whatever local changes have occurred since they were last in contact with their current whereabouts. If travel outpaces communications throughout the galaxy, the heroes (and everyone else, for that matter) operate in a setting where nearly everything is governed by word of mouth, at least in the near term. In such a series, players can never be sure exactly what sort of reception they're in for, even if it's a world they've visited before.

In any situation where a disparity between travel and talk times exists, any hero with an unlimited Communication power (or close to it) would become one of the most important and sought-after individuals in the galaxy once their ability became widely known. The power of instantaneous communication would be invaluable to a star-spanning empire, and the seed for many game sessions to come.

SURVIVING IN SPACE

Although it's probably not a common occurrence, most cosmic series do have their featured characters imperiled by the icy cold vacuum of space. The effects on someone other than a crimson-clad ensign venturing into the void unprotected are as follows.

COLD

Characters must make a Fortitude check (DC 10, +1 per previous check) for every ten unguarded minutes spent in space to avoid becoming fatigued. Fatigued characters who fail a check become exhausted, then incapacitated, at which point the character's condition becomes dying after another failed Fortitude check. Gamemasters who want more agony, less science in their hard vacuum can bump this figure up to every minute, or every round if they've truly given into their hate and embraced the Dark Side.

RADIATION

Every unprotected round in deep space inflicts Damage ranging between ranks 10 and 12, resisted by Fortitude. The victim must also make a Fortitude check against (DC 10 + radiation's rank) to avoid radiation sickness. Failure typically leads to a rank 10-12 Weaken Stamina effect, but at the GM's discretion can lead to other effects, such as damage to a hero's power ranks (causing a temporary decrease in powers).

SUFFOCATION

A character who attempts to hold his or her breath must make a Fortitude check (DC 15) every round; the DC increases by 1 each round, and on a *successful* check the character loses a rank of Stamina (from the pressure on the lining of his lungs). If the check *fails*, or when the character simply stops holding his breath, he begins to suffocate, and on the next round, he becomes incapacitated. The following round, he's dying and cannot stabilize until returned to a normal atmosphere.

On the third and each subsequent round of exposure to vacuum, a character must succeed on a Fortitude check (DC 20) or suffer from aeroembolism ("the bends"). A failed check means excruciating pain as small air bubbles form in the bloodstream; said character is stunned and remains so until returned to normal atmospheric pressure. Two or more degrees of failure impose the incapacitated condition.

VACUUM!

Science says explosive decompression doesn't actually happen in a vacuum, but there's nothing in comic-book science preventing Gamemasters from including it as a final showy demise for those characters unlucky enough to be killed by any of the real dangers of vacuum exposure.

STAYING ALIVE

Time is obviously on vacuum's side, as sooner or later even the highest Fortitude scores fail to measure up to the plethora of increasingly unfavorable checks. Other than a timely rescue (good thing there are superheroes around, eh?), a character's only recourse is to the Immunity power.

One rank in Immunity takes care of all the cold, radiation, or vacuum worries (or, even better, three ranks for all three). Two ranks allows a character to kick the oxygen habit and never fear suffocation ever again. A total of five ranks, then, makes a hero completely vacuum-proof.

Obviously, an investment of five power points isn't much of a sacrifice for most characters, particularly those in a cosmic series where players know in advance they'll be spending a lot of time in space. That modest expenditure also absolves more unscientific Gamemasters from having to worry about space hazards distracting the players from other, more colorful menaces in their storylines.

While the required five ranks of Immunity may be cost effective, they can also be hard to reconcile with many character concepts. (“So why exactly doesn’t vacuum hurt your character?”/“Uhhhhh, because it’s a cheap power?”) It may therefore be in everyone’s best interests to give characters ready access to some type of space suit. Even more frugally in that case, the five Immunity ranks needed to become vacuum-proof can be bought with 5 equipment points (total cost: 1 power point).

DARK STAR

When a big enough star burns up the last of its fuel, the remaining bits collapse into an unbelievably dense chunk of material that gives off more than enough gravity to grab and hold *light itself*. In short, it becomes a black hole.

Obviously, if light isn’t fast and intangible enough to avoid being doomed, the much slower and heavier player characters are in serious trouble, being drawn ever closer to the “event horizon.” This line of Beyond-Certain Death is where the fatal grasp of gravity becomes inescapable, and the player characters are mashed into little hero meatballs... and then into nothing.

FIXING A HOLE

The good news is the heroes can stay on the event horizon’s good side through a variety of methods. One option is to gain enough speed to achieve escape velocity. Heroes who get around via their own Flight or Movement (Space Travel) powers can use extra effort to get the needed boost. They can also serve as living exterior booster rockets, helping any trapped spaceships make it to safety. Even if the hero can’t provide enough extra push to single-handedly provide an escape, doing so can still buy more time for someone else to hit upon a solution.

With the right modifications, the heroes’ ride may see them to safety. A player character with Technology skill may build or jury-rig an anti-gravity force field, a crucial boost to the ship’s Speed, or some other means of deliverance. When the end result pushes the ship and its systems past the design limits, a Vehicles skill check may be needed to hold the ship together amidst all the gravitic stresses, but at any rate it’s a better risk than staying near the event horizon.

If the Vehicles skill is a hero’s strong suit, such an ace space jockey may be able to free the ship without any tech-geek help at all. Pulling some tricky maneuvers—skipping the ship off the event horizon like a stone on a pond, using the gravity well for a “slingshot effect”—may lead to a successful escape. The ship might get bent a little in the process, but that beats being crushed. Characters who space-travel under their own powers can follow suit using the Acrobatics skill, or perhaps even escaping with their Sleight of Hand skill.

Depending on their nature, some other powers may prove useful when staring at an event horizon. For example, Teleport may allow the heroes to simply disappear to a safer location (perhaps with extra effort required). Move Object may give the player characters the boost needed

to escape, or serve as a countering effect to the black hole. Whatever the players opt to do, Gamemaster, try to reward their creativity... unless you *want* them all to get sucked into the black hole.

Truth is, you just might. While available science tells us black holes are like cosmic trash compactors, comic-book science says they are open gateways to other universes, dimensions, and times. If players fail some important checks or the demands of the plot make a journey into a black hole a necessity, the other side may offer bold new adventures rather than an agonizing death. See the section on **Changes** for ideas on what might await them upon their arrival on the other side.

THE COLD EQUATIONS

As depicted in comic books, black holes are very versatile menaces. Depending on the heroes’ proximity, the gravity they experience can range from “gentle tug on the shoulder” to “make out your will.” Combine this with black holes’ tendency to just pop up out of nowhere right in front of space-traveling heroes, and difficulty classes assigned to the vital checks can literally be any number the Gamemaster needs them to be.

If the plot just needs the heroes to be distracted or inconvenienced, the hole first appears far away and the DCs are relatively low. When the black hole *is* the plot, the characters only become aware when they’re near the event horizon, and the DCs are consequently greater. If a trip through a black hole is intended to be a plot-required journey through time and/or space, the event horizon may truly be inescapable.

A HUMAN SUPERNOVA, A SOLAR SUPERMAN

One of the cosmic sub-genre’s favorite recurring doomsday scenarios involves inhabited worlds threatened by novae, or worse yet, supernovae. The difference? In the former, a dying star attracts enough hydrogen to start a massive nuclear fusion explosion. The latter involves the sudden collapse or surprise restarting of a dying star. In game terms, the end result is the same: “Blooney! Nothin’ left.” Nearby planetary bodies are obliterated, and inhabited worlds as many as 10 parsecs (33 light-years) away may be fatally stripped of their ozone layers by the radiation emitted.

The demands of good drama and fair play require that an impending (super)nova be an impossible-not-to-notice thing for the beings nearby. Those who can will flee, but those who cannot are going to need some super-powered help. If it’s the heroes themselves who need to make themselves scarce, they likely face similar challenges to avoiding a black hole, as outlined in **Fixing a Hole**: getting themselves—or their ship—into shape to escape before it explodes, or to outrun the explosion, and using skills and/or powers to make that happen.

Things get much more complicated when others are stuck in harm’s way, especially when those others are entire planetary populations. Unless the heroes are PLX3

or so (see **The X Factor**, following), their raw power isn't enough to evacuate everyone or disarm the star-bomb.

However, being owed a favor by a PLX3 being, or earning one (by proving their worth accomplishing some entity-pleasing mission, for instance), is a valid solution. This approach works as well with lesser, but still powerful, potential allies. For example, earning a favor with an advanced alien civilization can result in their space fleet performing the needed evacuation. Alternately, the heroes' efforts may be directed towards acquiring some long-lost ancient alien artifact with the power to save the day for everyone.

UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD

The various methods of averting the devastating effects of a supernova outlined in the previous paragraphs can serve as a template for any number of other planetary Armageddon scenarios. Among the choices for an apocalypse are rampaging PLX cosmic beings, interstellar plagues, invading space armadas, radiation or other harmful energy waves, temporal displacements, intergalactic parasites, vampiric clouds, massive amoebae, and rogue planets. Gamemasters are of course free to add other weird tech-nobable cosmic phenomena to the list as they see fit.

COSMIC RULE OPTIONS

Just as the cosmic sub-genre expands the scope of the usual superhero series for some added fun, tweaking the existing *M&M* game system toward the infinite can open up game sessions to enjoyable new possibilities. This section offers some new and optional rules for taking the World's Greatest Super Role-Playing Game and making it the Universe's Greatest.

It must be stressed these rules are *optional*. Even enthusiastic Gamemasters should read them over carefully, as they have the ability to completely wreck reality itself—their current series included. Don't hesitate to use the Gamemaster's greatest power: the ability to pronounce a final "no" to the players. Also, some of these rules may change aspects of the game, or define them in ways you don't want in your game. Whether you include them in your series is up to you.

THE X FACTOR

In a typical *M&M* series where cosmic sub-genre elements are only occasionally featured in the setting, omnipotent beings are best handled as "Power Level X" plot devices. There is little point in detailing their game stats, because they are so far beyond those of characters on the heroes' scale.

Still, all such antagonists should have some kind of weak point or vulnerability, something the heroes can exploit in order to defeat them. It doesn't necessarily have to be easy for them to figure out or employ, but it should be there at least close enough to the surface for a player to figure out on his or her own (or spend a hero point for enough inspiration to get a solid clue). Impersonal cosmic threats like massive solar flares similarly need an Achilles' heel for the players to find and exploit.

In *M&M*, Power Level X means the character's traits are as high as the Gamemaster wishes or the adventure requires. They are effectively unlimited in game terms—a plot device. Because of this, the Gamemaster needs to pay close attention to the awarding of hero points when dealing with a plot device entity, and encourage the use of said points for inspiration or extra effort aimed at overcoming the cosmic being.

SOLVING FOR X: COSMIC-LEVEL CHARACTERS

Things are different in an undiluted cosmic superhero setting. Characters are rubbing elbows with the personification of Anger in the universe, suns are going nova, and the fabric of time itself comes unraveled. Resolving each and every one of these situations by outwitting the nigh-unfathomable menace is certainly a valid option, but players being as they are, they may just want to take a more direct, die-driven approach to solving cosmic problems. This becomes all the more likely if they're portraying characters that are—even temporarily—a bit cosmic themselves.

COSMIC-LEVEL BENCHMARKS

To get you started on the road to everywhere, Gamemaster, the following benchmarks are presented. The table following lists various cosmic-level entities as they are typically represented in the cosmic superhero sub-genre.

COSMIC POWER LEVELS

PL	DESCRIPTION
X1	Beings limited to a particular culture and representing widespread but not universal concepts, like Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, or Thor, the Norse God of Thunder, when possessed of their full, unfettered power.
X2	Beings representing nearly universal concepts (like a god of war) or the powerful rulers of other groups of equal or lesser cosmic beings, like Zeus or Odin.
X3	Abstract beings representing truly universal ideas, like Life, Death, and Time.
X4	The embodiment of an entire universe and all that it physically and conceptually holds.
X5	Aristotle's "the unmoved mover", the supreme being(s) who created all—even creation itself.

The Gamemaster is, of course, free to adjust these guidelines as his or her particular storyline needs and personal tastes dictate.

Extremely powerful *M&M* characters can optionally be classified by varying degrees of omnipotence, each having a semi-quantified set of abilities. Under this system, godlike entities can be sorted into power level X1, power level X2, and so forth, up to power level X5. The implications of each grade are defined in the **Cosmic-Level Benchmarks** sidebar.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING COSMIC

For each and every check required of power level X1 characters, they are assumed to have a total of 20 in all applicable abilities, skills, and powers in addition to the random numbers earned from any required die rolls, unless the GM prefers to build in some areas of weakness with lower (perhaps even *much* lower) ranks. Each additional X-level adds *another* 20 to their total for skills, abilities, and powers. For example, a power level X2 character who succeeds at an attack check can (absent other modifiers or skills) scarcely do no worse than a 42 (X2 level times 20 plus avoiding a critical miss with a roll of two). A power level X4 character can (see the **Quantifying the Infinite** sidebar) push the planet Earth out of orbit with his or her bare hands or raw power (X4 level

times 20 equals Strength 80—more than enough to do the job).

NATURALLY AWESOME: ADVANTAGES & SKILLS

Cosmic entities tend to be inherently and equally good at everything, and are far above such mortal concepts as specialization. Most do have a strong suit or two related to the concept they define, and these trademark gimmicks can be represented as advantages, skills, or both. For example, Thor may well have Close Combat skill specialized for use with *Mjolnir* (and Ranged Combat as well, if he can throw it).

Please note the assumed 20s for cosmic characters make any skill granted them *very* potent. Reusing the power level X1 Thor example above, absent other modifiers and a bad die roll he can't do worse than a 42 to hit with his enchanted mallet (DEX 20 + 20 skill + avoiding a critical miss with a roll of two). This essentially allows cosmic characters to take on other cosmic beings a notch more powerful than themselves, at least when using their best tricks derived from the concept they embody.

QUANTIFYING THE INFINITE

The cosmic superhero sub-genre can rapidly exhaust the Measurements Table in the *M&M* rulebook. For those times when the characters need to do something truly mind-bending, here are some benchmark figures.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

The effective Strength required to move Earth's moon, Luna, is STR 71, while moving the Earth itself requires STR 77. A Jupiter-sized mass takes STR 86 to budge. All these Atlas-like feats require some means of propulsion (Flight or Movement (Space Travel), for example) and probably Immunity (Life Support) to survive in outer space. Heroes with perception range Move Object have a much easier time of it.

THE DISTANCE

Zippering from our sun to the edge of our solar system around Neptune is distance 40. A single light-year is distance 51. Traveling one parsec—roughly to the nearest known star to Earth, Proxima Centauri—is distance 53. The nearest known planetary system, Epsilon Eridani, is distance 55, making Movement 2 (Space Travel) a more cost-effective investment for space-faring heroes.

For those who like to compute their own astronomical ranges, distance 57 is 10 parsecs, and distance 60 is 100 parsecs. Distance 63 is a kiloparsec, and distance 70 is 100 kiloparsecs.

Making the 10 kiloparsec jaunt from Earth to the center of our Milky Way galaxy is distance 65, while the Milky Way itself is distance 66 across.

One megaparsec—roughly the distance from Earth to the neighboring Andromeda Galaxy—is distance 73, or Movement 3 (Space Travel) for those frugal with their character points.

Distance 77 takes a being 10 megaparsecs, while 80 makes it 100 megaparsecs. A gigaparsec is distance 83, and 10 of them is distance 87. At distance 88, a long-haul voyager hits the particle horizon—the observable limit of the universe.

CALL ME LIGHTNING

Moving at the speed of light itself requires a Speed of 28, or simply having Movement 1 (Space Travel).

YOU AND ME AGAINST THE WORLD

Mad at the whole world? Settling that quarrel with your fists—against an Earth-sized non-gas giant—means making a dent against a Toughness defense of 33. A STR 48 punch is (barring other modifiers) enough to completely destroy the planet with one blow, and is therefore not recommended without enough Immunity to survive in the ensuing, newly-created vacuum of space.

The Gamemaster should always bear in mind the reverse is also true. Since cosmic beings lack most skills, it is possible—and tremendous player fun—for a very talented but non-cosmic character to get the better of more omnipotent entities. To be sure, besting a power level X1 being and its Awareness 20 with Deception skill isn't easy, but throw in a hero point (if the situation merits it) and it becomes possible.

IT'S COMPLICATED

As alluded to above, power level X beings tend to have a vulnerability or weakness, one tied to the concept they embody. Fire gods don't do well when exposed to cold, and personifications of love are repelled by hatefulness. Throw in the general arrogance and pridefulness great power inculcates, and cosmic characters are at least as prone to complications as any other.

Complications are the one area where being a demigod or personified abstraction isn't all it's cracked up to be. Whereas mortal beings pocket hero points from a beneficent universe every time complications ruin their day, cosmic beings pretty much *are* that universe—so no lining their own pockets with free do-overs.

So, why portray a cosmic character and still inflict role-playing based complications like Greed or Quirk on one's alter ego?

A funny thing happens if, say, the Greek god of wine stops (over)sampling the Pinot noir whenever he gets the chance. Once he stops honoring his Complications, he ceases embodying all aspects of the concept from whence he derives his powers and said powers begin to desert him. The Gamemaster can discipline errant cosmic forces by reducing all their skills, powers, and attributes—from 20 at power level X1 to 19, or perhaps even 15. These reductions steadily continue until the scores reach zero. At that point, the cosmic character is rejuvenated instantly, back under the safe, sane auspices of Gamemaster control.

ULTIMATE POWER

By their very nature, cosmic beings are scary powerful. An angry power level X3 being (shame on your players for waking up Cthulhu, by the way) is going to respond to the offending party with a Damage 60 attack delivered with a minimum 62 attack check.

Some cosmic characters add a long, long list of powers to their sky-high attributes. As noted at the start, there's usually no point in writing down what a power level X character can do, as it's close enough to "everything."

That said, all but the higher ends of power level X should have *some* things they can't (or won't) do, simply because of the concepts they embody. At the lower ends of power level X, the omnipotence gap widens. For example, a power level X1 character has a nifty 20 points in Immunity... but that's a far cry from a power level X3 entity that can spring for, say, Immunity to Fortitude effects with points to spare.

These brief flashes of fallibility can serve as the critical vulnerability that allows otherwise outgunned heroes to triumph over a cosmic being. For instance, fighting anyone with a 20 Toughness (and 20 Dodge and Parry) is never fun, but the task is considerably easier using attack forms the targeted cosmic entity doesn't have Immunity to.

It also greatly increases the heroes chances of success (not to mention survival) if they're battling the Greek god of wine, who—though powerful—is pretty much conceptually limited to getting them completely drunk. If all else fails, a hero with Movement (Dimensional Travel) might just enable a faltering group to escape to the one place their cosmic opponent can't follow to plan anew.

POWERING UP

Like any grant of tremendous power, Gamemasters should use these optional rules very carefully. Although a series where the players all have power level X characters is certainly possible, the paucity of real challenges such a player-character pantheon could face is likely to make it a short-lived affair. It is therefore advisable that cosmic-powered player characters be so only briefly as well.

The classic method for this goes as follows. An immensely powerful being does something hugely bad, and the characters are too puny to stop it as they are. Seeking out another cosmic being for help—usually, the offending entity's nemesis—they find their would-be savior skeptical. However, by proving their worthiness (*e.g.*, accomplishing some appropriate deed), the benevolent power level X being loans the heroes a fraction of its cosmic power. Then, it's *go time*.

Keeping the suddenly more godlike characters on-task is important. True heroes heed the warning their elevated status won't last indefinitely and get right to their mission, so the Gamemaster's main concern is making the fight an entertaining one. The formula for doing so is simple: keep the characters a cosmic power level below their opposition, then add 20 to their existing attribute levels and power ranks per X level gained, only adding brand new powers as absolutely needed. That leaves the heroes less individually powerful than their foe, but with numbers (and hero points) to cancel out that disadvantage. The stage for a very memorable cosmic slugfest is then all set.

Naturally, the characters return to normal as soon the conflict is resolved and it's safe for them to do so. (It really sucks to punch out a demigod, then die in space when your temporarily gained Immunity (Life Support) power suddenly fades away.) The Gamemaster may opt to extend the duration of their increased omnipotence a bit if the heroes are intent on using said powers to undo the damage done by the beaten evil entity. This can be a time for something truly heroic and cosmic to happen, like restoring a bystander planet's damaged biosphere or bringing a beloved supporting character back to life (with Gamemaster consent, of course).

CHAPTER 2: COSMIC HEROES



Get your space-suit on and pack your universal translator! It's time to make a character and launch them into the never-ending skies of the cosmos! Cosmic adventures propel your heroes into the final frontier of comic book action. From battling alien hordes to exploring strange new worlds, your characters inevitably face situations many **MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS** characters aren't quite used to... or possibly even prepared for.

Fear not! The following pages equip you with everything you need to know to create characters ready for whatever the universe throws at them! This chapter explains how to use the **MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS** rules to create characters ready to face the strange and unknown. There are a few optional rules you may choose to use in your Cosmic series, but other than those, all you need is the **MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS Hero's Handbook**, a character sheet, and a pencil.

STARTING POWER LEVELS

"Cosmic" covers a lot of ground, so to speak. It's a term used to refer to a lot of territory in comic books, and cosmic heroes can range from a clever Earthling struggling to get by on alien worlds to a superhero with the power to stand up to villains bold enough to call themselves space gods. This section outlines how to translate those differences into the **MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS** rules and create characters that fit into such stories.

CHALLENGERS OF THE COSMOS

Some cosmic heroes are heavily inspired by the old Pulp science fiction authors of yesteryear. They struggle to compete against the strange alien landscapes that confront them and overcome challenges using their innately (and often uniquely) human traits of courage, ingenuity,

and perseverance. They may not have special powers of their own, but are sometimes empowered by the circumstances which brought them to the cosmic arena in the first place. Perhaps they were transported from their home by a beam from space which confers other advantages to them, or perhaps their homeworld has a higher level of gravity which gives them greater strength in this new, alien landscape. In any case, it's not unusual for such adventurers to have some special trait which helps even the odds against the strange aliens they encounter and environments they're in.

Frequently, heroes in this category are aided by the ability to learn new skills quickly or to simply have the dumb luck to know the right thing to do at a critical moment in their adventures. This adaptive nature of Challengers of the Cosmos makes them great explora-

WHEN DOES IT MATTER?

Frequently in comics, characters are transported from one side of the galaxy to another and yet have no problem communicating, breathing, and remaining healthy despite alien viruses. In a “realistic” science fiction setting, these and more would all be problems. It’s entirely likely that life on an alien world may have evolved from different proteins, leaving a character with no viable food supply. Why doesn’t this kind of problem come into play in super-hero comics?

Because it’s not what the story is about. Most comics are about the possibilities that engage our imaginations, inspire us, and call for action scene after action scene. For this reason, most of the characters presented in this book don’t worry about immunities to disease, finding safe food to eat, and so forth. This book does deal with the Comprehend power on a regular basis, because the idea of language is important to creating cultural diversity and making alien races more interesting, but you could easily dispense with that, too.

In essence, the physical concerns of travel in space and interactions with aliens only matter when the GM wants to create a problem for the players. It only matters... *when it matters*. The rest of the time, these things shouldn’t get in the way of a fast-paced action story!

If you’re going to make your setting more “realistic” and want to create complications for your players based along these lines, it’s probably best to let them know ahead of time so they can dedicate points to helping solve these problems by buying skills, devices, or advantages to help them out. Things like Expertise: Xenolinguistics (see the skills list later in this chapter) can help a character learn to communicate quickly with an alien race if you’re going to disallow the more “magical” idea of the Comprehend power. Be fair to your players, and make sure everyone knows what kind of universe they’re about to start adventuring in!

tion heroes; they easily tackle the new settings they discover on their adventures!

Challengers of the Cosmos are often good leaders and may rely on certain abilities (such as Presence) and advantages (including Inspire, Leadership, Set-up, and Teamwork) to make themselves and their allies more effective. They are frequently of above-average Intellect, but most often focus on their physical combat traits and skills. Depending on their primary method of problem-solving, Challengers can also be inventors or technology-focused characters, though they frequently leave such things to their teammates. Challengers range from PL 8 to PL 10.

COSMIC CRUSADERS

Cosmic Crusaders are a bit more like what players might consider the “average” superhero. Often at home in strange environments and gifted with superhuman abilities, Crusaders have the physical power to deal with things that Challengers need special equipment to tackle. Having to dedicate points towards power that allows them to survive in space means Cosmic Crusaders can wind up being a little ‘same-y’, but the archetypes in this section have been designed to show how such characters can vary greatly despite having similar powers. The GM may wish to consider granting certain powers or equipment to characters free of charge in order to help players save points for powers that really make their characters unique and interesting (see the **When Does It Matter?** sidebar).

Cosmic Crusaders often find themselves battling alien hordes, space fleets, and the occasional power-mad cosmic threat. Frequently aliens themselves, or empowered by alien technologies, Cosmic Crusaders are well-equipped to interact with the various races they encounter along the way. They often need some form of Comprehend to speak with the many races in their galaxy as they move from one system to another as easily as a comic book reader turns a page. Crusaders also need to

explore a variety of dangerous environments along the way, making Immunity (especially Life Support) a very common power among Crusaders.

Crusaders are used to dealing with trouble alone, but combine their efforts with others to fight the greatest battles. Quickly earning reputations as their fame spreads through the cosmic grapevine, Crusaders often earn benefits within the galactic community for their good deeds. They may be members of a cosmic peace-keeping force, and carry the authority of that organization along with the responsibilities of their position. Cosmic Crusaders are likely to have high Presence scores and other superhuman traits.

Cosmic Crusaders start at PL 10 with 150 power points, but the most common power level for cosmic games is PL 12 with 180 power points. The suggested power level for starting characters in a cosmic series using the *Cosmic Handbook* is power level 12.

COSMIC AVATARS

At the apex of power levels are the Cosmic Avatars. They are often solo heroes, able to challenge alien fleets without help from other heroes. The stars quake with their passing and they may be occupied by ‘greater concerns’ than the average hero. Avatars battle cosmic threats who may deem themselves gods, and challenge them on even terms. Avatars are almost always imbued with incredible power, and have no need for special equipment to travel from the coldest reaches of space to the burning heart of a star.

Avatars are sometimes possessed of technological knowledge and devices far beyond the ken of planet-bound heroes, or they may be granted the powers they need to explore the cosmos and conquer their foes. They sometimes have a base of operations that can move with them, or a headquarters that allows them to easily travel to the furthest reaches of space. This might be a spacecraft, a

space station, or a garden-filled world equipped with amazing portals to anywhere in the cosmos.

Avatars have incredible ability scores, but conversely often have little experience outside their own cosmic realms. They frequently find their great power balanced by complications when dealing with strange cultures or environments. The Avatar of Time and Space may know everything there is to know about timey-wimey stuff, but he doesn't have the first clue how to operate an Earthly vending machine. "What does it mean, 'exact change only?'"

Beginning at PL 14 with 210 power points, Cosmic Avatars are often difficult for the GM to challenge on an ongoing basis. If you want to play in a mixed-power level game, limiting the team to one hero at this level might be preferable, but the GM and players should be careful to give the other players assets which the Cosmic Avatar does not have and cannot imitate. If you want to play with an entire team of characters at this level, you will need to summon some truly epic stories and adversaries for the players on a regular basis. This can be a great deal of fun, but expect the heroes to have a profound impact on the setting.

WITH GREAT POWER COMES GREAT BIG ACTION SCENES

In higher power level games, players should expect their characters to face enemies that are vast in scale. Where a single alien spaceship might cause problems for an average hero, a Cosmic Avatar might have to stop a fleet of them! The scale of a cosmic series should include battle scenes with alien planets in the balance. If the movement powers of the characters allow for it, battles may range across entire galaxies. With this in mind, it's important for the players to understand the scale of the story when designing their characters. Make sure everyone at the gaming table is on the same page when it comes to using powers that are limited by ranges or areas (see **Powers** in the following section for more details). The GM may seriously consider modifying the scale of these powers based on circumstances or setting.

Most cosmic series revolve around characters who are relatively close to each other in power levels. When one character is punching asteroids out of the sky, you don't want another character sitting helplessly in a spaceship because he doesn't have life support powers. Perhaps more so than in any other super-heroic sub-genre, the cosmic adventure doesn't easily lend itself to widely mixed-power level gaming. Many comic books featuring cosmic heroes have all the characters using the same powers, differentiated only by their personalities and how they use those powers. That's one approach, but it's often more useful to make sure every character has certain things they can do that are unique to them, without overlooking the important powers or equipment that enable them to participate in the big action scenes.

OPTION: LONG-RANGE SENSING

The guidelines for Perception in the *Hero's Handbook* are linear (-1 per 10 feet of distance) rather than following the progression of the Measurements Table. If you prefer, you can change the guideline to a -2 to Perception checks for Ranged senses (+2 DC) per distance rank beyond 0 (30 feet). Each rank of the Extended option for Senses applies to all senses and decreases the effective distance rank by 1. Use Limited to reduce Extended to a single sense (making the cost 1 point per 2 ranks).

The Remote Sensing effect (*Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 6**) works well enough in a terrestrial environment, but runs into issues when dealing with vast distances like the gulch of interplanetary (much less interstellar) space.

One way of addressing this problem is to add the following modifier to the Communication effect (*Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 6**) so it also transfers sensory information over a distance.

PERCEPTION

You can receive sensory input other than just return messages. Additional cost per rank is the same as Remote Sensing: +1 point per rank per sense type, +2 points per rank for visual senses, and +5 points per rank for all senses. Unlike Remote Sensing, this modifier does not allow you to target perception ranged effects, although you may still be affected by sensory effects targeting the area you are perceiving. +1 point per rank per sense (+2 for visual senses).

POWERS

Cosmic superheroes are often known for wielding earth-shattering power, fighting battles that span the distances between stars, and searching out evil in the furthest and strangest corners of the cosmos. To this end, they often draw upon high ranks of powers for abilities that many planetbound heroes rarely need, like Life Support and Communication. This section details some special cases and optional rules to help expand the scope of your game using the powers found in the *Hero's Handbook*.

MEASUREMENTS

Space is vast. So vast, in fact, scientists have created new units of measurement to help calculate these distances more easily. A Light Year, for instance, is the amount of distance that light travels in a year. In *MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS* terms, a Light Year (or LY) is 51 ranks on the Measurements Table. An Astronomical Unit, or AU, is defined as the mean distance between Earth and the Sun, or 149,597,870,700 meters (that's 92,955,807 miles). Here are some sample distances in our Solar System in AU and in Distance Ranks from the Measurements Table (see **Chapter 1** of the *MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS Hero's Handbook*).

As you can see from these numbers, using multiples of 10 feet to calculate sensory range modifiers as per the core rules can prove exceedingly frustrating for characters at-

EXTENDED MEASUREMENT TABLE

MEASUREMENT RANKS	BENCHMARKS	DISTANCE IN AU OR LY (APPROXIMATE)
26	From Earth to the Moon, One Light-Second (the distance light travels in a second)	0.0026 AU
32	One Light Minute (the distance light travels in one minute)	.125 AU
34	From the Sun to Mercury	.39 AU
35	From the Sun to the Earth	1 AU
36	From the Sun to Mars	1.5 AU
37	From the Sun to Jupiter	5.2 AU
38	From the Sun to Saturn	9.58 AU
39	From the Sun to Uranus	19.23 AU
40	From the Sun to Pluto	39.5 AU
41	From the Sun to the far edge of the Kuiper Belt	55 AU
51	One Light Year (the distance light travels in a year)	63, 241 AU; 1 LY
54	Distance from the Sun to Alpha Centauri, one of our closest stars	4 LY

LONG-RANGE SENSORY MODIFIERS

RANKS OF SPACE TRAVEL	DISTANCE OR DIAMETER OF AREA SEARCHED	RANGE MODIFIER
1	From Earth to the Moon	-0
	From the Sun to Mars	-2
	From the Sun to Pluto	-5
2	Inside one Solar System	-0
	From one System to another	-2
	Somewhere inside a single Galaxy	-5
3	Searching a single Galaxy	-0
	Searching a super-large Galaxy or cluster of Galaxies	-2
	Searching the known universe	-5

tempting to search a single solar system for a target, much less attempting to search the vast distances between stars. Instead, the GM may make use of one of the Long-Range Sensing options from the *MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS Power Profile* for Sensory Powers which are duplicated below.

One simple solution for searching large areas or distances is to use a character's mobility to modify the ranges first, and then apply a general modifier to the area being searched. For example, if a character has movement power of 15 ranks, subtract those ranks from the Distance ranks of the radius he's searching before converting that to a search range. Characters with Movement (Space Travel) have another option when searching large swaths of space, which is outlined on the accompanying table.

These values are highly dependent upon other conditional modifiers and the sensory abilities of the searcher, not to mention any stealth skills or powers of the target of the search. Without the right skills or powers, a search may not be possible. The GM will need to decide how difficult a Perception check is on these scales. Keep in mind, modern

technology is still relatively blind to a large portion of space in the solar system. This is due not only to the vastness of space, but also due to large objects (like planets) blocking everything "behind" them. It wouldn't be hard to park a huge starship on the far side of the moon, thereby completely obscuring it from detection by most forms of terrestrial observation.

BATTLES BEYOND THE STARS

In order to better reflect the source material (cosmic comics), the ranges for attacks in a *Cosmic Handbook* series have been changed and greatly lengthened.

In terms of the narrative, assume ranges in space are longer due to the characters' raw power or due to the lack of air (or anything else) interfering with ranged powers. Do this by changing the range of every ranged power so its short range is equal to its rank on the Distance column of the Measurements Table (see *Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 1**). Medium range is then equal to the power's rank +1.



PURSUIT CHALLENGES

One type of challenge (*Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 8**) common for fast or fleeing foes is pursuit. The difficulty isn't in defeating the foe, but catching him!

A pursuit essentially works like any other challenge in that the pursuer must acquire a number of degrees of success before three or more degrees of failure. For a standard pursuit, the required degree of success is three as well, although the GM may modify this depending on circumstances.

The traits used in a pursuit challenge are typically those involving maneuverability (Agility, Acrobatics, or Vehicles), knowledge of the terrain (Expertise), and so forth, although players can potentially find uses for traits like Deception, Stealth, and various power effects. A key element is movement speed rank: characters within one rank of each other have no modifier to their challenge checks. Two ranks of difference gives the character with the higher rank a +2 circumstance bonus, while three or more ranks of difference gives the character with the higher rank a +5 circumstance bonus.

Long range is equal to the power's rank +2. So, a Ranged Damage 12 effect has a short range of 16 miles, medium range of 30 miles, and a long range of 60 miles.

POWER EFFECTS

This section examines certain important Power Effects in detail. It also discusses how they're important, and how to adjust them to a cosmic series if needed.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is instantaneous with any subject within your range, but ranges in cosmic adventures may be much larger than in other games. The Communication Range table in the *Hero's Handbook* (**Chapter 6**) is written with a standard super-heroic setting in mind. In a cosmic game, you may wish to update the listed distances to the following:

COMMUNICATION RANGE

RANK	DISTANCE
1	Continent-wide: Within 1,000 miles
2	Worldwide: Anywhere on a planet
3	System-wide: Within the confines of the Solar System
4	Galaxy-wide: Anywhere within the galaxy containing your Solar System
5	Universe-wide: Anywhere within the universe itself

These increased distances reflect the nature of a cosmic series and offer a bit more granularity for the higher ranks of the power as presented in the *Hero's Handbook*, but GMs should feel free to interfere with Communication powers

if and when they interfere with a good story (and give the affected player a hero point for their pain). The GM may require the higher ranks of the power be purchased with the Unreliable flaw to make it clear to the players that they may not always be able to get in touch with the people they want to at any time.

For all characters and examples, this book assumes the Communication power is used as written in the *Hero's Handbook*, but this chart may be substituted if your game uses it.

COMPREHEND

As mentioned in the Skill section (in the following pages), language difficulties may be important in your series, or they may only occasionally crop up. Check with the GM to decide if Comprehend is a necessary power for you, and if it is appropriate to consider a "Universal Translator" device as common enough technology to fit into a piece of Equipment rather than paying full price for a Device or Power. (See the **When Does It Matter?** sidebar and the Xenolinguistics skill (later in this chapter) for more discussion on this topic.)

FLIGHT

This power is almost ubiquitous in the cosmic genre and if a character has powers or devices that *could* grant the ability to fly, then he or she almost definitely has the power to fly through the air. Flight is typically used to move freely through an atmosphere, but it can also be used in space as long as the character also has Life Support. For movement between worlds, solar systems, or galaxies, characters need the Movement (Space Travel) power.

GROWTH

Cosmic entities are often larger than your run-of-the-mill Earthling, so this power is actually quite common. And why not? With no roof over your head, the sky is the limit! Many cosmic villains are designed to tower over the cities they threaten. If you want to play a hero with Growth at extreme levels, it's probably best to allow yourself the ability to return to a more normal height, simply for the convenience of being able to socialize with the "little people" who are likely to make up the bulk of your allies.

IMMORTALITY

Another common ability among cosmic beings, Immortality can reflect that someone is "one with the cosmos" or represents a universal concept, and so can't be permanently killed. Any defeat of their corporeal form is only temporary.

IMMUNITY

Perhaps the most common power in a cosmic series, Immunity allows heroes to explore environments that are

not only hostile, but downright deadly. It doesn't matter if you plan to dive into the heart of a star, or simply take a short walk outside your ship to fix the hyper drive, you'll need some form of Immunity to survive the trip. Many heroes in the higher power levels have innate Immunity powers, but others require some kind of space suit or force field projector to protect them. Depending on the technology norms of your series, these items may be inexpensive pieces of Equipment, or devices that require more of an investment in points. Check with the GM to find out how Immunity should be purchased; as a power, a device, or equipment. It may be possible your GM is giving the heroes Immunity for free or at a discounted price because it's so common.

MOVEMENT

The Movement power covers a lot of different effects, many of which are appropriate to cosmic games. Here are some effects of the power you may wish to consider for your character.

DIMENSION TRAVEL

Cosmic adventures frequently take the heroes into strange realms beyond our universe. It is not at all unusual for characters to be able to move through different dimensions, or to be sent there by an adversary or by circumstances beyond the heroes control. A character's Space Travel power may be a form of Dimension Travel, as they project themselves into a hyperspace where distances between points in our dimension are much closer together. Using Extra Effort to temporarily gain the use of Dimension Travel as an Alternate Effect of their Space Travel power should be allowed. The GM may wish to have the character risk getting lost in another dimension if the character isn't familiar with extra-dimensional travel.

ENVIRONMENTAL ADAPTATION (ZERO-G, OR ZERO GRAVITY)

Environmental Adaptation for zero gravity is very popular for characters. With it, they can operate without penalties in low- or no-gravity environments. Being adrift without gravity and with no sense of "up" or "down" can be very disorienting. This power solves those problems and allows characters to use appropriate movement powers (typically Flight) without limitations.

Moving without gravity is also an issue. In small spaces without gravity, a simple Acrobatics or Athletics check (DC 10) is enough to move at a reduced rate (use the climbing rates). A failed check means the character is disoriented and is Immobile and Vulnerable. A character attempting to move their full speed must make an Acrobatics or Athletics check (DC of 10 plus their Speed rank). On a failed check, the character slams into a surface and must make a Toughness check (DC 15 plus their ranks of the movement power used) to avoid hurting him or herself, as well as being Immobile and Vulnerable until the next round (or there's a moment to recover, if the movement happens out of combat).



Characters with Environmental Adaptation (Zero-G), can use their Strength to propel themselves through such areas with ease as long as they have surfaces to push against. These characters are skilled at maneuvering in this fashion and move at a Speed value determined by their Strength. Thus, a character with Environmental Adaptation (Zero-G) and Strength of 5 can fling themselves along at a speed of 900 feet in a movement action in a zero gravity environment. They do not need to make an Acrobatics or Athletics check and succeed automatically.

SPACE TRAVEL

Space Travel is one of the most important Movement powers for the cosmic hero, whether it's from a power, device, equipment, or vehicle. It allows the character to travel great distances during their adventures, something they'll do often. In some series, however, Space Travel may not be allowed as a power, or it may be tightly controlled by the GM. Characters of the Cosmic Challengers level, for instance, are often required to use a spaceship to travel great distances, which allows the GM some control over when the characters can leave one location to move on to the next. Some series take place on a single, strange planet and the heroes may spend the entire series searching for a way "home."

Because there are only 3 ranks of Space Travel, the gradations between characters can make running Pursuit Challenges (see the **Pursuit Challenges** sidebar) seem a bit less interesting if you use the Space Travel ranks to determine how much of an edge one character has over another. In these cases, use the non-Space Travel flight speed to establish the modifier when you determine who has the speed advantage. This works especially well if both targets have the same ranks of Space Travel. If one character has a clear advantage in Space Travel (Space Travel 3 over a Space Travel 1, for instance) use those ranks instead.

TIME TRAVEL

Time Travel is a surprisingly common power in cosmic adventures. In fact, some cosmic settings are so technologically advanced time machines are on display in museums with nothing but a velvet rope to discourage vandalism. There are different forms of comic book time travel. In some, travelers are only allowed to "witness" past events and aren't allowed to interact with the past. More often, however, the characters are able to travel back in time and influence events. Normally, this is done with the intention of fixing something that has gone wrong due to the influence of a time-traveling villain.

REMOTE SENSING

In cosmic series, it is not unusual to use the special Communication Range option for Remote Sensing. Refer to the **Option: Long-Range Sensing** sidebar for details on how to add Sensing to the Communication power as an advantage, to expand the range and scope of this power.

SENSES

Many characters used to traveling among the stars have special or unusual senses. These can allow various special skill uses as well. For example, a character with Infravision and the Tracking Advantage can follow a spaceship's heat trail in space.

TELEPORT

Teleport, like other movement effects, is designed for terrestrial use, even with the addition of the Extended Range extra your hero won't be crossing the gulf of space between planets (usually). To create a teleport effect along the lines of "making the jump to hyperspace," use the Movement (Space Travel) effect. A starship's transporter room may in fact have a Movement (Space Travel) effect with a Limit of being within range of the ship's sensors (that's a Limit in this case because Space Travel isn't usually limited in such a manner).

ABILITIES

In a game where heroes start at Power Level 12 or 14, it's not too unusual for a character to approach rank 20 with certain abilities. So what does this mean for the setting? In general, ability scores in a cosmic series work the same as they do in any other series, following the guidelines in the *Hero's Handbook*, but a GM may choose to highlight them in other ways.

Depending on the kind of series the GM wants to run, the scope of certain abilities can be expanded somewhat by allowing them to be used for power stunts in the same way that a character can use their Strength Damage to emulate non-damage effects with Extra Effort. In the case of Intellect, for example, a character might emulate Mind Reading by watching his opponent's actions and deducing what that character is thinking. This is similar to a use of the Insight skill, but grants the character more detailed information than might normally be intuited from a target's emotional state.

GMs choosing to allow these kinds of stunts should limit them so characters don't simply power stunt everything. Requiring Extra Effort is one limiting factor, but giving each character a signature ability they—and only they—can use this stunt option for is another. The GM is encouraged to ask the players what they want to excel at, and try to help them use their abilities to make their characters more unique.

Normally, when power stunting off Strength, you use the Damage value as an effect to determine the points you have access to. Thus, a character with a 16 Strength has 16 points to create alternate effects. The same holds true for stunting off other ability scores. Rather than using the Damage value (which other Abilities don't have as a default), you are essentially power stunting off the ability bonus used for skills or resistance checks. This means you can't power stunt off your Intellect and perform a skill action using your full Intellect bonus in the same action, because you've used that resource to do something else.

Example: *The Intergalactic Troubleshooter wishes to use his 8 Intellect to predict the actions of a particularly clever foe. He gets permission from the GM to use extra effort to power stunt Precognition using 4 of his Intellect's 8 ranks to buy 4 points of the Sense (Precognition) effect. He can't also add those 4 ranks to his Intellect-based skills on the same turn, because he is dedicating some of his Intellect bonus to predicting his opponent's actions. If he has an action left to do so, the Troubleshooter may still make a Tactics check, but with 4 fewer ranks than his usual total.*

Another thing to consider in your series is the impact of different levels of ability scores as they pertain to different species. One alien species, for example, might be much more intelligent than humanity. This might confer special advantages (their babies are working out calculus in their heads while human babies might be learning how to talk), but it can also create problems relating to other species, or other complications depending on the ability in question. A sufficiently Intellect-focused species, for instance, might have trouble accepting a less clever species as actually being sentient and worthy of respect. This is often a source of strife in comic books, where a super-intelligent species discounts the value of human life (or that of other alien races) and see them only as playthings or subjects for experimentation. The story potential for the differences in ability levels between races is rich soil from which many cosmic stories can grow.

SKILLS

Skills in a cosmic series work the same as how they're presented in the *Hero's Handbook*. However, here are a few new Expertise skills to help characters master their space-faring setting, and some expanded entries for certain skills to show how they can be used in an environment far beyond the bounds of Earth.

EXPERTISE: ASTROGATION

If it's your GM's desire to make traveling from star system to star system a challenge the heroes need to deal with in the game you're playing, pick up an Expertise in Astrogation. This specialized form of navigation allows a character to plan routes through space or hyperspace to avoid colliding with celestial bodies, gravity wells, and other deep-space objects. It also prevents characters from getting lost in the Big Empty of space. A clever player may also use this skill to attempt to track down a fleeing ship, or to escape a pursuer.

EXPERTISE: XENOLINGUISTICS

The ability to speak many different languages intuitively falls under the purview of the Comprehend power most of the time, but the understanding of the fundamentals of language as spoken by different alien species falls into the category of Xenolinguistics. A character with this Expertise may attempt to understand any language and interpret it with a skill check. If the skill check generates three or more successes, the character can communicate with that species from that point on, though there may still be

misunderstandings. The difficulty of any such language challenge should be based on how commonly encountered that species is, and how strange their methods of communicating are when compared with that of the interpreter. For example, a human may find most humanoid languages relatively easy to understand given time, but trying to communicate with an insect-like race that “sings” by rubbing their wings together is more difficult.

INSIGHT AND OTHER INTERACTION SKILLS (DECEPTION, INTIMIDATION, PERSUASION)

Cultural or biological differences may occasionally create problems using Insight and other interaction skills. If a species is particularly difficult or impossible to communicate with, the characters affected are unable to deceive, intimidate, or otherwise interact intelligibly with their desired subject. If a hero attempts to interact with aliens and the GM decides it’s impossible, that’s likely worth a hero point for the complication.

RANGED COMBAT: VEHICULAR WEAPONS

Characters familiar with spaceships and the weapons they’re equipped with can pick up a skill to represent their training with vehicle-mounted weapons. This skill can be used with any vehicle weapons, which may vary greatly in terms of damage output. The total number of ranks of this skill that can be used with a given weapon is determined by the GM. For weapons used regularly, sticking at or near the character’s power level is appropriate. If the weapons are significantly more powerful (say, the blasters on a star destroyer), the GM may allow the hero to use enough ranks to act as if they’re 2, 3, or more power levels higher than normal.

Example: *The Troubleshooter is a PL12 hero with a ship with Ranged Damage 14 blasters mounted to it and he has the Ranged Combat: Vehicular Weapons skill at a total of +10, which is the maximum allowed by his power level. In one adventure, he’s onboard a large Grue military vessel and he’s taken control of one of the gun turrets. The gun is Ranged Damage 18 and the GM allows Troubleshooter to use his full ranks in Ranged Combat: Vehicular Weapons, which gives him a +10 attack bonus and 18 Damage; the equivalent of a PL 14 attack.*

TECHNOLOGY

In a setting where characters are gallivanting across the galaxy and constantly encountering new cultures and races, Technology is going to be a frequently used skill. In most cosmic settings, merely having this skill is enough to allow a character to attempt to repair a hyperspace jump drive (or whatever it is the heroes use), something clearly beyond the skills of your average computer-user in a more Earthlike setting. Technological artifacts vary wildly from one alien species to another, however, so the GM is encouraged to occasionally give his players challenges related to these differences. Some technology may be so alien to the player characters that simply understanding and using it is a Challenge Sequence (see *Hero’s Handbook*, **Chapter 6**).

Some examples of alien-designed technology capable of creating challenges for players include: an alien race that uses audio-centric “displays” instead of visual ones due to their extra-sensitive ears and lack of eyes, an alien race that uses living creatures as technology, or a race that is so xenophobic their technology is designed not to interface with any other races.

TREATMENT

In a universe where characters are frequently encountering a variety of alien species, Treatment may be more difficult if the character is unfamiliar with the biology of the alien he or she is attempting to treat. If the player character is in a setting where meeting different aliens is a commonplace event, this shouldn’t be used as a penalty too often, but it may be appropriate from time to time to increase the DC of skill checks. The GM may decide to do so once in a while as a complication, or when introducing a new alien race to the setting, but the player should be awarded a hero point if this is the case. A player that spends points on Expertise in alien biology should be able to ignore such circumstance modifiers when using Treatment.

VEHICLES

In a cosmic series, the players may encounter a broad range of vehicles, from personal speeders to walking tripods to giant space-battleships. For the purposes of this skill, there is no need to differentiate between one kind of ship and another, but the same problems encountered with the Technology skill could apply here as well. If a GM wishes to make life difficult for the players, he or she can apply a -2 or -5 penalty to their Vehicles checks depending on how unfamiliar they are with the type of machine they’re attempting to pilot.

ADVANTAGES

Advantages in a cosmic series are no different than in any other superhero setting, but a few are called out here as having special merit. Cosmic settings range from primitive planet-bound savagery to pulpy science fiction to advanced civilizations spanning a galaxy. No matter the setting, an advantage which helps emphasize a character’s authority or gives the character a reputation is often useful or appropriate. The Gamemaster has final say on all advantage purchases, but given the breadth of a cosmic series, any of the advantages listed in the *Hero’s Handbook* are fair game.

Presented here are two new options for the Benefit advantage.

BENEFIT: GALACTIC AUTHORITY RANKED, GENERAL

A character with this advantage has been granted certain rights and responsibilities by a galactic civilization or other large organization. They are recognized almost everywhere in the civilized galaxy as having legal enforcement powers, as well as a certain amount of diplomatic immunity. Sometimes known as “space cops” by others, these characters have a duty to enforce a set of communally

accepted laws and the right to travel across the galaxy unimpeded by the various alien governments along the way. Those governments *usually* recognize the character's authority and respond to it in a positive manner.

BENEFIT: GALACTIC REPUTATION RANKED, GENERAL

For an adventurer who never feels like an outsider when traveling to alien worlds, this Benefit is ideal. Such a character has a reputation and is well-known throughout space-faring worlds. The rank of this Benefit offers a rough guideline for how much of the reputation precedes the character, not whether the reputation is positive or not. The character's actions in the game determine how those he encounters react to him, but this advantage makes sure people have heard about those actions.

FAVORED ENVIRONMENT GENERAL

With many planets to explore, this advantage may be useful in any number of situations. Potentially one of the most popular choices in a cosmic setting is Favored Environment: Space. However, if almost every fight scene takes place in open space, the Gamemaster should disallow this option because it's too common.

EQUIPMENT

There are many pieces of gear a star-faring character is likely to have with them all the time. Universal translators, weapons, and space suits are useful for many different types of characters, but there's also flight belts, communicators, and tools to help make getting around and communicating easier. Most of these pieces of gear assume the setting is a far-future or otherwise high-tech toy wonderland in which characters can use Equipment points to purchase items that wouldn't normally be available that way. The GM is the final arbiter when deciding if a piece of gear needs to be bought as a Device or Equipment.

In the comics, most space-faring heroes and villains exist alongside technology that is wondrous by today's standards, but not every cosmic setting is so advanced. As such, the GM should establish ground rules for what can and cannot be purchased as Equipment in your game. These rules may not be consistent from session to session and world to world due to the differences in gear available in different settings. The guidelines offered here use the Movement (Space Travel) power ranks as a benchmark for different levels of technology, because in most cosmic stories the ability to travel from one place to another is a strong indicator of a society's technological development. If you wish to expand on the list for your series, feel free to do so. Societies without the ability to leave their atmosphere are considered primitive by space-faring societies so the table on the next page starts at zero, but you may increase each value by one if you would rather have a scale from one to five.

These technology levels are suggested to help GMs determine the level of technology available as equipment in their series. If the heroes visit a backwater planet where

GALACTIC AUTHORITY

BENEFIT RANK	EFFECT
1	You are a galactic peace officer of some type, empowered to cross interplanetary "borders" and offer assistance to those in need. Local authorities still have more authority in local matters than you do, but will be mostly cooperative in your efforts to do your job.
2	A galactic guardian, this character has the powers of a galactic peace officer and often "outranks" the local authorities. In the right situations, they follow your orders and give assistance according to your needs.
3	Characters with 3 or more ranks invested in this Benefit are often considered a galactic authority on par with local governmental leaders. The character has the authority to command the assistance of local militaries when dealing with problems related to those governments, provided the locals recognize the character's authority and are willing and able to cooperate.
4	Cosmic authority is conferred upon the character with this level of Benefit. A character with cosmic authority may ask for, and expect, the assistance of multi-planetary armadas in times of need. Conversely, they have the authority to command such armadas to stand down if they can impress upon the leaders with an Interaction skill check the validity of their authority.

GALACTIC REPUTATION

BENEFIT RANK	EFFECT
1	Characters with this rank in Benefit are well-known in most hi-tech societies connected to the ones they travel most frequently among.
2	With this rank, a character is recognized on sight in most space-faring cultures.
3	At this rank, a character is so well-known, word of their deeds has begun to be whispered among aliens who have not left their home worlds.
4	A character with this rank of Reputation has a preternatural fame or infamy that makes him or her (or it) recognizable by any culture, anywhere. Even if the aliens don't have modern technology, they somehow know the character and are aware of his or her deeds. Some cosmic threats cultivate this level of Reputation to help them quickly subjugate more primitive worlds through intimidation.

some equipment is hard to find or repair, that may be worth a Complication. These tech levels are given as a set of guidelines and are not considered hard and fast rules. Use them as benchmarks for deciding where the technology in your game becomes fair game for Equipment points. Anything that seems more advanced than your chosen tech level should be purchased as a Device (*Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 7**). If a power effect is exceptional, unusual, or extremely useful compared to what NPCs in your setting normally carry as equipment, it is probably a device.

TECH LEVEL AND EQUIPMENT AVAILABILITY

TECH LEVEL	EQUIPMENT INCLUDES
0	Sticks, stones, swords and archaic armor, as well as basic metal tools. Space travel is not possible, but strange devices based on alien artifacts or "forgotten" technology may be available to the heroes.
1	Modern day Earth technology, advanced Earth tech, vehicles with Space Travel 1, likely with one or more flaws.
2	Vehicles run on clean energy, vehicles with Space Travel 2, energy weapons, powered armor, universal translators.
3	Vehicles with Space Travel 3, powerful energy weapons, possibly Unreliable Time Travel.
4	Vehicles with Time Travel, compact space travel equipment

SAMPLE EQUIPMENT

Equipment takes many forms. On the following pages are examples of starships, weapons, personal transporters, and much more. Use these items as written or as inspiration for your own creations. In each case, the equipment below is described in detail, including the minimum tech level for that item based on the **Tech Level and Equipment Availability** table, and accompanied by their game stats.

FLIGHT PLATFORM

TECH LEVEL 2

A common sight on more advanced worlds, flight platforms are often used by law enforcement to pursue criminals, or to gain a higher vantage point for observing an area. The flight platform is easy to use and fairly stable (although a person riding one can be knocked off by an attack or severe weather conditions). Flight platforms are ubiquitous, it is not unusual for them to be used by security guards inside some larger buildings, like a space station, mega-mall, or a hall of law. Ranks of Flight vary, but 4 ranks, for a speed of 30 MPH, is common.

Flight Platform: Flight, Platform • 1 point per rank

EXPLORER CLASS STARSHIP

TECH LEVEL 2

The more adventurous species in the cosmos see space as a frontier to be explored. They design massive starships, staffed by hundreds of crew, and send them out on extended missions into the unknown. These starships are often well-armed despite their peaceful mission. For vehicles of this scale, it is not unusual for them to have many of the same features as a headquarters, including infirmaries, laboratory space, living space, and more. The sensors of a starship enable skilled crew to sweep the space around them for anomalies and target potential threats.

The ship's anti-matter torpedoes are notable in their design. They have a burst radius, but must successfully target a vessel. Essentially, if the torpedo misses the target, it does not detonate but attempts to home in on it on the following turn. The full damage value is used for the attack against the hull of a ship, but only the ranks of damage with Burst Area are used against characters or other ships nearby; they still make a Dodge resistance check to reduce the effect of the damage as is normal with Area Effect attacks.

With powerful weapons and the most advanced technology available from their home world, commanding an Explorer Class Starship is the goal for many aspiring captains. Starships can become the setting for many cosmic adventures, if the heroes run out of planets to explore.

EXPLORER CLASS STARSHIP • 140 POINTS

Size: Awesome; **STR** 22 **SPD** 16 (125,000 MPH) **DEF** 0 **TOU** 18
Features: Communications, Computer, Fire Prevention System, Gym, Hangar, Holding Cells, Infirmary, Laboratory, Library, Living Space, Navigation System, Personnel, Security System

Deflector Shields: Enhanced Defenses 7 (Dodge 7), Protection 3 Impervious Toughness 10 • 20 points

Hyperspace Engines: Array (21 points)

- **Trans-portal Room:** Burst Area Selective Extended Teleport 7 (120 miles), Limited to Extended, Limited Location: To anywhere, back to the ship • 21 points
- **Hyperspace Drive:** Movement 2 (Space Travel) • 1 point
- **Long-Distance Trans-portal Room:** Burst Area Selective Teleport 7 (0.5 miles), Limited Location: To anywhere, back to the ship • 1 point

Graviton Drive: Flight 16 (125,000 MPH) • 32 points

Tractor Beam: Feature 1 (A starship of this scale is equipped with a tractor beam that allows it to exert strength at range to push, pull, or hold objects in relation to itself. Treat this as a Move Object effect at the rank of the ship's Strength value) • 1 point

Weapon Systems: Array (40 points)

- **Beam Cannon:** Ranged Damage 15, Penetrating 10 • 40 points
- **Anti-Matter Torpedoes:** Ranged Damage 15, Burst Area (5 ranks only), Homing 3 • 1 point

Power Points: **Abilities** 7 + **Powers** 117 + **Features** 13 + **Defenses** 3 = 140

PHASER

TECH LEVEL 2

A powerful weapon carried by more advanced cultures, the phaser has two settings: stun and lethal. Setting phasers to stun is a simple matter of flicking a switch on the side of the weapon; when fired, the device emits a beam of energy that disrupts the neural impulses of most organic life forms. This causes a painful, but temporary, loss of motor control functions in the target. The lethal setting is only used as a last resort by law-abiding races.

Phaser: Ranged Affliction 7 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated), **AE:** Ranged Damage 7 • 15 points



NULLIFIER BANDS

TECH LEVEL 2

In a universe filled with super-powerful criminals, it is no wonder someone developed nullifier bands. They are often designed as collars which are placed around the necks of prisoners, or built into strong cuffs or manacles. The nullifiers progressively weaken any super-abilities possessed by the wearer until the prisoner loses their powers (transformed into a powerless version of themselves). These devices have also found their way into the hands of space pirates and slavers, who use them to control powerful captives they plan on selling as slaves or holding for ransom. As soon as the bands are turned off or removed, the wearer regains their abilities. The ranks of Affliction vary, but are generally within two ranks of the power level of your game in order to be effective.

Nullifier Bands: Continuous Progressive Affliction (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Impaired, Disabled, Transformed), Instant Recovery • 3 points per rank

SPACE SUIT

TECH LEVEL 1

Practically a necessity in almost any cosmic game, the space suit is a piece of gear no space explorer should be without. Those heroes gifted with the power to survive the void of space will still want to know where they can find one for their less-durable friends. Space suits almost always come equipped with a simple commlink circuit for communicating via radio. Depending on which race the

suit was designed for, it may prove challenging for other races to wear, but most “comic-book” cosmic settings feature space suits which truly are “one size fits all.”

Space Suit: Feature 1 (Commlink), Immunity 7 (Cold, Disease, Heat, Radiation, Vacuum, Suffocation) • 8 points

SUPER-TECH FLIGHT BELT

TECH LEVEL 2

These compact devices create a gravitational field that responds to the will of the user. These inventions are often used by superheroes who don't have their own ability to fly, to help them keep up with their fellow heroes. They are reliable, easy to use, and fairly compact. Additionally, the effects of the belt are subtle, so the casual viewer may not know the belt is being used.

Super-Tech Flight Belt: Flight, Subtle • 1 point + 2 points per rank

TELEPATHIC TRANSCIVER

TECH LEVEL 3

The most efficient form of communication in a vacuum is telepathy, which requires no medium for sound to travel in and communicates ideas clearly without chance of miscommunication or interference. Often designed as a small ear plug or similar device, this unit scans the surface thoughts of the user and transmits them to others. While most living beings using a space suit find the built-in commlink sufficient for their needs, a telepathic transceiver is a must for those beings able to survive in a space without a containment suit. This



device allows communication with any sentient species, and often incorporates a universal translator to prevent miscommunication. Using one is as simple as speaking, and often heroes find themselves mouthing their words despite not needing to. The range of these devices is limited by their small power sources, and is only useful when the target of communications is within clear line of sight.

Telepathic Transceiver: Comprehend 2 (Understand, Understood), Communication 2 (Mental), Quirk—Line of Sight Required • 10 points

TIME SPHERE

TECH LEVEL 3

Most cultures in cosmic settings would love to have access to time travel, but it's only available to the most advanced civilizations. The time sphere is an example of a potent time machine, one designed for traveling back and forth in time. While traveling, the time sphere is able to slip out of phase with the local time stream, rendering the sphere both intangible and undetectable to those outside the vehicle. Time spheres have seen much use by superheroes looking to repair timelines damaged by the actions of super-villains or other catastrophes in space and time.

TIME SPHERE • 66 POINTS

SIZE: Large **STR** 4 **TOU** 7 **DEF** 8 **Features:** Navigation System, Remote Control

Powers: Flight 6, Immunity 7 (All Environmental Conditions, Suffocation), Insubstantial 4, Concealment 10, Movement 2 (Time Travel).

UNIVERSAL TRANSLATOR

TECH LEVEL 1

With the advent of space travel, comes the inevitable need to understand alien languages. Universal translation circuits can be built into any device that enables communication, but they can also be carried as portable, standalone units. These handy devices are as small as a piece of jewelry, or the size of an Earthly smartphone, depending on the level of technology of their native culture.

Most universal translators assume both parties are equipped with one, and are therefore designed as receivers only. If one party does not have a universal translator, this can be awkward, so more advanced models are designed to translate both ways. Due to the need to have a speaker, these “two-way” units are usually slightly larger and more obvious than the “one-way” design.

Universal Translator: Comprehend 1 (Languages; Understand All) • 2 points; 4 Points if the device has Comprehend 2 (Languages; Understand, Understood) instead.

ARCHETYPES

Each of the following archetypes is a great starting point for a cosmic hero. Feel free to use them as-is if appropriate for the cosmic series you're playing in, or customize them as needed. The characters on the following pages represent characters commonly found in cosmic comics, but there are many more options than are presented here. Gamemasters, you may wish to use these archetypes as NPCs or villains if you need something quickly. No matter how these archetypes are used, customize them by applying different descriptors, changing power names, inventing backgrounds, and giving them a name that fits what you've come up with. There are suggested names for each of the archetypes you can use if you wish.

Additionally, some archetypes from the *Hero's Handbook*, such as the Paragon, Powerhouse, Shapeshifter, or Warrior (and more) are perfectly appropriate as cosmic heroes. Since all the archetypes from that book are PL 10, you may have to spend some power points to get them up to the power level used in your series.

COSMIC CORSAIR

A gung-ho adventurer in space, the Cosmic Corsair might be a pirate preying on evil Imperial warships, or a Privateer in service to an honorable nation. The Corsair relies on

luck and skill to escape the many dangerous situations he gets himself into. When his quick wits aren't up to the task, he takes up his old-fashioned sabre with a smile. Charming and clever in equal measure, this hero often bands together with other adventurers in search of a big payoff! Despite his mercenary facade, he often finds himself doing great deeds of charity. Many desperate souls have been saved by the Cosmic Corsair, though they may not recognize his heroism when they see it. He may or may not have purchased his nimble space yacht, but the modifications on board are certainly not legal in most sectors.

COSMIC CRITTER

Short in stature, but long on courage, the Cosmic Critter is often discounted by other cosmic heroes... until they see him in combat! The beings of his homeworld bear a strong resemblance to cute, non-sentient creatures of another world (often Earthly critters), but he is an experienced soldier and leader. With no battles left to fight on his homeworld, he has ventured into space to take his innate sense of justice to the stars. He isn't above using his "cute" qualities to win allies over, but in the heat of battle he rises to the occasion and works well with a team.

GALACTIC PEACE OFFICER

She may be from the far side of the galaxy, but she knows what heroism is! The Galactic Peace Officer was chosen by a galactic peacekeeping force to enforce their interstellar code of justice. Armed and equipped with the most potent technology available, the Officer's authority is recognized by species all over the galaxy. She fights to protect the innocent and make sure the guilty are brought to justice. She works with local planetary authorities whenever possible, but she doesn't hesitate to go it alone in order to hunt down criminals. Her calling gives her a broad mandate and a vast jurisdiction.

RAY-GUN HERO

Torn from her original home, the Ray-Gun Hero is always out of her element. She must deal with alien environments and strange creatures in her quest to either return home, or to save her adopted home from whatever threatens it. She has a number of skills and advantages which help her adapt and overcome. Her Beginner's Luck advantage allows her to do whatever needs to be done, when it needs to be done. This adaptability and her own sense of adventure keep her going in the face of alien menaces that would make most travelers quiver in their boots.

SPACE DEMIGOD

An avatar of battle from a cosmic pantheon, the Space Demigod is often torn between two worlds. Born on a world of war, he has adopted the path of peace and struggles with his own nature to maintain this balance. It is not an easy path to walk, however. He can be a focused, clear-thinking warrior one moment, and a raging berserker the next! Equipped with a device of nearly supernatu-

ral technology, the star circuit, the Demigod often joins forces with other cosmic heroes in order to discover his true destiny.

SPACE KNIGHT

Inheritor of a great, cosmic legacy, the Space Knight is a shining example of goodness and courage to everyone. Equipped with a potent blade of pure quantum force, the Knight has many abilities due to his special heritage. He is attuned to the cosmos, able to sense the use of cosmic forces and perceive danger before it strikes. He channels cosmic energies into strength and stamina, and also use them to move objects around and fly. A Space Knight often seeks out great, personal challenges to prove his righteousness, such as the slaying of an evil space dragon.

SPACE SOLDIER

This veteran soldier is equipped with special power armor and an epsilon circuit, a cybernetic implant that gives him limited control over kinetic energy. He charges into battle ready to take on forces no matter the odds, inspiring all those who follow him. In many battles, his choice to fight for one side over another means the difference between victory and defeat for his allies. He is not used to taking prisoners, and fights with ferocious efficiency.

STAR HERO

The Star Hero's destiny was forever changed the day she was accepted by the Star Heart. The gauntlet contains the burning power of a thousand suns within it, tempered and focused through the wielder's will. The Star Hero may have chosen to accept this burden, or the artifact may have made the choice itself, but either way this cosmic hero is tasked with maintaining balance in the cosmos. All the galaxies and dimensions of living creation are hers to explore, and the power coursing through the Gauntlet protect her and gives even the most potent cosmic beings pause when she confronts them. She may be drawn to conflict, or to beings who seek to upset the natural order of the cosmos. Either way, her future is a challenging one, and the power at her fingertips will not be denied.

STRANGE VISITOR

Seemingly born of the cosmos, the Strange Visitor travels from world to world seeking either enlightenment or a new place to call home. Able to wield the strange energies of creation itself, he can exist in any environment and move faster than light itself. He can extend his perceptions to anywhere in the cosmos, using his cosmic gaze to search the galaxy for a place of peace and beauty free from the evils of hatred and violence. From time to time, he befriends other cosmic heroes in search of companionship, but he often finds their motivations difficult to comprehend. When confronted by evil and wanton destruction, however, he fearlessly defends that which he loves.

COSMIC CORSAIR

PL10

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
2	8	6	2
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
4	6	2	2

"Ah! A battle...good!
I was starting to get
bored with all this
sneaking around!"

EQUIPMENT

Blaster Pistol (Ranged Damage 5), Sword (Strength-based Damage 3, Improved Critical), Space Pirate Ship (see below)

ADVANTAGES

Agile Feint, Close Attack 4, Defensive Roll 4, Equipment 16, Leadership, Luck 3, Quick Draw, Ranged Attack 5, Skill Mastery (Acrobatics), Takedown, Taunt, Teamwork

SKILLS

Acrobatics 4 (+12), Close Combat: Sword 5 (+11), Deception 6 (+8), Insight 6 (+8), Perception 6 (+8), Persuasion 6 (+8), Ranged Combat: Pistols 4 (+10), Sleight of Hand 4 (+10), Stealth 4 (+12), Technology 3 (+5), Treatment 3 (+5), Vehicles 3 (+9)

OFFENSE
INITIATIVE +8

Blaster Pistol +15 Ranged, Damage 5
Sword +15 Close, Damage 5, Crit. 19-20

DEFENSE

DODGE	12	FORTITUDE	8
PARRY	12	TOUGHNESS	8/4*
WILL	8	*Without Defensive Roll	

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Thrill of Adventure: You are the personification of a swashbuckler! You hear the call of distant horizons and mysterious worlds, and can't resist them. If there's a treasure map, or a rumor of a kidnapped princess to be rescued, you can't help but leap into action.

All About Style: You must be seen to be happy. You aren't satisfied getting away with a clever stunt or deed unless everyone knows about it!

SPACE PIRATE SHIP • 66 EQUIPMENT POINTS

Size: Gargantuan; **STR** 14 **DEF** 4 **TOU** 14 **Features:** Communications, Hidden Compartments, Holding Cells, Infirmary, Living Space, Navigation System, Remote Control

POWERS

Hyperspace Engines: Array (29 points)

- **Graviton Drive:** Flight 14 (32,000 MPH) • 28 points
- **Hyperspace Drive:** Movement 2 (Space Travel) • 1 point

Weapon Systems: Array (40 points)

- **Beam Cannons:** Ranged Damage 10 • 20 points
- **Space Torpedoes:** Ranged Damage 9, Homing 2 • 1 point



POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 64 • POWERS 0 • ADVANTAGES 39 • SKILLS 27 • DEFENSES 20 = 150

COSMIC CRITTER

PL12

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
4	9	8	6
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
6	8	2	6

POWERS

Cute and Courageous: Enhanced Advantages 2 (Attractive 2) • 2 points

Fur: Feature 1 (A thick coat of fur protects you from most natural environments) • 1 point

Inhuman Eyes: Senses 1 (Infravision) • 1 point

Small but Fierce: Shrinking 4, Innate, Permanent; Enhanced Advantages 2 (Improved Trip, Instant Up) • 11 points

Unfeasibly Large Gun: Ranged Damage 12, AE: Ranged Burst Area Damage 12, Distracting; Easily Removable (-10 points) • 15 points

EQUIPMENT

Blaster Pistol: Ranged Damage 5 • 10 points

Zero-G Combat Suit: Flight 5 (60 MPH), Immunity 7 (All Environmental Conditions, Suffocation) • 17 points

Commlink, flashlight, multi-tool,

ADVANTAGES

Agile Feint, Attractive 2, Defensive Roll 4, Equipment 6, Evasion, Improved Trip, Instant Up, Jack-of-all-trades, Power Attack, Takedown, Teamwork, Tracking

SKILLS

Acrobatics 6 (+15), Athletics 4 (+8), Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+12), Expertise: Tactics 8 (+10), Insight 4 (+10), Perception 4 (+10), Persuasion 2 (+8), Ranged Combat: Firearms 4 (+12)

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +9

Blaster Pistol +12	Ranged, Damage 5
Unarmed +12	Close, Damage 4
Unfeasibly Large Gun +12	Ranged, Burst Area Damage 12 or Damage 12

DEFENSE

DODGE	14	FORTITUDE	8
PARRY	14	TOUGHNESS	10/6*
WILL	12	*Without Defensive Roll	

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

You're So Adorable! Often mistaken for a non-sentient species, you occasionally have to speak up to avoid being ignored by those unfamiliar with you.

Motivation—Acceptance: Due to your size and appearance, you're often the butt of jokes or you're not taken seriously. You fight every day to be accepted as an equal, worthy of respect.



"Don't call me 'Fluffy', pal. Only my shipmates get to call me Fluffy. You call me 'Sir'!!"

NEZ
02V

POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 100 • POWERS 30 • ADVANTAGES 17 • SKILLS 18 • DEFENSES 15 = 180

GALACTIC PEACE OFFICER

PL14

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
18/2*	2	4	3
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
2	4	2	3

POWERS

Quick Change: Feature 1 (Regular Clothes into Uniform) • 1 point

Uniform: 133 points, Removable (-31 points) • 126 points

Cosmic Energy Control: Array (36 points)

- **Cosmic Blast:** Ranged Damage 16, Accurate 4 • 36 points
- **Cosmic-powered Strength:** Enhanced Strength 16 • 1 point
- **Scanning Pulse:** Senses 16 (Analytical, Extended 6, Rapid, Vision Penetrates Concealment; Distance Sense, Infravision, Ultravision); Cannot penetrate force fields • 1 point

Cosmic Shield: Protection 16, Impervious, **AE: Extended**

Force Field: Burst Area Immunity 10 (Life Support), Affects Others Only, Limited to only affecting those inside Force Bubble, Linked to **Force Bubble:** Create 14, Impervious, Selective, Tether, Limited to creating spherical constructs around user, Proportional, Reduced Range • 33 points

Cosmically Enhanced: Enhanced Advantages 2 (Improved Initiative 2), Enhanced Defenses 22 (Dodge +4, Parry +4, Fortitude +6, Will +8) • 24 points

Galactic Flight: Flight 15 (64,000 MPH), **AE: Intergalactic Flight:** Movement 3 (Space Travel 3) • 31 points

Greater Authority: Enhanced Skill 3 (Intimidation 6) • 3 points

Justice System Database: Enhanced Advantage 1 (Well-informed) • 1 point

Navigation Computer: Feature 1 • 1 point

Sealed Systems: Immunity 10 (Life Support) • 10 points

Telepathic System: Mental Communication 2 (1 mile) • 8 points

Universal Translator: Comprehend Languages 3 (Read, Speak, Understand All) • 6 points

Zero-G Adaptation: Movement 1 (Environmental Adaptation: Zero-G) • 2 points

ADVANTAGES

Benefit 2 (Galactic Authority), Connected, Improved Initiative 2, Interpose, Well-informed

SKILLS

Close Combat: Unarmed 6 (+10), Expertise: Galactic Law 6 (+8), Insight 7 (+10), Intimidation 2 (+5/+11**), Investigation 5 (+7), Perception 4 (+7), Persuasion 4 (+7), Technology 2 (+4), Treatment 2 (+4), Vehicles 2 (+6)

** With Greater Authority from Uniform.

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +10

Cosmic Blast +12 Ranged, Damage 16
Unarmed +10 Close, Damage 18/2*

*Without Cosmic-powered Strength.

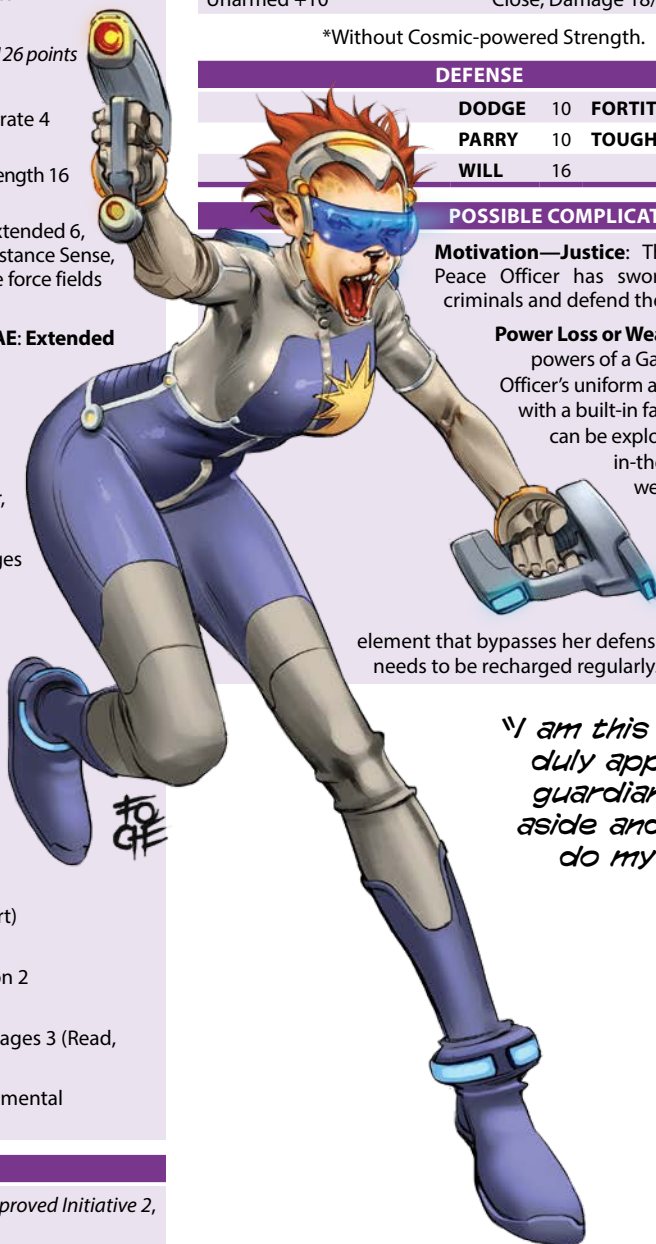
DEFENSE

DODGE	10	FORTITUDE	12
PARRY	10	TOUGHNESS	18
WILL	16		

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Justice: The Galactic Peace Officer has sworn to hunt criminals and defend the innocent.

Power Loss or Weakness: The powers of a Galactic Peace Officer's uniform are designed with a built-in failsafe which can be exploited by foes in-the-know. The weakness may be a code that shuts off her powers, or an element that bypasses her defenses, or that it needs to be recharged regularly.



"I am this sector's duly appointed guardian. Step aside and let me do my job."

POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 44 • POWERS 127 • ADVANTAGES 4 • SKILLS 20 • DEFENSES 15 = 210

RAY-GUN HERO

PL10

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
2	3	8	5
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
3	8	2	4

POWERS

Adaptable: Feature 2 (Each rank allows you to use the Beginner's Luck advantage once without needing to spend a Hero Point) • 2 points

Traveler's Luck: Protection 4 • 4 points

EQUIPMENT

Blaster Pistol (Ranged Damage 5), Blaster Rifle (Ranged Damage 8), Jet-Pack (Flight 5 (60 MPH)), Space Suit (Immunity 9 (All Environments, Disease, Poison, All Suffocation))

ADVANTAGES

All-out Attack, Animal Empathy, Beginner's Luck, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 3, Diehard, Equipment 9, Languages 1, Luck 3, Power Attack, Ranged Attack 4, Takedown 2, Teamwork, Tracking

SKILLS

Acrobatics 4 (+7), Athletics 4 (+6), Close Combat: Unarmed 6 (+14), Deception 4 (+8), Expertise: Survival 8 (+10), Insight 5 (+10), Intimidation 4 (+8), Investigation 4 (+6), Persuasion 2 (+7), Stealth 4 (+7), Technology 4 (+6), Treatment 4 (+6), Vehicles 1 (+9)

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +3

Blaster Pistol +12	Ranged, Damage 5
Blaster Rifle +12	Ranged, Damage 8
Unarmed +14	Close, Damage 2

DEFENSE

DODGE	10	FORTITUDE	8
PARRY	10	TOUGHNESS	10/7*
WILL	8	*Without Defensive Roll	

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

A Long Way From Home: You are often in strange and unusual circumstances during your adventures. While you're good at adapting to such things, you are sometimes confused by strange customs or new experiences and don't know exactly what to do.

Always a Stranger: Your adventures keep propelling you onward, leaving no time to stay in one place long enough to make friends or allies. Xenophobic cultures may react poorly to you, and rumors of your strangeness may precede you in a bad way.

Motivation—Doing Good: You seek to make things better for all. This is either the result of the culture you grew up in, an innate sense of justice, or simple optimism. In any case, you refuse to accept the status quo and struggle to make things better.



"I may be a long way from home, but I know fightin' words when I hear 'em!"

POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 70 • POWERS 6 • ADVANTAGES 30 • SKILLS 27 • DEFENSES 17 = 150

SPACE DEMIGOD

PL12

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
11*/8**	4	9	2
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
11*/8**	2	0	3

POWERS

Astro-Sled: Easily Removable (-17 points), Indestructible • 28 points

Stellar Motivator: Flight 9 (1,000 MPH), **AE: Stellar Accelerator** (Movement 1 (Space Travel 1) • 21 points

Remote Control: Feature 1 (Flight and Movement only) • 1 point

Twin Blasters: Ranged Damage 12, Split • 25 points

Dual Nature: Array (13 points)

- **Berserker:** Enhanced Stamina 3, Enhanced Strength 3, Enhanced Advantage 1 (Fearless) • 13 points
- **Focused:** Enhanced Advantages 7 (Close Attack 3, Ranged Attack 3, Teamwork), Enhanced Defenses 6 (Dodge 3, Parry 3) • 1 point

I Am Forever! Immunity 10 (Life Support), Immortality 1 (Return after 2 weeks), Protection 4, Regeneration 2 • 18 points

Star Circuit: Easily Removable (-5 points), Indestructible • 9 points

"Ping-Ping-Ping": Senses 1 (Danger Sense) • 1 point

Omnifunctions: Variable 1 • 7 points

Translation Circuit:

Comprehend Languages 3 (Read All, Speak All, Understand All) • 6 points

ADVANTAGES

All-out Attack, Close Attack 4, Close Attack 3**, Fearless*, Ranged Attack 3**, Takedown 2, Teamwork**

SKILLS

Athletics 4 (+12), Insight 4 (+6), Intimidation 7 (+10), Perception 3 (+5), Ranged Combat: Heavy Weapons 6 (+8), Technology 6 (+6), Vehicles 4 (+6)

"You are no match for me. I am my own worst enemy, so I should know!"

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +4

Twin Blasters +8*/+11** Damage 12

Unarmed +13*/+16** Damage 11*/8**

* Damage bonus depends on the option chosen under Powers.

DEFENSE

DODGE 9*/12** **FORTITUDE** 11*/18**

PARRY 9*/12** **TOUGHNESS** 15*/12**

WILL 12

*Berserker Assault/**Focused Warrior

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Enemy: You have a powerful enemy from the same terrible world that spawned you, someone who either seeks to bring you home for their own gain or to destroy you for leaving.

Temper: Your dual nature's dark side is that of a berserker. Sometimes the rage and pain gets to be too much and you lash out. In those moments enemies, bystanders, and friends alike may be the targets of your fury.



POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 72 • POWERS 69 • ADVANTAGES 7 • SKILLS 17 • DEFENSES 15 = 180

SPACE KNIGHT

PL12

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
10/16*	5	8	6
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
10	2	0	4

POWERS

Attuned to the Cosmos: Senses 2 (Cosmic Awareness, Danger Sense) • 2 points

Quantum Armor: Immunity 10 (Life Support), Movement 1 (Environmental Adaptation: Zero-G), Protection 4, Removable (-2 points), Indestructible • 14 points

Quantum Weapon: Array (30 points), Easily Removable (-11 points), Indestructible • 20 points

- **Quantum Blade:** Damage 10 linked to Weaken Toughness 10 (Resisted by Fortitude), Affects Objects • 30 points
- **Quantum Blaster:** Ranged Damage 14, Accurate 2 • 1 point

Quantum Forces: Perception Range Move Object 5, Subtle, AE: Enhanced Strength 6, AE: Flight 8 (500 MPH) • 18 points

ADVANTAGES

Benefit (Knight of the Cosmic Order), Favored Foe (Creatures of Cosmic Myth), Fearless, Improved Disarm

SKILLS

Athletics 4 (+14), Close Combat: Quantum Blade 6 (+14), Expertise: Cosmic Lore 6 (+6), Insight 4 (+10), Perception 4 (+10), Ranged Combat: Quantum Blast 4 (+6), Technology 2 (+2), Vehicles 4 (+6)

OFFENSE

Quantum Blade +14	Close, Damage 10 and Weaken 10
Quantum Blast +10	Ranged, Damage 14
Unarmed +8	Close, Damage 10/16*

*With Quantum Forces Enhanced Strength.

DEFENSE

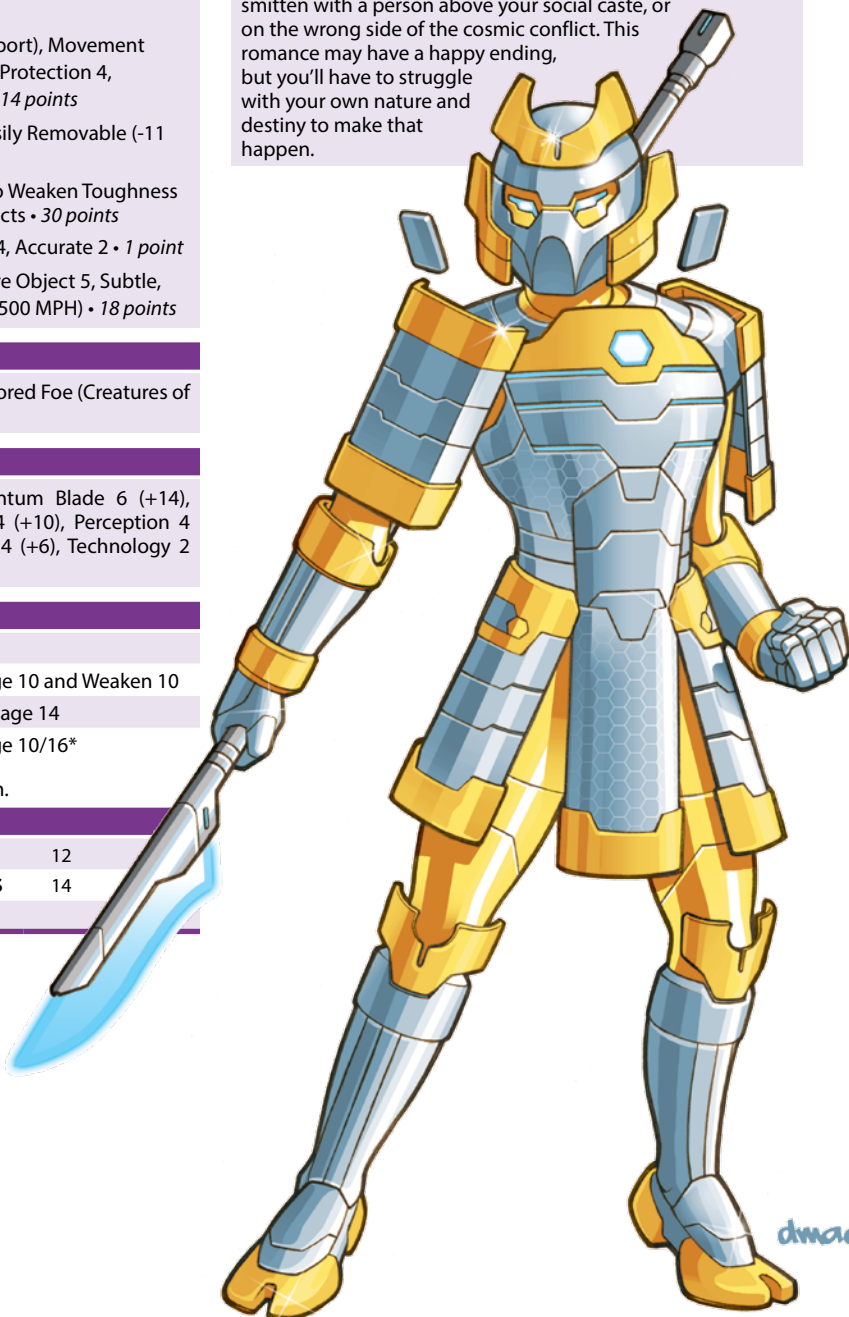
DODGE	10	FORTITUDE	12
PARRY	10	TOUGHNESS	14
WILL	12		

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Responsibility: You have a destiny. It may not be what you wanted from life, but that's how it is and you're going to do your best to live up to it... no matter the cost.

Fearless: Your fearlessness helps you stand fast against odds that would cow a lesser warrior, but it also leads you to make mistakes in judgment. You have a tendency to try and tackle problems directly when a more strategic solution might be warranted.

Forbidden Love: You are a warrior destined to live and die by the quantum sword, but you are not without a soul. You are smitten with a person above your social caste, or on the wrong side of the cosmic conflict. This romance may have a happy ending, but you'll have to struggle with your own nature and destiny to make that happen.



"The stars themselves called me to this place and this time. It is my destiny to oppose you!"

dmac

POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 90 • POWERS 54 • ADVANTAGES 4 • SKILLS 17 • DEFENSES 15 = 180

SPACE SOLDIER

PL11

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
1/4*	4	6	0
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
4	2	2	2

POWERS

Combat Armor: Radio Communication 2 (1 mile), Subtle; Protection 6; Impervious Toughness 10; Immunity 9 (Cold, Disease, Heat, Poison, Pressure, Radiation, Suffocation, Vacuum); Removable (-7 points) • 27 points

Kinetic Control Circuit: Speed 8 (500 MPH), Limited to straight line movement, Immunity 2 (Own Slam Damage); **AE:** Enhanced Strength 3 • 7 points

Regeneration: Regeneration 2 • 2 points

EQUIPMENT

Blaster Rifle
(Ranged Damage 8), Tear Gas Grenade (Ranged Cloud Area Affliction 4 (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Fortitude; Dazed and Vision Impaired, Stunned and Vision Disabled, Incapacitated)

ADVANTAGES

All-out Attack, Defensive Attack, Equipment 7, Improved Critical 8 (Blaster Rifle 4, Unarmed 4), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Ranged Attack 6, Set-up 3, Startle, Takedown 2, Teamwork

SKILLS

Athletics 6 (+7), Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+10), Expertise: Soldier 4 (+6), Expertise: Tactics 4 (+6), Intimidation 8 (+10), Perception 6 (+6), Persuasion 6 (+8), Ranged Combat: Blaster Rifle 6 (+8), Technology 2 (+4), Vehicles 2 (+4)

OFFENSE	
	INITIATIVE +8
Blaster Rifle +14	Ranged, Damage 8, Crit. 16-20
Slam +10	Close, Damage 9 (10 with a full move)
Tear Gas Grenade —	Ranged, Cloud Area Affliction 4, Dodge/Fort DC 14
Unarmed +10	Close, Damage 1/4*, Crit. 16-20

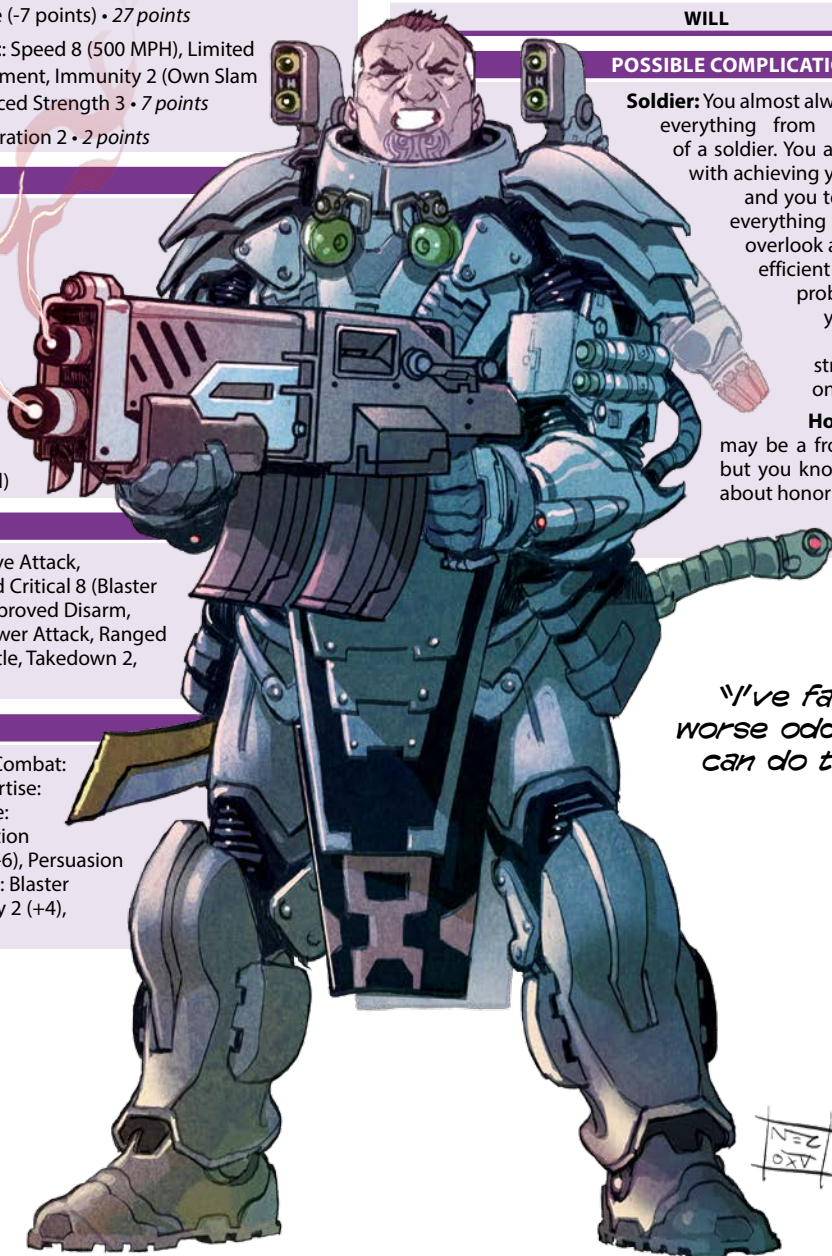
*With Kinetic Control Circuit Enhanced Strength.

DEFENSE			
DODGE	12	FORTITUDE	10
PARRY	12	TOUGHNESS	10
		WILL	10

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Soldier: You almost always approach everything from the mindset of a soldier. You are concerned with achieving your objective and you tend to ignore everything else. You may overlook a clever, more efficient solution to a problem because you have your mindset on a straightforward one.

Honorable: You may be a frontline grunt, but you know something about honor and standing up for what you believe.



"I've faced worse odds. We can do this!"

POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 42 • POWERS 36 • ADVANTAGES 33 • SKILLS 24 • DEFENSES 30 = 165

STAR HERO

PL12

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
15/5*	5	9	4
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
10	0	3	2

ADVANTAGES
Fearless
SKILLS
Expertise: The Cosmos 2 (+5), Insight 4 (+8), Perception 2 (+6), Persuasion 6 (+8), Ranged Combat: Star Heart Array 10 (+10)
OFFENSE
INITIATIVE +5
Fires of Creation +10 Ranged, Damage 14
Unarmed +9 Close, Damage 15/5*

POWERS

Chosen by the Star Heart: Comprehend 3 (Languages: Read All, Understand All, You're Understood), **Cosmic Council** (Feature 2 (2 uses of Inspiration as if a Hero Point had been spent per Session)), **I Am the Chosen One!** (Feature 1 (You command respect among other cosmic beings and PLX entities that wouldn't normally consider you a peer)) • 9 points

Gauntlet of the Star Heart: Removable (-21 points), Indestructible) • 90 points

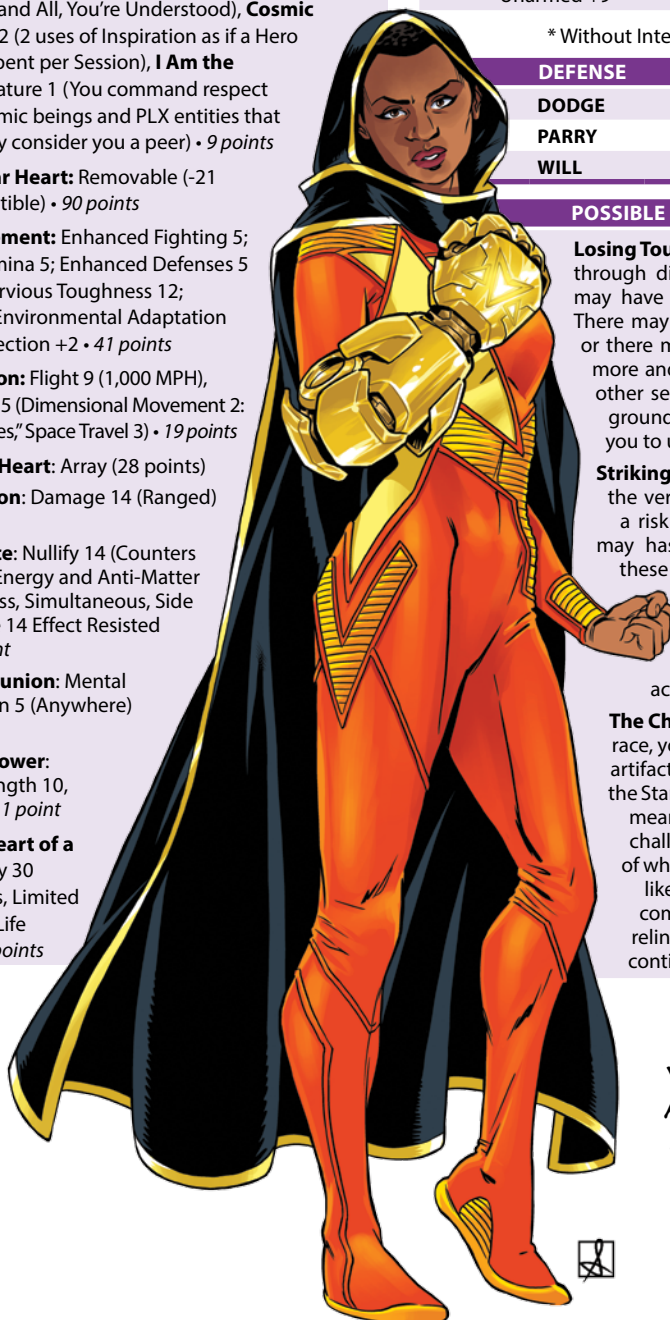
Cosmic Enhancement: Enhanced Fighting 5; Enhanced Stamina 5; Enhanced Defenses 5 (Will +5); Impervious Toughness 12; Movement 1 (Environmental Adaptation (Zero-G)); Protection +2 • 41 points

Cosmic Propulsion: Flight 9 (1,000 MPH), **AE:** Movement 5 (Dimensional Movement 2: "Living Universes," Space Travel 3) • 19 points

Fires of the Star Heart: Array (28 points)

- **Fires of Creation:** Damage 14 (Ranged) • 28 points
- **Cosmic Balance:** Nullify 14 (Counters Entropy, Anti-Energy and Anti-Matter effects, Effortless, Simultaneous, Side Effect: Damage 14 Effect Resisted by Will) • 1 point
- **Cosmic Communion:** Mental Communication 5 (Anywhere) • 1 point
- **Internalized Power:** Enhanced Strength 10, Penetrating 8 • 1 point

Forged in the Heart of a Star: Immunity 30 (Energy effects, Limited to Half Effect; Life Support) • 20 points



* Without Internalized Power active.

DEFENSE

DODGE	12	FORTITUDE	10
PARRY	12	TOUGHNESS	12
WILL	11		

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Losing Touch: Traveling from galaxy to galaxy, through dimensions uncounted, means you may have forgotten where you come from. There may be a world for you to go back to, or there may not, but this distance makes it more and more difficult for you to relate to other sentient beings. The plights of more grounded individuals may be difficult for you to understand.

Striking a Balance: Your powers stem from the very forces of creation. There may be a risk in using too much power, as you may hasten the end of creation itself if these forces are thrown out of balance. There may be times when these powers are denied to you by circumstances or by greater cosmic beings that control your access to them.

The Chosen One: Of all the beings of your race, you have been chosen by the cosmic artifact to become the Star Hero. Wielding the Star Heart (or similarly-themed artifact) means taking on many dangerous and challenging missions. You are not afraid of what you face, but you may not always like where the path leads. There may come a time when you would rather relinquish this great responsibility than continue to your destiny.

"You cannot ignore me, for I wield the might of the Star Heart!"

POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 56 • POWERS 99 • ADVANTAGES 1 • SKILLS 12 • DEFENSES 12 = 180

STRANGE VISITOR

PL14

STRENGTH	AGILITY	FIGHTING	AWARENESS
2/17*	6	11	6
STAMINA	DEXTERITY	INTELLECT	PRESENCE
12	2	3	6

ADVANTAGES

Fearless, Improved Initiative 2, Interpose, Jack-of-all-trades, Ranged Attack 2

SKILLS

Expertise: Astrogation 3 (+6), Ranged Combat: Cosmic Power 9 (+11)

OFFENSE
INITIATIVE +14

Cosmic Blast +13	Ranged, Damage 15
Unarmed +11	Close, Damage 2/17*

DEFENSE

DODGE	14	FORTITUDE	12
PARRY	14	TOUGHNESS	14
WILL	12	*With Cosmic Might.	

APPLICATIONS

Motivation—Acceptance: You now live on an alien world, either as punishment from a greater power or simply as a matter of circumstance. While you might spend a great deal of time pining for your lost home, you use your incredible abilities to earn a place for yourself on this new world.

Your World Is So Strange: Your innate sense of social justice sometimes brings you into conflict with alien worlds with a different sense of right and wrong. Sometimes your innocence shines a light on corruption, and sometimes you simply misunderstand the strange customs of alien culture. Because you don't know the difference at first, you hesitate to act or need to ask questions to determine the best course of action.

POWERS

Attuned to the Cosmos: Senses 4 (Extended 3 Cosmic Awareness), Comprehend 4 (Languages; Read, Speak, Understand All, Understood), Mental Communication 1 (mental; 100 feet) • 16 points

Born of the Stars: Immunity 11 (Life Support, Sleep); Protection 2 • 13 points

Cosmic Power: Array (30 points)

- **Cosmic Blast:** Ranged Damage 15 • 30 points
- **Cosmic Gaze:** Senses 20 (Extended Vision 20 (-20 effective distance), Limited to Visual only, uses the rules from the **Option: Long-Range Sensing** sidebar • 1 point
- **Cosmic Restoration:** Healing 9, Persistent, Restorative, Stabilize • 1 point
- **Cosmic Might:** Enhanced Strength 15 • 1 point
- **Sub-luminal Flight:** Flight 15, Stacks with Flight 10 (Total: 64 million MPH) • 1 point

Cosmic Traveler: Flight 10 (2,000 MPH), **AE:** Movement 4 (Dimensional (Hyperspace), Space Travel 3) • 25 points

"This world and its customs are strange to me, but you have shown me kindness. I will allow no harm to come to you!"


POWER POINT TOTALS: ABILITIES 96 • POWERS 84 • ADVANTAGES 7 • SKILLS 6 • DEFENSES 17 = 210

ALIEN TEMPLATES

In a setting as wild and vast in scope as a cosmic series, it is likely players will want to play aliens with abilities that deviate from what's considered normal for humans. While their alien nature may not be a source for all their special powers, a few simple Features or minor powers can help establish normal traits for an entire species. Players are encouraged to come up with alien races and cultures to flesh out the setting, as long as the GM approves. Some example of different alien species are listed in this section.

When applying these templates to an archetype that already exists (like those on the preceding pages), be sure to take power level caps and point totals into account. You may need to make some tough choices when layering these templates onto characters that have already been designed at a given power level and have spent all their power points. You will need to change or delete some traits in order to add some from these templates. For example, the Coldly Logical alien template below may offer some missing advantages or skills for your character, but if it already has the listed (or higher) Intellect, simply use that.

If one of these templates appeals to you, it may be easier to use it as the base upon which you build your character instead of adding it to an existing character or archetype.

Many comic book alien species are defined simply by having one special trait that humans do not have. This may be a power common to their entire race, such as telepathy, or a complication they all share. Some comic book series have embraced this approach to the extent that multi-planetary teams of heroes pick and choose their membership by the special traits each alien brings to the team, and only allow one of each race to join to ensure a variety of powers.

AMORPHOUS ALIEN

While most alien species have a fixed form, the amorphous alien is fluid, like a shape-shifting blob or giant amoeba. The species (or some members of it) may be true shapeshifters, also having the Shapeshifting Humanoid template, meaning they drop Permanent and Innate from their Insubstantial effect and have the Morph effect, allowing them to take on different solid forms and appearances. They may even have additional ranks of Morph, able to take on any appearance. Amorphous aliens sometimes have the True Omnivore template as well, substituting corrosive digestive acids for the Bite power, as they engulf their food to consume it

COLDLY LOGICAL ALIEN

Often presented as physically underwhelming, but with extraordinarily large or potent brains, the coldly logical alien is a common type of alien in comic books and science fiction. Their pragmatic approach can be fun to

play because it contrasts with more excitable heroes. Some settings offer the coldly logical alien as a mostly heroic archetype, while others cast them as villains who see nothing wrong with the experiments they inflict on other, less intelligent, races.

GROUPMIND NODE

This character archetype doesn't actually exist as a single entity. Instead, each individual is connected telepathically to a groupmind, most likely housed on the race's home planet or a nearby mothership. When this character dies, their memories are preserved by the rest of their race and nothing is lost. A player character from a groupmind can have a new member replace a lost character using the Im-

AMORPHOUS ALIEN • 17 POINTS

Powers: **Fluid Form** (Elongation 1 (15 feet), Insubstantial 5 (fluid; Permanent, Innate), Movement 2 (slithering, wall-crawling), Protection 6)

Totals: Abilities 0 + Powers 17 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defense 0 = 17

Suggested Complications: Vulnerability: The amorphous alien is allergic to some otherwise mundane element of Earth's environment, ranging from things like salt or certain metals to pet dander or human germs. Exposure to its allergy acts as an ongoing Affliction effect on the alien, typically with dazed, stunned, and incapacitated as the conditions. Truly severe allergies might be potentially fatal with long enough exposure. This condition might be what turns an otherwise peaceful alien into a mad, out of control monster while on Earth.

COLDLY LOGICAL ALIEN • 29 POINTS

INT 8

Powers: Immunity 5 (Interaction Skills)

Advantages: Assessment, Skill Mastery (Technology)

Skills: Expertise: Science 4, Expertise: Tactics 4, Technology 4

Totals: Abilities 16 + Powers 5 + Advantages 2 + Skills 6 + Defense 0 = 29

Suggested Complications: Cold: Incapable of feeling empathy for other aliens, perhaps even apathetic towards members of its own species.

GROUPMIND NODE • 6 POINTS

Powers: Senses 1 (Communication Link (Groupmind)), Immortality 1 (2 weeks)

Advantages: Beginner's Luck, Jack-of-all-trades, Well-informed

Totals: Abilities 0 + Powers 3 + Advantages 3 + Skills 0 + Defense 0 = 6

Suggested Complications: Naive or Uninformed: You don't understand cultures other than the groupmind's and have a difficult time interacting with aliens. (If you take this complication, you may wish to delete the Well-informed advantage from this template.)



mortality power, or simply by having GM permission to bring in a new “node” of their species.

Many races find telepathic species to be intimidating, and groupminds even moreso. Because of this, most groupmind species are rather withdrawn from the rest of galactic civilization.

ENERGY BEING • 32 POINTS

Powers: **Energy Form** (Flight 3 (16 MPH), Immunity 10 (Life Support), Insubstantial 3 (energy; Permanent, Innate))

Totals: Abilities 0 + Powers 32 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defense 0 = 32

Suggested Complications: **Energy Disruption:** The energy being's form is vulnerable to forces and conditions that disrupt that type of energy, which causes an Affliction to the being so long as the condition lasts. Typical Afflictions include dazed, stunned, and incapacitated, and the being tends to avoid or flee from conditions that can disrupt it.

INSECTOID RACE • 26 POINTS

DEX 4

Powers: Extra Limbs 2, Flight 4 (Wings; 30 MPH), Leaping 3 (60 feet), Movement (Wall-Crawling), Impervious Protection 3, Senses 1 (Radius Vision)

Totals: Abilities 8 + Powers 18 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defense 0 = 26

Suggested Complications: **Prejudice:** Other races have a difficult time interacting with insect-like races and react poorly to them.

ENERGY BEING

Many alien races evolve forms other than solid material, either arising out of energy fields like light, sound, magnetism, or plasma (to name a few), or evolving past the need for a material form, becoming creatures of pure energy. Energy beings range from peaceful evolved super-minds who want nothing to do with violent or primitive species, to destructive conquerors bent on claiming entire galaxies as part of their domain. In addition to the traits listed for the template, an energy being may have powers related to the specific form of energy composing its body, while “beings of pure thought” tend to also have some psionic powers, particularly telepathy and telekinesis. See the *Power Profiles* sourcebook for examples of different energy control, kinetic, and mental powers.

INSECTOID RACE

Similar to the groupmind, insectoid races usually aren't welcomed into society by other races. They are frequently seen as villains in comic books, though occasionally a hero arises to redeem the rest of the race, or who stands out as unique among them. Insectoid races are notable for having exoskeletons and other traits similar to Earthly insects. Depending on the level of realism in his series, a GM may wish to enforce specific scientific differences between these aliens and actual Earth insects, such as the need for lungs and other biological traits that

a human-sized creature would need in order to survive in most Earth-like environments.

PARAGON RACE

Many comics suppose that certain heroes were born with their powers, or gained them by travelling from their homeworld to a different world. Playing such a hero can be achieved by choosing to play the Paragon archetype from the *Hero's Handbook* (see **Chapter 2**) and describing the name and culture of that alien's race. If the character loses his powers in the absence or presence of certain elements (like certain types of starlight, or an element in the atmosphere), include it as a complication for the character. The GM has to decide if he wants an entire race of paragons in the setting, but if so, it makes for an easy source of new villains to challenge the hero.

PLANTLIKE SPECIES

Some aliens appear to be, or actually are, sentient, mobile trees or other kinds of plants. Members of a plant species can be anything from a giant tree, to a slender, willow creature, or anything else plantlike. No matter what, the template offers sample special qualities appropriate to a plant being's alien nature.

SHAPESHIFTING HUMANOID

Many comic book aliens are able to change their appearance. The control of their bodies can be as extraordinarily useful as that of the Shapeshifter archetype from the *Hero's Handbook* (see **Chapter 2**), or it can be more specialized, like the ability to imitate the appearance of other humanoids. The template given here adds the second such option to a character. If you want to play a full Shapeshifter, use the *Hero's Handbook* archetype. You should also consider what your character looks like in their native, un-shapeshifted form.

SUBATOMIC ALIEN

Many comic book settings include the idea of a subatomic world, an entire universe that exists within the matter of our own. This universe is at such a small scale that one atom in our universe represents a solar system in theirs. Travel back and forth between these two layers of reality is simply a matter of using the Dimension Travel power with the subatomic universe as the destination dimension.

Beings from this small world may use technology to transport themselves from this universe-within-our-universe, or residents may have the power to change size. It's even possible their homeworld changes size and they have adapted similar abilities in order to survive. Perhaps their size-changing is a result of radiation peculiar to their homeworld. Regardless, the Subatomic Alien template allows you to travel back and forth between the two worlds.

PLANTLIKE SPECIES · 25 POINTS

STA 8

Powers: Immunity 4 (Cold, Heat, Suffocation (water), Vacuum), Feature (Photosynthesis), Protection 3

Advantages: Diehard

Totals: Abilities 16 + Powers 8 + Advantages 1 + Skills 0 + Defense 0 = 25

Suggested Complications: **Prejudice:** Plantlike aliens look unusual and are off-putting to some. **Disability:** As a plant-based lifeform, this species often finds it challenging to find medical facilities that work on it.

SHAPESHIFTING HUMANOID · 21 POINTS

PRE 3

Powers: Morph 2 (Humanoids)

Advantages: Skill Mastery (Deception)

Skills: Deception 4, Expertise: Xenobiology 4

Totals: Abilities 6 + Powers 10 + Advantages 1 + Skills 4 + Defense 0 = 21

Suggested Complications: **Prejudice:** Many races react very poorly to shapeshifters, often letting fear get the better of them.

SUBATOMIC ALIEN · 4 POINTS

Powers: Movement (Dimension Travel (Subatomic Universe))

Skills: Expertise: Microverse 4

Totals: Abilities 0 + Powers 2 + Advantages 0 + Skills 2 + Defense 0 = 4

Suggested Complications: **Responsibility:** You find your homeworld endangered by events in the normal-scale universe and feel like you need to help fix it. **Disability:** You're limited in the amount of time you can spend outside your universe before you weaken, physically or mentally.

TRUE OMNIVORE · 20 POINTS

STA 4

Powers: Feature (Can eat anything), Immunity 1 (Ingested toxins), Bite (Strength Damage is Penetrating (ranks equal to Strength), Grab-based)

Totals: Abilities 8 + Powers 2 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defense 0 = 10

Suggested Complications: **Accident:** Your ability to eat anything often means you damage your surroundings when peckish. Sometimes you absently snack on important or expensive objects without thinking.

TRUE OMNIVORE

The true omnivore is able to consume anything: animal, vegetable, or mineral! Immune to ingested poisons and capable of biting through almost anything, the omnivore is often seen as a comical template, but it can prove useful in the hands of a clever player.

CHAPTER 3: THE COSMIC SERIES



Not all cosmic-themed series are created equal. Some are high PL adventures involving planet-busting menaces and conflicts with beings of godlike power. Others are lower powered and more personal, but with space-faring adventures, aliens, and other such elements in the background. However, despite these differences all cosmic games share a lot in common and understanding these similarities is key to making a game session or series feel truly cosmic in scale.

This section touches on some common themes found in many cosmic games, how to run a cosmic series, as well as discussing some cosmic superhero series ideas. Villain and minion archetypes especially appropriate to cosmic games are provided at the end of the chapter, as well as advice on how to adapt other MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS material for use in a cosmic game.

CENTRAL THEMES

Running cosmic games can be tricky and trying to make a series feel appropriately big, vast, and dynamic while still being fun and manageable is a challenge. Players in a game billed as “cosmic” expect certain things, and if a GM doesn’t deliver the dissonance can hurt the players’ enjoyment. Naturally, communicating with players about what they expect and want is very important, but there

are also common themes useful for GMs looking to give their games that cosmic touch.

ALIENS ARE PEOPLE TOO

Truly alien and unfathomable creatures are rare in cosmic series. The occasional renegade extradimensional alien intelligence aside, most aliens act a lot like humans. They have similar emotions, outlooks, and motivations. This provides context for GMs and players and anchors a game to an identifiable reality even when the PCs are slugging it out with vast armadas of ships made of living trees or fighting six-faced alien supermen. Even alien space gods and similar high-powered sorts often have very human hubris, insecurities, ambitions, and desires.

What this means is that GMs can often assume that your average alien NPC is a lot like a human one. Sure, that minister for the evil empire might have three eyes and four arms, but some ranks of Extra Limbs and Senses aside, he’s not going to be that much different from a corrupt Earth politician. Note that sometimes aliens have cultures and outlooks more like historical than modern Earthfolk, which can lead to interesting conflicts. For example, a patriotic American PC will probably enjoy dealing with a race’s Nazi-like fascist government and institutionalized racism more than their blue skin and prehensile tail.

BIG YET PERSONAL

Cosmic games operate on a galactic if not universal scale. In your typical cosmic adventure, at the very least whole planets are in jeopardy. Normal heroes might save a neighborhood, city, or nation; cosmic heroes save planets, star systems, and galaxy-spanning civilizations. Even lower PL cosmic games work on this scope.

However, vast as space is and however high the stakes, cosmic adventures are also philosophical. Can one person make a difference in the vast universe, and is it worth standing by moral principles in the face of galactic threats of godlike power? These are constant questions in need of answers. Given the heroic nature of cosmic superheroes, the answer to these questions is usually yes, though the questions still arise whenever a handful of heroes face down a massive invasion fleet or planet-killing monster.

INVASION!

Invasions are a staple of cosmic series. Alien empires invade Earth or each other with alarming regularity. These invasions might be overt affairs involving battle cruisers and giant robots and millions of alien troops. They might also be covert invasions with shapeshifting infiltrators, invisible alien agents, and conspiracies to undermine and dominate a species.

GMs using an invasion in their series should figure out what purpose they want it to serve and how it will come about. Overt invasions are great for big battles, grand heroics, and galaxy-changing conflicts. Covert invasions are better for themes of intrigue and paranoia. Power level is more important in overt invasions, as the PCs are more likely to fight a lot against vast numbers, whereas investigative skills and detection-type powers see a lot of use in rooting out covert invaders.

Also, if the PC heroes not only repel the invaders but utterly defeat them, it raises fun questions of what to do next. Do they help their foes choose better rulers, take over themselves and try to guide the aliens, or just kick them out of their space and hope things work out? The decisions they make will help determine the future of the invaders in a series. The same is true if the heroes fail: will they abandon the fight or try and resist their new conquerors?

THE UNIVERSE IS ANCIENT & MYSTERIOUS

While many aliens and planets often seem oddly familiar, the universe itself is a place of strange wonders and bizarre threats. The ruins of long-dead civilizations might hide ancient war machines or evidence of forced evolution of life on numerous worlds. Powerful entities dating before the Big Bang might challenge each other using whole civilizations as pawns. Artifacts capable of warping the very fabric of reality lay hidden in the darkest corners of space. Whatever sort of strange mystery, galactic threat, or ancient secret a GM wants to introduce can be found in the endless, unknowable dark of the universe.

The size and age of the universe might be personally intimidating, but it's a wonderful resource for GMs. Concepts too strange for conventional modern thinking can be presented as ancient or hailing from the farthest corners of reality to make them more palatable. And of course our universe is just one of several possible. This all makes it easier to introduce that army of solidified violent emotions or the alien menace who embodies the microsecond before the entropic death of the universe to spice up a series. You still need to make these work for players, but the nature of the universe makes them easier to justify simply by going further away from present day Earth.

SPACE TRAVEL

Space travel is common to virtually all cosmic series. Space ships, wormholes, or intergalactic teleporters allow visits to strange worlds with interesting alien allies and enemies. Many cosmic heroes can travel the stars under their own power, possessing Movement (Space Travel). Others use vehicles or equipment.

The dangers and obstacles involved in real world space travel are usually either ignored or blown way out of proportion in cosmic games. There's little middle ground. GMs should assume PCs navigate vast interstellar distances, space debris, and other common problems easily. On the other hand, cosmic heroes should occasionally encounter black holes leading to other dimensions, hungry space monsters, and other major threats. Basically, if it leads to a new exciting adventure, it matters and should be included. If not, assume characters just get to where they need and move on with the action.

IF IT'S TUESDAY, IT MUST BE INTERGALACTIC CIVIL WAR

Interstellar battles involving alien empires, armies of killer robots, swarms of killer space bugs, and other such problems are really common in cosmic games. Cosmic heroes find themselves facing down whole armies of foes and fighting to save entire planets from annihilation. This happens in more traditional superhero series as well, but in the cosmic game these threats are larger and more common.

GMs wanting their PCs to directly fight vast armadas and moon-sized alien swarms are encouraged to make ample use of the minion and mass combat rules (*Gamemaster's Guide*, **Chapter 6**). Even alien battleships or giant war machines can be considered minions, allowing a hero to take out entire armadas. These rules keep conflicts manageable, allowing PCs to engage these threats with some hope of success, and make them feel really powerful and cool.

Another method is to have NPC allies handle the vast numbers of invaders while PCs are dealing with shutting down the enemy flagship, assembling the super-weapon that will defeat the invaders, or enacting whatever critical strategy is needed to triumph. No matter how big the threat or vast the enemy numbers, the PCs should be key to stopping them.

RUNNING COSMIC GAMES

In many ways, running a cosmic-themed series or session isn't that much different than any other **MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS** game. This section will address the key differences, how to handle them, and provide a basic framework for running cosmic adventures.

EPISODIC OR SERIAL?

The first thing to consider when running a cosmic series is whether each session will be mostly stand-alone, or if it will mostly be serialized sessions with lots of reoccurring themes, characters, and threats. Most series are a mix of both. In fact, using episodic sessions to introduce new ideas, characters, and allow characters to explore their character's motivations and history makes it easier to focus on larger plots and concepts during multi-session serial arcs.

COSMIC POWER LEVELS

Power Level for cosmic games tends to be high (PL 10-16, centering on the mid-range of 12-14). This allows PCs to engage the vast forces and powerful villains so common in cosmic adventures. However, what really *makes* a cosmic game are space-related action, galactic threats, strange aliens, and exotic locations. PC heroes could easily be lower in power, though they would be more limited in what they can accomplish on their own.

Starting power points are another consideration. Many cosmic heroes aren't just mighty; they have a wide array of abilities that help them operate in space among various alien races, such as Immunity (Life Support), Languages, or Comprehend. GMs might consider giving extra points during character creation to reflect this, depending on the concept of your series and the heroes in it.

HOW MUCH CAN THE PLAYER CHARACTERS DO?

High-powered cosmic characters can accomplish a lot. They can move mountains, destroy armies of minions, and often control fundamental forces such as gravity and light. As powerful as they are, they do have limits, both external and internal. GMs should consider what these limits are and how they affect the game setting.

If there are powerful entities involved with cosmic affairs, the GM should figure out how the PCs generally interact with them. Are they agents of these powers? Enemies? What are the largest and most powerful civilizations and how can the heroes affect them? Is time travel possible and will it change the present or merely create an alternative time line? These questions aren't that different from those that come up in most superhero games, but given the power of your average PC they will likely come more often.

WHO ARE THE BAD GUYS?

Nearly as important as who the PC heroes are is who they're fighting. Villains can set the tone of the series and even nearly identical plots play out differently when different antagonists are involved. Planetbound bad guys or local crime lords mean smaller-scale adventures. Cosmic death gods, star-spanning empires, and planet eaters work on a larger scale.

GMs should also consider how enduring their bad guys are. Will the PCs be fighting a villain and their minions for years, slowly chipping away at their power until they are ultimately defeated, or will most opponents be "space monster of the week" types who show up, cause trouble, get beaten, and rarely return?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Once a GM has considered these various factors, decided which cosmic themes to use and how, and has his or her players ready to go it's time to rocket off into the black and start playing. Cosmic adventures are incredibly varied, but from space pirates to planet-shaking demigods they all tend to follow a basic framework:

ACT I: THE PROBLEM IS REVEALED

Whatever it is that requires a bunch of space-traveling, galaxy-spanning heroes to deal with manifests. This is usually pretty mundane at the start: a remote alien race loses contact with a scout ship, an astronomical anomaly is spotted, or a minor villainous threat causes some trouble. If the PCs are more proactive, they might get a prime opportunity to strike at an enemy's forces or foil their plans. The level of threat in this act is often well within what the heroes deal with all the time. If the problem seems minor enough they might not even deal with it right away, or only send a few of their number to handle things. However they respond, the act usually wraps up with an easy win for the PCs right before...

ACT II: THE PROBLEM GETS MUCH WORSE

In most cosmic adventures, that routine problem turns out to be the early stages of a real crisis. The more powerful the heroes, the worse it is. The alien scout ship might have encountered a massive invasion force from another galaxy, the simple anomaly might turn out to be the birth of a planet-eating menace, or the minor villains the heroes stopped are in fact working for a powerful villain whose plans threaten whole worlds. If the PCs were bringing the fight to their enemies they discover a terrible plot, nearly completed superweapon, or some other problem. Any serious complications or problems also surface, so if one of the PC's friends is secretly working for the bad guys, now is when they find out.



This is also the time when any help the PCs need appears. That plucky mechanic they rescued earlier reveals she's actually an alien princess. Or the data recorder on the wrecked ship they found yields valuable information. This act often involves a big confrontation with the true threat of the adventure, which the PCs might lose.

ACT III: THINGS GET RESOLVED

Once all the pieces are on the board, the endgame begins. The bad guys push towards their end goals with everything they have, and the PCs push back. This is when the battles get huge and the stakes very high. At the very least in cosmic adventures, a whole planet's future is on the line, and often it's even more serious.

The best thing about the final act for both GMs and PCs is it's time to cut loose. All the crazy alien swarms or gigantic battle beasts the GM has been saving? Now is when they attack Earth or another important world. All the planet-busting stunts and tactics the PCs have been working on? Now is the time to let them loose. This act is where some of the best gaming stories happen, the sort that end with "and that's how Starfist destroyed the alien armada" or "and after we trapped Hungarr the World Eater inside a black hole at the center of the galaxy, the allied alien worlds gave us medals and a new headquarters." After all, these are big cosmic adventures we're talking about. Go nuts.

EPILOGUE: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Events of the sort that happen in cosmic adventures have major consequences. Empires fall, planets are laid waste, dangerous foes are imprisoned, and innocent survivors cared for. The PCs are usually the best situated to help with these tasks, though they might not always be enthusiastic.

RANGE MECHANICS OF SPACE COMBAT

In cosmic series, space battles are nearly a foregone conclusion. Whether it's two characters duking it out in the inky void or fleets of starship attacking each other, eventually it will come up. And that's completely cool, but it raises a mechanical issue.

The problem with space is there's a lot of it. Things that only seem "right over there" might be miles distant. Visual distances aren't limited by the horizon like on Earth, and no gravity and atmosphere getting in the way means things can be spotted and engaged from great distances.

The default range rules for *MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS* doesn't presume this sort of vast battlefield as the norm. In fact many effective and expensive power effects end up generally useless if relying on strict ranges and areas of effect. Area Effect attacks might as well be single-target and everything but Perception ranged attacks are at extreme range or out of range, creating many situations where either you see it and hit automatically or don't even have a chance. This is going to be, to say the least, frustrating for most GMs and players.

The easiest way to fix this is to assume that ranges in space are longer due to the characters' raw power or due to the lack of air and other object interfering with ranged powers. The easiest way to do this is to give every ranged power a short range equal to its rank on the Distance column of the Measurements Table (see the *Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 1**), a medium range of the power rank +1, and a long range of the power rank +2. So, a rank 12 Ranged Damage effect has a short range of 16 miles, medium range of 30 miles, and a long range of 60 miles. GMs can also choose to ignore distances altogether on the cosmic scale, other than characters being "in range" or "out of range" for the use of their various ranged effects.

GMs should gauge their players' preferences. If they don't want to worry about rebuilding a devastated alien colony or finding a place to lock up the defeated cosmic villain, just assume someone else handles it for them. On the other hand, aiding civilians and other similar tasks can easily provide the mundane starting point for a whole new cosmic adventure and give the series a solid sense of continuity... or at least give the heroes some supporting characters to interact with on an ongoing basis.

WHAT IS TROUPE PLAY?

Troupe play is a slightly different way of playing a role-playing game. Instead of each player taking on the role of a single character, he or she creates a handful of characters to play. Each character, most likely, fills a slightly different role and could be of very different power levels than the other characters played by that player, but that's not a necessity. Depending on the player's desire, the GM's request, or the story's needs, the player could play any of his or her heroes in any given session. When other characters encounter one of that player's characters, he or she role-plays the character. If the player's character encounters one of his other characters, the GM plays the "inactive" hero (role-playing him or her in good faith, of course).

For example, Chris is playing in a troupe-style series in which he needs three heroes, one each at power levels 8, 10, and 12. The first, at PL 8, is Captain Hexx, an ex-ship captain turned smuggler; the second, at PL 10, is Titan, a young hero from Earth with growth powers who's decided to take Captain Hexx up on her invitation to explore the stars; and the last, at PL 12, is Chay-Pek, an alien war android who was discovered by the other heroes inactive in deep space. Depending on the story and the night, Chris could play any one of them as his hero for the night... and still have the opportunity to play any or all of the others if the other heroes or the GM interact with them.

Troupe-style play allows for a wide range of characters, all of whom typically exist in the same setting whether they're on the same team or different ones. One of the big virtues of troupe play is in handling a series with a large, rotating cast, like an international (or interstellar) super-team with a dozen or more members, or a series set in different time periods where each character is in a different time period.

In the example above, Chris really likes to play Chay-Pek because he has an interesting background mystery, but also likes playing Captain Hexx because she owns and pilots the starship the heroes call home, and enjoys playing Titan because he's more outgoing and fun loving than the serious, mysterious Chay-Pek and doesn't have as many responsibilities as the Captain... plus, sometimes it's fun to play a giant powerhouse! Regardless, Chris is able to choose to play whichever character is best for the current scenario or situation. Last game Chris played Captain Hexx, who had to take on some space pirates while ferrying the other player characters to an ancient, abandoned temple built into an asteroid on the edges of known space. This session Chris is playing Chay-Pek as they explore the temple and its ties to Chay-Pek's possible origins. Next session the GM says the game is going to be back in Freedom City, where Titan is, and he'll have to deal with an assassination attempt on a foreign diplomat.

This part of the adventure serves to wrap up loose ends and start new subplots or resolve ongoing subplots. Any PCs who like to role-play musing about the cost of their actions and making speeches about rebuilding and remaining strong to fight the next threat have ample opportunity to do that now. Those who want to hunt down the remaining minions of the main villain should also have a chance.

While not every cosmic adventure follows that basic framework, it's solid enough to form many adventures around. And stringing a few of these adventures together can help build a series and setting where the heroes make a serious impact.

SERIES IDEAS

Cosmic-level series literally have whole worlds to play with. It can be fun and liberating, but also a bit intimidating. Knowing where to start with such a game can be daunting, and the following section suggests some popular approaches to give focus and direction to cosmic series.

THE FUTURE IS NOW

This series doesn't take place in the modern day, but centuries or even millennia in the future. The PCs are future heroes who have banded together to protect the galaxy. Often these heroes are younger than normal, reflecting the idealism and optimism that the future brings. PCs might have unique powers, but they also might be members of variant human races or aliens who possess superhuman abilities. In such cases, the heroes are usually paragons of their race and have abilities that far exceed racial norms.

Future cosmic games often have fun future technology, but it's rarely the focus. In fact, it's usually in the background and used to enable ideas instead of being central to the plot. For example, quantum communicators might let heroes communicate with each other across galactic distances, but they're really just there to allow the PCs to be on different planets and stay in contact. Time travel is a popular theme in future cosmic games, with famous heroes and terrible villains from other times making appearances. This might even include former PCs from other games or important NPCs from other settings.

The Future is Now series is usually similar in power level to a modern superhero game, ranging from PL10-12. The most powerful members of a group could have PLs in the 13-15 range. It's a good series for having PCs with varied PLs, especially if lower-powered heroes possess particular skills or powers that make them important members despite their lack of overwhelming might.

HEAVY HITTERS

This sort of series pulls out all the stops. It's big, even compared to other cosmic series. The heroes are easily some of the most powerful heroes in the galaxy or even the universe, gathered together to defeat threats of incredible power. These are the sorts of heroes and villains who shatter planets, move moons, and can wipe out whole

armies with ease. They often don't get involved in lesser conflicts, either because they are sworn not to interfere or because they're too busy stopping planet-eating monsters and evil, living suns.

The Heavy Hitters series is what a lot of gamers think of when you say "cosmic level series." It's also one of the harder series to run. Challenging such heroes regularly is tough, and there's a real danger of players getting very ho-hum about stopping another cosmic threat that can snuff out billions of lives. This makes PCs having strong personalities, personal motivations, and even existential crises important to keep things interesting and give everyone a break from constant space battles. Look to the comics that feature such characters; you can see a lot of introspection amidst all the hitting bad guys with asteroids the size of Texas.

Heavy Hitters series are *at least* PL14 and often heroes are built on considerably more power points than 15 per power level. The variable power effect or lots of alternate effects are common as well, making this even trickier for GMs since heroes in this series can often do nearly anything. Menacing such heroes is challenging, and often involves both incredibly powerful villains and armies of lesser foes.

THE OTHER GUYS

Not everyone involved in cosmic events is a powerhouse. Sometimes lower-powered heroes find themselves drawn into galactic wars or battling cosmic threats well above their capabilities. This usually happens when some event or crisis puts more powerful heroes out of commission,

but it's also possible the heroes are just a bunch of well-meaning folks in over their heads, but committed to doing the right thing. These series tend to focus on grand heroism at a high cost. Fatalities are more common than in most cosmic series, and PCs in such games frequently find themselves outnumbered, outclassed, and trying anything they can to survive and succeed. Often the PCs come together to deal with a particular threat, though a group of outclassed but iron-willed do-gooders guarding their galaxy is also popular.

Other Guys series usually feature a rag-tag group of individuals with different powers and origins, much like standard superhero series. These heroes usually have a ship, interstellar transporter, psychic trouble-sensing space monkey, or some other resource to help get them into trouble, but often have to rely on ingenuity and perseverance to get out of it. Often the heroes have colorful pasts of their own with ex-space pirates, renegade alien monarchs, or displaced Earthling super-humans being common. Weapons and technology feature more prominently in this sort of series than many others, since the heroes need every bit of help they can. These games tend to resemble small-unit war dramas and "against all odds" style action films, right down to the snappy banter and laughing in the face of whole armies of bad guys.

Heroes in this series are usually in trouble, especially once they rack up a few victories against superior foes. For every big ally or cool headquarters they snag, they usually also end up with at least one alien armada or psychotic space god who wants to crush them. This often leads to a rotating cast as members are wounded, killed, imprisoned,



or simply quit. This makes such series options like troupe play (see the **What Is Troupe Play?** sidebar), or allowing experience to carry over to a player's new character when the old one is phased out, worth considering. After all, the heroes have it tough enough.

Other Guys series are usually intentionally lower-powered, ranging in the 9-11 PL range. This makes tactics important when facing more powerful and more numerous foes. Advantages like Teamwork, Set-up, Inspire, Equipment, Leadership, and Assessment might be useful to most heroes, but to PCs in this sort of series, they can be the difference between victory and getting your atoms scattered across deep space.

PRIVATEERS AND REBELS

This series focuses on a band of heroic but somewhat shady characters fighting against a large galactic empire or nefarious organization. The heroes are often criminals, renegades, or outcasts and might be allied with some opposing political force, like a deposed monarch or group of rebellious senators. These heroes avoid the authorities, work to undermine the government, and often try to turn a bit of a profit as well. Sometimes, the whole group were mercenaries and pirates before something turned them into a more politically active force. Like the Other Guys series, these heroes tend to be a bit lower in power than most cosmic heroes.

Privateers and Rebels are often being hunted by their enemies, bounty hunters, and rivals. They probably have a price on their heads since their foes have resources and influence. They don't tend to face huge galactic threats that aren't tied directly to their personal goals, but often in comics such groups find allies among Earth heroes and the champions of other worlds.

As a Privateers and Rebels group is usually the underdog in its struggle, members tend to be around the 9-11 PL range. However, they often have many NPC allies, such as crew members and fellow rebels. These are usually reflected by the Minions advantage, but Sidekick, Contacts, and Connected are also appropriate. Equipment is key in this sort of series, and the group likely has a space-worthy vehicle to give them mobility and a roving base of operations. Leadership, Inspire, Fascinate, and high Presence-based skills are also useful for rallying others to their cause.

SPACE COPS

A Space Cops game puts the PC heroes in the role of intergalactic enforcers of justice, law, and order. The heroes might not even be police officers; series involving space knights, space rangers, and even heroic bounty hunters are common. Typically, Space Cops work for some larger organization, such as the Star Knights in the Freedom City universe. Their bosses are often powerful aliens or cosmic entities who have chosen agents from various worlds to protect the universe. These superiors are usually aloof, uncompromising, and at times a real hindrance to the PCs, much like the surly police captain or government bureaucrat in a modern TV police drama.

Space Cops are usually assigned a particular part of the universe to protect, but it's usually a vast area encompassing hundreds of star systems. Depending on the exact nature of the Space Cops' superiors and agency, they might lock up bad guys themselves or turn them over to local authorities for punishment. In comics, these sorts of heroes often work alone or with a partner, but a series centered around a group of space cops dealing with major galactic crimes and threats is a great option.

Space Cops usually deal with numerous intergalactic threats, from pirates to would-be conquerors. Renegade members of their own organization are common bad guys, providing a cautionary tale to heroes who abuse their power. Themes of conflicts with higher authorities, trying to balance a personal life with one's duties, questioning procedures and protocols, and all the things you find in modern TV and fiction police dramas are common. However, unlike your average TV police officer, the Space Cops deal with things that affect billions of lives and have responsibilities extending across the galaxy. This results in a mix of the familiar and fantastic.

Space Cops are usually powerful, ranging from PL12-15. They also often share similar powers, either granted to them by their superiors or contained in some armor, device, or badge of office they all carry. In many cases, these powers are the only superhuman abilities an individual Space Cop has and typically has some sort of built-in limitation to keep members from turning easily into tyrants or criminals themselves.

SPACE GODS

This series is based around powerful aliens with mythic-style themes, powers, and problems. They may have even been worshipped as gods by less advanced cultures in Earth's, or some other world's, past. Sometimes their resemblance to mythic figures is very direct, with their members sharing the names and general backgrounds of the gods of the Greek, Norse, Aztec, or other cultures. Other times the resemblances are more distant, but the general themes remain with these groups having super-fast heralds, super-strong warriors, and cunning tricksters.

Space Gods always come with their own powerful enemies. They might be evil versions of their own people, though aliens modeled after giants, demons, titans, or other mythic creatures are also common. These foes want to destroy the space gods and dominate the universe. Often these villains are so powerful few except the gods themselves can stop them. The plots in this series are often very similar to those of mythology. This gives GMs great source material to inspire their games, but they should be careful of being too predictable by sticking too closely to real-world myth.

This series is high-powered, usually ranging from PL12-16. The heroes often have powers like Regeneration, Immunity, and even Immortality to reflect their godlike nature. Superhuman ability scores are very common. Individual gods also have weapons and powers suited to whatever role they play in their alien pantheon. A god of war might have vast superhuman strength and tactical expertise where a trickster might be a master of deception and illusion.

COSMIC VILLAIN ARCHETYPES

The following villain archetypes are especially suited for use in a cosmic series. Not all these characters are extremely powerful, but they all touch upon the themes and concepts common to galactic-spanning conflicts and interstellar adventures.

ALIEN SUPERMIND

The Alien Supermind is a mutated intellect of vast power. It might be the ruler or advisor of an alien empire or an independent entity. It possesses great mental powers and knowledge, but is physically limited by lack of mobility. Alien Superminds are usually frighteningly logical, capable of sacrificing whole worlds for "the greater good." This behavior usually brings them into conflict with heroes, who seek to save those the villain would destroy. Despite their power they are incredibly fragile if their powers can be negated, without them they are physically weak and vulnerable.

These villains are literally masterminds, using their potent brains to control everything they can. They are capable of controlling and coordinating vast forces, making them dangerous strategists. They might have autonomous agents, but they are more likely to have brainwashed servants and lackeys. They also don't play well with others unless they're in charge; this weakness can be exploited by savvy heroes.

THEMES

Alien Superminds focus on control, domination, and assimilation of other beings. Most focus on acquiring followers and creating an orderly structure with them at the top.

THE DISEMBODED CONSCIOUSNESS

This version of the Supermind doesn't have a weak physical form—he has no physical form at all! It might be a floating mass of intelligent energy or cosmic spirit. In any event, the villain's mental powers are the only way it can interact with the universe.

The disembodied consciousness has a Permanent Insubstantial power effect and his non-Will-affecting powers have the Affects Corporeal Extra. This makes him very difficult to harm without the proper powers and extras, making this version of the villain even more formidable.

HIVEMIND

The hivemind is a single organism who seeks to dominate other life forms to create a powerful group consciousness. These villains are parasites and their powers involve draining others willpower (Weaken) and controlling their actions (Affliction). Hiveminds are often the last of their kind, having been nearly wiped out eons ago when their race nearly took over the galaxy. This means ancient scholars and wise old alien mystics might provide insight into how to defeat them.



ALIEN SUPERMIND

PL15

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
-2	4	-2	0	-2	14	8	4

POWERS

Floating: Flight 3 (16 MPH), Continuous • 9 points

Mind Field: Immunity 10 (Mental Powers), Limited: Half-Effect, Reflect • 10 points

Psychokinetic Field: Immunity 10 (Life Support); Protection 14 • 24 points

Superior Mental Capacity: Comprehend 2 (languages, understand and understood); Quickness 10, Limited: Mental Tasks only • 9 points.

Telepathy: Mental Communication 5 (anywhere), Area, Selective • 30 points

Vast Psychic Powers: Array (62-point reserve) • 72 points

- **Implant Image:** Illusion 15 (all senses), Insidious, Limited: One Subject, Dynamic • 62 points
- **Dominate Mind:** Perception Range Cumulative Affliction 15 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Entranced, Compelled, Controlled), Dynamic • 2 points
- **Invade Thoughts:** Cumulative Effortless Mind Reading 15, Dynamic • 2 points
- **Mass Domination:** Burst Area 5 (500 foot radius) Affliction 10 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Entranced, Compelled, Controlled), Dynamic • 2 points
- **Psychic Blast:** Perception Range Damage 15, Alternate Resistance: Will, Dynamic • 2 points
- **Psychokinesis:** Perception Range Damaging Move Object 15, Dynamic • 2 points

SKILLS

Deception 5 (+9), Expertise: Galactic Lore 4 (+18), Expertise: Science 6 (+20), Expertise: Strategy 6 (+20), Insight 4 (+12), Intimidation 4 (+8), Investigation 4 (+18), Perception 7 (+15), Technology 10 (+24), Treatment 4 (+18)

Hiveminds provide the real threat of a PC being dominated and turned against his allies. This can be tricky to implement in games and any dominated hero should be given ample hero points for her troubles, and so they can be used to throw off her new master's yolk at a dramatic moment and help defeat the villain.

THE RULING OVERMIND

The ruling overmind runs his own organization. It might be an interstellar crime syndicate, an empire, or an army of killer robots. This villain has whole armies of minions at his disposal to further his goals. They are often advanced artificial intelligences built as constructs, though sometimes they are a collective consciousness tied to those they rule, similar to the hivemind, previously. In either case, they focus on mental domination and iron-fisted rule. Any who oppose them will be attacked with ruthless efficiency.

Sometimes the ruling overmind chooses a hero as an agent, granting him or her powers and assistance. However, the villain's overall goals and attitude usually

ADVANTAGES

Assessment, Eidetic Memory, Improvised Tools, Inventor, Jack-of-all-trades, Seize Initiative, Speed of Thought, Ultimate Effort (Will resistance checks), Well-informed

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +14

Psychic Blast — Perception Ranged, Damage 15, Resisted by Will

Psychokinesis — Perception Ranged, Damaging Move Object 15

Unarmed -2 Close, Damage -2

DEFENSE

DODGE 12 **FORTITUDE** 10

PARRY 10 **TOUGHNESS** 18

WILL 20

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES 48 **SKILLS** 27

POWERS 154 **DEFENSES** 44

ADVANTAGES 9 **TOTAL** 282

COMPLICATIONS

Disabled: Can barely move without mechanical assistance or through use of powers.

Motivation—Domination: The Alien Supermind seeks to control all around him and treats people like puppets.

make this a volatile and short-lived relationship. Any hero who rebels against him will be targeted for capture, extermination, or worse.

THE VAMPIRIC INTELLIGENCE

The vampiric intelligence gets stronger and deadlier the more beings he holds under his sway. Give him a city and he's a threat, a planet he's a menace, and with an empire he's a danger to the universe! This means finding a way to liberate this villain's pawns is the best way to beat him, but it's also a surefire way to earn his enmity.

A vampiric intelligence tends to increase in power level the more minions it has, making it a bit odd compared to most characters. Usually it starts out fairly weak, in the PL6-9 range, and gain power levels and ranks in powers, defenses, and attacks the more minds it dominates. A good rule of thumb is to give the villain a power level about every multiple of ten beings it controls. Thus a vampiric intelligence who begins at PL7 but manages to take over 10 people is now PL8, but one who controls a planet of 10 billion is PL17! These villains usually have powerful Afflictions and Will-based attacks as well.

NAME SUGGESTIONS

Grand Thinker, High Intelligence, Lord Neuron, Master Brain, Mindscape, Supreme Overmind, Worldmind

CLASSIC BITS

Classic bits that involve the Alien Supermind include:

GRAND PLAN

Alien Superminds often have a grand plan that they are constantly working towards. They might seek to expand their empire, push a race to a new stage of evolution, or even seek the deepest secrets of the universe. Often these villains discover some individual, location, or item is an obstacle to these goals. When they do, they seek to eliminate it. These potential threats often seem mundane or insignificant, but the villain's vast intelligence and predictive powers tell them otherwise. Players' heroes are a good choice for such an obstacle, especially since by attacking them the villain motivates the hero to bring about the eventual defeat the Alien Supermind fears.

LIMITED CREATIVITY

Often the Alien Supermind is vastly intelligent but lacks creativity or imagination greater than most less-intelligent beings. At times they are frightfully unimaginative, hindered by overly logical computer-like thought processes. Their abilities make them grand strategists and technical geniuses, but even a simple Earth child can summon up stories or ideas they cannot. This can be a fatal flaw, causing their plans to be derailed by desperate and irrational, but unpredictable tricks heroes often employ.

DEFECTIVE SYSTEMS MUST BE ELIMINATED!

These villains often desire an orderly, uniform universe. They want their subordinates to fulfill their determined

roles and not engage in aberrant behavior. Of course, what the Alien Supermind considers aberrant might be perfectly normal, or even admirable, to many. Wiping out love, laughter, and other such concepts could be the target of a great crusade by the villain. Any world the Alien Supermind seeks to dominate might have active resistance movements made up of "defective" individuals who seek to live life how they choose. Such characters can make great allies and innocents for heroes to aid.

CLASSIC CAPERS

Adventures using the Alien Supermind include:

NUMBERS DON'T LIE

The Alien Supermind has performed a complex series of computations and in-depth analysis of countless variables and has determined Earth, or some other world important to the heroes, is a growing threat to its dominion. The villain seeks to either dominate all life on the planet, or failing that, destroy it. The heroes and whatever allies they can gather must defeat this threat or convince it it's made an error. Honestly, given the intellectual arrogance of this sort of villain, the former is usually easier than the latter.

MEETING OF THE MINDS

Two Alien Superminds have come into conflict, each at the head of its own vast empire. The two civilizations are being pushed towards a terrible war that will cost countless lives all so the two villains can prove which one is the supreme intelligence. Without the intervention of outside forces, such as the heroes, these two plunge worlds into cataclysmic war. The rival superminds must either be convinced of the folly of their actions or be defeated. Of course to get at either of these two requires getting past their guards, armies, and champions. Truly this is a test for only the greatest heroes in the galaxy!

AVATAR OF DESTRUCTION

The Avatar of Destruction is a godlike being who desires nothing more than death, entropy, and carnage. It won't be happy until worlds, or perhaps the whole universe, lies in ruin. Some are gods themselves, either of a familiar Earth pantheon or hailing from a group of alien deities. Others worship or serve an incarnation of a destructive concept like death, devastation, or suffering. In all of these cases, this villain views destruction as an art and the cosmos as its canvas.

The Avatar of Destruction works alone or with minions and subordinate villains. It rarely allies with anyone or anything of equal status unless engaged in a plot that is truly universal in nature. Possessing terrible power capable of leveling cities, destroying armies, and engaging multiple heroes in battle, this villain is a walking apocalypse looking for a world to end.

THEMES

As its title implies, an Avatar of Destruction focuses on channeling the power of divine or cosmic entities focused on destruction and ruin. It doesn't tend to engage in behind-the-scenes scheming, though it might use misdirection and deception to achieve its ultimate goal.

THE LOVER OF CARNAGE

This version of the Avatar of Destruction doesn't just desire destruction—it's literally in love with the concept. It might be the consort of a god trying to prove itself or an already powerful entity seeking favor with a cosmic incarnation of death or chaos. This villain tends to behave like a figure out of a romance novel, with flowery speeches of devotion



though twisted alien god-things from beyond the stars might have dark cosmic powers instead. Its followers are usually religious zealots and may encompass the populations of entire star systems.

THE LORD OF TERROR

The lord of terror loves destruction and death not for their own sake, but for the fear they inspire. The lord of terror might be devoted to a god or incarnation of fear or maybe just devoted fully to the concept. This villain usually seeks to become the ruler of a vast empire where the lord of terror can use his subjects' fears to empower and entertain him. A lord of terror usually has various mental powers based on causing fear, and may grow stronger the more people around him are afraid. He might also have the ability to affect people's dreams or bring their fears to life. These powers can have any origin; he may even have been simply born this way.

THE REAPER

The reaper is a cosmic-powered undead who seeks to destroy the living. The reaper likely serves a death god or incarnation. Usually, the reaper is either a great hero who turned corrupt and mad or a terrible villain whose crimes were so terrible in life she was given a chance to continue them. In either case, the reaper focuses on genocide and widespread destruction. The reaper can likely raise great armies of undead (Summon), including former allies and friends of any heroes who oppose her. If not stopped early on, the reaper might literally have whole fleets or planets of undead at her disposal. Such villains are often mystical in nature, but they could easily be tied to cosmic forces.

and claims that nothing matters so much as pleasing the object of its affection. Of course, given whom it's chosen as its intended, this is far creepier than most love stories. The lover of carnage might kill a whole world as a sign of devotion, or sacrifice other powerful beings in the name of twisted affection. This villain often has power sources tied to the source of its obsession; a consort of a goddess might use magic whereas a genocidal alien seeking favor with the universal incarnation of death might favor super-science and cosmic power.

DESTRUCTIVE DIVINITY

This destructive divinity doesn't love or worship another power. It's actually a god, come to this reality seeking to collect devoted followers and destroy unbelievers. It likely hails from a particular planet's pantheon of gods where it was the central figure in apocalyptic myths that it now seeks to make reality. Sometimes, the destructive divinity was once even more powerful (PL 17 to X) but has been weakened by a past defeat, imprisonment, or loss of many of its faithful. This villain is usually mystical in nature,

NAME SUGGESTIONS

Abaddon, Entropos, Destriss the Destroyer, Lady Kali, Masacre, Necronmonger, Terminax

CLASSIC BITS

Some classic bits associated with the Avatar of Destruction include:

THE TERRIBLE ALL-MIGHTY MACGUFFIN

Many Avatars of Destruction seek something that makes their goals easier to achieve if not inevitable. This might be a secret code that causes people to lose their will, a cosmic weapon that can destroy anything, or even an imprisoned being whose freedom is likely to destroy the cosmos. The object of the villain's quest isn't that important; what's important is just how crazy, obsessive, and unrelenting they are about achieving it. This desire can be

AVATAR OF DESTRUCTION

PL16

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
16	10	2	2	10	3	4	4

POWERS

- Beyond Mortality:** Immortality 5 (1 day); Immunity 30 (Fortitude); Impervious Toughness 18; Protection 8; Regeneration 5 • 71 points
- Destructive Field:** Damage 10, Reaction (when attacked); Immunity 80 (Toughness), Limited: Half Effect, Limited: Only vs. physical objects (not energy) • 67 points
- Eyes of Despair:** Senses 2 (Darkvision); Senses 2 (Postcognition), Limited: Only scenes of death and destruction • 4 points
- Flight:** Flight 10 (2,000 MPH) • 20 points
- Living Apocalypse:** Array (64-point array) • 67 points
- **Sow Terror:** Cumulative Perception Area (Sight) Affliction 16 (Resisted by Will; Impaired and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Disabled, Incapacitated and Paralyzed), Extra Condition • 64 points
 - **Destructive Energies:** Ranged Damage 20, Secondary Effect, Split 4 • 1 point
 - **Devastating Blast:** Burst Area 2 (60 foot radius) Damage 10 Linked to Burst Area 2 (60 foot radius) Weaken Toughness 10, Objects Only • 1 point
 - **Ride Devastation:** Movement 6 (Dimensional Travel 3, Space Travel 3), Medium: Places of Destruction, Portal; Teleport 15, Limited to Extended, Medium: Places of Destruction, Portal • 1 point

SKILLS

Athletics 2 (+18), Close Combat: Unarmed 6 (+16), Expertise: Apocalyptic Lore 10 (+13), Insight 6 (+10), Intimidation 16 (+20), Perception 6 (+10), Ranged Combat: Living Apocalypse 10 (+12)

used to trick the villain or predict their actions. That said, the object of their quest is something they should probably never be allowed to get their hands on.

NOW I WILL EXPLAIN AT LENGTH WHY YOU CAN'T WIN

Maybe it's the connection to divine beings or the metaphysical nature of their devotions, but Avatars of Destruction love to tell heroes how they can't win. They can't seem to resist it. They don't just summon up an army of alien locust zombies and devour the Earth. No, first they announce their intentions, give the populace a chance to make peace with their fate, and then brag about how there's no chance to stop them. This, of course, gives the heroes time to stop them.

CAPERS

Adventures involving an Avatar of Destruction include:

THE DARK GOD RISES

The heroes have lost contact with an ally working on an archaeological dig in a remote locale. Their friend's last trans-

ADVANTAGES

All-out Attack, Daze (Intimidation), Fascinate (Intimidation), Fearless, Improved Smash, Power Attack, Takedown 2, Weapon Break

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +2	
Destructive Energies +12	Ranged, Damage 20
Unarmed +16	Close, Damage 16

DEFENSE

DODGE	14	FORTITUDE	Immune
PARRY	14	TOUGHNESS	18
WILL	16		

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	102	SKILLS	28
POWERS	229	DEFENSES	28
ADVANTAGES	9	TOTAL	396

COMPLICATIONS

- Motivation—Destruction:** The Avatar of Destruction desires carnage, death, and terror. The bigger the disaster, the better.
- Weakness:** Powers which project positive emotions and peaceful thoughts do damage to the Avatar of Destruction as if they were perception range attacks (no roll to hit needed, just a resistance check). At GM's discretion, large displays of peace and love might have a similar effect.

mission spoke of an exciting discovery, but he or she was light on details. Investigating the site, the heroes find the remains of an ancient dimensional portal and the archeologists and workers have either been enslaved or killed by the Avatar of Destruction. The villain explains she was freed from eons of imprisonment and is ready to once again bring death and devastation to the universe. She then disappears, but returns later as the mastermind driving the forces the heroes have been fighting over the course of the series.

THE STARS ARE RIGHT

A cosmic alignment of heavenly bodies unlocks a terrible source of power for the first time in millennia. Any being present at an ancient obelisk on a particular planet is able to seize this dark power for his or her own ends. The Avatar of Destruction is aware of this and seeks to harness the energies to further its carnage. The Avatar and its army of minions are besieging the planet, destroying cities and decimating the populace. Can the heroes defeat the villain and its army before the Avatar can claim the power? If not, can they somehow defeat it after being empowered (unlocking this power increases the villain's PL by 3-4, but also imposes related weaknesses).

IMPERIAL CHAMPION

The Imperial Champion is the chief enforcer and arbiter of a vast galactic empire. She's not necessarily the ruler, though she is considered the paragon of her race. Her government has used its advanced technology to empower the villain with the might of a whole star battalion and provided her with the best resources available.



The Imperial Champion acts as an advance scout, bodyguard, assassin, or whatever other role her leaders ask of her. She is unwaveringly loyal to her people and believes it is their destiny to expand across known space and beyond.

THEMES

The Imperial Champion is almost always a hero to her people. She believes in a cause, defends her people, and valiantly defends their ideals. What makes this character less than heroic are the causes and empires she serves. Common Imperial Champion themes focus on this conflict in various ways.

ALIEN SUPER-SOLDIER

The alien super-soldier is everything her race is, but turned way up. If her people are a race of super-strong, arrogant fascist birdmen, then this villain is the strongest, most arrogant fascist birdman of them all. This villain often has other powers as well, sometimes modeled or designed to counteract enemy champions or agents. Her people love her, viewing her a great hero who will carry their race to glory. Dissidents and rebels within the empire see her as the biggest obstacle to changing the status quo.

While any version of the Imperial Champion resembles the heroic paragon archetype gone horribly wrong, the resemblance is especially strong with the alien super-soldier. With her devotion, willpower, and powers she could be an inspiration for and protector of all life. However, an uncompromising commitment to a single ideology or culture hinders her and causes frequent conflict with anyone with the audacity to refuse her empire's rule.

GOD-EMPEROR

Sometimes the Imperial Champion and ruler of the empire are one and the same. By accident or design, this villain possesses power far in excess of her subjects and uses it to dominate them. This sort of all-around might makes her arrogant and possibly even unstable. Her people may literally worship her, believing her to be not just their monarch but also an instrument of the gods, if not an actual god.

God-emperor types often surround themselves with an elite of lower-powered but still formidable guards, assistants, and ministers. The result is basically a super-villain group with its own empire to back it up. This makes the god-emperor very dangerous, but also a great bad guy for a high-powered cosmic series.

JUSTICAR

This version of the Imperial Champion is charged with tracking down dissidents, rooting out traitors, and

IMPERIAL CHAMPION

PL15

STR 18	STA 14	AGL 4	DEX 4	FGT 12	INT 2	AWE 4	PRE 6
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POWERS

Invulnerability: Immunity 10 (Life Support); Impervious Toughness 18; Protection 4; Regeneration 1 • 33 points

Living Quantum Battery: Array (30-point array) • 32 points

- **Q-Vision:** Ranged Damage 14, Accurate 2 • 1 point
- **Quantum Might:** Enhanced Strength 5, Limited to lifting only (Lifting STR 23; 6 ktons); Multiattack and Penetrating 7 on Strength Damage • 1 point
- **Shockwave:** Burst Area Damage 15 • 1 point

Quantum Flight: Flight 14 (32,000 MPH), Movement (Space Travel 2) • 32 points

Quantum Senses: Senses 8 (Darkvision, Extended Vision 2, Penetrates Concealment Vision) • 8 points

Super-Speed: Enhanced Advantage (Improved Initiative 5), Quickness 5 • 10 points

Translator Implant: Comprehend 3 (Read, Speak, Understand Languages) • 6 points

SKILLS

Athletics 5 (+23), Expertise: Imperial Law & Customs 8 (+10), Intimidation 6 (+12), Perception 8 (+12), Technology 2 (+4), Vehicles 2 (+6)

judging whole planets for either imperial assimilation or extermination. She has nigh-ultimate authority and discretion, answering only to the rulers of her empire. The justicar often carries some badge of office in the form of a weapon or item with potent abilities of its own.

The justicar is tough and uncompromising, but just and fair. The problem is, her version of justice is rooted in and biased toward her own culture, and it's rarely compatible with less militaristic and expansionist civilizations. The justicar often has higher mental abilities and skills than many Imperial Champions, with advantages like Assessment, Fascinate, and Daze allowing her to judge others and shock whole crowds into silence.

LIVING WEAPON

The living weapon is used by its rulers as a one-person invasion force and strike team. Where other versions of the Imperial Champion might deal with affairs of state or politics, the living weapon is simply pointed at an objective and set loose. Often she is even higher power level than the Imperial Champion presented here, with all her powers and abilities optimized for combat. This makes the villain intentionally one-sided: hard to counter strength for strength but with suitable weaknesses to exploit.

Living weapons are often created by extensive brainwashing or exploitation of a superhumanly powerful but oppressed minority. If this conditioning ever breaks, the villain goes from utterly loyal to something else entirely.

ADVANTAGES

Benefit 3 (Imperial Elite), Extraordinary Effort, Great Endurance, Improved Grab, *Improved Initiative* 5, Inspire 3, Interpose, Move-by Action, Ranged Attack 8, Takedown, Ultimate Effort 2 (Toughness checks, Will checks),

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +24	
Q-Vision +16	Ranged, Damage 14
Unarmed +12	Close, Damage 18

DEFENSE

DODGE	12	FORTITUDE	20
PARRY	12	TOUGHNESS	18
WILL	10		

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	128	SKILLS	16
POWERS	121	DEFENSES	20
ADVANTAGES	22	TOTAL	307

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Loyalty: The Imperial Champion is utterly loyal to his empire.

Pride: The Imperial Champion truly believes there is no race or civilization greater or possessing a grander destiny than his own. This often blinds him to his people's faults.

She may turn against her government, go insane, or leave to find her place elsewhere.

NAME SUGGESTIONS

Argos the Appraiser, Battlemaster, Intercessor, Magistrate, Peacekeeper, Sentinel, Warden

CLASSIC BITS

Classic bits involving the Imperial Champion are:

DISPLAYS OF POWER

The Imperial Champion is prideful and grandiose. She declares other races inferior and refuses to accept criticism of her own culture. This doesn't mean she thinks her people are necessarily perfect, but she's sure they're the next best thing. This makes her hard enough to deal with as an ally, but heroes who oppose her are treated to everything from dismissive arrogance to cultural exceptionalism. Also, she sees besting the heroes and champions of other civilizations as proof of her people's superiority, making her more likely to fight than negotiate.

USING OTHER ARCHETYPES AND VILLAINS IN A COSMIC SERIES

GMs seeking additional villains for their cosmic series can find them in *MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS* products such as the *Game-masters Guide* and *Threat Report*. Most of the *Gamemaster's Guide* villain archetypes are suitable for use in a cosmic series with minimal or no alteration. For example, the Elder Evil makes a good malevolent cosmic entity, and the Assassin could easily be an alien killer-for-hire. Some are already cosmic in nature or have variant themes that are, like the Overlord or Imp. Other archetypes are trickier to include in cosmic games due to power level or concept. Those archetypes either need boosting to make them more of a challenge for the PCs, or they should be used as subtle or behind-the-scenes threats that avoid direct confrontation and have access to large numbers of minions and other resources. The Crime Lord and Master of Disguise are both prime examples of these sorts of archetypes.

The *Threat Report* is also a great place to find bad guys for your cosmic series. Again, some, like the Starbreed or Ku Tu the Eternal, are already cosmic in origin or scale. Others require more effort to include, but could be a neat twist. For example, taking Count Dracula up several power levels, changing his animal forms to something more alien, and making his vampire abilities more about sucking life force than blood results in a perfectly good "space vampire" to menace your heroes.

THE GUARD

Sometimes the Imperial Champion is merely the biggest, baddest member of a whole cadre of alien super-imperials. This legion of aliens helps make their empire a major force in the galaxy and gives anyone opposing them plenty of people to fight. The guard usually has a theme they adhere to: animals, elements, analogs of famous heroes from comics and movies, etc.

GMs wanting to fill out a whole imperial guard quickly are encouraged to use archetypes and characters from various *MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS* products, including the **Quickstart Character Generator**, which is available in the *MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS Deluxe Hero's Handbook*. Make whatever changes necessary to reflect these villains' alien nature and allegiances. Teamwork and Set-Up are popular advantages to add to reflect the guard's intense training and cooperation.

RULES AND PROCEDURES

The Imperial Champion has lots of power, but she's bound by the extensive and often complex power structure of her empire. He might be able to level an alien settlement single-handedly or call in a fleet that can destroy a planet, but she can't do anything without proper approval. In addition, she may have the heroes on their knees, or be one step from removing an enemy, but have to stop because she's commanded to do so by her superiors for whatever reason. This restriction might be psychological, reflecting deep conditioning, or an unbreakable oath of loyalty. It also might be biological, meaning due to safeguards or some genetic anomaly the villain literally can't disobey orders.

This becomes very interesting during the power struggles so common to big star empires. For example, if the firm but fair emperor is deposed by her mad, sadistic brother, who does the Imperial Champion follow? This sort of dilemma can make for interesting drama and might result in the Imperial Champion shifting from ally to foe—or even neutral observer—with each power struggle.

CLASSIC CAPERS

Adventures involving the Imperial Champion are:

MEET THE NEW BOSS

The Imperial Champion's rulers have fallen, a victim of a galactic menace like the Avatar of Destruction or the Devourer. The people need both assistance and a new government. The Imperial Champion has little interest in ruling, but she will do anything to save her people. This might result in her trying to seize power and ruthlessly eliminate any rivals to improve stability, falling in with whomever she believes is the rightful heir, or even turning to old enemies to aid her. What the heroes do is up to them, but if they do nothing the citizens of the shattered empire suffer and may return as a more desperate threat later.

SAVE THE EMPEROR!

The Imperial Champion has come to the heroes seeking their aid. Her liege, the emperor (or empress) of a great galactic empire has been taken hostage by a group of super-powered dissidents. The emperor is a tyrant, but she also keeps the peace and her people generally prosper. Now her empire is in disarray, the people are panicking, and most of the ruling class has taken to infighting. The champion desires the heroes' help, citing the vast destruction and chaos that will rain down if her lord isn't rescued. Will the characters aid the despot? What happens if they decide to replace her with a more benevolent ruler? Of course the whole thing could be an elaborate trap to snare the heroes, especially if they are known foes of the empire.

YOU HAVE BEEN WEIGHED, YOU HAVE BEEN MEASURED...

The empire the Imperial Champion serves has decided to annex a new world, perhaps even the homeworld of one or more of the heroes. The Imperial Champion has been sent to prepare the citizens for the conquest and crush any resistance. The villain is happy to do this, believing that joining the empire is a blessing any sensible race should welcome. Of course, the locals probably feel differently.

If the natives resist too strongly, the Imperial Champion has orders to do whatever is necessary, up to and including summoning an imperial fleet to destroy the planet or part of it.

SPACE DRAGON

The Space Dragon is a powerful alien in the form of a dragon. He's large, hungry, and ancient. He might be the last of his kind, an outcast from a more peaceful race, or a solitary creation from a long-dead civilization. This villain travels the stars looking for prey and treasure. He often lays claim to a planet or sector of space as its territory, regardless of how the natives feel about it. The Space Dragon is usually somewhat intelligent, but he isn't a great thinker, and with his power he doesn't need to be.

The Space Dragon rarely allies with others, the exceptions being other, similar creatures and the occasional galactic conqueror who has something he wants. The Space Dragon is very difficult to hurt physically, and is resistant to most forms of attack.

THEMES

The Space Dragon has the same themes as fantasy dragons, just much larger in scope. Where a dragon might capture a princess, the Space Dragon menaces a princess' entire world. If a normal dragon wants a horde of gold, the Space Dragon covets rare items of vast cosmic power. While one stalwart knight can defeat a dragon, several cosmic-level heroes are required to defeat the Space Dragon.

A DIFFERENT BREED

Some Space Dragons don't look like dragons at all. Instead they appear as giant mythical beasts of another sort: cosmic krakens, colossal space whales, or terrible chimera made up of various creatures. This villain is often more mindless and feral than a typical Space Dragon, though not always. A giant mind-controlling space squid could easily fit into this category. These different breeds are usually motivated by the same things as their dragon-like cousins, but they often focus more on feeding and procreating rather than hoarding treasure. Their powers are often based on creatures of myth but on a cosmic scale, so a cosmic kraken would be capable of attacking and destroying starships while a space whale could swallow them whole or batter them to bits.

COSMIC PREDATOR

The cosmic predator is unbelievably old. It has devastated countless civilizations and driven whole planets' worth of species to extinction. Its hunger is incredible and it refuses to share territory with anyone or anything. Such villains are usually more like forces of nature than regular threats (perhaps 2-3 power levels above normal for this archetype) and can rarely be reasoned with. This sort of villain likely spends a lot of time out in uncharted space and is only encountered when it shows up to attack an occupied world. Thankfully, this sort of Space Dragon doesn't usually have allies or followers, though it might

be host to parasitic aliens that feed off whatever morsels the beast misses. Basically, think the shark from *Jaws* only much bigger, meaner, and hungrier.

MOTHER OF DRAGONS

This version of the Space Dragon is the last of her kind and wants very much to not be so. She has a clutch of eggs she is seeking to lay which when hatched will revitalize her race. However, powerful cosmic lizards aren't popular with many civilizations. This might be simple prejudice,



SPACE DRAGON

PL16

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
20	20	0	-2	12	8	4	10

POWERS

Alien Physiology: Impervious Fortitude 20; Impervious Toughness 24; Protection 4 • 48 points

Claws & Fangs: Enhanced Advantage (Improved Critical 2 (Unarmed)) • 2 points

Cosmic Dragonfire: Cone Area 2 (120 feet) Damage 16, Secondary Effect • 64 points

Dragon Flight: Flight 14 (32,000 mph); Movement 4 (Environmental Adaptation: Space, Space Travel 3) • 36 points

Gigantic Space Monster: Growth 20, Innate, Permanent • 41 points

Self-Sustaining: Immunity 10 (Aging, Disease, Cold, Heat, Pressure, Poison, Pressure, Suffocation, Vacuum) • 10 points

Starsight: Senses 4 (Extended 3 Vision, Ultravision) • 4 points

SKILLS

Athletics 2 (+22), Expertise: Galactic Lore 2 (+10), Intimidation 4 (+24), Perception 4 (+10), Stealth 0 (-20)

ADVANTAGES

All-out Attack, Daze (Intimidation), Fearless, Great Endurance, Improved Critical 2 (Unarmed), Power Attack, Startle, Takedown 2, Trance

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +0

Unarmed +12 Close, Damage 20, Crit. 18-20

DEFENSE

DODGE 8 **FORTITUDE** 20

PARRY 8 **TOUGHNESS** 24

WILL 12

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES 64 **SKILLS** 7

POWERS 204 **DEFENSES** 32

ADVANTAGES 9 **TOTAL** 316

COMPLICATIONS

Enemy: The Space Dragon has many enemies from monster hunters to other space-faring monsters.

Motivation—Hunger: Whether it's for treasure, food, or greater power, the Space Dragon is always hungry.

but it's just as likely that the laying and hatching of so many creatures in an area will turn whole star systems into feeding grounds for the Space Dragon's brood. If the villain's nature is malevolent, this is an even bigger threat.

WISE WYRM

While few Space Dragons are stupid, the wise wyrm is extremely experienced and intelligent. He's unlocked various secrets of the universe and has access to cosmic powers beyond most of his kin. The dragon's savvy and cunning makes him easier to reason with, but it also makes him much more dangerous.

Some wise wyrms can assume various other shapes, represented by changing their Growth from Permanent to Continuous and adding Morph. Others have mystical or cosmic energy powers in addition to their natural abilities.

NAME SUGGESTIONS

Dracis the Devourer, Drakkor, Fangir, Jormungandr, King Klaw Kloon, Starscale, Terragor, Wyvernos

CLASSIC BITS

Classic bits involving Space Dragons are:

NO ONE EXPECTS A SPACE DRAGON

Space Dragons tend to show up in the most surprising places. Unlike other cosmic villains whose arrival is often foretold, this villain shows up and runs rampant without warning. This may be because he's just arrived in the area seeking food or recently awakened from a centuries' long slumber. Once the villain shows up, he creates a lair somewhere, but his initial appearance is usually a surprise.

MYTH, MEET FACT

While Space Dragon appearances are usually sudden, by contrast their existence is usually well known. They are often the subject of ancient tales, legends, and prophecies. How accurate these stories are varies, but it's a rare version of this villain that doesn't have some alien scholar or order of space knights aware of it. These individuals can aid heroes in opposing the creature, and might have insight into the Space Dragon's weaknesses and motivations. Of course, such creatures might also have worshippers and admirers, providing additional problems.

CAPERS

Capers involving Space Dragons include:

CAN'T MAKE AN OMELET...

An alien scientist has unknowingly unearthed an ancient egg of a Space Dragon and taken it to his homeworld

for study. He believes it to be a fossil of some long dead alien, but it's actually quite alive. Detecting the presence of one of her own kind, the Space Dragon is carving a destructive swath through space and heading right for the alien world. The egg might be her own offspring she seeks to protect, or the egg of a long-dead rival she seeks to devour to protect its dominance. Either way, she's trouble and how are the heroes going to deal with the rampaging beast? Also, how can the heroes keep opportunistic scientists, conquerors, and other villains from getting their hands on the egg and using it to clone a whole army of monsters?

NEVER DEAL WITH A SPACE DRAGON...

The heroes are in need of a rare substance or artifact to aid them in some endeavor. Unfortunately, the horde of the Space Dragon is the only place where it is known to exist. Can they offer the dragon something in exchange for what they need, or is the villain's price too high? Can they defeat the monster in her lair? What happens if other villains trying to stop the heroes interfere? Even if they manage to get the object, can they prevent the dragon from coming after them and laying waste anything that gets in the way?

THE DEVOURER

The Devourer is a being of vast hunger and incredible power who feeds on stars, planets, or other cosmic phenomena. The Devourer has driven whole civilizations and countless species extinct during its existence and shows no signs of stopping. This creature is often either a survivor from a previous universe, created around the time of the Big Bang, or destined to devour the last remaining bits of the universe before it ends (sometimes all three!). It's rarely effective to engage this villain directly, even for cosmic-level heroes, and instead it must be stopped in more indirect ways. This makes the Devourer a PLX villain, and defeating it means finding an unknown weakness, convincing it to take its hunger elsewhere, or embarking on a great quest to find the secret to its destruction or imprisonment. The devourer usually isn't evil, just hungry and indifferent to the death and devastation it causes to lesser beings.

The Devourer is sometimes served by less powerful, but still formidable agents who match or exceed the power level of cosmic heroes. These beings help it find suitable targets for their hunger, serve as defenders if their master is attacked, or even travel ahead of the Devourer informing "lesser races" it will be arriving to destroy them.

THEMES

The Devourer's role is very specialized, but there are still a number of variations of it. While a series may prominently feature a single Devourer as an adversary, there could still be other Devourers that show up from time to time to threaten worlds for different reasons. These themes provide some different options.



EXTRADIMENSIONAL SCOURGE

The extradimensional scourge comes from another reality to destroy ours. It might be a giant wave of sentient anti-matter that destroys everything it touches, or an impossibly alien creature of strange angles and unfathomable size freed from a prison universe. These beings can pretty much never be reasoned with or distracted. Instead they have to be destroyed or sent back where they came from. Some extradimensional scourges have armies of minions which aid them. These are often less powerful beings from their home dimension, but they could also be aliens or humans driven mad through prophetic dreams or mental assaults from the villain or its emergence into our realm.

POWER LEVEL X IN COSMIC GAMES

Power Level X is used for characters whose abilities fall outside the scope of Mutants & Mastermind's mechanics and instead are dependent almost entirely on concept and plot. They are used sparingly in most games, reserved for nigh-omnipotent beings. Heroes usually can't beat up a PLX villain; instead they have to find some way of enduring, surviving, and hopefully triumphing without relying on shooting the bad guy with their laser vision. However, since so many cosmic level heroes are beings of frightening power themselves, PLX is both rarer and trickier to use in such games. After all, if a PL 15+ hero who can fly through the heart of a sun unharmed can't affect a villain, there's a real danger of the game losing its cosmic feel.

The best solution to this issue is to have these PLX threats be all-powerful and impossible to deal with through conventional means until some condition is met. Once that happens, then GMs scales the villain back to a potent but quantifiable power level and the heroes can beat the tar out of it. This lets the heroes experience the awe-inspiring power of their foe but eventually get to punch it in the face until it cries "Uncle!" Meeting and even discovering these conditions aren't easy. In fact, a whole series could revolve around weakening and then defeating a PLX villain.

Some popular conditions that scale back a PLX threat include robbing it of its food or energy source for extended periods, exposing it to some rare element, or using a cosmic artifact to strip it of part of its power. It's also possible the heroes might find a way to boost their own power temporarily, letting them fight the PLX threat as an equal. Mechanically this works the same as scaling back the villain except the heroes are on their own against the threat unless they can find some other PLX entity to assist them.

Note some villains might have PLX in a power or defense, but not everything. Thus heroes might not be able to best a PLX Toughness and Fortitude foe in physical combat, but they might be able to impress, deceive, or mentally assault it. They might not be able to resist the villain's PLX Dimensional Travel attack, but they could still dodge it normally or maybe even reflect it back at the bad guy. These traits are rare, but they can serve as a fun challenge if not overdone.

For more options with PLX characters, see **Cosmic Rule Options** in **Chapter 1**.

SELF-AWARE EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

Sometimes a Devourer isn't an ancient doomsday machine or monstrous alien demigod, but the embodiment of despair, surrender, oppression, or something similar. This version of the villain doesn't destroy the physical aspects of a civilization or world, but instead attacks its very soul. It might suck the life from worlds as it passes, or perhaps everyone simply gives up and wastes away unless rescued and cared for. The end effect is much the same, though the after effects are almost more shocking.

Often another villain seeks to harness the self-aware existential crisis, believing it to be the key to ultimate power. Some villains, such as the Avatar of Destruction, might even serve it.

STAR-EATER

A star-eater snuffs out suns. This leaves whole solar systems lifeless and cold. Star-eaters are almost impossibly vast and they tend to be very detached in their dealings with most characters. After all, their food source is several steps removed in scale from the individual inhabitants of the insignificant planets they leave dark and freezing in their wake. If they deal with the heroes at all it is likely through agents and intermediaries. Defeating a star-eater usually involves transporting it to another dimension, sending it to another corner of the universe, or using some weapon powerful enough to destroy a star all by itself. Since such methods are hard to come by and since the star-eater can rarely be reasoned with by beings it sees as tiny and insignificant, it's one of the worst types of Devourer.

WORLD-EATER

World-eaters are more intimate than star-eaters; they merely want to destroy a planet and all the life on it. Planets teeming with life taste better or provide more energy, but the planet-eater can usually survive on lifeless rocks in a pinch. Often the key to defeating this villain is convincing it that it's best served avoiding populated systems and seeking sustenance elsewhere. This is usually a short-lived solution; the world-eater's hunger is eternal and it continues to feed until it is destroyed or there are no more worlds left to consume.

NAME SUGGESTIONS

Galakt the Glutton, Hun-Gar, Lord Ravenous, Maw, Starcide the Sun-Eater, World eater.

CLASSIC BITS

Classic bits with the Devourer are:

ACHILLES HEEL

Though PLX threats, all Devourers have a weakness. The most common is simply starvation; after enough time without feeding the villain shrinks in power and

scope, becoming a potent but manageable threat, even losing its PLX status and reverting to “only” a very high power level villain. Other possible weaknesses include an ancient unused weapon from an extinct civilization, a benevolent and equally powerful force that empowers one or more of the heroes to serve as its champion(s), or a rare element that can destroy the Devourer’s ability to feed.

HARBINGER OF HUNGER

Most Devourers have a singular, very powerful subordinate who serves them. These individuals are often picked from worlds the Devourer has either destroyed or spared in exchange for the service of this agent. Despite being a servant, these characters are usually very powerful (power level 14-16) and capable of engaging whole teams of lower-powered superheroes. Some Devourers even rotate through a number of these servants, replacing those who turn against it or are killed in the line of duty. These characters usually follow a theme of their own: elements, emotional states, or fundamental universal forces.

CAPERS

Adventures involving Devourers include the following cosmic capers.

GALACTIC TOUGH GUY

The Galactic Tough Guy isn’t as sophisticated or ambitious as many other cosmic villains. He’s mainly interested in proving he’s the baddest dude around and fighting anyone who annoys or interests him. He likes to show up on a planet, pick the toughest opponents he can find, and give them a beating. Then he usually declares the inhabitants of that world weaklings and moves on to the next fight. If someone gives him a good fight, win or lose, he likely sticks around for awhile, either for a rematch or to help out his new “buddy”. This sort of assistance is usually violent, impulsive, and generally not appreciated.

This villain is dangerous and powerful, but he’s not a deep thinker or subtle. He’s also not really evil; he’s just got something to prove and likes to fight. He tends to respect physical might over all else, meaning he could end up working for some other villain who manages to beat him.

THEMES

The Galactic Tough Guy revolves around a combative nature and an action-oriented lifestyle. Most problems are created by fighting... and solved by fighting.

THE BIG MAN

The big man is kind of like the dumb jock bully in a high school TV drama, if that guy could headbutt asteroids in

COMES THE DEVOURER

The Devourer is on its way to a major inhabited system. This could be Earth or the homeworld of an alien player character. It could even be the homeworld of a longtime adversary of the heroes. In any event, if the villain is not stopped it destroys all life on the planet and possibly in the star system, claiming billions of lives and sending any survivors fleeing across the galaxy. The Devourer is disinclined to leave if asked nicely, so the heroes have to find a way to deter, destroy, or defeat the threat.

TRIAL OF THE EON

An alien race has somehow managed to capture or contain the Devourer. The race is inviting all the survivors from any race whose worlds were destroyed by it to come see its trial and subsequent destruction. The heroes attend to see justice is done and to ensure the villain’s power is not used as a weapon to threaten others.

It’s possible the villain serves some higher purpose in the cosmos, and that containing or destroying it will cause some future calamity. In this case, how do the heroes convince the victims of countless dead worlds to free their destroyer? If the PCs break the villain out themselves, they find themselves hunted across the galaxy and have to live with the destruction freeing the villain will cause.

half. He’s all about partying, showing off, fighting, and generally being a jerk. He usually makes his living as a mercenary, outlaw, or bounty hunter and is known for his violent methods and lack of finesse. This means he can be hired for the right price and might even work for the heroes, but that would mean putting up with his attitude problems, tendency to hit on anyone he finds attractive, and habit of passing out drunk in their headquarters.

The big man is often as unkillable as he is unlikable. This makes him both more dangerous and more annoying than some other adversaries, as he *always* comes back for another round. However, he’s also one of the easiest villains to get on the heroes’ side. The question is: do they even want him there?

THE DESTROYER

Sometimes the Galactic Tough Guy has more focused goals that still involve wrecking things and causing trouble. This version of the villain has some grudge against another individual or group, and a powerful one at that. He might be justified in his animosity, or he could seek revenge for an imagined slight. Whatever the case, the destroyer takes things too far and fights anyone who gets between him and his target. Destroyers tend to be more honorable than other Galactic Tough Guys, but they’re even harder to reason with.

Favored Foe is a mainstay advantage of a Galactic Tough Guy with the destroyer theme. Many destroyers also have Immunity to some powers of his nemesis. Whether it's evil space gods or cosmic zombies, the destroyer knows more about hunting and fighting his enemies than anyone else. He might team up with heroes who share his grudge, but he's still an uncertain and volatile ally.

ULTIMATE CHAMPION

This villain has beaten everything he's ever fought and he might be immortal; he's certainly very old and powerful,



so that's a lot of fights over a lot of years. He approaches existence as a series of battles and judges harshly those who cannot acquit themselves well in combat. The ultimate champion delights in fighting the strongest and most powerful warriors around. He also doesn't like taking "No" for an answer and cajoles, threatens, attacks, insults, or otherwise persuades his chosen opponents if they refuse.

The ultimate champion is usually at least one power level above the strongest and most physically powerful PC in a series. He's meant to be an overpowering foe in single combat, though he might have other powers to help ensure his battles occur under the conditions he desires.

NAME SUGGESTIONS

Arn the Annihilator, Barbarak, Battlor, Gladiator, Varg the Hunter, Wolfgang

CLASSIC BITS

Classic bits for the Galactic Tough Guy are:

I DON'T NEED NO FANCY TOYS

A Galactic Tough Guy rarely covets items of power or potent technology. For him, fighting the galaxy with nothing but grit and his fists is the ultimate expression of power. He openly mocks characters that rely on too many weapons or tricks, loudly proclaiming how "real" warriors don't need that sort of thing. Of course any weapons he uses are acceptable—and totally cool.

This villain's use of weapons can be especially frustrating if he gets his hands on an important weapon or tool the heroes need. He might demand they fight him for it or even throw it in a black hole or the heart of a star to teach these "wussies" a lesson. It's funny, but also infuriating, a combination that makes this villain an easy one to want to pummel into submission.

STACKING THE DECK

While this villain might be thuggish and overly violent, he's not stupid. He has very particular views of what constitutes a fair fight, and they often vary between villains of this archetype. Some might insist on unarmed combat. Others won't fight multiple opponents. Still others threaten an opponent's loved ones or even their entire world to make sure they're really committed to a good fight. And of course, some of these guys just hate to lose and cheat at the first sign of trouble. Figuring out a particular Galactic Tough Guy's eccentricities is often key to beating him, or at least making it a truly fair fight.

TO BE THE MAN...

The Galactic Tough Guy loves to fight. Conflict and combat is how he defines his self-image and personal worth. To this villain, a punch in the face is the same as saying "Hello." Heroes usually end up duking it out with

GALACTIC TOUGH GUY

PL14

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
16	16	4	2	12	0	2	4

POWERS

Badass is Universal: Comprehend 2 (Languages: Understand, You're Understood) • 4 points

Cosmic Brawling: Array (16-point array) • 19 points

- **Battleship Buster:** Penetrating on Strength damage 16 • 1 point
- **Bonebreaker:** Grab-based Cumulative Affliction 16 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Impaired, Disabled), Limited Degree, Secondary Effect • 1 point
- **Fists o' Flurry:** Multiattack on Strength Damage 16 • 1 point
- **You'll Feel that Later:** Secondary Effect on Strength Damage 16 • 1 point

Just a Flesh Wound: Immortality 2 (1 week); Regeneration 2 • 6 points

Superior Physical Specimen: Enhanced Strength 5, Limited to lifting only (Lifting STR 21; 50 ktons); Leaping 5 (250 feet), Speed 5 (60 MPH) • 15 points

That All You Got?: Immunity 10 (Life Support), Immunity 20 (Bludgeoning Damage), Limited: Half-Effect • 20 points

SKILLS

Acrobatics 2 (+6), Athletics 6 (+22), Expertise (PRE): Galactic Streetwise 6 (+10), Expertise (STA): Tough Guy 6 (+22), Intimidation 12 (+16), Investigation 6 (+6), Perception 6 (+8), Vehicles 8 (+10)

this guy within moments of meeting him. Doing well could result in temporary assistance and respect from him, while doing poorly garners mockery and dismissal. Both can easily result in the villain following the hero for a time to either show he's not afraid of a superior foe or remind everyone who's the real tough guy.

CLASSIC CAPERS

Adventures involving the Galactic Tough Guy include:

CLASH OF THE TITANS

The Galactic Tough Guy has come to the heroes' sector of space to stage a contest. He gathers all the toughest heroes and villains and pits them against each other. He's part of the contest too, and takes great pleasure in trashing his foes. Anyone who isn't willing to compete is cajoled or otherwise convinced into doing so—threatening to blow up a character's loved ones or even home planet is a popular method of persuasion. He also might offer some item of terrible power to the winner, meaning the heroes can't let any of the villains in the contest win either.

The rules of the contest should be interesting and challenging. Handicap matches against two weaker foes, a battle royale, fighting in a vast lava field, and other hazards should be used to spice things up. Also, it's pos-

ADVANTAGES

Accurate Attack, All-out Attack, Defensive Attack, Diehard, Equipment 6 (30 point space-capable vehicle), Fast Grab, Fearless, Great Endurance, Improved Grab, Improved Hold, Improved Trip, Instant Up, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Prone Fighting, Takedown 2, Ultimate Effort (Fortitude checks), Ultimate Effort (Toughness checks)

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +4

Unarmed +12 Close, Damage 16

DEFENSE

DODGE 12 **FORTITUDE** 18

PARRY 12 **TOUGHNESS** 16

WILL 10

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES 112 **SKILLS** 26

POWERS 64 **DEFENSES** 18

ADVANTAGES 24 **TOTAL** 244

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Recognition: The Galactic Tough Guy is driven to prove he's the toughest one there is against any challenge, real or imagined.

Reputation: The Galactic Tough Guy has a reputation for being an uncontrollable troublemaker and danger to those around him.

sible the heroes don't even need to win. They might just impress the villain so much he leaves with praise for their courage and foreboding hints of a rematch.

MY NEW BUDDIES

This adventure works best if the heroes have already fought the villain at least once. When their team is short-handed or in trouble, the Galactic Tough Guy shows up to help. He trashes their opponents whether the PCs want his help or not and then informs them he's their newest member. Problem is, he's loud, obnoxious, and solves everything with fighting. He might be fun for awhile, but soon the heroes have to decide how to get rid of him, preferably without triggering a battle that levels the surrounding area.

GMs can run this adventure even if the PCs don't know this villain, but it's a bit trickier. Still, it can be amusing to suddenly have to contend with a temperamental powerhouse who thinks diplomacy means you only break two limbs. If nothing else, it gives more combative and violent heroes something to think about when they see how bad that attitude can get.

RENEGADE SPACE COP

The Renegade Space Cop is a corrupt or twisted version of a galactic organization devoted to law, justice, and protecting the innocent. This villain chafed under the rules and requirements of his office, becoming dangerous and uncontrollable—and eventually turning against his peers. He now seeks conquest, profit, or any number of other more selfish goals. Renegade Space Cops sometimes work in groups, often led by the first of their number who rebelled. In any event, these villains want to tear down

their former organization, destroy its membership, and take advantage of the chaos this causes.

This villain usually has a corrupt version of the powers granted members of his former agency. These abilities might have been granted by another powerful villain or stem from an ancient threat his former space cop brethren thought dealt with long ago.

THEMES

Renegade Space Cops take common themes from law enforcement or heroic space adventures, but take them in the opposite direction. Honor and duty become corruption and privilege. Serving and protecting others gives way to abuses of power and the drive for personal gain.

THE BLACK KNIGHT

Sometimes the villain's former agency is actually a benevolent empire or feudal protectorate using super-powered guards and soldiers as enforcers of the ruling class' laws. In this case, the villain usually is driven more by twisted honor, power lust, and intrigue than corruption and defiance of authority. He was probably a highly-placed member of his former order barred from leadership or additional power for some reason. Now he's had enough (or been driven insane or is malfunctioning) and wants to take over, or has allied himself with some greater evil. Villains operating under this theme tend to be a bit smaller in scope, seeking mostly to conquer their former territory or overthrow their former government. However, in the case of a villain who once served a great galactic empire the area threatened can still be vast.

OPPOSING FORCE

Often the Renegade Space Cop gathers his own group of rebels, misfits, and villains to form a twisted version of his former organization. This turns a single villain into a whole group of threats, usually with similar powers except for any innate alien abilities. This new group often uses powers and equipment similar to the original, but with a darker origin or opposing theme. Thus, if the original organization grants its officers powers based on light, the renegade's group uses darkness.

Such villainous organizations are powerful, but rarely stable. Internal struggles are common, as the various members try to pursue their own agendas or try to enforce their personal vision of the group's overall goals. Keeping them together requires their leader and founder to be even more ruthless and driven, making him that much more dangerous.



RENEGADE SPACE COP

PL14

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
1	2	2	3	5	3	3	3

POWERS

Power Badge: Device (Removable, -24 points) • 89 points

Cosmic Scanner: Senses 6 (Acute Analytical Cosmic Awareness, Danger Sense, Extended Awareness 2) • 6 points

Energy Manipulation: Array (36-point array) • 39 points

- **Animate Energy:** Movable Create 12 • 1 point
- **Construct Manipulation:** Move Object 17, Precise • 1 point
- **Energy Constructs:** Create 17, Stationary, Tether • 1 point
- **Tracking Blast:** Ranged Damage 17, Homing 1, Split 1 • 1 point

Flight: Flight 15 (64,000 MPH); Movement (Space Travel 3) • 36 points

Protective Field: Immunity 10 (Life Support); Impervious Protection 12 • 34 points

Summon Uniform: Feature 1 • 1 point

Universal Translator: Comprehend 3 (Languages; Read, Speak, Understand All) • 6 points

SKILLS

Close Combat: Unarmed 5 (+10), Deception 7 (+10), Expertise: Galactic Lore 5 (+8), Expertise: Space Cops 5 (+8), Insight 3 (+6), Intimidation 7 (+10), Investigation 4 (+7), Perception 7 (+10), Ranged Combat: Power Badge 3 (+6), Technology 2 (+5), Vehicles 2 (+5)

DARK MIRROR

Often the Renegade Space Cop exists to showcase the differences between him and an existing heroic member of the organization. This might be a PC hero or an ally, but either way the villain's personality, powers, and even physical appearance can serve to distinguish him from the hero who's still on the righteous path. A dark mirror might embrace other themes as well, but he's tied to whatever his heroic counterpart does. This villain can be a bit one-dimensional, but he also can be a great foil for a series.

NAME SUGGESTIONS

Blackheart, Judazz, Night Templar, Malefikar, Massakor, Star King, Umbra, Zealot

CLASSIC BITS

Classic bits for the Renegade Space Cop are:

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

The Renegade Space Cop's betrayal usually leaves his organization shaken. Often he's the first of his kind to go bad and any members connected to him suddenly find themselves the target of suspicion or even investigation.

ADVANTAGES

Accurate Attack, Defensive Attack, Fearless, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Ranged Attack 5

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +6

Tracking Blast +11 Ranged, Damage 17, Homing, Split

Unarmed +10 Close, Damage 1

DEFENSE

DODGE 14 **FORTITUDE** 10

PARRY 14 **TOUGHNESS** 14

WILL 17

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES 44 **SKILLS** 25

POWERS 98 **DEFENSES** 43

ADVANTAGES 12 **TOTAL** 222

COMPLICATIONS

Arrogant: The Renegade Space Cop is positive his means are justified and his judgment is superior to everyone else's.

Motivation—Revenge: The Renegade Space Cop wants revenge on his former peers and to prove their devotion to law and justice is flawed, misguided, or inefficient.

His former partners, friends, lovers, and family are considered potential risks. The villain himself might try to recruit them, and even if they don't join him, other members of the organization often decide there's something going on and monitor, confront, or harass them due to their connection to the villain. Any PCs with such connections could easily find themselves running afoul of very powerful and well-meaning but angry cosmic law enforcement.

TECH UPGRADE

If the Renegade Space Cop has been stripped of his powers by his former bosses, he's certainly going to be looking for a new source of power. Any cosmic weapon, power source, or even individuals whose might can be stolen make attractive targets. The villain doesn't usually have his full abilities during this period, instead relying on temporary measures, stolen technology, or even hirelings to aid him until he can secure a more permanent solution. However, once he achieves his goals he might have enough power to start his own organization.

TRAINING DAZE

This villain often trained or mentored important heroes from his former organization. Maybe even one of the

heroes is a current member of that group and the villain was his former partner or trainer. The villain was trusted above many other members, which is why he was honored with the role of mentor to new members, making his fall and betrayal that much more shocking. He might try and recruit his former pupils and partners, or they might be seen as threats to eliminate first, especially if they were particularly talented students or too morally centered. Either way, this sort of relationship makes the villain's conflict with his former peers very personal.

CAPERS

Adventures involving the Renegade Space Cop are:

SMEAR CAMPAIGN

The villain has been attacking ships and planets under the guise of a legitimate member of his old organization. This is turning galactic opinion against the space cops and re-

sulting in many of them being attacked, arrested, or hunted down. The PCs have to uncover the deception, defeat the villain, and turn him over to the proper authorities for trial. If the heroes aren't members of the organization, they might even be inducted as honorary members for their assistance. Unfortunately, if they're outsiders, the leaders of the organization are more likely to rebuff their offers of aid.

WELCOME TO MY NEW HEADQUARTERS

The villain has decided Earth or another prominent planet would make a great base of operations for himself or his gang of renegades (if he has one). Allying with various alien villains and gathering an army of minions, he invades. If successful he sets himself up as a despotic ruler and then sets his sights on expansion. The PCs have to defeat an entire army of pirates, rogues, and renegades if they're going to save the populace. This caper can easily be part of a larger galactic invasion involving multiple villains, with rule of the planet being the villain's cost for his assistance.

STAR HUNTER

The Star Hunter is the galaxy's greatest huntsman. She's tracked and killed nearly every dangerous beast in the galaxy. She doesn't have much concern for her target's sentience either, and hunts intelligent aliens just as readily as beasts, as long as they present a good challenge. This villain might be a solo act, but she could just as easily be a member of a race who defines themselves by these skills and arrive on a planet in force, each one setting out to prove herself.

Star Hunters vary in power level and concept as needed. Some are space-faring ancient demigods who live for the hunt, while others are more like amped-up big game hunters. What they all have in common is their skills and general methods.

THEMES

Star Hunters are focused on hunting, killing, and the relationship between predator and prey. Many villains of this sort develop whole philosophies and themes based around these relationships.

ALIEN BEASTMASTER

Not all Star Hunters kill their prey. Some capture their quarry alive. These acquisitions are usually kept in huge zoos on the villain's spaceship or home planet. The most dangerous creatures might even be trained (or somehow controlled) and used on future hunts. This villain often shows up whenever a new creature is discovered and tries to add it to her collection.

The alien beastmaster usually has the Minions and Sidekick advantages to reflect favored pets, robotic assistants, or even apprentices. However, she also might use Summon to transport a beast from her menagerie when needed. Animal Empathy and Expertise: Animal Training are common traits as well.

THE BOUNTY HUNTER

The bounty hunter loves the hunt, but she also loves getting paid for her work. She hunts anything for the right price and employs whatever tactics and methods are required to bring down her prey. Often she tries to capture her target alive, but that's because those jobs tend to pay better—it's not because she has a moral preference. Professional reputation and personal honor forbid this villain from abandoning a contract once accepted. This means that if a character escapes her, she keeps coming.

This villain often has weapons or powers that have both lethal and nonlethal attacks. She often has Advantages such as Contacts, Well-informed, and Skill Mastery related to Perception or Investigation. Bounty hunters aren't generally high PL, but they make up for it with trickery and tactics.

THE MANHUNTER

The manhunter has abandoned hunting unintelligent beasts and alien monsters in favor of sentient prey. She seeks to prove her skills against foes who can reason and plan. She doesn't care if her quarry wants to play, she's in it to test herself. She usually has a strict set of rules that help select targets. Some manhunters only hunt those with military training. Others only engaged superhuman or heavily armed opponents.

This villain can easily be very mobile, wandering from planet to planet in search of her next big hunt. Just as often, however, she brings prey to her. This version of the manhunter often has a headquarters on a remote world with massive grounds where she stages her hunts. In some cases, the whole planet might be one big hunting ground.

HUNTING TROPHIES

Some Star Hunters claim more than just money or grizzly mementoes from their hunts, they acquire the strengths and advantages of their prey, increasing their own power. A Star Hunter might have added options to the Hunting Arsenal array made up of devices scavenged from previous victims. These can range from a favorite blaster to items of cosmic power or potential. Similarly, a Star Hunter might replace the Hunting Arsenal array entirely with a meta-power like Power Mimicry (particularly Memento Mimicry or Vampiric Mimicry) or Adaptive Immunity (see the *Power Profiles* sourcebook for examples of **Meta-Powers**) gaining the powers of defeated prey, or becoming immune to them.

NAME SUGGESTIONS

Hound, Huntarr, Huntress, Mantis, Packmaster, Pursuer, Questor, Stalker, Tracker, Valcon

CLASSIC BITS

Classic bits with the Star Hunter are:

HUNTER'S HONOR

Most Star Hunters have some sort of twisted moral code. It varies from villain to villain, but they define themselves with challenging hunts and make their own rules to ensure the hunts remain challenging. A common code involves not robbing prey of a chance to defend themselves. So even if the ability to nullify a character's powers and abilities is available, it's rarely used. Fast transit powers like Space Flight and Teleport are often the exceptions here, as the villain doesn't want her quarry to simply leave, and disabling such powers is just another part of the "trap."

Player character heroes who defeat this villain are either honored, released, or pursued until their heads adorn the Star Hunter's trophy wall. Which way this goes depends a lot on the exact personality you give the villain.

MOST DANGEROUS GAME

Star Hunters typically pop out of nowhere, bag their target, and leave. This villain prefers to play around instead. She might leave little clues or give her prey opportunities to see her before the hunt begins. Some daring hunters even meet their targets and tell them flat out they're planning on hunting them down. The Star Hunter considers these pre-hunt encounters fair warning for the prey, even if they don't recognize what's happening.

For truly special hunts, the Star Hunter might even wager something of value against success. It's often riches or some treasured object, but it could be anything. In fact, maybe the villain herself was once prey in a similar hunt and won her resources and status from her predecessor.

TROPHIES

All Star Hunters keep trophies of their hunts. It might be a simple hologram of their victim's last



STAR HUNTER

PL12

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
6	8	4	2	10	1	4	1

POWERS

Alien Senses: Sense 4 (Infravision, Low-light Vision, Tracking (Visual), Ultravision) • 4 points

Fast: Leaping 3 (60 feet), Movement 1 (Sure-footed), Speed 3 (16 MPH) • 8 points

Hunting Arsenal: Device, Array (26-point array), Removable (-6 points) • 24 points

- **Plasma Caster:** Ranged Damage 11, Accurate, Penetrating 3 • 1 point
- **Explosive Trap:** Burst Area Damage 12, Triggered: Proximity • 1 point
- **Hunting Blades:** Strength-based Damage 6, Feature: Marking Chemical (+5 to track injured target), Multiattack with 6 Extra ranks for Strength • 1 point
- **Snare Rockets:** Ranged Affliction 12 (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Damage; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobile), Accurate, Extra Condition, Limited Degree • 1 point
- **Vocal Mimic:** Feature 1 (+5 to Deception to mimic voices and sounds) • 1 point

"There's Nothing Here...": Concealment 3 (Normal Sight, Normal Hearing), Blending • 3 points

SKILLS

Acrobatics 2 (+6), Athletics 6 (+12), Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+14), Deception 7 (+8), Expertise: Hunter 15 (+16), Insight 4 (+8), Intimidation 7 (+8), Perception 12 (+16), Ranged Combat: Plasma Caster 1 (+3), Sleight of Hand 2 (+4), Stealth 12 (+16), Technology 4 (+5), Treatment 4 (+5), Vehicles 8 (+10)

moments, but it's usually more involved and exotic. Bones and hides are common trophies, but costumes and personal equipment are also popular. Sometimes the prey is taken, preserved in whole, and mounted in the hunter's den. These victims might even be still alive, frozen in some sort of high-tech stasis field. Damaging or robbing a Star Hunter of a trophy is a great way to make a lasting enemy. However, this might be necessary if the villain has living specimens or dangerous weapons in her trophy case.

CLASSIC CAPERS

Adventures using the Star Hunter include:

HUNTER'S MOON

The Star Hunter has trapped the heroes on a desolate moon. They have access to most of their powers, but an energy field surrounding the moon prevents any attempt to leave. The hunter wants to test her skills and add the PCs to her trophy case. She's outnumbered, but she knows the territory and employs traps and trained beasts to even the odds. She also informs the heroes she's carrying the controls to disable the energy field and ensures them if they can survive one night she will let them go. Unfortu-

ADVANTAGES

Accurate Attack, Assessment, Defensive Roll 3, Evasion, Great Endurance, Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Critical (Hunting Blades), Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Improvised Weapon, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Precise Attack (Ranged, Cover), Ranged Attack 8, Skill Mastery (Expertise: Hunter), Takedown, Tracking

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +8

Hunting Blades +10	Close, Damage 12, Crit. 19-20
Plasma Caster +13	Ranged, Damage 11
Snare Rockets +12	Ranged, Affliction 12, Resisted by Dodge (DC 27)
Unarmed +14	Close, Damage 6

DEFENSE

DODGE	13	FORTITUDE	12
PARRY	13	TOUGHNESS	11/8*
WILL	9	*Without Defensive Roll.	

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	72	SKILLS	44
POWERS	39	DEFENSES	21
ADVANTAGES	26	TOTAL	202

COMPLICATIONS

Hunter's Code: The Star Hunter has a particular code of honor relating to how hunts must occur, what prey are provided with, and what happens if they fail to take down their prey. The code varies with each Star Hunter, but they are extremely devoted to their credo.

Motivation—Thrills or Recognition: The Star Hunter lives for the thrill of the hunt and capture or kill. Alternatively, the Star Hunter is interested in proving her worthiness to the rest of her space clan; a successful, honorable hunt does that.

nately, she doesn't elect to tell the heroes the nights last one Earth week....

THE PACK

A whole group of Star Hunters have come after the heroes. These villains are members of an alien race that considers hunting and killing a super-powered sentient being to be the ultimate test of their skills. They won't engage non-super-humans unless attacked by them, preferring to focus on the PCs and NPCs of similar power. These villains don't stop their hunt unless forced to, but if defeated they leave... but not before declaring their opponents "the ultimate challenge." Whether this particular group of villains returns at some point in the future is up to the GM, but no doubt other galactic sportsmen one day decide to see if they can bring the PCs down.

TIME MASTER

Not all cosmic threats come from space; some hail from distant possible futures or even alternate timelines. The Time Master is a time-traveling villain obsessed with ruling not just a linear section of time, but all of time itself. She uses her time manipulation powers along with weapons and minions drawn from various points in history to pursue this goal. Any heroes who foil her plans are targeted for elimination lest they permanently stop the Time Master from achieving her goals.

THEMES

Unsurprisingly, time is a big theme with these villains. Historical periods, famous people, and important landmarks are both targets and set pieces for the Time Master. Some common themes are:

ALT-TIMER

This version of the Time Master comes from an alternate timeline where she rules a vast advanced empire. Seeking new conquests, she has used her powers to expand into other timelines and universes. Often the villain is an alternative version of an important person: a historical figure, important NPC, or even one of the PCs! This may give her extensive but imperfect knowledge of events.

The alt-timer often uses versions of heroes and villains from her own time in her schemes. This can be disconcerting for PCs, but a real boon for GMs who can alter existing characters somewhat (even cosmetic changes are enough in some cases) and create all new threats to menace their PCs.

OLD-TIMER

Most Time Masters hail from the far future, but not this villain. She's an ancient being who has existed for thousands of years if not longer. She might be an alien whose race long ago mastered time travel or is from an ancient Earth culture and somehow gained temporal powers. Old-timers are heavily themed on their original time period and culture, but with a futuristic twist. She might be a space pharaoh with Egyptian-style timeships and robotic armies shaped like ancient gods or a time-traveling Norsewoman with hordes of time-Vikings. The villain desires to mold all of time in this image with herself as supreme ruler.

END-TIMER

The end-timer isn't just from the future—she's from the end of time. She holds dominion over the period right before the Big Crunch and is pushing backward in time to expand her domain. The time period she rules starts billions of years in the future, but it quickly comes closer if the villain isn't stopped. The existence of an end-timer often creates a time-barrier that others can't breach, an ever-expanding time period where the villain reigns supreme.

The end-timer makes a great villain for a far future series. The heroes in such games are literally fighting for the future, and their enemy's dominion even farther along the timeline makes a nice contrast.



TIME MASTER

PL15

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
7	5	1	5	5	5	5	5

EQUIPMENT

Futurian Garb: Device (Removable, -14 points) • 54 points

- **Anti-Gravity Field:** Flight 4 (30 MPH) • 8 points
- **Body Armor:** Protection 9 • 9 points
- **Built-In Weapons:** Ranged Damage 15, Accurate 3 • 33 points
- **Life Support System:** Immunity 8 (Environmental Conditions (All), Starvation and Thirst, Suffocation) • 8 points
- **Physical Enhancement:** Enhanced Strength 5 • 10 points

Master of Time: Feature 1 (Temporal Anchor); Immortality 1 (2 weeks), Variable descriptor (Different methods of survival); Immunity 5 (Aging, Disease, Sleep, Time Powers); Movement 5 (Dimensional Travel 2: Alternate Timelines, Time Travel 3), Portal • 29 points

Slow Temporal Flow: Enhanced Traits 8 (Parry 4, Dodge 4, Improved Initiative 4); Quickness 8; Speed 8 (500 MPH) • 28 points.

Temporal Manipulation: Array (56-point array) • 59 points

- **Accelerate Aging:** Ranged Cumulative Affliction 18 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Fatigued, Exhausted, Transformed (elderly and feeble)), Reversible • 1 point
- **Bend Spacetime:** Teleport 13 (30 miles), Extended (8,000 miles in 2 move actions), Increased Mass 4 (800 lbs.) • 1 point
- **Temporal Banishment:** Ranged Movement Attack 14 (Dimensional Travel 2: Alternate Timelines, Time Travel 3), Resisted by Dodge, Accurate 2, Extra Ranks 9 (DC 14), Precise, Reversible • 1 point
- **Temporal Stasis:** Ranged Affliction 18 (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Will; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobile, Paralyzed and Unaware), Extra Condition, Reversible • 1 point
- **Time Distortion Field:** Burst Area Affliction 15 (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Will; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobile, Paralyzed and Unaware), Extra Condition, Reversible • 1 point

Time Vision: Senses 9 (Precognition, Postcognition, Time Sense) • 9 points

SKILLS

Close Combat: Unarmed 8 (+13), Deception 5 (+10), Expertise: Future Science 10 (+15), Expertise: History 15 (+20), Insight 7 (+12), Intimidation 7 (+12), Investigation 3 (+8), Perception 5 (+10), Persuasion 3 (+8), Ranged Combat: Temporal Manipulation 3 (+8), Technology 7 (+12), Vehicles 7 (+12)

ADVANTAGES

Assessment, Beginner's Luck, Benefit 4 (Temporal Despot), Benefit 5 (Billionaire), Connected, Contacts, Eidetic Memory, Inventor, *Improved Initiative 4*, Languages 6 (32 languages of choice), Ranged Attack 4, Redirect, Set-up, Well-informed

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +17

Built-In Weapons +15	Range, Damage 15
Accelerate Aging +12	Range, Affliction 18 (Fortitude DC 33)
Temporal Banishment +16	Range, Movement Attack 16 (Dodge DC 31)
Temporal Stasis +12	Range, Affliction 18 (Dodge/Will DC 28)
Unarmed +13	Close, Damage 7

DEFENSE

DODGE	16	FORTITUDE	13
PARRY	16	TOUGHNESS	14
WILL	16		

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	66	SKILLS	40
POWERS	179	DEFENSES	37
ADVANTAGES	28	TOTAL	350

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Domination: The Time Master seeks mastery of a certain section of time, or perhaps all possible futures and pasts.

Bah! Primitives!: The Time Master is arrogantly dismissive of those from time periods earlier than her own.

NAME SUGGESTIONS

Fugit, Futurion, King Kronus, Lord/Lady Eon, Pharoxx, Temporatrix, Tidiz the Raider-Queen of Time, Time Tyrant

CLASSIC BITS

Classic bits that involve the Time Master are:

HISTORY CAN BE DANGEROUS

Time Masters love to use minions, weapons, monsters, and other threats from throughout time. They also have no sense of temporal purity, mixing and matching as desired. One week the PCs might be fighting Roman soldiers armed with 30th Century plasma cannons, and the next cyborg musketeers riding dinosaurs. These mash-ups can be tons of fun, though GMs should be careful to

keep these combinations somewhat rare in order to keep them intriguing. Once players move from "Wow, I never thought I'd be fighting samurai riding a rocket-powered megalodon" to "Ho-hum, again?" it's time to give this bit a break.

"IT'S YOU! IT CAN'T BE!"

Time Masters are usually someone recognizable and important. Even if they aren't time-controlling versions of Jean D'Arc or Queen Victoria, there should be something about their origin the PCs are familiar with, perhaps even involving the heroes, supporting cast, or allies. This leads

to a dramatic reveal but also helps PCs decide how to deal with their foe.

Of course this works both ways. Barring some time-induced amnesia or insanity, the villain knows who she is and uses this to manipulate, confuse, and harass the PCs. This sort of plotline is usually best suited to longer series arcs, as it takes time to set up, reveal, and resolve such complicated relationships.

"THAT WAS MY TIME DOUBLE!"

Most mastermind type villains are hard to permanently defeat. The Time Master makes those guys look like amateurs. Not only can she jump into next Thursday to avoid capture, but even if killed she returns to reveal the deceased version was from an alternate timeline, cloned using super-future technology, or some other explanation. This is good for the GM who wants to keep reusing this villain, but it can be annoying. There should be some way to permanently shut down this cycle of escape and rebirth, at least until that love-child she engineered from the DNA of the greatest conquerors in history grows up and takes over mom's empire.

ONE OF THOSE TIME TRAVEL THINGS

Time travel in games is tricky and even annoying if overused. On the other hand, alternate timelines, major changes to past and future events, and other classic time travel bits can be great fodder to get an adventure rolling. All it takes is for a villain to show up and declare the PCs her most hated foes, or a future version of a hero complete with gray hair and an eye-patch to contact them with some dire warning to get things moving. The best part is,

the PCs don't even need to have done something—what they'll do in the future is enough.

CLASSIC CAPERS

Adventures involving the Time Master are varied and vast, but include:

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

The Time Master seeks an artifact known as the Ultimate Nexus. This will allow the villain to merge all of time into a single eternal moment which she can control. The artifact was destroyed millennia ago by a group of cosmic heroes, but the villain believes she can travel back and seize it before its destruction. Can the heroes stop her before she folds all of history onto itself? Can they find allies in the past with their ancient counterparts? Note, it's possible there are no ancient heroes, and the heroes themselves are destined to destroy the Ultimate Nexus in a battle with the villain far in the past.

I WILL STOP YOU BEFORE YOU STOP ME!

The Time Master's minions attack the PCs out of nowhere. This pattern repeats until the villain herself appears and explains she is determined to eliminate the PCs because they will be instrumental in foiling her future plans. She won't say what they did, but she's very upset and ready to do anything to bring them down. Can the heroes stop the villain and discover how they foiled her for good? Maybe the secret they seek lies in the future as well, known to descendants and protégés that don't even exist yet.

MINION ARCHETYPES

Ruffians and street thugs aren't the sorts of threats cosmic heroes usually have to deal with—even in the back alleys of alien pirate havens or other hives of scum and villainy. The minions on the following pages are especially appropriate for a cosmic series. They can be used in more traditional superhero games as well, though note that many of these characters are fairly powerful despite their minion status.

Of course they're still minions, and won't pose much of a threat to most heroes except in large numbers. After all, a character designated as a minion can still be quite effective, but doesn't stand up to being hit very well. A handful of powerful minions make a great threat for cosmic heroes because they can damage or delay them, but not for long.

After its power level, each minion archetype has "MR" which stands for "Minion Rank." This is the rank of the Minion advantage or Summon effect needed to have a single example of that archetype as a minion. Creatures with a power point total less than 15 (including 0 points) are listed as MR1.

USING MINIONS FROM OTHER BOOKS

The truth is that most of the minions in the *Gamemaster's Guide* and *Hero's Handbook* work just fine in cosmic games with minimal alteration. It might seem like this wouldn't be the case, but most minions are a blaster rifle or minor alien feature from representing any number of characters that populate the galaxy in cosmic adventures. Some suggestions on how to handle and tweak various types of minions for use in cosmic series follow.

ANIMAL MINIONS

Most animal minions can be altered easily to serve as strange alien beasts. The shark's statistics (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, **Chapter 3**) could represent any number of ravenous killer fish found in alien seas. Adding Flight, Space Flight, and Immunity (Life Support) even creates space-faring sharks which might prey on small starcraft and stranded travelers. Rats or insect swarms (see *Gamemaster's Guide*, **Chapter 3**), can represent any number of space vermin from a dozen

different worlds. Adding the occasional power or increasing an animal's PL by 1 or 2 is an easier way to represent most alien beasts rather than designing them from scratch.

CIVILIANS

Civilian and non-combatant minion types really don't change much whether they're aliens or humans. A scientist minion from a race of super-intelligent clones might have a few more ranks in Expertise and Intellect, but as these characters usually serve as non-combat extras their statistics usually need minimal alteration.

CULTISTS, DEMONS, AND MYSTICS

For cosmic series with magic or mysticism, these characters can be used pretty much unaltered. If magic is unheard of or rare, then these minions could represent truly alien and extradimensional horrors and the twisted individuals who serve them. Cultists also might rise up to worship certain very powerful villains as living gods. Or perhaps there are magic-wielding races in the depths of space, possibly even a planet of demons who've spilled out of Hell and onto a world far from Earth.

DINOSAURS

Dinosaurs deserve special mention because, well, they're dinosaurs. Cosmic superhero comics have a long history

of putting dinosaur-like monsters on other planets—either because that's where they actually came from or because some space gods seeded the galaxy with them—for heroes to face. Sometimes these creatures are pretty close to their prehistoric cousins. Other times they are massive (add more Growth) or have strange powers like fiery breath (Ranged or Cone Damage) or even a hypnotic gaze (Perception Area Affliction, Sense-based). These space dinosaurs are often mindless brutes, but occasionally a race of high-Intellect sentient dinosaurs pops up. These alien beings might have strong psionic powers or advanced technology and possibly connections in some way to the extinct reptilian giants of Earth's past.

MONSTERS

Honestly, in most cases a monster is a monster. A giant animated tree or venomous spider works much the same whether they are Antarian Snare Beasts or a product of some Earth-bound mad scientist or sorcerer. To be credible threats to some cosmic heroes, the PL of these minions should be increased, but they require little mechanical alteration otherwise. This doesn't mean alien monsters might not look strange and otherworldly, just that such physical changes often require minimal alteration of game statistics. Coming up with a new way to describe a monster you already have a statblock for saves you the time of writing up something new.

NINJA AND MARTIAL ARTISTS

While traditional ninja hail from Earth's Japan, the idea of sneaky spies and assassins for hire works almost anywhere. Various alien races certainly have their own version of the ninja, augmented by advanced weaponry, technology, and even alien abilities. The various minion templates work perfectly as a base for such characters, simply add advanced technology like energy swords, short-range teleportation bands, personal cloaking devices, or innate blending powers. Such minions could easily work for any number of galactic crime lords, alien conquerors, or planetary intelligence agencies.

COPS AND CRIMINALS

Law enforcement and criminals are often similar throughout the galaxy. All but the most anarchic planets have some sort of police, and all but the most utopian have some sort of criminal underworld. These individuals tend to operate below the scale (and notice) of many cosmic-level superheroes, but it's not unheard of for them to become involved in adventures, especially with the most powerful and influential of gangs.

SOLDIERS

Whether they're professional military, planetary militia, or alien terrorists, soldier minions come up a lot in cosmic adventures. Every galactic empire, mercenary company, and would-be conqueror has them at their disposal. These minions are rarely a challenge for high power level cosmic

ALIENS ARE A LOT LIKE US....

One common conceit discussed earlier in this chapter is the idea that despite appearances most alien races in cosmic tales are a lot like humanity. They tend to have similar emotions, ambitions, and weaknesses. They're often humanoid and have just a few cosmetic differences when compared to humanity. This commonality isn't universal, but it comes up frequently enough it can be used to a GM's benefit in his own cosmic series.

Simply put, when it comes to minions and other supporting characters, most of the time human equivalents work just fine as a model. Even alien superheroes are often similar in powers and motivation to their Earth counterparts. The purple-furred paragon Dext the Defiant from the Andromeda Galaxy might have Feature (fur) and possess his people's natural Infravision and Tracking Scent, but he can otherwise be represented by a Paragon hero archetype in a pinch. More important and longstanding characters probably deserve their own statblocks, but for many guest stars, minions, and supporting characters there's no need to spend a lot of time coming up with tons of new statistics.

Of course, alien races with particularly interesting powers or abilities should have these added to suitable templates, but it's often not necessary to create a statblock for every racial variant of cop, soldier, and thug. And this sort of approach frees up the GM to have fun describing the strange array of aliens the PCs encounter without worrying about shuffling statblocks for the moose-headed alien thug, his three-eyed buddy, and their companion with the bright red skin.

characters—even in modest-sized groups—and often require special weapons or massive numbers to have a chance. Gamemasters seeking to throw whole armies against their PCs should consider using the mass combat rules in the *Gamemaster's Guide* (Chapter 3).

ZOMBIES!

Zombies are quite popular these days in cosmic comics, though most of the stories of brainless, flesh-hungry

undead take place on Earth. Of course, there's no reason a GM can't change that. Whether its mind-controlled minions of an alien overlord or a terrible alien plague that reanimates the dead, zombies can be a nice change of pace from fighting renegade space gods and alien armadas. Of course, like soldiers, these minions either need to be beefed up a bit or used in massive numbers for many cosmic series. If you want your cosmic game to include some horror, zombies are a good place to start. You may also want to check out Mutants & Mastermind's *Supernatural Handbook*, which covers the horror genre extensively.

COSMIC MINIONS

As mentioned before, many minions from other MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS products work very well in a cosmic game. However, a few minion types show up more frequently in cosmic tales and deserve special mention. The following section details a number of minion types suitable for use in a cosmic series.

CUDDLY ALIEN PET

Sometimes heroes or other characters end up with an extraterrestrial pet. These otherworldly baby dragons, animated furballs, or oddly colored counterparts to Earth animals tend to have one or two strange powers but generally behave much like their terrestrial counterparts. In some cases, these pets are Sidekicks or honorary teammates, such as Cosmo the Moon Monkey, but just as often they are sometimes useful but fairly fragile companions best represented as minions. Cuddly alien pets usually have some hidden aspect or unexpected talent like being secretly very intelligent, the natural predators of a seemingly more dangerous species, or the lost ruler from a previously unknown world.

ENERGY BEINGS

Not all life in a superhero universe is carbon based. Beings of pure energy are a staple of many cosmic stories. These beings can be unusual allies or exotic enemies. In either case, their unusual makeup often makes them alien not only in form but thought as well. These different goals, ideologies, and physiologies can make for interesting encounters. Also, some villains and heroes with energy-related powers could summon or dominate such creatures to do their bidding.

SHAPESHIFTING ALIENS

Aliens who change their shape are common in cosmic stories, especially stories with intrigue, covert operations, and secret invasions. Usually the average shapeshifter can't mimic the powers of a target, just their form and any natural abilities inherent to the form. Thus mimicking a bird would let them fly, but taking a flying superhuman's form wouldn't. However, these aliens usually have special operatives who can mimic powers as well (either by pos-

CUDDLY ALIEN PET **PL5 MINION • MR6 • 86 POINTS**

STR	1	STA	1	AGL	4	DEX	0	FGT	2	INT	1	AWE	1	PRE	1
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Powers: **Big Soulful Eyes** (Sense 1 (Low-light vision)); **Itty Bitty Claws & Teeth** (Enhanced Advantage (Improved Critical (Unarmed))); **Small and Cuddly** (Enhanced Advantage (Attractive), Shrinking 6, Innate, Normal Strength, Permanent)

Pick Any One Movement Power: Flight 4 (30 MPH) or Speed 2 (8 MPH), Leaping 2 (30 feet), Movement 2 (Wall-crawling) or Teleport 4 (500 feet)

Pick Any One Offensive Power: **Breath Weapon** (Ranged Damage 4) or **Poison Quill** (Ranged Affliction 4 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Fatigued, Exhausted, Asleep)) or **Sonic Shriek** (Perception Area Affliction 4 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Impaired, Disabled, Incapacitated)

Advantages: Agile Feint, Attractive, Defensive Roll 2, Evasion, Improved Critical (Unarmed), Move-by Action

Skills: Acrobatics 2 (+6), Close Combat: Unarmed 6 (+8), Deception 2 (+3), Perception 4 (+5), Stealth 2 (+12)*. Add either Ranged Combat: Breath Weapon or Poison Quill 6 (+6) or Sleight of Hand 6 (+6)

Offense: Init +4, Unarmed +8 (Close, Damage 1), Other Power +6 (Ranged, Damage or Affliction 4)

Defenses: Dodge 7*, Parry 7*, Fortitude 5, Toughness 3, Will 5

Totals: Abilities 22 + Powers 38 + Advantages 5 + Skills 11 + Defenses 10 = Total 86 *Includes Shrinking modifiers.

ENERGY BEINGS **PL8 MINION • MR8 • 119 POINTS**

STR	0	STA	—	AGL	2	DEX	0	FGT	0	INT	1	AWE	1	PRE	0
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Powers: **Energy Form** (Insubstantial 3, Permanent, Innate; Protection 8); **Energy Flight** (Flight 3 (16 MPH)); **Energy Perception** (Senses 5 (Infravision, Analytical Detect 2: Energy Patterns, Ultravision)); **Power Aura** (Reaction Affliction 8 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated)); **Living Energy** (Immunity 30 (Fortitude Effects))

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 8 (+8), Expertise: Physics 1 (+2), Perception 1 (+2)

Offense: Init +2, Unarmed +8 (Close, Damage 0/Affliction 8 for Power Aura)

Defenses: Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 8, Will 6

Totals: Abilities -2 + Powers 97 + Advantages 0 + Skills 5 + Defenses 19 = Total 119

sessing duplicates of those powers all the time, or by the use of the Variable effect, Limited either by number of individuals that can be mimicked or only when assuming that being's form).

Shapeshifting aliens are traditionally bad guys. They sow paranoia, spy on other races, and generally act sneaky and underhanded. There are a few notable exceptions to the

ALIEN SHAPESHIFTER PL6 MINIONS · MR6 · 90 POINTS

STR 1 STA 3 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 3 INT 1 AWE 1 PRE 1

Powers: **Shapeshifting** (Morph 3 (any living being), Regeneration 1, Variable 2, move action, only natural abilities)

Advantages: Defensive Roll 2, Equipment 2, Hide in Plain Sight

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+7), Deception 5 (+6), Expertise: Espionage 2 (+3), Perception 1 (+2), Persuasion 1 (+2), Ranged Combat: Blaster 6 (+7), Stealth 4 (+5), Technology 2 (+3), Vehicles 1 (+2)

Equipment: Concealed Blaster (Ranged Damage 4, Crit. 19-20, Subtle)

Offense: Init +1, Concealed Blaster +7 (Ranged, Damage 4, Crit. 19-20), Unarmed +7 (Close, Damage 1)

Defenses: Dodge 7, Parry 7, Fortitude 6, Toughness 5, Will 6

Totals: Abilities 24 + Powers 30 + Advantages 5 + Skills 14 + Defenses 18 = Total 90

XENOMORPH LARVAE PL5 MINIONS · MR4 · 53 POINTS

STR 3 STA 1 AGL 3 DEX -2 FGT 2 INT -4 AWE 1 PRE -3

Powers: **Alien Movement** (Movement 3 (Slithering, Wall-crawling 2), Speed 1 (4 MPH)); **Alien Infection** (Progressive Affliction 8 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Transformed), Grab-based, Insidious, Limit: Third degree only); **Small** (Shrinking 6, Innate, Permanent); **Grasping Tentacle** (Enhanced Strength 2, Limited—Only for Grabs, Extra Limb 1)

Advantages: All-out Attack, *Improved Grab*, Improved Hold

Skills: Close Combat: Grab 7 (+9), Perception 2 (+3), Stealth 1 (+10)

Offense: Init +3, Grab +9 (DC 13), Unarmed +2 (Close, Damage 3)

Defenses: Dodge 9, Parry 9, Fortitude 6, Toughness 1, Will 4

Totals: Abilities 0 + Powers 32 + Advantages 2 + Skills 5 + Defenses 14 = Total 53 *Includes Shrinking modifiers.

XENOMORPH WARRIOR PL7 MINIONS · MR7 · 98 POINTS

STR 4 STA 4 AGL 1 DEX -1 FGT 4 INT -1 AWE 2 PRE 0

Powers: **Alien Movement** (Movement 3 (Slithering, Wall-crawling 2), Speed 2 (8 MPH)); **Alien Sight** (Senses 2 (Darkvision)); **Armored Chitin** (Immunity 3 (Corrosive Blood, Suffocation)), Protection 4); **Corrosive Blood** (Damage 4, Penetrating 4, Reaction—When it fails a Toughness check, Secondary Effect); **Teeth and Claws** (Strength-based Damage 4)

Advantages: All-out Attack, Close Attack 2, Set-up, Teamwork

Skills: Deception 2 (+2), Intimidation 5 (+5), Perception 3 (+5), Stealth 4 (+5)

Offense: Init +1, Teeth & Claws +6 (Close, Damage 8), Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 4)

Defenses: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 8, Toughness 8, Will 6

Totals: Abilities 26 + Powers 45 + Advantages 5 + Skills 7 + Defenses 15 = Total 98

“shapeshifting plus alien equals evil” equation, but even these heroes tend to have villainous members of their race to deal with.

XENOMORPHS

This is a catch-all category for insectoid alien nasties who are short on conversation and long on planting their eggs inside other species' bodies. This process ends badly for the host, resulting in severe trauma and usually death. Xenomorphs are vicious organisms who have evolved to be perfect engines of killing and procreation. They may be a naturally evolved species or a product of genetic experimentation (possibly designed to be the perfect weapon), but in either case they are dangerous predators and parasites. A handful of their larvae could wipe out a whole world given time to spread.

Xenomorphs may or may not be intelligent, but many don't speak any language. They usually have a queen or ruling class directing their actions. If encountered, the queen is considered a villain and not a minion and is usually several PLs above others of the race. The exact nature of these ruling bugs varies and GMs should design or select an archetype that best suits their concept for the ruler. For example, a big alien “brain bug” might be the Alien Supermind (earlier in this chapter), while a starship-sized hive mother could be a slightly altered Space Dragon (earlier in this chapter). All xenomorphs serve their queen unquestioningly and gladly die carrying out her orders or defending her.

XENOMORPH LARVAE

Xenomorph larvae are swift but fairly fragile. They exist purely to find a host and infect it. As this kills the host eventually, this is reflected a bit differently than many Affliction-based effects. Namely, once a target is suffering from a third degree Transformed condition, there's rarely any going back. GMs should allow PCs and important NPCs some chance of surviving this process, but generally there's little hope for the victim (especially unimportant NPC victims) at that stage of infection.

XENOMORPH WARRIOR

These are the core members of the Xenomorph races and the ones most commonly encountered. In some cases they might also have traits taken from their hosts, such as higher abilities or powers. They usually try to incapacitate their victims and take them back to a larvae-filled hatchery to serve as hosts. However, especially dangerous threats or injured and weak targets may be eliminated or used for food. Xenomorph warriors are cunning and deadly in large numbers due to their instinctive ability to coordinate their actions. Some variants of these minions have wings (Flight 4 (30 MPH)), are aquatic (Swimming 4 (8 MPH), Movement 1 (Aquatic Adaptation), and Favored Environment (Aquatic), have a chameleon-like ability to blend into their surroundings (Concealment 4 (All visual senses), Blending, Passive and Hide in Plain Sight) or are linked together by a telepathic hivemind (Communication 2, Limited 2—Only other Xenomorphs).

CHAPTER 4: THE FREEDOM COSMOS



The universe is vast, and it's fairly common knowledge on Earth—and especially in places like Freedom City and Emerald City—that humanity is not alone in the cosmos. On the contrary, there are countless worlds filled with a bewildering variety of alien life, some of it quite advanced, and some hostile to Earth. Visitors from other worlds have made their way to our own, but, for the most part, Earth is considered something of an interstellar backwater, a primitive curiosity among space-faring races. Were it not for its unusual number of powerful inhabitants, and the prior intervention of the Preservers, Earth would hardly rate any notice at all.

This chapter looks at the wider cosmos of the *Freedom City* and *Emerald City* settings. It describes the context of cosmic history, the unfolding of which has significantly impacted the world, Emerald City in particular in recent years, and events that may shape the course of history in Earth's galaxy for years to come. It also looks at the solar system, the major space-faring civilizations interacting with Earth, important alien races, and beyond the material universe to other dimensions and vast, cosmic beings known to take an interest in human affairs.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COSMOS

Over billions of years, galaxies formed, stars developed planets, and a few of those first-generation planets gave rise to life. The first life in the universe arose long before the development of life on Earth, perhaps even before the formation of Earth's solar system.

THE PRESERVERS

One of the first species developed intelligence and, eventually, a star-spanning civilization. They left the cradle of their home world and set out to explore and tame the cosmos. An inquisitive race, they wanted to learn and understand everything.

Eventually, their unquenchable thirst for knowledge led this species to a massive feat of stellar engineering: the creation of a vast quantum computer built and programmed, atom by atom, from the mass of a star. It would have such computational power that it would be capable of modeling the entirety of the cosmos, encompassing the whole of creation and laying bare its secrets to its creators. They would understand everything.

But when the vast stellar engine became active, it created an unexpected chain reaction. The process caused the star to collapse in on itself, growing so materially and informationally dense that it formed a black hole, a sentient singularity driven by one thing: the need to encompass the

PRESERVER ARTIFACTS

The Preservers built to last, and some examples of their technology survive to the present day. These include various artificial intelligences, like the Curator as well as Tellax and Mentor (in this chapter). Other Preserver artifacts include the MEGAS technology employed by Megastar and the Preserver Stones used by Farside City, the Star Knights, and the Blackguard. The most infamous Preserver “artifact” is Collapsar itself, one of the greatest threats the cosmos has known. (For more information about these characters, see the *Emerald City* and *Freedom City* setting books.)

Preserver technology is so advanced it may as well be magic. Even technologically sophisticated space-faring cultures do not fully understand it. Molecular-, atomic-, and even quantum-scale engineering is involved, along with tapping into vast sources of “cosmic” energy. In game terms, Preserver artifacts are intended as plot devices for Gamemasters; give them whatever capabilities are necessary for the needs of your story and series. Given their makers’ talent for artificial intelligence, Preserver artifacts often have their own agendas!

whole of creation. In that moment, the cosmic menace known as Collapsar the Devourer was born, consuming the entire solar system where it was created.

Collapsar’s creators were stunned and horrified. In their arrogance, their rush to advance and understand, they had unleashed the universe’s undoing. They sought to leash and trap what they had created, penning it inside folds in space-time, but projections showed all their solutions were only temporary. In time, Collapsar would consume everything. So its creators found new purpose, and a new existence. They became known as “the Preservers,” their original name lost to history, and were tasked with finding a way for life in the universe to thrive, prosper, and advance to the point where it might be capable of overcoming what they had unintentionally unleashed.

For millions of years, the Preservers spanned the universe, cultivating and guiding new life. They created artificial intelligences to manage and monitor their projects and perform other duties. One, eventually known as the Curator, was charged with gathering and cataloging all knowledge, perhaps with an eye towards creating a kind of “time capsule” or record of the universe should all other efforts fail. Other A.I.s were set as guardians and overseers of burgeoning civilizations, recording and reporting to their masters anything of interest or potential. One such source of potential was the planet Earth.

Earth at the time was inhabited by two intelligent species: saurian Serpent People and primates known as Humans. The Serpent People were of little interest: degenerate, cold-blooded, and corrupted by the worship of nameless entities from outside the universe even the Preservers considered dangerous. Humanity showed promise, however. So the Preservers intervened in the evolutionary contest between the species. They took and studied human specimens, vivisectioning them and breaking them down to their essential components, mapping every molecule of their genetic makeup. Humanity had considerable potential, and the Preservers sought to exploit it.

They took biological samples and “seeded” many of the worlds in the galaxy with life, extending its reach and influence, often modifying it to suit new environments or to follow new evolutionary paths. The galaxy became a living laboratory, designed to give rise to new species, perhaps with an eye towards ensuring life’s survival and cultivating civilizations capable of one day confronting

the threat looming in the void between the stars, the dark hunger seeking to consume everything.

They created a “preserve” on the far side of Earth’s Moon, transplanting a human colony there. They harvested vast storage banks of human genetic information and cellular samples. They engineered variant strains of the human genome, enhancing certain traits to bring out their potential. When they were done, they departed, leaving behind their machines to monitor the progress of their experiments. They never returned.

The fate of the Preservers remains one of the great cosmic mysteries. Perhaps they finally fell victim to Collapsar, consumed by the endless hunger of their own creation. Their other creations—advanced artificial intelligences or new life forms—could have rebelled against them. They might have suffered some disaster, a plague or even a war amongst their own kind, or with another race as advanced as they. Rather than being destroyed, the Preservers might have simply chosen to leave the universe behind, having set plans in motion to right the wrongs they had done, then left, hoping to end their interference and give other life in the universe a chance.

THE GREAT EMPIRES

The “star gods” commanded the human-descended inhabitants of the planet Lor-Van to go forth and conquer. So the Lor united their world and, eventually, reached up to the stars to claim their rightful place in the home of the gods. The Lor sailed into the black void of space while humans on Earth were still sailing the seas and exploring their planet.

On many worlds, Lor emissaries discovered species much like their own, affirming the belief that humanoids were a “chosen people” fashioned in the gods’ image. On other planets, the Lor found truly alien life, but they primarily sought to explore and to build connections of commerce and cultural trade. Still, the Lor did not abandon their warrior heritage, and responded with force against any who threatened them.

The threads of trade, communication, exploration, and military might spun out by the Lor led to the formation of the Lor Republic, an alliance of star systems and species governed by a Senate and a Supreme Praetor chosen by the Senate to hold executive power. The Republic’s seat of power was located on a colony world named Magna-Lor, the center of a great civilization.

The Republic faced challenges from both within and without. Strains of humanocentrism created struggles for non-human species to find their place within the Republic, and even human-descended races found themselves regarded as second-class citizens to the great families of Lor-Van. Some systems and species also responded to the Republic's overtures of friendship with hostilities, or sought to prey upon its border systems and colonies.

Still, the greatest threat appeared when the Republic first came into contact with the Grue Unity. Grue agents nearly brought about civil war within the Republic before Lor mentats helped to root them out. Since that time, the Lor and the Grue have been in a state of "cold war," occasionally erupting into open conflict. The Republic was a civilization too vast for the Grue to swallow in a quick conquest, while the Grue were too wily, persistent, and dedicated for the Lor to overcome without a massive offensive that threatened to destroy both civilizations.

THE CHAOS OF COLLAPSAR

Earth has had only a few decades of largely unofficial contact with other species. A damaged Grue ship crashed in the southwestern United States in the 1950s, the remains recovered by the United States government. This led to a Grue scouting and infiltration mission that, while ultimately routed, did manage to fan the flames of public opinion against superheroes for some years. The immortal human hero Daedalus (see the *Freedom City* setting book) encountered the Lor during years of travel through space and taught them about Earth, while the

Atom Family and others made contact with the inhabitants of Farside City, thanks to Mentac, the exiled surviving heir of the Selunite Royal Family.

More recently, Tellax, a damaged Preserver monitor AI, reactivated near the Pacific Northwest. Tellax attempted to fulfill its programming to further evolve humanity and sought to exploit human potential to create a super-army potentially capable of fending off or destroying Collapsar. Tellax unleashed the Silver Storm on Emerald City, a nanotech infection that created numerous new superhumans and drew others to the city. Emerald City's defenders were able to thwart Tellax's attempt to expand its experiments and infect all of humanity with a variant of the Silver Storm technology. In so doing, they forced the AI to leave Earth, as detailed in the adventure *Emerald City Knights* (found in the *Emerald City* setting book).

Unfortunately, the re-activation of a large concentration of Preserver technology on Earth brought the planet to the attention of Collapsar and its herald Orizon. Collapsar destroyed and devoured the whole of the Magna-Lor system, throwing the Lor Republic into chaos and leaving it vulnerable to a swift two-front invasion by the Grue and the Stellar Khanate. The events that followed are told in the *Heroes' Journey: Event Horizon* adventure series found in this book.

Collapsar's swath of destruction, the fall of the Lor Republic, and rise of new interstellar factions like the Argents and the Blackguard have shifted the balance of power in the galaxy and brought even more attention to the primitive planet known as Earth. Ready or not, humanity's sworn defenders must take their place on the cosmic stage.

THE SOLAR SYSTEM

Although humanity still takes great pride in a set of boot-prints and a flag planted on the Moon, the truth is that Earth's solar system is practically littered with artifacts from other civilizations. The remnants of alien visitors who have passed through at some point in the past hundred millennia or so and left their marks on the planets orbiting Sol are not difficult to find. The people of Earth know full well they are not alone in the wider universe, as several different species of aliens have visited, and now more than a few are looking to stay.

EARTH

The blue-green planet third from an unremarkable G-type star, Earth holds special significance in the galaxy. The Preservers saw special potential in life on this world, which they attempted to cultivate for their own purposes. Whatever their long-ago intentions, their intervention contributed to Earth as home to more super-powered beings than virtually any other known planet in the galaxy. This goes far beyond just homogeneous racial abilities, manifesting in the unique ability of some humans to transcend a challenge or crisis and become something more than human.

THE ROSWELL INCIDENT

The United States government carefully covered up the discovery of a crashed Grue scout ship near Roswell, New Mexico and denies to this day that the incident involved anything other than a weather balloon or some other earthly device (like an experimental Air Force craft). In truth, the government has held samples of alien technology—and Grue DNA—for decades. If the rumors are to be believed, they may even have one or more Grue prisoners held for interrogation and experimentation, captured from the crash or during the aliens' initial "Hidden Invasion" during the 1950s.

The truth of all of this is left to the individual Gamemaster to decide. At the least, Roswell provided humanity with proof of the existence of aliens (proof Earth has seen numerous times since) and possibly some useful technical information to explain those government-issue blasters and similar super-science for organizations like AEGIS. At the far end, the worst nightmares of paranoid splinter groups like Majestic-20 (see the *Emerald City* setting book) are actually true: a "shadow government" within the United States (or even the United Nations) has been secretly per-

forming illegal experiments involving alien genetics and technology for decades, either on their own or under the influence of alien (or alien-hybrid) shapeshifters.

MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS Gamemasters looking to run a “Watch the Skies” style series of 1950s science-horror can easily use the decade following the Roswell Incident—and the accompanying Red Scare—as a backdrop.

ARCADIA

Before the Grue crashed on Earth, their damaged vessel passed over the Pacific Northwest, particularly the dense temperate rainforest near Emerald City. Desperate attempts to save the ship, along with possible conflict with whatever was on-board, left debris scattered along their route. This contaminated the Arcadian Forest with Grue germ-plasm as well as their technology and containers of alien substances, possibly even escaped alien beings. An accident involving one of these containers merged a human and an alien prisoner of the Grue to create the hero Xeno (see the *Emerald City* setting for details).

In the years since, the alien contamination has added to the Arcadian reputation for strange sightings and phenomena. This led to the incorporation of alien visitors and those changed by their influence into the Cryptid Clans, a secret society of “outsiders,” non-humans, and mutants dwelling in the Arcadian wilderness (also detailed in *Emerald City*). It has also made the Arcadian Forest a popular site for “cryptid hunters” and others seeking evidence of elusive creatures like Bigfoot and extraterrestrials.

STAR ISLAND

Of course, those looking for evidence of extraterrestrials on Earth these days don’t have to go further than the Internet or cable news. In addition to several known alien heroes, the E.T. population of Earth has recently increased significantly due to a new “migration”.

Located off the coast near Freedom City, Star Island was so named because of its rough shape as well as its time as a launching facility and ground-based space telemetry center. Shifts in government funding, along with several incidents involving super-villain attacks, led to the closure of the Space Center. Discussions were underway within the Federal Government to use Star Island for the expansion of the Blackstone Prison facility when the Silver Storm occurred in Emerald City, shifting priority to the creation of a new federal super-prison closer to the West Coast (and leading to the creation of the Deep Six prison described in *Emerald City*).

After the destruction of Magna-Lor and the collapse of the Lor Republic, Daedalus (a member of Earth’s Freedom League) made contact with some of his old friends in Lor space. When it became clear the Republic could not be saved, Daedalus did what he could to rescue endangered refugees hunted by the forces of the new Imperium under Star-Khan. He brought them to Earth, where the League set up Star Island as a combination triage center and refugee camp. Once the United States government and the United Nations became aware of the situation, Daedalus and the Freedom League were ordered to halt the importation of any further “illegal aliens.”



That left a population of a few thousand extraterrestrials—most of them human offshoots like the Lor—on Star Island, and the earthly authorities with no real means of extraditing them, nor much in the way of legal precedent for dealing with them, but a clear need for humanitarian (or “xenotarian”) aid. The refugees can make a reasonable claim of seeking political asylum, and most can even ultimately claim Earth as their ancestral home world (although many of the Lor choose to see it the other way, with Earth as one of their “lost colonies”).

For the time being, the U.S. government has chosen to extend refugee status to the inhabitants of Star Island, with Daedalus’ promise to create a more permanent solution to the issue (see **The Outer Planets** section, following). The island is off-limits to casual visitors, a cordon enforced by the Coast Guard and AEGIS, but its inhabitants are allowed to visit the mainland, now that questions of quarantine and the like have been answered. Still, although the alien refugees are not prisoners, the authorities carefully monitor them, and there are long-term social, political, and biological concerns about their presence on Earth.

THE MOON

In a crater on the far side of Earth’s moon is a hidden city, thousands of years old. Its inhabitants, the Farsiders (also known as Selunites or “Moon People”), are the descendants of humans taken from Earth by the alien Preservers, the same race that seeded humanity across the galaxy.

The Preservers built Farside City in a deep crater, along with atmospheric generators, and settled a number of humans there. Apparently, they used the city as some sort of outpost or perhaps a “living laboratory” to study humanity. They may have also intended the city to ensure the survival of various species (including humans) if something happened to wipe out life on Earth. Certainly, some of the Farsiders’ myths suggest their home was intended as “the Last Refuge.” Whatever the case, the Preservers disappeared long ago, leaving the Farsiders to develop on their own.

The inhabitants of the lunar city advanced faster than their Earth-bound cousins, achieving a high level of scientific and technological sophistication, given a “leg-up” by studying the remnants of the technology the Preservers left behind. They also developed psionic abilities among a minority of their population, which soon became the ruling class. Generally, the Farsiders led an idyllic existence with little reason to change their way of life. A strong xenophobic streak, perhaps encouraged or engineered by the Preservers, kept them from returning to Earth, even when they had the means to do so. This limitation—along with the environmental dangers—also kept them from exploring their lunar home much beyond the bounds of their city. Their society peaked centuries ago and has remained largely the same since.

Things changed when humans from Earth began to leave their planet and explore space. The Farsiders learned much about the mother-world from intercepted radio and TV transmissions. They knew Earthlings were primi-

tive and warlike, and they feared the possibility of a conflict, even more so once humanity developed arsenals of atomic- and space-based weapons.

Fear and ambition drove Selene, a member of the Farsider royal family, to lead a coup against her relations. She seized control of Farside City and used its technology to hide all evidence of the city from technological or biological sensors. The only other member of the royal family to survive was a boy named Mentac, who escaped to Earth and was adopted by humans.

Selene took the title Lady Lunar and turned the city into a dictatorship under her rule. She used the power of the Moonstone, an alien artifact left by the Preservers, to increase her powers and exert influence over the Farsiders. Rather than be destroyed by Earthlings, Lady Lunar planned to build a space fleet and eventually seize control of Earth, ruling from her city on the Moon.

Years later, Mentac returned to Farside City as one of the Atom Family. They overthrew Lady Lunar and freed the Farsiders from her influence. Mentac refused to take his aunt’s place, not wishing to exchange one dictator for another, no matter how benevolent. He encouraged his people to institute a democratic form of government, and the elected Farside Council now rules the city.

Most people on Earth still do not know of Farside City’s existence, although it is a popular urban legend. Farsider technology hides them from satellites and space probes, although several major Earth governments know about the city and its location. Many people in the superhuman community are aware of or have even visited Farside City, particularly the current generation of the Atom Family, who are children of Mentac and his wife Andrea Atom and are half Farsider themselves.

The Farsiders are of human stock, still almost genetically identical to Earth humans. They have the same traits as ordinary humans, although they tend to be taller, with thinner builds. (Farside City has artificial gravity, but not quite as strong as Earth’s normal 1G.) Some Farsiders still manifest psionic abilities, although such powers have become even less common since Lady Lunar wiped out the rest of the royal family (the Farsiders with the strongest psionic genes). Farside technology is quite advanced, including gravity control, genetic engineering, and supercomputers.

THE MOONSTONE

The Moonstone is a mysterious alien artifact, created or discovered by the Preservers and left behind in Farside City when they departed Earth’s solar system. It is a fist-sized, faceted piece of translucent crystal with a pearly luster that glows softly from inside. The Moonstone is a potentially limitless power-source, and has provided most of the energy needs of Farside City for thousands of years.

The Moonstone is also a powerful psionic amplifier. Its energy can boost the abilities of a psychic through physical contact, and even grant access to abilities they don’t normally have. The mentats of Farside occasionally used the

CRATER APES

PL6 • 64 POINTS

STR 6 STA 4 AGL 3 DEX 1 FGT 3 INT -4 AWE 1 PRE 0

Powers: Ape (Fur (Feature 1), Large (Growth 4, Permanent, Innate), Senses 3 (Acute Olfactory, Low-light Vision, Tracking Scent), Tough (Protection 2)); **Radiation Absorption** (Enhanced Strength 2, Immunity 11 (Radiation effects, Starvation and Thirst))

Skills: Acrobatics 5 (+8), Athletics 4 (+10), Close Combat: Unarmed 3 (+6), Intimidation 4 (+6), Perception 3 (+4), Stealth 4 (+3) (Stats include all Growth modifiers)

Offense: Initiative +3, Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 6)

Defense: Dodge 5, Parry 5, Fortitude 8, Toughness 6, Will 3

Totals: Abilities 8 + Powers 30 + Skills 12 + Defenses 14 = 64

Complications: **Ape:** Crater apes are big, aggressive, and stupid. They cannot speak or think on a human level, and establish their pecking order by brute strength. **Power Loss:** Crater apes lose their Enhanced Strength and Immunity to Starvation and Thirst after 24 hours with no exposure to a radiation source.



Moonstone to enhance their powers, and held the crystal in trust for the entire community. When Lady Lunar overthrew the royal family, she seized the Moonstone's power for herself. The Atom Family returned it to the custody of the Farsiders when they, in turn, deposed Lady Lunar.

There appears to be some sort of psychic link between the Moonstone and Chase Atom. Chase has been able to override another's control of the stone in the past with great mental effort. It may be because he is descended from one of the last survivors of the royal family, because of his unique human/Farsider heritage, his unusually strong psionic powers, or some combination thereof.

Like other Preserver artifacts, the Moonstone is a plot device for Gamemasters to use as they see fit; therefore, it is not given any game traits.

CRATER APES

Crater apes are primates genetically engineered long ago by the Preservers (or perhaps by the ancient ancestors of the Farsiders—it's not entirely clear). Crater apes were originally used to perform heavy labor in parts of Farside City, under the psychic control and guidance of Farsider nobles. They were designed to absorb solar radiation, and thrive on it, enhancing their strength.

While Lady Lunar ruled Farside City, she turned the crater apes from a labor force into her mentally controlled enforcers and guards, using them to help keep the human population of the city in line. The apes served quite well in that capacity, until the Atom Family overthrew Lady Lunar and liberated the Farsiders.

The people of Farside City attempted to return the crater apes to their role as domesticated servants, but encountered difficulties. Lady Lunar gave them a taste for violence and a domineering attitude toward anyone except for her, plus there were virtually no mentats left to control them. The Farsiders faced some trouble with the crater apes and eventually isolated the population in a preserve. Efforts to re-train them have been slow (particularly without the aid of experienced telepaths), but are progressing.

Lady Lunar may have taken some crater apes with her when she fled Farside City, or shortly thereafter. She has at least once unleashed the crater apes on both Farside and Freedom City after driving them into a state of "lunacy" with her powers. The Atom Family was able to capture and contain the rogue apes and return them to their preserve on the Moon.

Crater apes make useful minions for whomever manages to capture and train or otherwise control some of them. Heroes visiting Farside City may also encounter them there.

VENUS

The hellish, inhospitable atmosphere of Venus has not kept one of Earth's neighbors entirely free of alien life. Decades ago, a colony of Mycanoids established themselves here, growing from spores swept into the solar system. The so-called "Mushroom Men of Venus" eventually reached maturity and launched spore-pods towards Earth when the blue planet came within proximity, leading to a small invasion repelled by Earth's superhuman protectors.

Unknown to those who defeated the initial invasion, the Mycanoid colony on Venus merely became dormant, going through a new cycle of building spore-pods and awaiting the opportunity to launch them again at Earth. See the **Alien Races** section later in this chapter for more information on the Mycanoids, if you want to stage this invasion for your players.

MARS

Surprisingly, Earth's other celestial neighbor is relatively free of alien activity. Once thought of as a fantastic world of red deserts and canals, Mars has turned out to be of little interest in a cosmic sense. There are no "Martians," although there are ancient Preserver ruins buried beneath the red sands, indicating they once had a presence here, most likely during their early days of investigating Earth's solar system.

The Grue also used Mars as a staging point for operations in Earth's solar system in the mid-20th Century, leading some to erroneously believe the red-skinned shapeshifters were Martians. There may still be some abandoned Grue technology on Mars, perhaps even Grue "sleepers" in suspended animation, but neither has cropped up as a concern thus far.

THE OUTER PLANETS

The outer planets of the solar system, beyond the asteroid belt, are of little interest to extraterrestrial life, save for two exceptions.

The first is Europa, one of Jupiter's Galilean moons. It was the site of what appears to have been a Preserver habitat, similar to Farside City (see **The Moon**, previously) but uninhabited. The reasons for this remain unknown: perhaps the Preservers built the self-contained environment as a back-up or secondary habitat, but never used it, or perhaps the life forms they settled there proved unviable in some fashion and were eliminated. If anyone lived in the habitat, there is no evidence of them any longer, although the life-support systems are set to provide a largely Earth-like environment. Daedalus made the modern discovery of the "lost city" during his explorations of space and it remained largely a curiosity, beyond the reach of most on Earth.

Recent events have led Daedalus to choose the habitat—which he has named "Starhaven"—as a more permanent suitable home for refugees from the Stellar Imperium, once it is sufficiently refurbished and restored to full operational condition. Daedalus has devoted himself to the effort, aided by construction robots and some of the alien refugees with the necessary technical skills. The primary concern is whether or not Starhaven will be truly safe, isolated as it is and lacking any planetary defenses.

At the outer edges of the solar system, ice-bound Pluto is home to strange, ancient ruins: honeycombs of caves and tunnels, cyclopean monoliths, and scratched-out carvings. They are not the work of any known species and have been abandoned for countless millennia. Daedalus calls the ruins "oppressive," citing a strange encounter there with images from his extensive past, and recommends they be left alone. If their creators used any technology, no evidence of it (or them) remains, or else it is too alien for anyone from Earth to even recognize it as such.

THE GREATER GALAXY

The Milky Way Galaxy is made up of billions of stars, many of which have inhabited planets of their own. Only a fraction of the entire galaxy is known and explored, and much of the focus of activity in the spiral arm where Earth is located is around the great galactic powers of the Grue Unity and the territory which was, until very recently, controlled by the Lor Republic, now contested between the Stellar Imperium, the Grue, and the remnants of those loyal to the old Republic.

THE GRUE UNITY

The Grue Unity is an expansionist, militaristic, interstellar empire near Earth's region of the Milky Way. The presence of the rival Lor Republic checked the expansion of the Grue for nearly two centuries and now the Stellar Imperium attempts to do the same. Still, the Grue do not intend to allow anyone to prevent them from achieving

their destiny, which is to one day rule all inhabited worlds in the galaxy... and beyond.

The Grue are a protean, shapeshifting species from the dark planet Gruen Prime. As they evolved, the Grue differentiated into different "castes" with specialized roles and intellectual capabilities to match. They developed a telepathic collective consciousness that directs the race as a whole, making it difficult to understand or negotiate with individual Grue, in as much as the concept of "individual" exists for them.

Grue are disdainful of "solid" creatures with fixed forms and consider themselves inherently superior to other forms of life. They are an arrogant, xenophobic species and believe it is their manifest destiny to rule the galaxy.

The Grue expand their Unity using their shapeshifting powers to infiltrate and take control of other civilizations until they amass enough power to reveal their presence

and rule openly. On some occasions they simply invade and seize control of more primitive worlds using sheer military might. The presence of Lor mentats limited the Grue ability to infiltrate the Republic, although there were still Grue moles active in Lor society.

The Grue have been interested in Earth for some time, though the first known contact occurred in 1947 when a scout craft damaged by a conflict with the Lor crashed in the desert southwest of North America. Since then, the Unity has sent additional scouts and other forces to Earth for various reasons. One thing the Unity knows is it has little chance to conquer Earth while its native superhumans watch over it. Many Grue schemes are intended to undermine or eliminate Earth's superhuman protectors so the aliens can then invade in force.

GRUE TECHNOLOGY

The Unity's technology is advanced, but largely stolen or mimicked from other civilizations. They have faster-than-

light starships, energy weapons, force fields, anti-gravity, genetic engineering, and so forth. They're particularly proud of their weapons technology, which includes a variety of nerve-stimulating pain weapons and capture devices in addition to standard-issue blasters and implosion grenades. Grue often prefer to capture their foes alive, and keep them that way (at least initially), so their metamorphs can use them as physical and mental "templates" to assume their forms and infiltrate the captives' worlds.

GRUE DRONE

The lowest Grue caste is made up of "drones," warriors with only limited intelligence and metamorphic abilities, directed by the higher castes of their species. While drones are capable of acting on their own, they require the mental powers of the Meta-Mind for true coordination and initiative. Lor mentats have taken advantage of this complication and interfered with drone mental coordination, another reason the Unity has been unable to launch an all-out assault against the Lor Republic until recently.

GRUE METAMORPH

Over time, certain Grue drones mature, develop greater awareness, and attain the metamorph level, the Grue "commissioned" caste. Metamorphs are as intelligent as humans (more, in their estimation) and have fully developed shape-changing powers, which they use to infiltrate alien cultures, preparing the way for invasion and conquest.

Metamorphs are psychic parasites, feeding on the neural energies of their prey, and telepathically learning to mimic them more effectively in turn. The Grue "brain drain" power reduces victims' awareness of any danger, and eventually places them in a comatose state, allowing the Grue to replace them, with sufficient memories and information to convincingly imitate their victims.

Some metamorphs develop even more efficient shape-shifting abilities, allowing them to mimic more physically powerful forms, while others have more refined telepathic powers. Unfortunately, the more powerful and skilled a metamorph becomes, the more likely it will go rogue but also the better suited it is for joining with the Meta-Mind (see the following). Thus the Meta-Mind carefully monitors the most powerful and active metamorphs.

Note that while metamorphs are listed as power level 6, their power level can vary considerably based on their assumed form, and GMs are free to apply additional power points from a metamorph's Variable effect without regard for power level, making individual metamorphs a match for many higher power level foes. Also keep in mind their Shapeshifting allows them to re-allocate points spent on physical traits as needed.

THE META-MIND

The pinnacle of Grue development is the Meta-Mind, supreme intelligence of the Unity. It is made up of the brain-nuclei and bodies of numerous Grue, merged to-

GRUE DRONE

PL4

STR 2 **STA** 2 **AGL** 0 **DEX** 0 **FGT** 2 **INT** 0 **AWE** 0 **PRE** -1

Powers: **Collective Mind** (Immunity 30 (Will effects), Limited to half effect); **Shapeshift** (Morph 3 (Humanoid forms))

Equipment: Blaster pistol (Ranged Damage 5)

Advantages: Equipment 2

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 3 (+5), Perception 2 (+2), Ranged Combat: Blaster 3 (+3)

Offense: Initiative +0, Blaster +3 (Ranged, Damage 5), Unarmed +5 (Close, Damage 2)

Defense: Dodge 4, Parry 4, Fortitude 4, Toughness 2, Will 4

Totals: Abilities 10 + Powers 30 + Advantages 2 + Skills 4 + Defenses 12 = Total 58

Complications: Drone: Grue drones have only limited identity and free will.

GRUE METAMORPH

PL6

STR 2 **STA** 2 **AGL** 0 **DEX** 0 **FGT** 6 **INT** 1 **AWE** 1 **PRE** 2

Powers: **Brain Drain** (Progressive Affliction 1 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Incapacitated), Concentration, Insidious, Subtle); **Shapeshifting** (Morph 3, Variable 6); **Telepathy** (Comprehend 2 (Languages, Speak All, Understand All), Mind Reading 6, Close Range); **Voice Mimic** (Feature 1)

Advantages: Defensive Roll 2, Equipment 3 (as needed), Improved Initiative

Skills: Deception 6 (+8), Insight 4 (+5), Perception 4 (+5), Ranged Combat: Blaster 5 (+5), Stealth 4 (+4), Technology 3 (+4)

Offense: Initiative +4, Blaster +5 (Ranged, Damage 5), Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 2)

Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 6, Toughness 4/2*, Will 6

*Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 28 + Powers 71 + Advantages 6 + Skills 13 + Defenses 15 = Total 133

Complications: Responsibility: Grue are part of the larger Unity and responsible to it rather than their individual needs.

THE META-MIND

PL15

STR 16 STA 16 AGL 0 DEX 0 FGT 8 INT 15 AWE 14 PRE 7

Powers: **Collective Mind** (Impervious Will 14); **Massive** (Growth 16 (Permanent, Innate), Impervious Toughness 16); **Mental Blast** (Perception Ranged Damage 15, Resisted by Will, Limited to close range with non-Grue); **Protean** (Incorporeal 1 (Permanent), Morph 4 (Any form), Variable 6); **Telepathy** (Comprehend 3 (Languages, Speak All, Understand All, Understood), Area Mental Communication 5 (Limited to close range with non-Grue), Mind Reading 15 (Limited to close range with non-Grue))

Advantages: Jack-of-all-trades, Second Chance (Will resistance checks vs. mental powers)

Skills: Deception 8 (+15), Insight 6 (+20), Intimidation 6 (+13/21), Investigation 4 (+19), Perception 4 (+18), Persuasion 6 (+13), Technology 6 (+21)

Offense: Initiative +0, Mental Blast +8 (close, Damage 15), Unarmed +8 (close, Damage 16)

Defense: Dodge 4, Parry 4, Fortitude 16, Toughness 16, Will 14

Totals: Abilities 88 + Powers 216 + Advantages 2 + Skills 20 + Defenses 16 = Total 342

Complications: **Arrogant:** The Meta-Mind is assured of its superiority over all creatures. **Massive:** The Meta-Mind is a massive entity that rarely leaves the place that houses it on Gruen Prime.

gether into a single collective being. Certain Grue metamorphs are selected for the honor of merging with the Meta-Mind. What most do not know is that these are also the Grue closest to becoming rogues (see the following). Their consciousness and potential merges with the greater entity, while also removing the danger of a potential loss to the Unity.

The Meta-Mind still possesses protean traits, but is too massive to mimic most creatures. More important are its formidable mental powers, gained from the fusion of many minds. It is able to mentally communicate with and coordinate Grue across the cosmos, making it the true “mind” of the species. Indeed, while the “core” of the Meta-Mind is made up of its physical structures, all Grue are a part of its greater “mind,” spread out across the stars. Fortunately for the cosmos, the Meta-Mind’s powers are limited to close contact when dealing with non-Grue. The Meta-Mind drives the Unity’s plans for conquest and expansion. In many ways, it *is* the Unity.

The Meta-Mind dwells in a temple-like cavern deep underground on Gruen Prime, arising from “The Well of the Ancients” when it must physically interact or hold an audience with off-worlders. It is rare for aliens to even enter the presence of the Meta-Mind, and all Grue within the Unity will sacrifice themselves without a moment’s hesitation to safeguard their leader, like white blood cells battling an invading organism within the body.

When dealing with non-Grue, the Meta-Mind sometimes appears to them via view screens and communication devices, but it can also use any Grue in the unity as its “proxy” to relay messages. Such Grue often temporarily shapeshift into a likeness of the Meta-Mind, and some “appearances” of the Meta-Mind away from Gruen Prime are actually its proxies, rather than the entity itself.



ROGUE GRUE

The Grue are telepathically linked as a species through the Meta-Mind, suppressing their development of individual personalities and identities. Even Grue metamorphs have only a limited sense of independent identity apart from the collective of the Unity. On rare occasions, “rogue” Grue break away from the collective and develop independent personalities, most often after telepathic contact with some alien mind or a prolonged period imitating an independent being. The Grue liken these rogues to cancers within the “body” of the Unity. They are usually hunted down and re-assimilated as soon as possible.

A few Grue rogues have been able to avoid this fate, including Pseudo of the Freedom League and the Meta-Grue. Some, like Pseudo, have hopes of granting their entire race independent awareness and the ability to make their own moral choices (hopefully peaceful ones), while others, like the Meta-Grue, have ambitions of replacing the Meta-Mind as absolute ruler of the Unity (and, eventually, the cosmos). The existence of independent, peaceful Grue from parallel realities (like Changeling of the Alterna-Teens) suggests these dreams are not impossible, even if they are unlikely.

THE HIDDEN

Grue metamorphs have been the Unity’s most effective means of infiltrating, destabilizing, and then toppling a rival civilization, leaving it open to conquest. However, in recent history, the Grue have faced setbacks due to the one area where they are vulnerable: the mind. Lor Republic telepaths ferreted out disguised Grue and used their powers to interfere with the Unity’s collective, guiding intelligence. Likewise, the inhabitants of Earth have come up with novel ways of detecting and dealing with Grue infiltrators, leading to the Unity’s failure to conquer that world not once, but several times.

So the Meta-Mind embarked on a risky plan: the development of a new type of Grue metamorph, where a copy of the target’s consciousness is allowed to “overlay” the metamorph’s Grue identity, which is submerged, deep in the subconscious, where the barest thread of connection to the greater Unity is

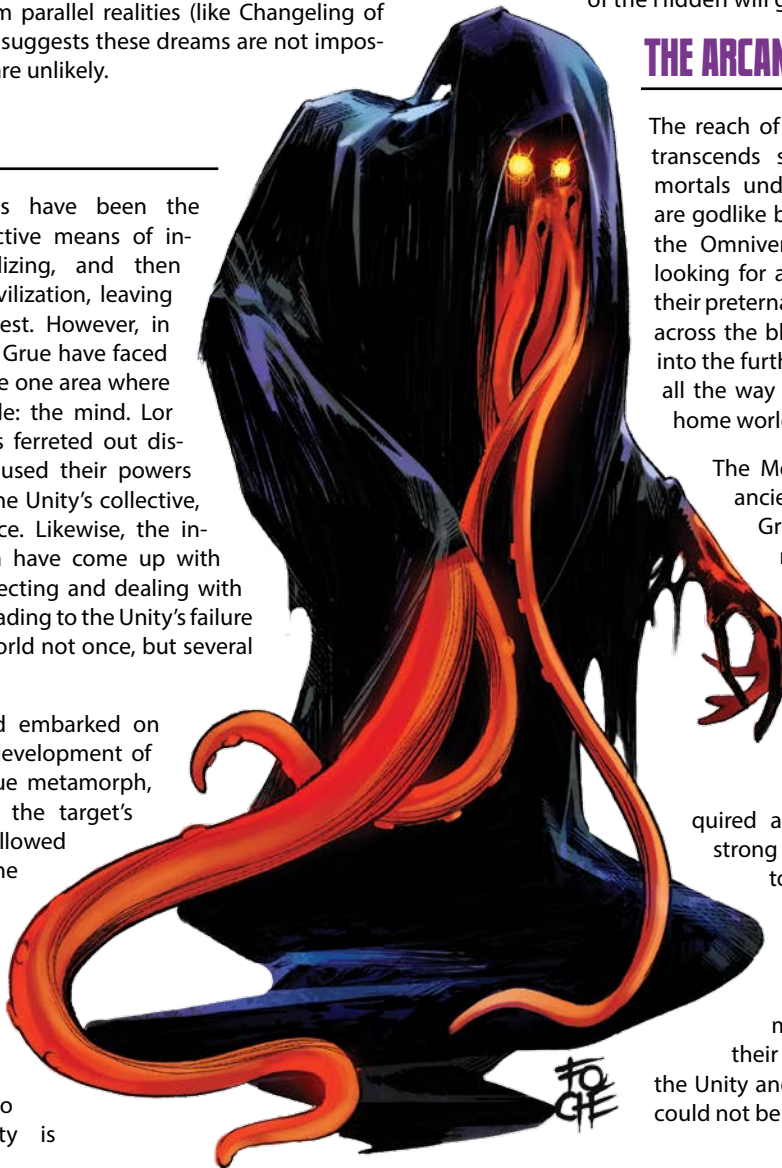
maintained. “The Hidden”—as they are known only to the Meta-Mind itself—become Grue sleeper agents, not even consciously aware of their true nature, until a telepathic signal “activates” them and brings the Grue-self to the forefront. They can pass even fairly intensive psychological and psionic tests, allowing them to infiltrate more secure (and therefore valuable) targets.

The risk is that the process of creating the Hidden is exactly the sort of conditions that give rise to rogue Grue (previously). Even the Meta-Mind cannot say for certain how many of the Hidden will “go rogue” when they are activated, influenced by some trace of their false persona to develop true independence. Thus the supreme leader of the Unity deployed its new agents sparingly. The Hidden were intended as part of a long-term plan to infiltrate both the Lor Republic and the Star Knights, but recent events have changed matters. Now some of the Hidden may find unprecedented opportunities, and the Meta-Mind has chosen to remain patient and allow interstellar events to unfold before playing this particular ace-in-the-hole card, knowing all the while that the longer it waits, the greater the chance some of the Hidden will go rogue.

THE ARCANES

The reach of the Nameless Ones transcends space and time as mortals understand it, for they are godlike beings from “outside” the Omniverse, but very much looking for a way in. The lure of their preternatural power extends across the black gulf of the stars into the furthest depths of space, all the way to Gruen Prime, the home world of the Grue Unity.

The Meta-Mind recalls the ancient time when the Grue first discovered magic. Initially, it was a promising source of power, but even then it was troubling. The mindset and training required to wield mystic forces required a degree of ego—a strong sense of self—alien to the collective mind of the Grue. Thus, the strongest potential magicians were also those most likely to sever their connection with the Unity and go rogue, and this could not be tolerated.



Still, magic is power, and some rogue arcane Gruen managed to escape their brethren and survive, hidden away in secret corners or wastelands of Gruen Prime, furthering their studies, and even aiding others like them in escaping from the Unity. They plumbed the depths of the dimensions, seeking knowledge and power, and they encountered forces greater and more terrible than any of their kind ever imagined. They gladly forged pacts with these forces to further their own ends.

Eventually, the threat of these “Arcane” and their powers became too great for the Meta-Mind to ignore. War erupted on Gruen Prime between the two factions, the first and only civil war within the Unity. While the Arcane wielded considerable power, they were ultimately no match for the greater numbers and coordination of the Unity, willing to sacrifice countless drones, if need be, to eliminate the threat. The Arcane were too self-aware and valued their individual lives too much. Finally, they were forced to flee their homeworld, never to return. The Unity believed them extinct and chooses to continue believing it.

But in the dark depths of a black nebula lies a world shrouded in perpetual shadow, unknown save in the tall tales of space-travelers. Its rocky, desolate surface is whipped by dusty winds and dotted with boiling cauldrons of molten rock. Here, the Arcane have raised rocky citadels of basalt and obsidian where they study and practice the dark arts. The ego and individuality that allowed the Unity to triumph over them remains in full force, and the Arcane gather only for occasional councils, spending the rest of their time warring amongst themselves.

Still, the alien sorcerers are driven by ambition and agreements forged with their Nameless masters. They know full well that Earth is a powerful nexus as well as home of the Master Mage, a thorn in the side of the Nameless Ones. These things combine to make the lush blue-green globe a target for their schemes. The Arcane can span cosmic distances in the blink of an eye with their magics, and, in the past, they have controlled earthly and alien cults, sought lost or hidden artifacts, or assumed innocuous forms to trick other mystics out of their secrets or bind them to the service of the Nameless Ones forever.

THE STELLAR IMPERIUM

The Lor Republic was a star-spanning civilization of more than a hundred worlds, many inhabited by the descendants of humans taken from Earth by the Preservers and “seeded” on those worlds. Some of the human stock was genetically altered to adapt to the new environments, and others evolved further on their new home worlds.

The inhabitants of the planet Lor-Van began exploring space at the time when the Sinking claimed the ancient cities of Atlantis and Lemuria on Earth, and discovered faster-than-light travel before Europeans discovered America. In the centuries since, the Lor steadily expanded into space, usually encountering less developed races—some of them human as well—and absorbing them into their vast Republic.

ARCANE

PL6
STR 2 STA 2 AGL 0 DEX 0 FGT 2 INT 1 AWE 1 PRE 2

Powers: **Brain Drain** (Progressive Affliction 1 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Incapacitated), Concentration, Insidious, Subtle); **Magic** (typically a 12-point array with four Alternate Effects, some Arcane have a larger array and more spells); **Shapeshifting** (Morph 3 (Humanoid Forms), Variable 6); **Telepathy** (Comprehend 2 (Languages, Understand All, Understood), Mind Reading 6, Close Range); **Voice Mimic** (Feature 1)

Advantages Improved Initiative, Ritualist

Skills: Deception 6 (+8), Expertise: Magic 7 (+8), Insight 4 (+5), Perception 4 (+5), Ranged Combat: Magic 6 (+6), Stealth 5 (+5)

Offense: Initiative +4, Mystic Blast +6 (Ranged, Damage 6), Unarmed +2 (Close, Damage 2)

Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 5, Toughness 2, Will 7

Totals: Abilities 20 + Powers 87 + Advantages 2 + Skills 16 + Defenses 19 = Total 144

Complications: **Dark Pacts:** Arcane have entered into agreements with preternatural entities granting their occult power. **Selfish:** Arcane are out for themselves and only cooperate out of self-interest.

The Lor learned of Earth decades ago when they encountered the Terran hero Daedalus, who was exploring the galaxy in his ship, the *Icarus*. Lor contact with Earth has been limited. Given the number of superhumans there, and the heretical concept that Earth was the “mother-world” of the human race, the Republic declared the Earth system “off-limits” and were largely content to allow the Star Knight assigned there to deal with any interstellar concerns.

On the borders of the Lor Republic existed various “barbaric” worlds: some primitive, developing societies, left alone by the Lor, others with spaceflight capabilities of their own, banded together into loose (and often temporary and tenuous) alliances. These worlds were like wolves at the door of the Republic, fended off by the Lor Star Navy and the cunning of Lor diplomats (and mentats). Most such barbarian empires were of little concern to the Republic.

This led the Lor to underestimate a war-leader named Khana, the ambitious queen of a small alliance of worlds ruled from Zultas. More importantly, it led them to underestimate her son and successor, Kinan Khan, who has become known as “The Star-Khan.” A military genius, the Star-Khan turned a ramshackle collection of worlds on the fringe of the Republic into a military force without peer. It’s likely he would have conquered the Lor in his first great war against them, if not for the intervention of Daedalus and the Star Knights.

After a crushing defeat, it took years for the Stellar Khanate to recover, and the Lor Republic was not so likely to underestimate Kinan Khan again. Agents of the Republic kept a close watch on the Khanate for signs of further aggression, although containment remained their policy, as it had been for decades. For some years, the Star-Khan chose the velvet glove of diplomacy over the iron fist of conquest, allowing him time to rebuild,

hatch new plans, and plot revenge against those who tried to deny him his destiny. He formed alliances with other worlds on the fringes of the Republic and even found sympathizers within the Republic itself, those who felt the Lor had grown soft and decadent, willing to abandon their destiny to expand across the stars as their gods had commanded them.

When Collapsar destroyed and devoured the capitol world of Magna-Lor, Star-Khan saw his opportunity and seized it. The armies of the Stellar Khanate poured across the borders of the Republic as loyal agents within committed acts of sabotage, opening the way for the invasion. At almost the same time, the Grue struck at the wounded Republic, seizing border worlds and sowing chaos throughout the Star Navy and the bureaucracy with their own sleeper agents. The cunning Star-Khan expected this and turned it to his advantage by making the citizens of the Republic an offer: would they rather become slave-subjects of the Grue, crushed beneath the Meta-Mind's eternal rule, or were they willing to give their allegiance over to a proven general with the military might and skill to oppose the Grue and protect them from this threat as well as the looming danger of Collapsar? Most of the Republic had little choice but to give in to Star-Khan's demands and elect him Supreme Praetor "for as long as the crisis endured." Few have any illusions about the crisis ending anytime soon, if ever.

Star-Khan wasted no time in imposing military rule over the Republic and repelling the Grue invaders. He placed his own generals and officers in key command positions, but also "promoted" and maintained those in the Star Navy willing to swear allegiance to the new order, vetted by loyal "hound" mentats. He has promised to begin the process of restoring the lost Republic Senate, but has delayed elections "until such a time as the domain is secure once more" in conjunction with the creation of the Stellar Imperium to replace the old Republic. Order—sure and unrelenting—is the primary business of former Republic member worlds as their citizens attempt to go on with their lives, grateful they do not share the fate of the planets taken by the Grue, or destroyed by the all-consuming darkness of Collapsar.

THE RACES OF THE IMPERIUM

Lor are virtually identical in appearance and biology to humans, and interfertile with them, so many Lor can easily pass as Terrans. Lor have a somewhat different range of hair and eye pigmentation. White, gray, deep red, and even blue or green hair are all common. Amber, tan, and violet eyes are known, in addition to the normal human ranges of colors. Skin tone ranges from pale to deep brown (depending on the area of Lor-Van where a particular Lor's ancestors hail from).

The Lor summarily reject the theory first put forth by Daedalus when he encountered them: that their race originated on Earth. Instead, many Lor believe Earth is a lost colony from what they call the First Age, when another legendary Lor Republic ruled the stars. The Lor are somewhat superior in their attitude toward what

they deem "developing" species, although they are fascinated by the diverse powers demonstrated by Earth's superhumans. What disturbs them is how often Terran superhuman powers vastly exceed the abilities of Lor mentats.

The inhabitants of the planet Zultas adapted to suit the harsh environment of their home: dark skin pigmentation for a blazing sun, pointed ears and better hearing for a thinner atmosphere, more efficient lungs and blood oxygenation. The Zultasians embraced a harsh philosophy of survival of the fittest and rule by the strongest (and most able to hold on to the power they claimed, by whatever means necessary). The gods, they believed, placed them in a crucible, and only the strongest would emerge to receive their blessings.

Zultasians had little use for technological development apart from more efficient means of fighting and conquest. Still, they developed space flight on their own before Lor explorers discovered them. The first expedition to Zultas was "lost"—murdered by their hosts, their technology stolen and analyzed. By the time the Republic discovered their fate, the frontier barbarians possessed starships of their own and were in the process of carving out a small empire amongst the nearby systems.

Numerous other humanoids and alien species belonged to the Republic, and are now—willingly or not—Imperium citizens under the Star-Khan's "protection."

Mixing amongst humanoid races within the Republic has diversified the human genotype. No skin tones or cosmetic distinctions are left unturned, as one can meet humans with antennae (the hive-minded Dotrae) to green or blue-skinned humans with gills, webbed hands, and feet (the amphibious Pisceans) or winged humans using a limited telekinetic ability to fly. The races of the Republic have no prejudices regarding pigmentation or ancestry, and consider such beliefs symptoms of a primitive species.

IMPERIUM TROOPERS

The Imperium's rank-and-file troops are a complex mix, to say the least, of hardened and seasoned troops loyal to the Star-Khan, former members of the Lor Star Navy and ground forces, and a rag-tag collection of barbarians and mercenaries. The Star-Khan's troops feel a sense of ownership of the empire, as if they personally conquered the old Lor Republic, while the former Lor soldiers must work side-by-side with those they fought not so long ago. Justicars have purged the higher ranks and installed those loyal to the new order, but there are still sympathizers with the old Republic and the underground rebellion. They must tread carefully, however, as even their own comrades may sell them out to curry favor with the new officer corps.

Imperium troopers are generally equipped with energy blaster weapons and have access to the Imperium's advanced technology, including starships, interstellar communications, and heavy armaments like anti-grav tanks and blaster cannon emplacements.

IMPERIUM JUSTICAR

PL11

STR 9 STA 4 AGL 3 DEX 2 FGT 8 INT 1 AWE 3 PRE 3

Powers: **Battlesuit** (Communication (subspace) 5, Subtle; Enhanced Strength 6; Flight 1 (4 MPH); Immunity 10 (Life Support); Impervious Protection 8; Senses 7 (Darkvision, Direction sense, Distance sense, Extended Vision 2, Time Sense); Removable); **Power Staff** (Ranged Damage 10, AE: Strength-based Damage 1, Penetrating 7, Reach 1; Easily Removable)

Advantages: Accurate Attack, Benefit 3 (Justicar of the Stellar Imperium), Close Attack 4, Defensive Attack, Improved Initiative, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Ranged Attack 9, Startle, Takedown

Skills: Athletics 2 (+11), Deception 4 (+7), Expertise: Law 8 (+9), Insight 8 (+11), Intimidation 6 (+9), Investigation 8 (+9), Perception 6 (+9), Persuasion 4 (+7), Technology 4 (+5), Vehicles 5 (+6)

Offense: Initiative +7, Staff Blast +11 (Ranged, Damage 10), Staff Strike +12 (Close, Damage 10, Penetrating 7, Reach 1), Unarmed +12 (Close, Damage 9)

Defense: Dodge 10, Parry 10, Fortitude 11, Toughness 12, Will 10

Totals: Abilities 54 + Powers 67 + Advantages 24 + Skills 27 + Defenses 23 = 195

Complications: **Motivation—Duty:** To the Imperium.

IMPERIUM JUSTICARS

To strengthen his hold over his new domain, the Star-Khan wasted no time in expanding the ranks of the Justicars, lieutenants charged with maintaining order and discipline. Each Justicar wears a suit of advanced technological armor and carries a power staff similar to their master's, and each is responsible for a region of the Imperium. Individual Justicars are powerful enough to rival interstellar forces like the Star Knights and Argents in sheer power and combat skill (although not usually in terms of utility or breadth of power effects).

Justicars are absolute overlords in their domains, answering only to the Star-Khan himself and have wide discretionary powers, so long as they keep things under control. The populace of the Imperium has been told marshal law is necessary and that disobedience of the Justicars is illegal and punishable by imprisonment, which has been enough to keep most in line.

The primary task of the Justicars is pacifying the subject worlds of the Imperium, but eventually they will also be entrusted with the task of incorporating new client worlds, including some border systems of the Republic that have escaped the Star-Khan's notice for the time being, or have been taken by the Grue or other interstellar forces. The Imperium intends to reclaim these systems, and the Justicars will be at the forefront of the effort.

IMPERIUM TROOPER

PL5

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), Commlink

Advantages: Equipment 3

Skills: Athletics 4 (+5), Expertise: Military 4 (+4), Intimidation 2 (+2), Perception 2 (+2), Ranged Combat: Blasters 4 (+5), Vehicles 4 (+5)

Offense: Initiative +1, Blaster +5 (Ranged, Damage 5), Unarmed (Close, Damage 1)

Defense: Dodge 5, Parry 5, Fortitude 5, Toughness 5, Will 5

Totals: Abilities 18 + Powers 0 + Advantages 3 + Skills 10 + Defenses 13 = 44

Complications: **Motivation—Duty:** To the Imperium.



IMPERIUM HOUNDS

Supporting the Justicars, and the whole of the Imperium, are the “Hounds of the Star-Khan.” They are the unfortunate members of the Lor mentat caste, and members of other races (primarily humanoids) with psionic potential.

The Lor, like many human races (including Terrans), have latent psionic abilities. A small minority manifests active powers, usually during adolescence or early adulthood. For centuries, the Lor (and later their Republic) took it upon themselves to train these “mentats” in the responsible use of their gifts for the benefit of society as a whole. When the Republic first encountered the shapeshifting Grue, the usefulness of mentats was cemented; their telepathic powers helped to ferret out Grue infiltrators and block the Unity’s own telepathic communications. For generations, mentats protected the Republic and placed it as a bulwark to Grue expansion in the galaxy. The mentat caste became increasingly integrated with the Republic military, although they served the Republic in many capacities.

The Zultasians also have their psionically gifted minority, but the warlords of Zultas found other uses for them. Fearing their power, they quickly established a harsh system of “recruiting” potential psis and training them as a talented slave caste. These “Hounds” are owned by the most powerful leaders of Zultas, who use their powers to advance their own fortunes and to protect themselves against the psionic powers wielded by the hounds of their enemies. When he seized control of Lor space, the Star-Khan began exporting the practice of creating and using Hounds as well.

Mentats began quietly disappearing, beginning with those who questioned the savior of the Republic too loudly or often. Rumors spread about “troubles” with the mentat caste: secret plots to overthrow the Republic, al-

liances struck with the alien, telepathic Grue... perhaps even a plot that led Collapsar to Magna-Lor (intentionally or otherwise). Could the people trust their “gifted guardians”? Jealousy towards the aloof and powerful mentats fueled the rumors and mistrust, and greater efforts to “regulate” them and their powers were met with approval, or at least silent indifference.

Now the ranks of mentats who choose to remain loyal to the Imperium of their own free will continue to shrink, while the numbers of Hounds under the command of the Justicars grow, and the recruitment of young psi talents is given over into their hands “for the good of the people.”

STAR-KHAN

Throughout the history of the cosmos, there have been great leaders who felt the call to battle and conquest. Many of these leaders built powerful empires before time and enemies brought them low. Still, the legends they created live on and never die. Such is the life of Kinan Khan of Zultas. He is the most brilliant and ruthless military leader his world has ever produced, the son of the ruthless and powerful Queen Khana. By the age of 20 solar cycles, Khan ruled his nation and commanded a great army. Within four years, he was the undisputed ruler of his world. By the age of 30, he ruled over entire star systems, and his name was feared and respected throughout his region of the galaxy. In the ensuing years, nothing seemed to stop him.

More than a few worlds rushed to join the Lor Republic out of fear that the Star-Khan and his forces would conquer them. Most thought the Republic and the Star Knights would hold Khan’s small empire at bay, but they underestimated the ambition and abilities of Kinan Khan. The Lor Republic could not stop him. In fact, it would be his next conquest!

Khan might have succeeded in his first attempt at invading and conquering the Republic if it were not for the aid of the Earthman Daedalus, who then traveled the stars. With the ancient inventor’s brilliance and daring, coupled with the abilities of A’lan Koor and the Star Knights, the Star-Khan’s invasion failed. As a result, a rebellion arose within his own empire that eventually led to his overthrow. Kinan Khan escaped from his vengeful former subjects with the remnants of his army, swearing vengeance on Daedalus and the Star Knights.

It took him years to rebuild, but the Star-Khan returned to conquer anew. He reclaimed his old dominion, crushed rebellious worlds beneath his heel, and even expanded his influence while the Lor Republic remained distracted by the Grue. More cautious than in the days of his fiery youth—seasoned and wily—Khan added diplomacy to his arsenal, although his legendary temper and thirst for conquest have not been diminished in the slightest. His earlier setbacks taught him the value of patience, of waiting until the time was right, and doing everything necessary to ensure success.

So, when the Star Knights were faced with the new dual threat of the Blackguard and the Argents, and the terrible

IMPERIUM HOUND

PL6

STR 0 **STA** 1 **AGL** 1 **DEX** 0 **FGT** 3 **INT** 1 **AWE** 2 **PRE** 1

Powers: Senses 1 (Mental Awareness) plus either Telekinesis or Telepathy, below:

- **Telekinesis:** Flight 2 (8 MPH); Perception Ranged Move Object 4, AE: Ranged Damage 6; Sustained Protection 5, Subtle
- **Telepathy:** Mental Communication 2; Mind Reading 6, AE: Illusion 3 (all senses, Resistible by Will), AE: Perception Ranged Damage 3, Resisted by Will; Senses 1 (Mental Tracking)

Advantages: Ranged Attack 4 (telekinetic) or Defensive Roll 4 (telepath)

Skills: Insight 8 (+10), Perception 6 (+8), Stealth 4 (+5) plus Ranged Combat: Telekinesis 2 (+2) or Expertise: Interrogation 2 (+3)

Offense: Initiative +1, Unarmed +3 (Close, Damage 0), plus Telekinetic Blast +6 (Ranged, Damage 6) or Mental Blast — (Perception Ranged, Damage 3, Will DC 18)

Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 5, Toughness 6 (telekinetic), 5 (telepath), Will 7

Totals: Abilities 18 + Powers 23 + Advantages 4 + Skills 10 + Defenses 17 = 73

Complications: **Motivation—Duty:** To the Imperium. **Hound’s Collar:** The collar all Hounds wear is capable of inflicting neuro-stimulated punishments at the command of a Justicar.

STAR-KHAN

PL15

STR 11 STA 4 AGL 3 DEX 3 FGT 14 INT 2 AWE 3 PRE 8

Powers: **Battlesuit** (Communication (subspace) 5, Subtle; Enhanced Strength 7; Flight 3 (16 MPH); Immunity 10 (Life Support); Impervious Protection 10; Senses 7 (Darkvision, Direction sense, Distance sense, Extended Vision 2, Time Sense); Removable); **Power Staff** (Ranged Damage 12, **AE:** Strength-based Damage 1, Penetrating 10, Reach 1; Easily Removable)

Advantages: Accurate Attack, All-out Attack, Assessment, Benefit 5 (Khan of the Stellar Imperium), Chokehold, Close Attack 4, Defensive Attack, Evasion, Great Endurance, Improved Initiative, Inspire 2, Leadership, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Precise Attack (Ranged; Cover), Quick Draw, Ranged Attack 13, Startle, Takedown

Skills: Athletics 2 (+13), Deception 7 (+15), Expertise: Politics 8 (+10), Insight 8 (+11), Intimidation 6 (+14), Perception 8 (+11), Persuasion 7 (+15), Stealth 4 (+7), Technology 4 (+6), Vehicles 8 (+11)

Offense: Initiative +7, Staff Blast +16 (Ranged, Damage 12), Staff Strike +18 (Close, Damage 12, Penetrating 10, Reach 1), Unarmed +18 (Close, Damage 11)

Defense: Dodge 14, Parry 14, Fortitude 14, Toughness 14, Will 16

Totals: Abilities 82 + Powers 77 + Advantages 39 + Skills 31 + Defenses 34 = 263

Complications: **Motivation—Conquest:** Star-Khan believes it is his right to rule the galaxy. **Warrior's Spirit:** Star-Khan seeks worthy adversaries to test his mettle.

specter of Collapsar rose up and devoured Magna-Lor, throwing the Lor Republic into chaos, Star-Khan seized the moment and struck without mercy. He has been rewarded with the greatest victory of his career, and rule over an unrivaled interstellar domain. Although the power of the Preserver Stones has eluded him, Khan still dreams of greater power and glory.

Kinan Khan considers battle the only worthy pursuit in life. He is a warrior born, while most others in the cosmos are little more than cattle to be led or conquered. It's the conquest that matters to him—planning his strategies, moving the pieces into place, and then executing a flawless campaign to bring his enemy down. It's not just a matter of winning, but winning with strategy and cunning against a worthy adversary. Khan thirsts for enemies worthy of him, and savors the conflict since it will make his expected victory that much sweeter.

THE SACRED ASSEMBLY OF THE PROPHETS

A resurgent faction of the Imperium is the ancient religious assembly of the Lor. The Sacred Assembly of the Prophets—also known simply as “The Assembly”—began with the small number of psionically talented Lor with precognitive abilities, and the belief that these prophets and seers were chosen by the Star Gods to guide the people towards their destiny. The Prophets became influential religious figures amongst the Lor, offering their insight and guidance, although many talented seers fell under the influence of cunning political leaders and ad-

ministrators, while others were more than willing to leverage their reputation for prognostication for political and social influence.

Ironically, the Assembly helped to quickly guide the Lor towards a global civilization and to travel out amongst the stars, but, as their understanding of science grew, faith in the Assembly as a religion waned. The Republic government and military subsumed much of the Assembly's practical training of mentats and the Sacred Assembly became more of a ceremonial appendix of Republic society. At the same time, the number of capable seers declined. The Earthman Daedalus speculated a connection between strong faith in the Star Gods and their religion and awakened precognitive potential—as the faith weakened, so did the visions of the seers, in a kind of “self-fulfilling prophecy.” The final clear visions of the Prophets



suggested the Assembly would go through generations of obscurity before returning to prominence to help guide the gods' chosen people. The small remaining core of the faithful clung to this prophecy as their last hope.

The current High Prophet, a seeress named Arolla-Nor, claims Star-Khan's conquest and creation of the Imperium is the fulfillment of this prophecy. Arolla is the most talented seeress the Assembly has known for ten generations, an ability she used to attain her current position. Although no one dares speak of it openly, it seems clear the High Prophet foresaw the destruction of Magna-Lor and the ascendancy of the Star-Khan, and positioned herself—and the Assembly—to take advantage of both. The sudden loss of the previous High Prophet and many of his close advisors left an opening at the summit of the Assembly, one Arolla-Nor was poised to occupy.

Although initially inclined to have the would-be High Prophet confined to a cell, the Star-Khan changed his tune after a private meeting with Arolla-Nor. No one but the two of them knows what was discussed; all anyone else knows is that the seeress emerged from that meeting with the Star-Khan's support and a mandate to restore the Assembly to a place of prominence. The High Prophet takes regular meetings with the Star-Khan, serving as his advisor, although she is wise enough to play her cards closely and carefully. Still, her advice and abilities have already proven useful in consolidating Kinan Khan's hold over the former Republic, while his support has helped the Sacred Assembly reassert ancient privileges on Lor-Van and elsewhere.

Arolla-Nor can rely upon a close circle of high-ranking Assembly members, solid in their faith that the vision of the Star Gods is being fulfilled, with the High Prophet (and themselves) as their agents. The Assembly is also the only place in the new Imperium where mentats can potentially find shelter from the Hounds, although service to the Prophets is only a shade better than becoming a Hound. Arolla-Nor particularly claims any who show precognitive potential as a seer and—thanks to the Assembly's insights—manages to reach them first before the Justicars do. Although most believe the Star-Khan would like his own pet prophets, whatever influence Arolla-Nor exerts has been enough to keep him from pressing the issue thus far.

The Assembly is uniquely independent amongst institutions in the Imperium, even having its own security forces. Assembly Farseers also perform missionary and exploration work inside and outside of the Imperium's borders, in accordance with the High Prophet's fascination with "relics of the Star Gods" (in other words, evidence of ancient Preserver artifacts). The accumulated knowledge in the Assembly archives, and their willingness to seek out and reclaim the relics of their alien gods, may play into the reasons why Star-Khan has allowed them such unusual freedoms under his rule.

THE REPUBLIC ALLIANCE

Not everyone has surrendered to the rule of the Star-Khan or forgotten the ideals of the Lor Republic. Quite

the contrary, although Imperium news sources have carefully censored the information, many loyal elements of the Republic went underground when it became clear the Star-Khan's coup would be successful. They include a small handful of surviving Republic senators who were off-world when Magna-Lor was destroyed, elements of the Republic Star Navy, and surviving mentats who have escaped the Hounds.

Daedalus, long a friend of the Republic, has provided what aid he can to survivors, refugees, and asylum-seekers. Still, the majority of the new Republic Alliance has no wish to hide on a backwater planet on the far reaches of civilized space. After taking the opportunity to regroup and go underground, the new Alliance almost immediately began planning how to retake the systems of the former Republic and bring down the Star-Khan and his Imperium.

They have a difficult task before them. Although some Republic Star Navy vessels defected and fled rather than surrender to the conquerors, they were scattered, and many were picked off before they could find safe harbors or consolidate. The Alliance is severely out-manned and out-gunned. Additionally, they are faced with constant persecution by Imperium Justicars and Hounds, capable of breaking the most disciplined mind, given time, and learning all they know. Already, a few hidden bases and safe havens have been compromised and wiped out.

The Alliance has therefore adopted a cell structure, with a minimum of contact between cells to insulate their organization from discovery. Most cell members know only about their own cell, and cell leaders are only in contact with single individuals in the cells "above" and "below" them. Pseudonyms and guises are used to further conceal identities, with communications encrypted and even memories altered by allied mentats to safeguard information.

Unfortunately, while helping to protect it from the Imperium, the Alliance's structure makes it vulnerable to both the resurgent criminal element in Imperium space as well as outside forces like the Grue. Criminal syndicates cut deals with the Alliance for whatever they think they can get, but just as gladly betray them, if the profit potential is greater elsewhere, and such arrangements entangle the allies in feuds between criminals, which exposes them to risk while also wasting time and draining resources. The Grue also see the Alliance as an opportunity to place their own covert agents within the Imperium, getting in on the "ground floor" of the struggle against Star-Khan. Should the Alliance eventually succeed, they may find many of their most trusted members ready to betray them to the Grue Unity before the victory party is over.

IMPERIUM TECHNOLOGY

Imperium technology is highly advanced. They have faster-than-light starships, energy beam weapons, anti-gravity, limited teleportation, energy transfer and transmission, force fields, and similar devices. Some of their

technology came from reverse-engineering ancient Preserver devices, but most has been developed or acquired in the conquest of other worlds. Imperium technology is fairly “mature” and has not changed significantly in many generations; the levels of innovation seen on Earth in the past few centuries is a foreign experience to most Imperium citizens, who claim they prefer the stability of their own society to such constant change.

ALIEN RACES

The universe abounds with life and Earth’s galaxy is no exception. Most stars have systems of planets, and many of those planets support life. Those where life did not evolve on its own became the “gardens” of the Preservers, allowing them to transplant suitable life-forms from other worlds, sometimes genetically modified to suit their new environment or allowed to adapt to it over time (or a combination of the two).

HUMANOIDS

Ironically for Earth, one of the most common “alien races” in the galaxy is humanity, offshoots of the human genotype seeded by the Preservers. The Lor adopted the term *vellorvan* (“Children of Lor-Van”) once they noted the genetic similarities between many humanoid species they encountered, which they initially attributed to the intervention of their “Star Gods” and to the idea that the Lor might have ascended to the stars previously, leaving behind lost colonies, or that the Star Gods took some of their chosen away from Lor-Van, leaving the bulk of the race to follow the path to the stars laid out for them by the Prophets.

Humanoids are found on many worlds throughout the galaxy. They include the Lor and Zultasians as well as the inhabitants of Aljor, Wynn, Xol, Karath, Gaius, and more than a dozen other planets and their colonies. The inhabitants of these worlds display a wider range of phenotypes than humans on Earth, with skin tones ranging from almost completely black through dusky grey and various shades of brown through to tan, golden, pinkish tones, and pure white. Some display freckling or mottling, and various forms of skin dyeing, tattooing, and other decoration are common. Similarly, hair and eye color are of a greater variety than found amongst Terrans, including bright primary colors such as blue, green, and violet in some cases.

More extreme adaptations of the humanoid form are found on some worlds in the galaxy, particularly the Dotrae (with their antennae and smooth, hairless skin) or the Ealas (with their feathered wings and the ability to fly). Some races were engineered for a specific racial power or ability, or evolved it due to exposure to their planet’s environment.

There are also humanoid species that evolved independently of humanity, although sometimes they were also the subjects of Preserver “guidance.” In particular, the Cholaxans are a race of furred humanoids largely responsible for the sasquatch and “bigfoot” legends on Earth. Because



of their strength and large size, Cholaxans have been used as slave-soldiers and laborers in the past. The Imperium has reestablished this former underground trade, placing Cholax V under direct Justicar control.

REPTOIDS

Reptilian races are known on some worlds in the galaxy, particularly the race known as the Jereids, a species similar to humanoid alligators, evolved from reptilian hunters on their homeworld. They developed interstellar travel, allowing them to establish the Jereid Hegemony, a cluster of star systems near the borders of Imperium space not far from Earth in stellar terms. Jereids find “Earth mammals” primitive and hostile, based on the experience of the so-called “Alien Gator”, a Jereid explorer marooned on Earth for some years in the mid-20th century.

The Ruluans, red-skinned inhabitants of Rulu IV, have some reptilian and amphibian traits, being smooth-skinned and large-eyed. They suffered under a cruel Grue occupation, although some Ruluans used their considerable strength and energy projection abilities to resist their conquerors. Malak Krin, one of the subjects of a series of Grue experiments, found her way to Earth, where she has merged with the human biologist Kim Kamada to become the hero *Xeno* (see the *Emerald City* setting).

AQUANS

Intelligent water-breathing species include the humanoid Pisceans (members of the Republic and now reluctant citizens of the Imperium) alongside non-humanoids like the Kailur, intelligent giant squid-like creatures, and their smaller “cousins” the Hexxim, six-limbed intelligent, telepathic cephalopods. Water-breathers (unless they are amphibious) tend to rely on water-filled life support suits or vehicles when operating away from their home environment, but they adapt well to microgravity, living in water-filled ships or space habitats. Hexxim, for example, are excellent physicians and technicians in the Imperium.

OTHER SPECIES

Life exists in a tremendous variety throughout the galaxy (and beyond) and various worlds boast intelligent species like humanoid animals (felinoids and caninoids, for example), fish-like species, and even stranger life-forms. Complete other orders of life include beings of pure energy, gaseous creatures (some dwelling in the atmospheres of gas giants, others in the void between worlds), silicate and crystalline life, and much more.

INTERSTELLAR FACTIONS

The great interstellar empires are far from the only powers in the galaxy. There are organizations both old and new with vast resources and their own agendas for the future of civilization and intelligent life in the universe. The factions in this section are not governments or civilizations as such, but organizations (or, in some cases, cults) working within, around, and between the great star-spanning civilizations and their lesser planetary neighbors and vassals.

ARGENT TEMPLATE

126 POINTS

Skills: Technology 8 • 4 points

Advantages: Fearless • 1 point

ARGENT ARMOR

Nanomorph: Morph 2 (Machine Shapes), Variable 4 (20 points, machine forms) • 38 points

Physical Enhancement: Enhanced Stamina 7, Enhanced Strength 7 • 28 points

Protective Shell: Immunity 10 (Life Support), Impervious Toughness 10, Protection 3 • 23 points

Sensor Systems: Senses 6 (Communication Link with Tellax, Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Low-light Vision, Radio, Rapid Radio) • 6 points

Stellar Flight: Flight 8 (500 MPH), Movement 3 (Space Travel 3) • 22 points

Universal Translator: Comprehend 2 (Languages, Understand All, Understood) • 4 points

THE ARGENTS

Driven from Earth following an attempt to induce a mass-activation of the genetic potential implanted in humanity by its Preserver creators, the artificial intelligence Tellax held true to its programmed mission: improve biological creatures to protect the cosmos against the threat of Colapsar the Devourer. Cut off from its closest and most effective source of soldiers in that war—the people of Earth—Tellax was forced to reconsider its plans. If it could not raise a superhuman army, then it would do the next best thing and engineer a suitable force to carry out its mission.

Tellax constructed robotic probes to scour the inhabitant worlds of the galaxy for suitable biological agents, ideally members of species previously touched by the Preservers, Tellax’s own creators. The diverse human offshoots in the galaxy were prime candidates, but other species were also found suitable. The candidates were offered the opportunity to become part of a great force to protect the universe—and if they refused, they were taken anyway. In either case, the “processing” of Tellax’s new agents may have helped ensure their compliance and loyalty. Sometime later, the first nano-creches opened, and the Argents emerged.

Although focused on overcoming and eliminating Colapsar (Tellax’s prime directive), the Argents and their creator are not so single-minded. Their greater purpose is to bring about order in the universe and to safeguard against threats. In this regard, the Argents are more proactive than



the Star Knights: they have no regard for the governments, cultures, or claims of the various species and civilizations in the galaxy. Their imperative supersedes all “local” concerns. Unlike the Blackguard, however, the Argents claim not to seek power for its own sake, but to fulfill their greater mission. (For more information on Tellax and his plot against Emerald City, see the *Emerald City* setting book.)

The Argent conversion process involves placing candidates inside a life-support cocoon, where they undergo transformation in both body and mind. The candidate’s blood is replaced with liquid nanomachines (the “silver blood”) which correct biological imperfections and reprogram the subject’s mind for compliance with the Argents’ mission, as well as reinforcing and improving the subject’s physical body. Once the process is complete, the new Argent emerges and becomes a part of the cadre.

All Argents are equipped with nano-built implants allowing them to communicate via sub-space with the Tellax intelligence and each other, along with enhancing their sensory abilities and providing a brain-linked universal translator. Normally, a protective sheath of nano-material covers the Argent’s body, giving them the silvery “skin” of their namesake, but they are capable of a “stealth” mode where the nano-armor withdraws into the body.

Similarly, their reservoir of nanomachines can shape itself into a variety of implements, weapons, and tools: Argents commonly manifest weapons mounted over or above their hands as needed (although heavier shoulder-mount weapons are common as well). They can reallocate points from their Nanomorph power to attacks, additional limbs or sensors, or whatever else they need to get the job done.

TYPICAL ARGENT

PL10

STR 8 STA 8 AGL 1 DEX 2 FGT 6 INT 2 AWE 1 PRE 0

Powers: **Nanomorph** (Morph 2 (Machine Shapes), Variable 4 (20 points, machine forms)); **Physical Enhancement** (Enhanced Stamina 7, Enhanced Strength 7); **Protective Shell** (Immunity 10 (Life Support), Impervious Toughness 10, Protection 3); **Sensor Systems** (Senses 6 (Communication Link with Tellax, Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Low-light Vision, Radio, Rapid Radio)); **Stellar Flight** (Flight 8 (500 MPH), Movement 3 (Space Travel 3)); **Universal Translator** (Comprehend 2 (Languages, Understand All, Understood))

Advantages Accurate Attack, Eidetic Memory, Fearless, Skill Mastery (Technology)

Skills Close Combat: Nanomorph Weapons 4 (+10), Intimidation 4 (+4), Perception 6 (+7), Ranged Combat: Nanomorph Weapons 8 (+10), Technology 8 (+9), Vehicles 6 (+8)

Offense Initiative +1, Nanomorph Weapons +10 (Close or Ranged, typically Damage 10)

Defense Dodge 9, Parry 9, Fortitude 10, Toughness 11, Will 9

Totals Abilities 30 + Powers 121 + Advantages 4 + Skills 18 + Defenses 20 = 193

Complications: **Dedicated:** Argents are dedicated to Tellax and the cause of order, whatever their other motivations might be.

Argents learn from their mistakes and frequently reallocate their Nanomorph points to adapt and overcome challenges; it is difficult to defeat them the same way twice.

Their other standard implants include gravimetric impellers for flight and navigation of space-warps and full-spectrum life support for their biological components, allowing the Argents to function in any environment.

NOTABLE ARGENTS

The Argents pride themselves on their unity and homogeneity. Still, some of them do stand out as significant for the future of the organization, and the galaxy.

MAUL

A Kovald heavy-worlder with a massive, muscular build and super-human strength combined with Argent nano-armor and military training. Maul favors close-in combat with various weapons, particularly his namesake heavy hammer, but foes should not underestimate his cunning or loyalty to the Argent cause. Maul speaks of his time as an interstellar mercenary with some regret, now a fervent convert to Tellax's vision of order in the galaxy.

SIX

A Hexxim (six-limbed telepathic cephalopod) provided life support and movement capabilities by its (Hexxim are hermaphroditic) silvery Argent shell. "Six" is a nickname as its true name is a telepathic complex of images. Six was

TELLAX THE REDEEMER

PL16

STR 16 STA — AGL 0 DEX 3 FGT 4 INT 9 AWE 4 PRE 4

Powers: **Artificial Form** (Enhanced Advantages 1 (Diehard), Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects), Protection 8, Regeneration 5); **Artificial Intelligence** (Comprehend 2 (Languages; Understand All, Understood), Enhanced Advantages 4 (Assessment, Eidetic Memory, Fearless, Jack-of-all-trades), Immunity 10 (Mental effects)); **Force Field** (Enhanced Defenses 28 (Dodge 16, Parry 12, Sustained), Impervious Toughness 20 (Sustained)); **Force Manipulation** (Array: **Force Constructs** (Create Force Construct 18, Movable), AE: **Force Blast** (Ranged Damage 18, Penetrating 18), AE: **Nanite Carrier Beam** (Transform 9 (anything into anything, 400 lbs.), Accurate 2, Continuous), AE: **Tractor Beam** (Move Object 18, Accurate 3)); **Hyperjump** (Movement 3 (Space Travel 3), Portal); **Massive** (Growth 16, Permanent, Innate); **Sensors** (Radio Communication 5, Senses 20 (Acute and Analytical Taste (chem-scanner), Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Microscopic Vision 4, Rapid Vision 2, Rapid Radio 4, Time Sense, Vision Counters All Concealment))

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)

Offense: Initiative +0, Force Blast +14 (Ranged, Damage 18, Penetrating 18), Unarmed +11 (Close, Damage 16)

Defense: Dodge 8*, Parry 8*, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 24, Will 16

Totals: Abilities 38 + Powers 253 + Advantages 0 + Skills 41 + Defenses 12 = 344 *Includes size modifiers.

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).

initially motivated by a desire to explore the galaxy but, like all Argents, is also dedicated to the cause. It makes effective use of its multiple limbs and eyes and the natural Hexxim talent for assessing other life forms.

TAMIR ZEK

Zek is a thin, wiry "free-faller," a human stock engineered for life in microgravity, having prehensile feet as well as hands. A capable technician even before joining the Argents, Zek is brilliantly innovative in using the nano capabilities of his armor and at hacking other technology, making him effective in neutralizing opposing defense and sensor systems and infiltrating space-based targets.

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 and Mentor. 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 up for its creators' error and serve as the universe's 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 reactivated and reawakened it, allowing the AI to resume its mission, but due to its long dormancy time was of the essence. A process that should have begun long ago and occur over centuries (or longer) had only months or years in which to take place. 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 said 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, was salvaged by a human named Maximillian Mars. Although a primitive, Mars had somehow learned enough about the nanites to "imprint" upon them and make use of them. Now some of Tellax's own adaptive technology was creating interference! The lost technology had to be recovered and restored before plans could proceed. So Tellax engineered events to free itself from its resting place and take direct action.

Much to the AI's surprise, the primitive humans it was trying to save found a way to use its own technology

against it. They severed Tellax's link with those enhanced by the Silver Storm and made Earth's environment "toxic" to it. Tellax was forced to flee, having achieved none of its goals. Forced back out into space, the Redeemer began a new program to evolve and protect, with the Argents.

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 at virtually any cost, and individual lives mean nothing to it. Other life forms are, by necessity, simply biological resources to manipulate as needed to achieve its goals. It may well be that Max Mars' close connection with Tellax's technology on Earth over many years "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.

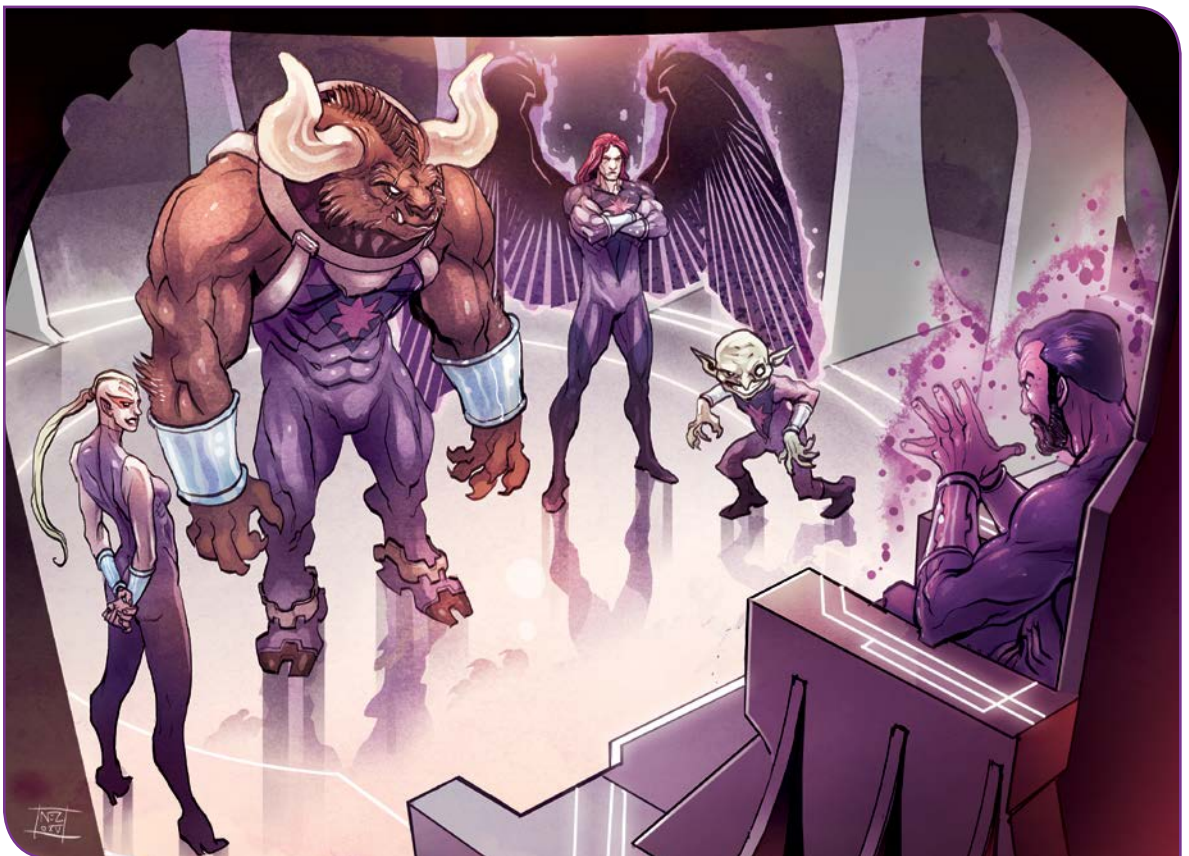
Technically speaking, Tellax is a disembodied entity, a sophisticated self-aware computer program, capable of "inhabiting" a variety of technological "shells." Tellax can copy its program into other forms, and may be able to holistically encode it on a sub-atomic level, allowing it to survive in even 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. The ones given in its game stats are merely the most common.

THE BLACKGUARD

In the long history of the Star Knights, only one of them has ever turned against the Order. Sri Rojan Lhar betrayed the Star Knights and attempted to seize control of Citadel and the power of the Star Stone for himself. He failed but managed to escape, despite the efforts of Mentor and his fellow Star Knights. A'Lan Koor pursued Rojan—who became known as "Blackstar"—to Earth and the two became implacable foes. Years after his betrayal, Rojan was captured and Mentor stripped "the Black Star Knight" of his armor, sentencing him to life imprisonment on an isolated asteroid.

Blackstar—as he became known—managed to escape from his prison with the aid of Omega, who gifted Blackstar with the Shadow Bands, ancient artifacts which had found their way into the Terminus. Perhaps Omega intended Blackstar to one day join his Annihilators, or simply wished to soften the defenses of Earth's universe. Whatever the case, Blackstar took full advantage of his good fortune, becoming active once more in Earth's area of the galaxy and working with the notorious Crime League.

Still, his ambitions far exceeded petty criminal activity or even power over just one planet. Blackstar used his freedom and available resources to unlock the secrets of the Shadow Bands and learn about their link to the legendary Nightstone, a cosmic source of near-limitless power. If he could not overcome the Star Knights and their Mentor by stealth, then he would do so by force, creating



BLACKGUARD TEMPLATE

83 POINTS

Skills: Intimidation 4 • 2 points

SHADOW BANDS

Darkflight: Flight 10 (2,000 MPH), Movement 3 (Space Travel 3) • 26 points**Shadow Control:** (20-point array)

- **Blinding:** Ranged Cumulative Affliction 10 (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Unaware), Limited to Vision • 20 points
- **Dark Blast:** Ranged Damage 10 • 1 point
- **Darkness:** Ranged Cloud Area 2 (30 feet) Concealment Attack 4 (Visual) • 1 point
- **Shadow Constructs:** Create Shadow Constructs 10 • 1 point

Shadow Shield: Immunity 10 (Life Support), Impervious Protection 10 • 30 points**Shadow Sight:** Senses 2 (Darkvision) • 2 points

TYPICAL BLACKGUARD

PL10

STR 1 STA 2 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 4 INT 0 AWE 1 PRE 0

Powers: **Darkflight** (Flight 10 (2,000 MPH), Movement 3 (Space Travel 3)); **Shadow Control** (Array; **Blinding** (Affliction 10, Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Unaware, Cumulative, Ranged, Limited to Vision), **AE: Dark Blast** (Ranged Damage 10), **AE: Darkness** (Ranged Cloud Area 2 Visual Concealment Attack 4), **AE: Shadow Constructs** (Create Shadow Constructs 10)); **Shadow Shield** (Immunity 10 (Life Support), Impervious Protection 10); **Shadow Sight** (Senses 2 (Darkvision))

Advantages: All-out Attack, Startle

Skills: Athletics 4 (+5), Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+8), Insight 3 (+4), Intimidation 4 (+4), Perception 4 (+5), Ranged Combat: Shadow Control 9 (+10), Stealth 4 (+5)

Offense: Initiative +1, Dark Blast +10 (Ranged, Damage 10), Unarmed +8 (Close, Damage 1)

Defense: Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fortitude 10, Toughness 12, Will 10

Totals: Abilities 20 + Powers 81 + Advantages 2 + Skills 16 + Defenses 28 = 147

Complications: **Dark Ambition:** Wearers of the Shadow Bands feed the dark side of their ambitions, encouraging them to grow stronger and more dominant. **Power Loss:** A Blackguard only wields the Shadow Bands' power while wearing them.

an equal and opposite army able to wage war against the hated Star Knights... the Blackguard.

Using the power of the Nightstone, which powers the Shadow Bands, Blackstar has delved the galaxy for the cruelest and most ambitious souls as his recruits, granting each of them Shadow Bands similar to (although slightly weaker than) his own, with the promise of greater power and spoils to follow for those who accept his leadership and swear loyalty.

The two things all Blackguards have in common are their Shadow Bands (lesser duplicates of those worn and wielded by Blackstar) and their ambition, the dark drives which the Bands bring out and encourage.

Although their power depends upon the Shadow Bands, Blackguards are

not so easily deprived of them. The Bands bond to their wearer and cannot be removed without consent or conscious effort, so they are near impossible to steal (reflected in the lack of a Removable modifier on their powers).

NOTABLE BLACKGUARDS

Blackstar has recruited some of the most notorious figures in the galaxy to serve as his lieutenants, promising all of them a share in the spoils when the Blackguard crushes all other opposition and rules over every star in the sky. Some of the most noteworthy Blackguards include the following.

AUROCH

A minotaur-like humanoid, tall and massively muscled, covered in a pelt of black fur, with a bull-like head that includes a pair of curving horns. One eye burns red, the other is milky and bisected by a scar across his face. Auroch is a savage warrior who rose to become a king on his home planet before he was deposed and exiled. He used the power of his Shadow Bands to crush his former rival and claim his harem-herd for himself; now, Auroch sets his sights higher than control over just one planet.

GRAVIK

Called "Gravik the Imp" by some, this Blackguard is a Drik, a small, green-skinned reptilian species and moon-faced goblin with a wide grin filled with sharp teeth. He is a cunning and feral trickster and a vicious spy, using the Shadow Bands' darkness to cloak his activities, and is frequently found at the base of Blackstar's throne (or hiding behind it), looking for opportunities to curry favor with his master.

KARESS

A dusky-skinned Zultasian woman, Karess hints that she is the daughter of a noble and a harem slave, and was once a slave herself. She is a survivor, having punished those who thought her helpless and escaping even her own planned execution thanks to the Nightstone and the power of the Shadow Bands. Karess is a sultry figure with a cat-like manner and a vicious temper.

IZEEL

A member of a human offshoot with wings, Izeel was an infamous serial killer, sentenced to become a "dirt-walker" by having his wings amputated. He escaped from prison shortly before Blackstar found him through the Nightstone. As a Blackguard, Izeel fancies himself an "angel of death" and typically wears black-feathered shadow construct wings he creates for himself. He is a twisted soul who delights in the suffering of others and has become Blackstar's prime interrogator, quite loyal so long as he is allowed to indulge his dark appetites.

*We shall spread the night,
Across the stars,
For the darkness is power,
the power of the Blackguard!
Hail Blackstar! Hail the Night!*

— Blackguard oath

BLACKSTAR

Rojan Lhar from the planet Aljor was among the chosen few, those worthy of becoming Star Knights, defenders of peace and justice throughout the galaxy. Sri Rojan, although an extremely capable Star Knight, faced ongoing conflicts with Mentor and the Inner Circle regarding policy and his own actions in the field. Rojan was convinced the Star Knights could accomplish more, much more, if they didn't allow themselves to be shackled by policies of non-interference. The Grue Unity, for example, continually defied them, but the Knights did nothing to deal with the Grue, merely keeping watch over their activities and stepping in when the Grue violated interstellar law. The same was true on primitive worlds where the Star Knights did not put an end to wars, or work to uplift primitive races from superstition and barbarism, preferring to let them "develop naturally on their own."

Sri Rojan thus took it upon himself to demonstrate to Mentor and the Star Knight Inner Circle the sort of things the Knights could accomplish. He quickly and easily conquered a primitive world in his assigned sector of the galaxy, setting himself up as its supreme ruler and god, then set about creating order and advancing civilization. He intended to present the whole matter to the Inner Circle as a *fait accompli*, but another Star Knight, A'Jan Koor, discovered Rojan's activities before he was able to complete his plans. Although Rojan attempted to convince his fellow Star Knight of the rightness of his intentions, Sri A'Jan was aghast at the celebrated knight's violation of their code.

Desperate to avoid his inevitable punishment, and convinced his plan could still succeed, Rojan infiltrated Citadel and attempted to seize control of the Star Stone. With its power, he could bring order to the galaxy, eliminating crime, barbarism, and all threats to civilization. Thanks to the warning of A'Jan Koor, he failed, and was forced to flee. A'Jan Koor was appointed the task of bringing the first and only rogue Star Knight to justice.



BLACKSTAR

PL14

STR 1 STA 2 AGL 2 DEX 3 FGT 8 INT 1 AWE 3 PRE 3

Powers: **Darkflight** (Flight 11 (4,000 MPH), Movement 3 (Space Travel 3)); **Shadow Bands** (Shadow Control Array, all Dynamic: **Blinding** (Ranged Cumulative Affliction 16 (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Unaware), Limited to Vision, **AE: Dark Blast** (Ranged Damage 16), **AE: Darkness** (Cloud Area 5 (250 feet) Concealment Attack 4 (Visual)), **AE: Shadow Constructs** (Create Shadow Constructs 16)); **Shadow Shield** (Immunity 10 (Life Support), Impervious Protection 16); **Shadow Sight** (Senses 2 (Darkvision))

Advantages: Accurate Attack, All-out Attack, Benefit 4 (Leader of the Blackguard), Fearless, Power Attack, Precise Attack (Ranged; Cover), Ranged Attack 6, Startle

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+8), Athletics 4 (+5), Deception 8 (+11), Insight 6 (+9), Intimidation 6 (+9), Perception 4 (+7), Persuasion 4 (+7), Ranged Combat: Shadow Control 3 (+6), Stealth 4 (+6), Vehicles 4 (+7)

Offense: Initiative +2, Shadow Control +12 (Ranged, Damage 16 or others), Unarmed +8 (Close, Damage 1 or by weapon)

Defense: Dodge 10, Parry 10, Fortitude 12, Toughness 18, Will 16

Totals: Abilities 46 + Powers 111 + Advantages 16 + Skills 25 + Defenses 33 = 231

Complications: **Dark Ambition:** Bolstered by the Shadow Bands and the Nightstone, Blackstar wants nothing less than dominion over the stars so he can impose his own vision of order. **Dark Fury:** Normally cold and controlled, Blackstar becomes furious when reminded of his betrayal of the Star Knights, since it is *they* who have betrayed him and their mission to bring order to the galaxy!

Rojan Lhar fled to a backwards world known as Earth, in an isolated part of the galaxy, arriving there in the Earth year 1969. His foe A'Jan Koor became known to the people of Earth as Star Knight and joined a group of Earth heroes, the Freedom League. Rojan adopted the name Blackstar, and made several attempts to eliminate his hated rival and acquire the power to storm Citadel and claim the Star Stone's power. Toward that end, Blackstar worked with various super-criminals on Earth, even joining an incarnation of the Crime League, the Freedom League's deadliest foes.

Star Knight thwarted Blackstar's schemes each time, although the rogue always managed to escape to fight another day. Finally, in 1977, Star Knight captured Blackstar and brought him to Citadel for trial. Mentor stripped Blackstar of his armor and sentenced him to imprisonment for life on an asteroid specially modified to hold him, with robotic jailers to care for his needs.

For over twenty years, Rojan Lhar stewed alone in his interstellar prison. What news he was allowed only deepened his bitterness. He saw his hated enemy A'Lan Koor advance to the Inner Circle of the Star Knights, lauded as a great hero. He heard about the voyages of the human Daedalus and the conflict between the Lor Republic and Star-Khan. He even managed to escape on two occasions, although he was always captured not long thereafter and returned to his exile.

Then Blackstar made covert contact with Omega, the Lord of the Terminus. Omega granted Rojan Lhar assistance in the form of a pair of ancient weapons: metallic wristbands that allow Lhar to tap into and channel a powerful "shadow force." Blackstar arranged the destruction of his asteroid prison, hoping to convince his former jailers he perished in a cosmic disaster. Since then he has rejoined the Crime League on Earth and fought Earth's new Star Knight.

THE NIGHTSTONE

Like an obsidian gem carved from the blackness of space, the Nightstone almost appears to absorb light that falls upon it, capturing it deep within so only the faintest glimmer escapes its surface. The Nightstone taps into a dense black energy, the "shadow force," which may well be connected to the extradimensional Shadow World (see *Freedom City*). Certainly, the dark power of the Nightstone appears to "feed" the drives and ambitions of those who wield it, causing them to grow to insatiable depths. The stone is linked to the Shadow Bands, which spring forth from its dark depths and tap into its power, allowing the Blackguard to manipulate the stuff of the Shadow World as they will.

Naturally, Blackstar jealously guards possession of the Nightstone, keeping it inside an extradimensional "fold" within his throne chamber, to which only he has the psychic "key." The leader of the Blackguard is known to spend time in meditation with the Nightstone, gazing into its depths, plumbing for visions and new avenues toward the power he craves. Such work yielded the knowledge to create the Blackguard in the first place, and the galaxy had best hope Blackstar's efforts do not yield up any more secrets of the Preserver artifact and the powers it controls.

THE STAR KNIGHTS

The Order of the Star Knights began centuries ago on a distant world now known as Citadel. The entity Mentor is a vast neural-mapped cybernetic computer network programmed with the knowledge and experiences of hundreds of thousands of beings—in essence, the sum total of an entire city's worth of minds linked together to achieve a collective intelligence. Many suspect Mentor is a creation of the Preservers, like many fantastic artifacts throughout the galaxy, but it remains silent on the matter of its origins. Mentor possesses vast

intelligence and experience, along with direct control over incredibly advanced technological facilities and a nearly limitless power source. Fortunately, it also has a deep sense of fairness and justice.

When the Lor first achieved interstellar spaceflight centuries ago, the Grue often blasted them out of the stars rather than have any rivals for the space lanes. Mentor detected these conflicts, assessed the actions of both star-faring races, and saw there would be a need for agents to maintain order and protect innocents from harm out among the stars.

Mentor began recruiting brave and intelligent beings, using robotic messengers to ferry potential recruits to Citadel, where it began training the first Star Knights. Coming from a variety of worlds across the galaxy and representing a diverse range of species, Mentor first taught its recruits to respect the diversity among them and conquer any prejudices they previously held. Once their training was complete, Mentor equipped each with an advanced suit of armor with offensive and defensive capabilities and the ability to fly through interstellar space. The Star Knights were charged with preserving peace, order, and justice in the galaxy.

The Lor Republic acknowledged the authority of the Star Knights after witnessing them in action, and most other civilized worlds in the galaxy do so as well. The Star Knights make it a point not to interfere in the internal affairs of other worlds. They rarely go where they are not wanted, and concentrate on dealing with natural disasters, interstellar crime, and similar menaces. They also protect developing worlds from outside exploitation and conquest. The Grue Unity considers the Star Knights adversaries, although they respect the Knights' abilities and only challenge them when they feel numbers are in their favor.

There are currently thousands of Star Knights throughout the galaxy, but they're still spread quite thin, and multiple Star Knights are only seen together in times of great crisis. Each Star Knight is independent and expected to handle matters largely on his or her or its own.

Each Knight wears an advanced suit of technological armor drawing power from the Star Stone, the glowing, multifaceted crystal floating in the heart of Mentor's complex on Citadel. The Star Stone contains or draws upon a seemingly inexhaustible energy source. The Grue have sought to kill Star Knights for centuries to claim their armor and study it, but whenever a Knight is killed, the armor automatically returns to Citadel (often bringing the corpse with it) or else self-destructs.

A Lor Star Knight, A'Lan Koor, was stationed on Earth for a time. A member of the Freedom League in the late 1960s and most of the 1970s, he was known to Earth simply as "Star Knight." He eventually returned to space and has risen to membership of the Inner Circle that administers the Order of Star Knights. He is considered

*Sword and shield, Star Stone's light,
shining beacon in our fight,
for justice, honor, truth, and right,
evil beware—the true Star Knight!*

—The Star Knight oath



a candidate to have his memories incorporated into Mentor upon his biological death, although that is not expected for many cycles.

NOTABLE STAR KNIGHTS

Thousands of sentients have served in the Order of the Star Knights over the centuries and the rolls of honor are filled with the names and stories of those who have given all for their higher purpose. Notable current members of the Star Knights include the following:

SRI EE'DOK

Ee'dok (EE-doc) is a member of an arthropod species called the Skr'ee, resembling human-sized, four-limbed spiders. In addition to its other capabilities, Ee'dok's armor is configured to use its deflector as a tractor beam to move objects (add a Move Object Alternate Effect to the Stellar Shield power), referred to as the "starweb." In spite of being as carnivorous as Earth spiders, the Skr'ee are a peaceful and philosophical race and Sri Ee'dok has a reputation as a contemplative warrior.

SRI IERUS

Ierus (EE-er-us) belongs to a four-armed humanoid species called the Shoon, and was trained as a gladiator in the game-pits of Zultas before becoming a Star Knight. Although she has had to leave old scores behind, Ierus still bears a strong dislike of Zultasians, and now the Stellar Imperium. She wields a power staff similar to those used by

STAR KNIGHT TEMPLATE

88 POINTS

Skills: Insight 4, Persuasion 4 • 4 points

Advantages: Fearless • 1 point

STAR KNIGHT ARMOR

Removable (-21 points) • 83 points

Protective Casing: Immunity 10 (Life Support), Impervious Protection 10 • 30 points

Sensor Systems: Senses 4 (Communication Link with Mentor and Citadel, Direction Sense, Low-light Vision, Radio) • 4 points

Stellar Flight: Flight 8 (500 MPH), Movement 3 (Space Travel 3) • 22 points

Stellar Shield: Deflect 10 • 10 points

Stellar Strength: Enhanced Strength 7 • 14 points

Stellar Sword: Ranged Damage (light) 10 • 20 points

Universal Translator: Comprehend 2 (Languages; Understand, Understood) • 4 points

Complications: Responsibility: Duty to the Order is paramount amongst Star Knights, a noble service to a higher cause.

Imperium Justicars, but as a focus for her Stellar Sword and Shield powers.

SRI HASHIK

(HA-sheek) A reptoid Star Knight, with a snake-like lower body and humanoid upper body, including snake-like head. Hashik is a hereditary prince of the Haassaan, a female-dominated species from the desert planet Haassaa. His role, like other royal males, was a largely ceremonial

STAR KNIGHT (SRI MARIA MONTOYA) PL11 • 184 POINTS**STR 8 STA 1 AGL 2 DEX 2 FGT 10 INT 0 AWE 2 PRE 2**

Powers: **Star Knight Armor** (Removable (-22 points); **Protective Casing** (Immunity 10 (Life Support), Impervious Protection 10); **Sensor Systems** (Senses 4 (Communication Link with Mentor and Citadel, Direction Sense, Low-light Vision, Radio)); **Stellar Flight** (Flight 10 (2,000 MPH), Movement 2 (Space Travel 3 (Other solar systems))); **Stellar Shield** (Deflect 10); **Stellar Strength** (Enhanced Strength 8); **Stellar Sword** (Ranged Damage (light) 10); **Universal Translator** (Comprehend 2 (Languages; Understand, Understood)))

Advantages: Defensive Attack, Fearless, Interpose, Languages (Spanish, English native), Power Attack, Ranged Attack 8

Skills: Athletics 4 (+12), Expertise: Police Officer 6 (+6), Insight 6 (+8), Intimidation 6 (+8), Perception 8 (+10), Persuasion 4 (+6), Stealth 4 (+6)

Offense: Initiative +2, Unarmed +10 (Close, Damage 8), Stellar Sword +10 (Ranged, Damage 10)

Defense: Dodge 10, Parry 10, Fortitude 10, Toughness 11, Will 11

Totals: Abilities 38 + Powers 88 + Advantages 13 + Skills 19 + Defenses 26 = 184

Complications: **Motivation—Responsibility:** Star Knight uses her powers to protect and serve to the best of her ability. **Responsibility:** Sri Montoya is sworn to the Order of Star Knights.

and martial one until his recruitment. Hashik is a loyal warrior who has overcome his cultural prejudices concerning males (and non-gendered sentients) in roles of authority. He sometimes carries a Citadel-made version of a Haasaan ceremonial glaive.

SRI ZARIUS

(za-RE-us) Known to some as “the Silver Knight,” Sri Zarius is a former Lor soldier chosen to serve the Order. Young, talented, and ambitious, he has become known as one of the Star Knights’ most capable new recruits. Unfortunately, the true Zarius lies in a stasis pod hidden beneath the surface of Gruen Prime. The Silver Knight has been replaced by a Hidden Grue infiltrator (see **The Hidden**, previously), mentally conditioned to believe he is the real Zarius, with no conscious memory of his true nature. While Zarius is loyal to the Order, it remains to be seen what his doppel-ganger will do when his true colors are revealed.

STAR KNIGHT

Maria’s parents were both children of immigrants: her father’s family from Central America, her mother’s from Greece. She grew up in California, where she decided to attend the police academy and become an officer. She earned high marks in criminal procedure, shooting, and hand-to-hand combat, but also had a problem with authority. Her temper got her into trouble on occasion, but she graduated with honors and found a job with the police force.

Officer Montoya worked the streets, dealing with gangs, organized crime, and other risks on a daily basis. A routine investigation led her to evidence of corruption within the department. She was warned to mind her own business, but instead chose to dig deeper on her own. Maria discovered far more than just a few dirty cops; she uncovered infiltration by the alien Grue!

Hunted by the Grue, she found an ally in Pseudo, a rogue member of his race, who sought to warn Earth of the impending invasion. Maria also came to the attention of Mentor and the Star Knights. With the Grue threatening to invade, Mentor appointed Maria the new Star Knight of Earth’s sector of space. She accepted the job and got her initial training “on the job,” helping the Freedom League and Earth’s other heroes against the alien invasion.

Once the Earth was safe, Maria underwent training at the Star Citadel and met her predecessor, A’Lan Koor. Once her formal Star Knight training was complete, Sri Montoya returned to Earth, where she now serves as Earth’s resident Star Knight and a member of the Freedom League.

Star Knight is fairly hard-nosed compared to her teammates—she had to be in order to make it as a woman in a largely male police force. She tends to go for the aggressive solution, although she's learned some diplomacy from the Star Knights and some restraint from Captain Thunder.

SRI A'LAN KOOR

A'LAN Koor was born on a colony world on the borders of Republic space and raised in an environment of independent pioneering, but also potential danger, as his home was subject to raids by pirates and outlaws and of interest to the Grue Unity. He learned at an early age to defend himself and his people, but also the value of diplomacy and a community working together for the greater good. He might well have become a statesman or senator from his world, if the Star Knights had not found him instead. Offered the opportunity to further the cause of peace in the galaxy, A'LAN accepted and joined the ranks of the Order.

Although he distinguished himself in training and on duty, A'LAN Koor's career as a Star Knight changed after the betrayal of Rojan Lhar. Mentor chose Sri A'LAN to pursue the Black Star Knight to a planet called Earth, home to a primitive human culture on the distant edges of civilized space. For some years, A'LAN lived and worked amongst the people of Earth as the hero known as Star Knight. He joined the first incarnation of the Freedom League and advised the League on matters concerning space and potential galactic threats to Earth. He also developed a deep and abiding respect for Earth-people, so very like the pioneers of his home world.

Eventually, Star Knight defeated Blackstar (as Rojan Lhar came to be known) and completed his duties on Earth. Returning to Citadel, Sri A'LAN accepted promotion into the Inner Circle of the Order, training newer and younger Star Knights and advising Mentor directly. Although he hoped for a peaceful retirement eventually, that is looking less and less likely with upheaval in the galaxy, the overthrow of the Republic, and the formation of the Argents and the Blackguard, led by A'LAN's old foe, Blackstar.

Chronologically in his 80s (by Earth standards), Sri A'LAN is still middle-aged, thanks to advanced eugenics and medicine, although his brown hair is going increasingly to grey along the temples. Still, his blue eyes are as sharp as ever, even if they sport a few more crow's feet. The senior Star Knight is rarely seen in his armor any more these days, generally wearing a councilor's robes while going about his duties on Citadel, although he still has access to his armor and keeps in practice using it.

THE INNER CIRCLE

A'LAN Koor is a member of the Inner Circle, the trusted council of senior Star Knights responsible for leading the order with the guidance and assistance of Mentor. Traditionally, the Inner Circle numbers thirteen, allowing for majority votes with the elected head of the Circle as a tie-breaker.

The Inner Circle is responsible for administration of the Order of Star Knights as well as their training and for revising and enforcing the Star Knight's Code, the body of rules

and regulations governing the Order. New councilors are chosen by the Council itself with guidance from Mentor and typically serve until they choose to retire. The very best are chosen to have their neural patterns copied into Mentor's matrix.

Like the Order itself, the Inner Circle is made up of members of different species from various worlds, brought together in common purpose to preserve peace in the galaxy. The Circle is known for vigorous debate on important issues, but they are all united in their dedication to the Order and its goals. Politics have little place in the Inner Circle's work and many councilors agree to serve reluctantly, in spite of the honor of doing so, since the Inner Circle tends to favor those who do not seek power.

MENTOR

The true leader and organizing principle of the Star Knights is Mentor, an artificial intelligence housed in the Order's main headquarters on Citadel. Indeed, the Star Citadel can be said to *be* Mentor in many ways, his circuitry and consciousness incorporated throughout. Mentor is widely believed to be of Preserver origin, but he has never confirmed or denied this. It may well be he does not know, having been activated some time after the Preservers vanished from the known galaxy for good.

Mentor is based on a complex series of neural "maps" and the technology exists for further mind-mapping. Essentially, the greatest and most capable of the Star Knights have been chosen to have their minds and memories incorporated into Mentor's neural matrix before (or shortly after) their corporeal deaths. This ensures the knowledge and experience of the Order is not lost, and allows Mentor's wisdom to grow over the ages as he guides the Star Knights.

Still, Mentor is not an absolute leader. He shares power with the Inner Circle and serves as advisor, counselor, and coordinator, able to oversee far more than any organic mind. Both Mentor and the Order have always considered it important that Star Knights serve of their own free will, understanding the importance of their work and their oaths. So while the chain of command is respected, it tends to be a short one, and Star Knights are given a great deal of autonomy, so long as they do not abuse their office. Only in times of great crisis does Mentor take "command" of the Order and coordinate their efforts.

THE STAR STONE

The Star Stone is the source of the Star Knights' power, an icosahedron of crystalline material created by the Preservers uncounted millennia ago. Like other Preserver artifacts, it appears to channel cosmic energy from the very fabric of the universe itself, power linked to the armor of every Star Knight as well as to the primary defensive systems on Citadel, where the stone resides. The Star Stone is powerful enough that no one has mounted a successful attack on Citadel in the entire history of the Order, although Blackstar came closest, using his inside knowledge of the Star Knights and their fortress.

INFINITY AND BEYOND

The universe is *big*—so big it can scarcely be imagined. Just Earth's own galaxy contains everything discussed in this chapter thus far, and that's not even touching upon the *billions* of other galaxies in the observable universe. Space is vast enough to contain virtually anything, and powers of space-folding, hyper-travel, and more can bring all of it to Earth (or the heroes to it). Yet there is still more beyond just Earth's physical universe; there are entire other universes and planes of existence making up a greater Omniverse that stretches to the very bounds of imagination itself.

INTERSTITIAL UNIVERSES

A variety of universes, or planes of existence, can be said to be "in between" or "around" other realities. In truth, they possess an N-dimensional hypergeography difficult to explain to human-level intellects, but they are reachable from Earth's universe, and can sometimes reach into it as well.

THE COUNTERVERSE

The Counterverse is a cosmos of antimatter, the "mirror opposite" of Earth's own universe. Under normal circumstances, the two universes are completely separate and not even aware of each other, which is to their benefit, since contact between matter and antimatter results in the instant annihilation of both, releasing a considerable amount of energy. Were the Counterverse and Earth's universe to truly come into contact, both would be destroyed!

From the point of view of the positive matter universe, everything in the Counterverse appears backwards, like a photographic negative. Similarly, Counterverse language sounds backwards, like a recording of positive-universe language played in reverse, making it nearly impossible to understand Counterverse languages (like "Hsilgne") without some means of translation.

What's more, the inimical nature of the two universes seems to create a deep, uncontrollable repulsion. Simply put, beings from the Counterverse instinctually *hate* their counterparts from Earth's universe, and vice versa, each driven to destroy the other in a blind fury. It's possible to overcome this urge with a Will check, with the difficulty based on the familiarity of the character's counterpart. The better known he or she is, the more difficult it is, from DC 10 for a casual acquaintance to DC 20 for a close friend or loved one and DC 30 for the character's own opposite number. Even a successful check only puts off the hostile urges; a new check is required every minute of interaction to fight down the urge.

Otherwise, beings from the Counterverse are not the moral or physical opposites of their counterparts. Indeed, they often prove quite similar, and would likely be amiable, if not for the innate conflict between them.

Any sort of contact between an antimatter and positive matter being is extremely dangerous. It results in a rank 0 Damage effect opposed with a +0 modifier (that is, roll an unmodified d20 and read the results on the **Damage Resistance Table**). The result applies equally to both characters. If the contact is between counterparts, the DC of the check increases by +5 and, with four or more degrees of failure, both characters are disintegrated, their atoms completely annihilated!

HYPERSPACE

Hyperspace is a parallel dimension "above" or "outside" of the normal dimensions of space-time, making it useful as a kind of bypass for space vessels. Distances are vastly distorted in hyperspace compared to ordinary or normal space, allowing a space-faring vessel to travel much greater distances in the same amount of time. Typically, the technology to access hyperspace uses gravity generators to "fold" space, creating an aperture. The same technology is used to exit hyperspace back into the normal universe. Not all faster-than-light vessels use hyperspace technology: some create "warp fields" to travel faster than the speed of light within normal space, but hyperspace technology is fairly common amongst space-faring species and worlds. Indeed, it is essential for civilizations to extend beyond one star system.

Hyperspace is also used as a medium for transmitting faster-than-light signals across vast distances of space, although quantum entanglement, psionics, and other means of FTL communication and transmission are known. A signal beamed through hyperspace can be picked up by a hyperspace communicator at its destination, although hyperspace signals can also be intercepted *en route* and even blocked, if the transmission and reception points are known.

Hyperspace itself appears like a vast "silver darkness" (as the Lor have called it), shimmering with a faint rainbow sheen. While thought of as a lifeless void, starfaring civilizations abound with tall tales of encounters with strange forms of life within hyperspace, as well as derelict "ghost ships" adrift in the void for who knows how long. There may even be a kind of "current" in hyperspace, pulling such hulks off course and depositing them into a kind of "cosmic graveyard" of wrecks, floating alongside rubble, debris, and the corpses of vast and alien creatures.

More advanced civilizations (beyond even galactic societies like the Imperium and the Unity) have additional capabilities for manipulating hyperspace, even to the point of doing away with space vessels altogether and using hyperspatial gateways to move between worlds as easily as between rooms. They appear to have accessed (or created) deeper levels of hyperspace, which may connect to other dimensions and realities. Certainly scientists theorize that hyperspace may be an "arterial" dimension,



interconnecting parallel realities which all float “inside” of it, so the hyperspace of Earth-Prime’s dimension is the same, ultimately, as the hyperspace found in every parallel universe.

THE INFRAVERSE

The Infraverse is a spatial domain accessible through quantum matter compression, in other words, shrinking. Beyond a certain sub-atomic threshold, a shrinking subject crosses the infra-barrier and shifts out of the material universe into another, altogether different, universe. Although the Infraverse is often described as a “sub-atomic cosmos” it is not accurate to say that it is made up of atoms or even sub-atomic particles, although it may appear so.

The black void of the Infraverse is dimly lit by a reddish glow and filled with complex orbiting bodies, some of them in chains, rosettes, or other formations that resemble molecules (including complex ones like DNA). Although an airless void, the space between bodies in the Infraverse is not as dangerous as the depths of space in Earth’s universe: the reddish “lifeglow” somehow sustains beings in the absence of air, allowing them to survive, and even speak, normally. There is no gravity in the void, so those without means of propulsion float helplessly. However, gravitational attraction is unusual in that “falling” onto even a planetary body causes no more harm than falling a relatively short distance. A normal human can make “worldfall” with essentially no lasting harm.

The Infraverse’s curiosities don’t end there; many of the various planetary bodies are inhabited, some by humanoid beings, others by strange aliens. The “lifeglow” also appears to establish a low-level telepathic connection that allows intelligent beings to communicate regardless of linguistic skills. Some worlds feature entire races of beings, others strange patchwork collections of intelligent species, often with no rhyme or reason. Some inhabitants of the Infraverse are immigrants, brought there by scientific experiments, spatial warps, magical misfires, or other incidents.

In spite of the relatively forgiving life-support conditions, life in the Infraverse is relatively harsh. Most of its civilization is based around city-states and roving bands of nomads (some of which even travel from world to world). Survival is paramount, and the strongest leaders most able to protect their people rule, until a rival overthrows them. Conflict is common, although the Infraverse is thinly populated by Earth standards. An entire world might have no more than a handful of city-states totaling a few million people. Large swaths of settled worlds remain untamed and unexplored, along with entire “wild” worlds and planetoids.

THE METROVERSE

The so-called “Metroverse”—also known as Metro-World or City-Space or simply “the City”—is an interstitial reality existing “between” (and incorporating parts of) different universes. Essentially, the Metroverse is a vast, effectively infinite, city formed by the edges of different overlapping

OTHER WORLDS AND TIMES

The Omniverse is even *more* vast than described here (than even can be described, truly) and other **MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS** sourcebooks detail it further. The *Worlds of Freedom* sourcebook looks at other time periods, parallel worlds (where history has followed a different path), and the cosmic annihilation that is the Terminus. The *Book of Magic* discusses mystic dimensions, from strange, chaotic realms ruled by sorcerous Dark Lords to hellish netherworlds and the domains of mythological gods, faeries, and other beings. Characters in a cosmic series may visit any of these places as well, and encounter the powerful beings dwelling there.

realities, which phase in and out of sync, causing the “geography” of the place to slowly shift and change over time so it is never quite the same.

The origin of the Metroverse is unknown, although the eldest beings and sources of information there refer to a mythic “Time Before the City” a vast, but unspecified, time ago. Dr. Metropolis and others have referred to “urban resonance” as part of the Metroverse’s existence: the idea that cities are somehow sympathetically “attuned” to each other and connected on a fundamental (and perhaps metaphysical) level.

Whatever the cause of its continued existence, the Metroverse is the urban environment writ large: vast canyons between towering buildings, with a maze of street- and subterranean-levels, high-level bridges, air- and ground-traffic lanes, and a tremendous blending of different styles of architecture, technology, and design. Also like any city, the Metroverse has both a governing authority and a criminal element.

The Coppers, the city’s law enforcement, are a cadre of self-repairing (and self-reproducing) robots programmed with a vast codex of laws and determined to keep the peace. The Coppers are incorruptible and not vulnerable to mortal appetites or needs. They are intelligent and capable of logical discourse, and overall have a *laissez faire* attitude: so long as Citizens are not threatening the public good or creating a nuisance, they’re fairly free to go about their affairs. True to their name, the Coppers look like Art Deco humanoid machines made from a coppery-colored metal alloy.

The Zeks, the Metroverse criminal element, are law-breakers wanted by the Coppers for violations of the criminal code ranging from murder to theft. They are societal outcasts, by definition, but also range from petty criminals or loners who have committed crimes of passion to hardened gangsters who profit off criminal activity. As fewer things are considered crimes in the Metroverse, many Zeks have profitable “legitimate” business empires based around different vices, and the exact line between wealthy entrepreneur and syndicate boss is sometimes unclear without a lot of investigation.

In between lie the vast majority of the Citizenry, beings from across worlds and time who have found their way into the Metroverse, or have been born and raised there. The Coppers do not distinguish between “natural born”

Citizens and immigrants, apart from ensuring newcomers are entered into their vast and interconnected Registry so they can be recognized in the future. Citizenship is a right to all intelligent beings in the Metroverse, save those who violate the law. Even then, punishments are aimed towards rehabilitation.

To outsiders, the Metroverse has the appearance of a madhouse where the inmates are in charge. It is a cosmic “sin city” on steroids, filled with gambling parlors, vice dens, and a bewildering variety of merchants selling just about anything imaginable. The primary concern it poses for Earth (and other worlds in Earth’s universe) lies with when the City comes into phase with an existing urban environment, allowing for some crossover. Inevitably, there’s a flood of bizarre people, goods, and technology along with various disappearances of people slipping “through the cracks” into the Metroverse. Those worlds that treat the matter as an invasion and react aggressively discover the one thing that unites the inhabitants of the Metroverse—including the Coppers—is their willingness to defend themselves from outsiders.

THE ZERO ZONE

The Zero Zone is a reality of stasis and eternal stillness, forever unchanging, and largely featureless. It is a dimension between dimensions, apparently used by some to traverse the dimensions, or simply as a dumping ground to store things or exile prisoners.

The Zero Zone looks like an endless vista of white nothingness. Cosmic flotsam drifts through it, ranging in size from small rocks to entire planetoids, difficult to discern in size due to the lack of reference points. Gravity is strictly a local phenomenon in the Zero Zone; larger objects have their own gravitational fields, but otherwise things simply drift aimlessly.

Vision tends to be limited, like moving through a thick bank of fog or an endless cloud. The “mist” of the Zero Zone isn’t actual water vapor or any other sort of physical cloud. It’s actually a “cloud” of probability; the further away something is, the less fixed and certain its actual location—or even existence—so a quantum “cloud” fuzzes out its shape. More distant objects cannot be seen at all.

This means the travelers’ experiences actually *create* the Zero Zone to a degree. Aspects of the Zone sometimes respond to thoughts, conscious or subconscious, bringing those things to life. Scientists posit a possible connection between the Zero Zone and the astral plane or dream dimension, as well as to the “depths” of hyperspace, where similar unusual phenomena are reported of visitors’ imaginations coming to life.

In the past, the Zero Zone has been used as a place of exile. Alien races (some long dead) used the Zero Zone as a prison, or a dumping ground. Since the Zone is influenced by thought, it can become a “heaven” or “hell” of the exile’s own making, depending on factors like strength of will and length of banishment. Visitors have found some “pocket” realities within the Zero Zone formed in this way.



THE PRIMALS

There are powers in the cosmos beyond even the greatest star-empire, forces barely comprehensible to mere mortals. They are known by many names, but the most common translation in English is *Primal*: the First Ones, wielders of the Primal Power, spawned by the very creation of the cosmos itself.

In truth, the Primals are not the first, although they are effectively immortal by human, even planetary, standards. Not all beings who have claimed to be Primal—such as the Curator—truly are, and some beings that may or may not be Primals (like the mysterious Time-Keepers) remain silent. Humans have had only the barest glimpses at the nature and agenda of these beings.

ASCENDED AND INCARNATE

Primals arrive at their exalted status in one of two ways: ascension or incarnation.

The Ascended were once mortal beings, but their monomaniacal obsession with their particular purpose in life eventually allowed them to tap into the Primal Power. They ascended from mortality into cosmic godhood, becoming Primal. Some of the Ascended shed their mortality before the Earth's solar system was even formed, so they recall little (if anything) about their mortal lives. All that matters to them is their purpose; otherwise, they would not have ascended, so those who hope to find understanding or sympathy for mortality in the Ascended are often disappointed.

The Incarnate, according to their own claims, were never mortal. Instead, they began as ideas: concepts, arche-

ARE THE PRIMALS GODS?

No. Although many of them *claim* to be, none of the Primals are deities, despite their godlike powers. Some masquerade as gods to less powerful creatures, but the Primals did not create the universe, nor are they “in charge” of any aspect of it, even their particular area of interest. Some Primals aspire to such control, but none of them (thankfully) have attained it, and it may not even be possible for them to do so.

The Incarnates come close, being living embodiments of particular concepts, which some might say is the same as being a god, but, for example, while the Norn is an Incarnate of Fate or Destiny, she is not the same as the force of fate itself, nor does she control or direct the fates of all things. Indeed, the Norn is most often seen when the pattern or balance of fate is *threatened* in some fashion. Even there, her ability to directly set it right is limited. Much the same is true of Celesteon and the cosmic order of space: he is created and sustained by it, rather than the other way around, and generally only appears when it is threatened or out of balance.

Although some Primals have disguised themselves as gods or other figures from mythology, many of those beings have their own independent existence in mystical dimensions connected to the material cosmos (although the access deities have is limited by ancient spells and agreements, see *The Book of Magic* for details). Primals are also unaffected by others' belief in or worship of them, beyond their own particular interests. So while a Primal might *want* or even demand worship, they do not need it. Lastly, most gods wield magical powers of some kind (as they typically dwell in magic-rich dimensions) whereas the Primal Power is not mystical, but tied to the fundamental fabric of this reality.

types, even philosophical movements. Over time, these complex constructs of thought, belief, and custom took on a life of their own. The Primal Power coalesced around them, bringing into existence a being, the literal incarnate form of that idea. Even if an Incarnate is destroyed, they claim, the idea survives and simply coalesces into a new form, given time.

Of course, it is possible the Incarnate are simply Ascended who have forgotten their true origins, or choose to conceal them for some reason, just as it could be the Ascended are Incarnates who believe they were once mortal (or wish others to believe it). Functionally, there's no difference between the two types of Primals, and no real way of telling one from the other. Indeed some Primals—notably the Trickster—regularly change the story about their origins.

THE PRIMAL POWER

All Primals wield what they call “the Primal Power”, “the Power Primal”, or “the One Power.” It appears to be a kind of zero-point energy, drawn from the very fabric of the universe itself. For all intents and purposes, the Primal Power makes its wielders like gods, able to shape reality to suit their whims. Primals have, in the past, altered space and time, destroyed planets, and re-ignited dying stars (or caused healthy ones to go supernova).

At the most basic level, the Primal Power makes all Primals essentially immortal and invulnerable. Many of them have existed for millions or even billions of years and they are capable of shrugging off virtually any force less than another use of the Power Primal against them. They quickly recover from any harm they do suffer, and

PRIMAL GAME USE

The Primals are pure plot device characters (see **Omnipotent Villains**, *M&M Gamemaster's Guide*, **Chapter 2**), provided as tools for the Gamemaster to create or drive stories. They're cosmic comic book *deus ex astra* (“gods out of the stars”), nigh-omnipotent beings who treat superheroes as their agents, pawns, or playthings, depending on their moods and particular obsessions.

As such, there are no game traits for the Primals or their degree of Primal Power, and no limits save what the GM—interpreting the Primal's motives—chooses to impose. Being at the whim or mercy of a Primal (much less more than one!) is certainly a challenge worth a hero point award, since the characters will no doubt need those points once they find out what the Primal wants!

The Primals tend to treat mortals as little more than pawns on a cosmic chessboard. Even “good” Primals like the Norn or Questor are not used to explaining themselves to more limited beings. Some Primals may follow the example of the Time-Keepers and even choose particular mortals to become their full-time agents, investing them with a fraction of their vast Primal Power and charging them with carrying out duties related to the Primal's focus in the material universe. This provides a useful origin for cosmic heroes and villains in a *Cosmic Freedom* series.

can survive in any environment, including the depths of space.

Primals can communicate with any being telepathically, making it appear they are speaking the subject's own language. They can likewise alter their appearance at will, often looking like a member of the viewer's species, and sometimes doing so for all of the viewers present, so that a human sees the Primal as human (or at least humanoid) whereas a Grue sees him or her as Grue-like and a Jerreid as reptilian. They can also disguise their appearance or simply become invisible to most known means of detection.

The Primal Power grants a wide range of energy manipulating effects, from simple bolts or arcs of destructive force to subtle restructuring of matter at the atomic (or even quantum) level. Primals can move objects using telekinesis or force manipulation, create warps through hyperspace, and rearrange inanimate matter to create virtually whatever they wish.

The main limitation on the Power Primal is the focus and will of its wielder. The same obsession that grants Primals their power also limits them. Outside of their “area of interest” Primals can do very little. Of course, many of them are largely unaware of this, since it never occurs to them to ever do *anything* outside of their obsession. The primary way for a Primal to expire, according to the Primal known as the Game-Master, is for them to lose interest in the focus that maintains their continued existence. Without such focus, a Primal wastes away and disappears.

KNOWN PRIMALS

It is difficult to say exactly how many Primals there are; the cosmos is vast and, given the tendency of many Primals to shapeshift or otherwise disguise themselves, it is hard to say with certainty who is who. What's more, other beings have been mistaken for Primals (particularly creations of the Preservers like the Curator, Collapsar, and Mentor) or have masqueraded as Primals, such as Omega, who is a cosmic entity of a different order. The following are some of the Primals that have had previous contact with humanity.

CELESTEON

The “Great, Cosmic Throne” and “The One Prime.” Some refer to Celesteon as “king” of the Primals, although that term has little meaning, as they all treat him as a peer rather than a sovereign. Celesteon is a living manifestation of cosmic order. He (or she, for Celesteon is beyond gender) is the great starry heavens given voice and form. Celesteon treats all life in the cosmos as his children and seeks to nurture and create wherever possible. Celesteon is largely a passive force, felt in the motion of the stars and planets, but largely content to set things in motion and flow with them. Only when the cosmic order is threatened does Celesteon take notice, and the few mortals who have ever communicated with him have related tales of stars that spoke, whispers from nebulae, or shifting constellations that seemed to form an ancient and wise visage in the blackness.

THE GAME-MASTER

A Primal obsessed with all forms of games and contests, and known for occasionally wagering on their outcome. The Game-Master typically appears hooded and masked and, in the past, has appeared to be blank nothingness beneath his outer garments. He sometimes hints at the idea that all existence is merely a game, controlled by even greater forces from “outside” the cosmos, or even the Omniverse, where “our makers roll the dice of our destinies.”

THE GREY EMISSARY

Cloaked, hooded, and faceless, completely lacking in color other than a uniform grey, the so-called Grey Emissary claims to be an “agent of balance” in the cosmos, and takes a hand in righting what he sees as imbalances. The Emissary does so without compassion or concern, and many of the “imbalances” he seeks to correct are excesses of life, civilization, and order, just as often as chaos, cruelty, and destruction. The Grey Emissary, like many Primals, often employs mortal agents, offering them power or particular rewards. He can be a valuable ally, but a completely unreliable one, as he is concerned solely with his particular ideas of cosmic balance, and not personal ties.

THE NORN

A shadowy, often insubstantial female figure in a hooded, flowing robe, the Norn sometimes shifts in appearance from youthful to aged, but typically maintains an ageless maturity. She claims to be a force of Fate or Destiny, the “rightful” purpose or direction of the universe—all universes, in fact, although she is maddeningly vague about how that direction is determined. She appears only in times of great crisis, when “the fate of the cosmos” is at stake, to attempt to put things right. She does so by offering advice and sometimes choosing champions to intervene on her behalf.

QUESTOR

Questor is concerned with truth, both the revelation of facts and knowledge as well as larger cosmic truths, and the quest to find them. Questor travels the cosmos and the many layers of reality gathering knowledge and piecing together elements of “the great cosmic puzzle” to better understand the nature of all things. He is obsessed with this quest to the exclusion of all

else, and prefers to remain uninvolved except in cases where the whole of reality (and therefore his quest) may be threatened. Even then, Questor is more likely to point mortal agents towards a useful truth than he is to simply reveal information unbidden. Sometimes Questor’s truths can be harsh, but necessary. Questor appears differently to different people, always as someone they trust, although his behavior quickly makes it apparent he (or she) is not that person. Questor’s true appearance (if any) is one truth he has kept to himself.

THE TRICKSTER

A Primal concerned with little more than playing elaborate pranks and con games, the Trickster is a being of pure deception. Sometimes he claims to have swindled the incarnation of trickery out of the role, allowing him to ascend; other times he says that he is that selfsame incarnation, and has been since the beginning of time. The Trickster’s appearance likewise varies and he can change it at will. He has considerable ability to reshape reality, his sole limitations being that he cannot read the thoughts of a sentient being, nor usurp their free will. Thus his various schemes involve ferreting out what others want—or fear—and getting them to accede to his wishes.

THE TIME-KEEPERS

As the Norn is to Fate, so are the mysterious Time-Keepers to the flow of history—past, present, and future. This trio of masked and robed figures presides as a kind of “cosmic tribunal” over temporal matters and have taken it upon themselves to appoint “guardians” of different periods of history, as well as the time-stream in general. The time-lost hero Dr. Tomorrow (*Freedom City*) is their agent in the 20th and 21st centuries on Earth.



CHAPTER 5: FREEDOM CITY 2525



In the far distant future, Freedom City is at the center of a peaceful Galactic Confederation. Still, even in the 26th century, there remain threats to peace, justice, and freedom across the known galaxy. Fortunately, the Confederation can call upon the aid of the legendary Freedom Legion!

A BRIGHT, SHINING FUTURE

Welcome to Freedom City, galactic citizens! Current local time designation is 06:53:04 a.m., Tuesday, 21 August, CE 2525.

This extract from the Metropolitan Information Center's public databanks is recommended to acquaint visitors with Freedom City's colorful history, famous landmarks, and best-known residents. Whether you're an ambassador en route to the Confederation of Planets Building or a tourist hoping to catch a glimpse of the famed Freedom Legion, we hope this information helps make the most of your visit.

THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

Freedom City is much like the rest of 26th century Earth. Problems persisting on less-advanced worlds like poverty, prejudice, disease, hunger, and ignorance are nearly eradicated. Want is a thing of the distant past, but disparities between the social strata remain. After eight millennia, wealth (now measured in credits) still has its privileges.

Culturally, humanity's diversity is rare in the galaxy. Most worlds have one philosophy, racial makeup, and language, as well as distinctive abilities common amongst all planetary natives, but Earth is rich in contrasts. While much is made of humans' normally lacking natural superabilities, their cultural diversity more than compensates. Humans (Terran, Lor, and others seeded throughout the galaxy) possess the cosmopolitan perspective needed to forge bonds between disparate alien races. In a very real sense, humanity's love and respect for alien civilizations is the mortar holding the galaxy together in peace.

THE CITY OF THE FUTURE

Visitors from sub-Tech Level 3 civilizations often find Freedom City strange, but in time, most appreciate its modern Energy Age conveniences. Rest assured, all publicly accessible devices are completely user friendly, and built-in safeguards prevent them from inflicting harm, inadvertently or otherwise.

City services such as access to the hover-rail system, the gravity induction power grid, and the computer network are free of charge. Necessities such as basic food and lodging can be attained at no cost from municipal agencies, but admittedly don't match the quality of privately owned restaurants and hotels.

A time-lost Freedom resident from before the Crisis of 2112 would be shocked by the city's changed appearance, with its towering plassteel skyscrapers, holographic billboards, personal hovercrafts, and alien tourists from any of a thousand worlds. However, our hypothetical visitor could find his or her way around with surprising ease because of Freedom's "city spirit," Dr. Metropolis.

For centuries, Dr. Metropolis has handled all urban renovations, often changing buildings in form but rarely in function. Therefore, a 21st century man might not recognize Freedom Medical Center in its present "futuristic" guise, but the city layout is so similar he could still locate it using a map from his native era.

Thanks to Dr. Metropolis' redevelopments, Freedom City's historical and environmental qualities are preserved while still keeping it on the cutting edge of technology. The following is a sampling of notable Freedom City sites, all maintaining the traditions of the past while pointing the way to the future.

THE CONFEDERATION OF PLANETS BUILDING

Towering over the city skyline on the former site of the Federal Plaza is the Confederation of Planets Building, home to the grandest experiment in recorded history. Here, the day-to-day struggle of ensuring peace in the galaxy takes place, with all of the triumphs and tragedies attendant upon such an epic undertaking.

The building itself was specially redesigned by Dr. Metropolis to accommodate life forms from a variety of different biospheres, as well as to make it sturdy enough to survive sizable bomb blasts. This resiliency is routinely tested, as the Grue Unity, the Tyranny Legion, the Unification Movement, and others have attempted to raze the building over the years. As a further precaution, an elite detachment of Solar Guard soldiers garrison the grounds at all times, under the command of the stalwart Terran General Thomas B. Ankrum.

Inside are offices for the Confederation President, the Secretariat, the member worlds' ambassadors, and the Solar Guard Chiefs of Staff. The largest room is the famous General Assembly chamber, where matters concerning the entire alliance are debated and voted upon. Such meetings are watched with great interest, not only for the political ramifications but for the history of supervillains and extremist groups choosing such moments to threaten the Confederation's leaders.

CITY HALL

An enduring landmark, City Hall's neo-classical exteriors remain unchanged from centuries past, but its interiors are now equipped with the very latest technology. This

allows city officials and technicians to maintain municipal services at peak efficiency and deal rapidly with any emergencies.

The top local official in Freedom is the City Administrator, appointed by the United Earth government. While its prestige makes the job highly sought after, the challenge of balancing the interests of the city, the planet, the Confederation, and the thousands of alien cultures represented in the metropolitan area is often daunting. Fortunately, the current Administrator, Tamas Keyne, is utterly tireless in his work and completely unflappable in the face of catastrophe. He also shows considerable diplomatic skills, as evinced by good working relationships with Confederation President Yang and most of the COP's ambassadors.

Municipal security is handled by the Police Commissioner's office, currently overseen by one Oskar N'Danga. N'Danga holds the Commissionership thanks to a surprise appointment by Keyne, who passed over more experienced candidates in a stated effort to "get some new blood" into the city's administration. N'Danga goes about his job quietly but competently, avoiding publicity—both good and bad.

BASEHART INSTITUTE FOR MARINE RESEARCH

Located on the former Lonely Point Naval Station, the Basehart Institute for Marine Research is the galaxy's leading oceanographic center. Its founder, retired Solar Guard Admiral David Basehart, felt Earth's oceans were comparatively ignored in the rush to explore space, and he established the Institute to rectify this imbalance.

The Institute works in conjunction with the United Earth government, and the relationship profits both sides. It allows the Institute to build and maintain its advanced scientific devices—most famously the fantastic research submarine *Oceanview*—and makes Earth a leader in ocean-related sciences.

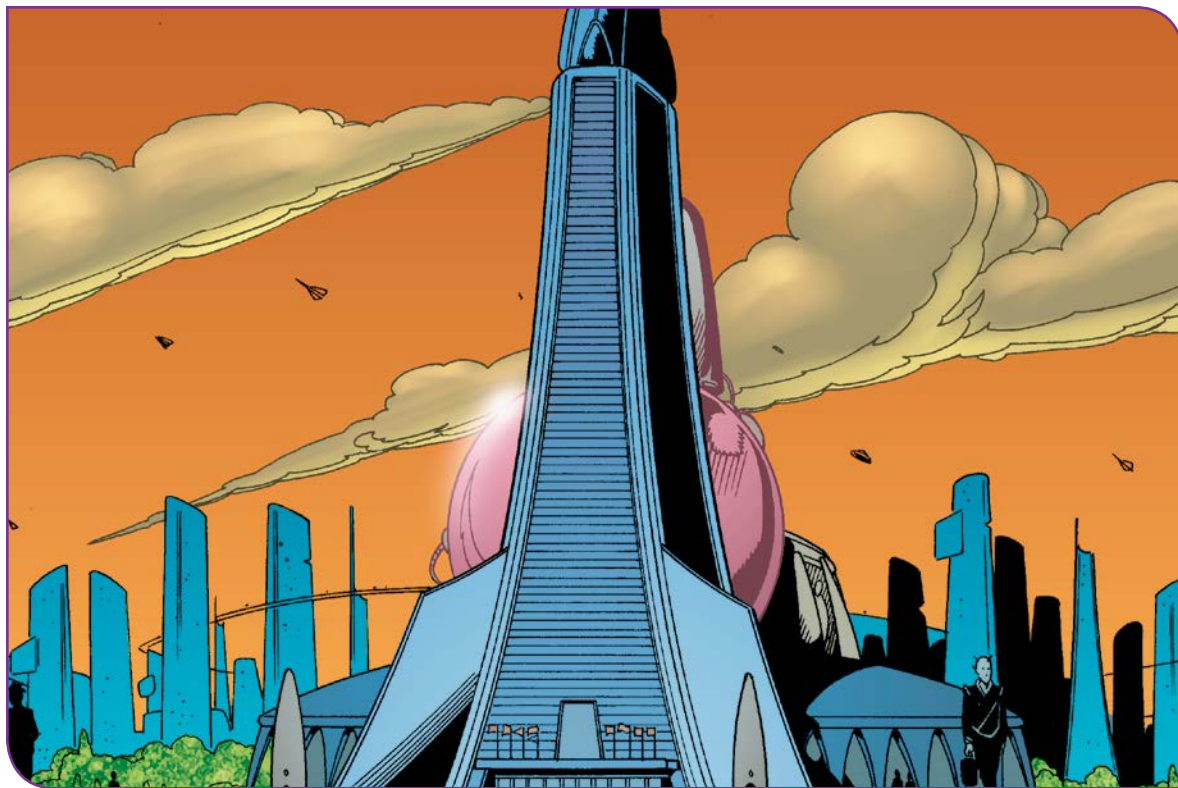
Thanks to the Institute, harvesting oceanic resources is both feasible and ecologically sound, contributing to the virtual elimination of famine. Basehart is currently supervising the construction of the first permanent ocean-floor settlements off the Freedom City coast.

Though not widely known, the Institute is frequently called upon to investigate and counter underwater threats. However, despite triumphs over giant sea creatures, Grue infiltrators, renegade Atlanteans, and various natural hazards, Admiral Basehart would rather be known for his scientific contributions.

Basehart fits the Gadgeteer archetype (see *Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 2**). The *Oceanview* combines a submarine's vehicle stats with the stately manor headquarters' features (see *Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 7** for both).

DR. ALEXANDER ATOM SPACEPORT

Located on Star Island, "AA" is Earth's primary gateway to the stars and a center of interplanetary trade. AA is never less than busy, with ships from throughout the galaxy ar-



riving and departing around the clock. The numbers and types of aliens and exotic goods found here at any given moment must be seen to be appreciated.

For safety reasons, larger spacecraft usually remain in orbit and convey payloads and passengers to AA via shuttlecraft. Once they clear customs, both cargo and people are quickly transported from AA on city hover-rail lines or any number of hovercabs. There are also several amenities for travelers laying over at AA *en route* to other destinations.

Spaceport security is tight, and rarely does a day pass without the authorities apprehending at least one would-be smuggler, thief, kidnapper, hijacker, or terrorist. While the F.C.P.D. is accustomed to such threats, it doesn't hesitate to call in the Solar Guard when more serious menaces appear.

Despite AA's unparalleled safety record, spaceflight retains a degree of risk: ships veer off course, pilots make errors, and computers develop glitches. The spaceport's crack staff is trained to deal with such emergencies, but sometimes events race pass even their ability to manage. In such instances, frightened space travelers find reason to be grateful for the Freedom Legion's close proximity to AA.

For Gamemasters, use the police officer archetype (*Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 9**) with blaster pistols (*Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 7**) when the F.C.P.D.'s future cops are needed in your game. Use the soldier archetype (*Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 9**) with blaster rifles (*Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 7**) whenever the Solar Guard is summoned.

FREEDOM HALL

Vacant after Daedalus and the Freedom League disappeared while battling the Star-Khan in 2378, Freedom Hall is now once again home to Earth's greatest superheroes. Dr. Metropolis has completely restored and renovated the building to suit the current occupants, the Freedom Legion.

Freedom Hall's exterior appears unchanged, but inside it houses beyond state-of-the-art technology, incorporating devices from a number of alien cultures. Additional subterranean levels have been constructed, creating sufficient space to accommodate all of the Legion's affiliated members and their varied environmental requirements.

The Hall allows the Legion's core membership to respond rapidly to emergencies throughout known space. Teleports send Legion members to the Atom Spaceport, Moonbase One, and other critical planetary locales in seconds, and a squadron of *Daedalus*-class space-planes is available for off-world missions.

CLAREMONT ACADEMY

This unique school once carried out its mission secretly, but it is now famous galaxy-wide for training youth to use their extraordinary abilities. Perhaps more importantly, the Academy strives to make its students well-rounded individuals of good character, instructing them in everything from *sampo* construction to Venusian aikido.

Indicative of the strong ties between the Legion and the Academy, the current co-headmasters Casey Leeds (the second Centurion) and Una Hunt (the Nightstalker,

YOUR OWN FREEDOM LEGION SERIES

The characters and information presented on the following pages outline one possible setting for a Freedom Legion series, but it's not the only possible one. If your heroes are traveling to 2525, using the Confederation of Planets, the Freedom Legion, the Unification Movement, and the Tyranny Legion as is may prove to be very useful. This chapter lays out the setting in broad strokes allowing you to fill in the details as needed.

If, however, you and your players are interested in a futuristic series similar to that of the Legion's, you can (and should) take what you like from this chapter and change the rest. You may opt to use the Freedom Legion mostly as presented, but have the players make up the core of the Legion using their own versions of these heroes, or with completely new heroes they find more interesting. You could even work up a different origin for the team. Or jettison the Freedom Legion entirely and come up with a new team you and your players find more interesting.

See the **Time Passages** section later in this chapter for more ideas on customizing Freedom City 2525.

26th century Earth's Master Mage) are reserve Legion members. Their shared experiences serve the students well, particularly when emergencies force their pupils to put their training into action.

Traditionally, most Academy students are from Earth, but that has been changing over time. Headmaster Warner in particular, himself a strange visitor from a parallel Earth, makes increased campus diversity a top priority.

THE GOODMAN BUILDING

The home base of the famous Atom Family is a true city legend. No family member has been seen or heard from since before the Crisis of 2112, but the Goodman Building's technology continues operating without pause, maintained by means unknown.

Over the centuries, the building's caretaker has answered inquiries as to the family's whereabouts. Like his ancestors preceding him, current caretaker Hal Oldmun asserts the Atoms will return someday, though when, how, and from where he never says.

BEYOND FREEDOM CITY

Humans once spoke of a "global village" as new means of transportation rendered once vast distances meaningless. With the development of the gravity induction drive in 2266, the term "galactic village" became more apropos, for mankind then had the farthest stars within its grasp.

Two hundred fifty years later, humanity's presence in space is greater than ever. The following is but a brief survey of points of interest lying far beyond the Earth itself.

MOONBASE ONE

United Earth's first great diplomatic success was persuading Farside City to allow a permanent human settlement opposite it on Luna. Moonbase One was completed in 2199, a crowning achievement for a planet finally recovered from the global anarchy following the worldwide computer failure in 2112.

Today, Moonbase One is an important center for scientific research, primarily astronomical observation and experiments requiring the moon's special environment. The

base also serves as a way station for spaceships traveling to and from Earth.

Hostile action against the facility by anti-Confederation powers is a major concern for Moonbase Commander Wally Po. Normally, the base's defenses would be routinely upgraded to meet burgeoning threats, but by treaty, Moonbase One's continued presence is at the Farsiders' discretion. The Farside Council remains skittish at the prospect of their "savage relations" from Earth militarizing the moon. Commander Po continues to impress upon them the need for improved lunar defenses, but to no avail as yet.

Stats for the Moonbase are in the *Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 7**. Its personnel are a mix of government agent (like Po), soldier (with blaster rifles—see *Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 7**), and scientist archetypes (*Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 9**).

THE CONFEDERATION OF PLANETS

The C.O.P. sprang from the interplanetary alliances Earth forged during the Grue War. Mutual defense remains its core purpose, but over time, its mission has expanded to include trade promotion, cultural exchange, a common language (Galacta), humanitarian aid, and peaceful resolution of disputes.

Membership is open to civilizations committed to peaceful co-existence that agree to abide by the Confederation's strictures, such as contributing (financially and otherwise) to the common defense. To the largest extent possible, members' local affairs remain outside the scope of Confederation authority. Because of this decentralized approach, the C.O.P. encompasses scores of vastly differing cultures.

Major decisions are made by majority vote of the General Assembly, consisting of voting representatives of each member world. Enforcement of Assembly decisions is the ultimate responsibility of the Confederation President, an office currently held by the renowned Terran statesman Roman Yang. The President is assisted by the Secretariat (an appointed bureaucracy) and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (the ranking officers of the Solar Guard, the C.O.P. military).

The challenges of protecting the freedom and interests of C.O.P. members nearly beggar the imagination. However, the dedication and sacrifice of countless beings on the Confederation's behalf speaks volumes for the nobility and worthiness of these goals.

THE FREEDOM LEGION

BASE: Freedom City, Earth

CURRENT MEMBERS: Centurion II (reserve), Charger, Chiller, the Clockwatcher (affiliate), Colonel Colossus, Dr. Metropolis (affiliate), Metalla, the Nightstalker (reserve), Professor Danger, Solarflare, Star Knight; many other affiliate members across known space

FORMER MEMBERS: Elementress; others as yet unestablished

HEADQUARTERS: Freedom Hall

VEHICLES: *Daedalus*-class space-plane

For seven centuries, Freedom City's superheroes have shown the way to a bright, shining future for all. Today's heir to the Patriot Regiment legacy is the Freedom Legion. Tales of the Legion's heroic exploits inspire the inhabitants of countless worlds, and the team is revered throughout the galaxy for its dedication to justice and liberty for all sentient beings.

By necessity, the interplanetary Freedom Legion is structured more loosely than its predecessors. Scores of super-beings (including Dr. Metropolis) who prefer not to leave their bases of operation have affiliate-member status. They are left to pursue their own heroic agendas while still enjoying the sanction and support of the C.O.P. and

Legion, obligated only to respond to either organization's emergency calls.

By contrast, a dedicated core opts for active-member status, committing themselves full-time to resolving crises throughout the galaxy. The active members reside at Freedom Hall, allowing them immediate access to the Confederation's top decision-makers.

HEADQUARTERS: FREEDOM HALL - 36 POINTS

Size: Colossal **TOU:** 20 **Features:** Combat Simulator, Communications, Computer, Defense System, Fire Prevention System, Gym, Hangar, Holding Cells (Impervious, Punishment), Infirmary, Laboratory, Library, Living Space, Personnel, Power System, Security System 5, Teleportal (Teleport 18, Affects Others Only, Limited to Extended, Limited to other teleportal locations), Trophy Room, Workshop

DAEDALUS-CLASS SPACE-PLANE - 50 POINTS

Size: Gargantuan; **STR** 13 **SPD** 12 (Flight (8,000 MPH)) **DEF** 6 **TOU** 13, **Features:** Autopilot 3, Communications 2, Computer, Fire Prevention System, Holding Cells (Impervious), Navigation System 3. **Powers:** Space Travel 3

CHARGER

Inhabitants of the storm-swept planet Tempest endure one of the harshest climates in known space. On other worlds, technology alleviates intemperate environmental conditions, but Tempest's electrically charged atmosphere overloads most electronic devices, leaving its culture backward and pastoral.

Such a low-tech world cannot long hold dreamers like Mykal Antczak, and at a young age, he left Tempest for planets unknown. Mykal never considered himself special, but on Earth, he learned the natural abilities his people take for granted qualified him for the Claremont Academy.

To survive lightning strikes, Tempestians naturally expel electricity from their bodies. With the Academy's guidance, Mykal learned to direct and focus these electrical discharges, and he set his sights on using his abilities as a superhero.

Mykal's selfless, humble nature and boundless enthusiasm made him a natural for the Freedom Legion, and he joined shortly after graduation. Taking the codename Charger, Mykal serves the Legion with honor and distinction. His boyhood dreams of seeing the galaxy realized, Mykal is finally happy, even if he doesn't always understand the technology he encounters along the way.

CHILLER

As a child, Geoff Miklas miraculously survived a crash landing on the arid planet Szolta. He vividly remembers blacking out from the unrelenting sun as he wished he could be cold... freezing cold....

This trauma triggered Geoff's latent cryokinetic powers. Though his ability to project intense cold saved his life, it also made him feel less human. He enrolled in the



CHARGER

PL10 · 153 POINTS

STR 4 STA 4 AGL 3 DEX 1 FGT 1 INT 1 AWE 3 PRE 2

Powers: **Alien Physiology** (Immunity 15 (Dazzle effects, Electrical Power effects)); **Electrical Control** (Array (21 points)); **Ball Lightning** (Ranged Burst Area Damage 7), **AE: Electrical Aura** (Reaction Damage 5), **AE: Lightning and Thunder** (Ranged Cumulative Affliction 7 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Impaired, Disabled, Unaware), Visual and Auditory Senses), **AE: Lightning Bolt** (Ranged Damage 10), **AE: Electroshock** (Ranged Affliction 10 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated); **Electrical-Current Riding** (Flight 6 (120 MPH))

Advantages: Accurate Attack, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Great Endurance, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Hold, Improved Trip, Languages (Galacta, Tempestian native), Teamwork, Tracking

Skills: Athletics 5 (+9), Close Combat: Unarmed 7 (+8), Expertise: Farmer 6 (+7), Expertise: Theology & Philosophy 3 (+4), Insight 4 (+7), Perception 6 (+9), Ranged Combat: Electrical Control 9 (+10)

Offense: Initiative +3, Lightning Bolt +10 (Ranged, Damage 10), Unarmed +8 (Close, Damage 4)

Defense: Dodge 12, Parry 10, Fortitude 10, Toughness 8/4*, Will 8 *Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 38 + Powers 52 + Advantages 14 + Skills 20 + Defenses 29 = 153

Complications: Motivation—Doing Good: Mykal's overriding kindheartedness leads him to always do right by others. **Thrills:** Free from the many strictures of life on his homeworld, Mykal genuinely loves the excitement of being a costumed hero. **Quirk:** Mykal is sometimes at a loss when dealing with user-unfriendly technology of the sort not found on Tempest.

Claremont Academy, hoping for acceptance where strange powers are the norm.

At the Academy, Geoff studied art and design with greater alacrity than his mutant powers. In fact, he would never have become a costumed hero had it not been for his close friendship with classmate Dav Fikse. Dav suggested a stint with the Freedom Legion might rescue Geoff's artistic career from all-consuming obscurity. Geoff concurred, and despite semi-serious threats to quit, he remains with the team under the codename Chiller.

Personally, Geoff is witty, cultured, and still very passionate about his art. Though he'd never admit it, he really does enjoy being a hero, and in any event, he would never leave Dav facing danger alone.



CHILLER

PL10 · 151 POINTS

STR 1 STA 1 AGL 2 DEX 2 FGT 1 INT 3 AWE 2 PRE 1

Powers: **Cold Control** (Dynamic Array (21 points)): **Cold Blast** (Ranged Damage 7, Alternate Resistance (Fortitude)), **AE: Blizzard** (Burst Area 7 (1,800 feet) Concealment 2 Attack (normal sight)), **AE: Cold Snap** (Environment 10, extreme cold), **AE: Freezing Air** (Ranged Affliction 10 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Fatigued, Exhausted, Asleep)), **AE: Ice Bonds** (Ranged Cumulative Affliction 7 (Resisted by Dodge and Overcome by Damage; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobile), Extra Condition, Limited Degree), **AE: Ice Constructs** (Continuous Create 6, Innate), **AE: Ice Projectiles** (Ranged Damage 10), **AE: Icy Surfaces** (Environment 10, Impede Movement, Reduce 2 ranks), **AE: Snowblind** (Ranged Cumulative Affliction 7 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Impaired, Disabled, Unaware), Limited to Visual Sense), **AE: Subzero Freezing** (Ranged Weaken Toughness 10, Affects Only Objects); **Mutant Physiology** (Immunity 10 (Cold Power effects))

Advantages: Accurate Attack, Daze (Deception), Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Grabbing Finesse, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Hold, Improved Trip, Languages (Galacta, English native), Move-by Action, Power Attack, Taunt

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 9 (+10), Deception 7 (+8), Expertise: Art 6 (+9), Expertise: Current Events 3 (+6), Expertise: Graphic Design 11 (+14), Expertise: Popular Culture 7 (+10), Perception 5 (+7), Ranged Combat: Cold Control 8 (+10)

Offense: Initiative +2, Ice Projectiles +10 (Ranged, Damage 10), Unarmed +10 (Close, Damage 1)

Defense: Dodge 14, Parry 13, Fortitude 8, Toughness 5/1*, Will 12 *Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 26 + Powers 40 + Advantages 16 + Skills 28 + Defenses 41 = 151

Complications: Motivation—Thrills: His frequent protestations to the contrary, Geoff really does enjoy being a hero. **Acceptance:** As a mutant, Geoff feels at home in the world of costumed heroes, and often ill at ease dealing with people outside it. Being a hero allows him to remain within his comfort zone.

COLONEL COLOSSUS

Glenn Langan was a lieutenant colonel in the Solar Guard, stationed at a remote outpost on the edge of Grue space. Known for his courage under fire, Langan fought valiantly to repel what at first seemed to be a hit-and-run Grue raid. However, their real aim was testing a new quantum weapon, and the resulting explosion completely leveled the outpost.

Col. Langan alone survived, despite receiving a lethal dose of an unknown radiation type. Once healed, Langan found his genetic make-up radically altered, allowing him to grow to enormous size at will and become remarkably resistant to injury.

COLONEL COLOSSUS

PL10 • 136 POINTS

STR 12/2* STA 12/2* AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 6 INT 1 AWE 3 PRE 3

Powers: **Colossal Man** (Enhanced Advantages 7 (Fast Grab, Improved Hold, Improvised Weapon, Interpose, Takedown 2, Weapon Break); Growth 10 (Activation (Move Action, -1 point)); Immunity 10 (Radiation Power effects); Protection 4; Persistent Regeneration 3)

Advantages: All-out Attack, Defensive Attack, *Fast Grab*, Favored Foe (the Grue), Great Endurance, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative, *Improved Grab*, *Improved Hold*, *Improved Weapon*, Inspire 3, *Interpose*, Languages (Galacta, English native), Leadership, Power Attack, Startle, *Takedown 2*, *Weapon Break*

Skills: Athletics 4 (+16/+6*), Close Combat: Unarmed 2 (+8), Expertise: Soldier 9 (+10), Expertise: Tactics 7 (+8), Intimidation 7 (+15/+10*), Perception 4 (+7), Ranged Combat: Energy Weapons 9 (+10), Stealth 4 (-5/+5*)

Offense: Initiative +5, Unarmed +8 (Close, Damage 12/2*)

Defense: Dodge 4/11*, Parry 4/11*, Fortitude 16/2*, Toughness 12/2*, Will 8
*Without Growth.

Totals: Abilities 38 + Powers 46 + Advantages 13 + Skills 23 + Defenses 20 = 136

Complications:

Motivation—Responsibility: Though his uniform has changed, Glenn is still a soldier, dedicated to doing his duty. **Quirk:** Though no longer bearing them hatred as he once did, Glenn retains a considerable dislike for the Grue.

The Guard gave Langan a medical discharge, but as always, he was loath to quit an unfinished fight. Upon returning to Earth, Glenn enlisted in the Freedom Legion as the aptly named Colonel Colossus.

Avenging the loss of his men once drove Langan, but his camaraderie with his Legion teammates has mellowed him considerably. Langan models all that is most admirable in a soldier: loyalty, bravery, and self-sacrifice. These qualities—and his formidable tactical knowledge—make him a highly valued Legion member.

METALLA

Like all on Dalea who manifest extraordinary powers, Milica Vidas was worshiped as a goddess. While others crave such adoration, it struck Milica as tiresome and irrational, and she longed to escape the gilded cage of imposed divinity.

After helping the Freedom Legion resolve a case on Dalea, she saw her opportunity and successfully petitioned the team for membership. This “abduction” caused a serious diplomatic incident, but when the C.O.P. refused to intervene, her return became Dalea’s global priority. As a result, Milica sees Legion membership and continued freedom as synonymous, and she serves the team with a fervor few rival.

Milica—“Mili” to friends—chose the codename Metalla in recognition of her mastery over ferrous objects. Her fiercely

independent spirit and natural charm are her foremost personal characteristics, but she also harbors some trepidation over her people’s ceaseless efforts to force her return home.

PROFESSOR DANGER

Renowned xenoarchaeologist Prof. Talita Silva earned the nickname “Professor Danger” early in her career from her dauntless pursuit of hazardous finds and her kinship with the legendary Johnny Danger. Her ancestry later came to the fore when she inherited both the Danger family fortune and directorship of the Danger International explorers’ society.

For the next several years, Prof. Silva used her now-prodigious resources to further her field research, expanding her already unmatched knowledge of alien cultures. Because of this expertise, the Freedom Legion asked her advice on a number of cases, and in each instance, the Professor’s assistance proved invaluable.

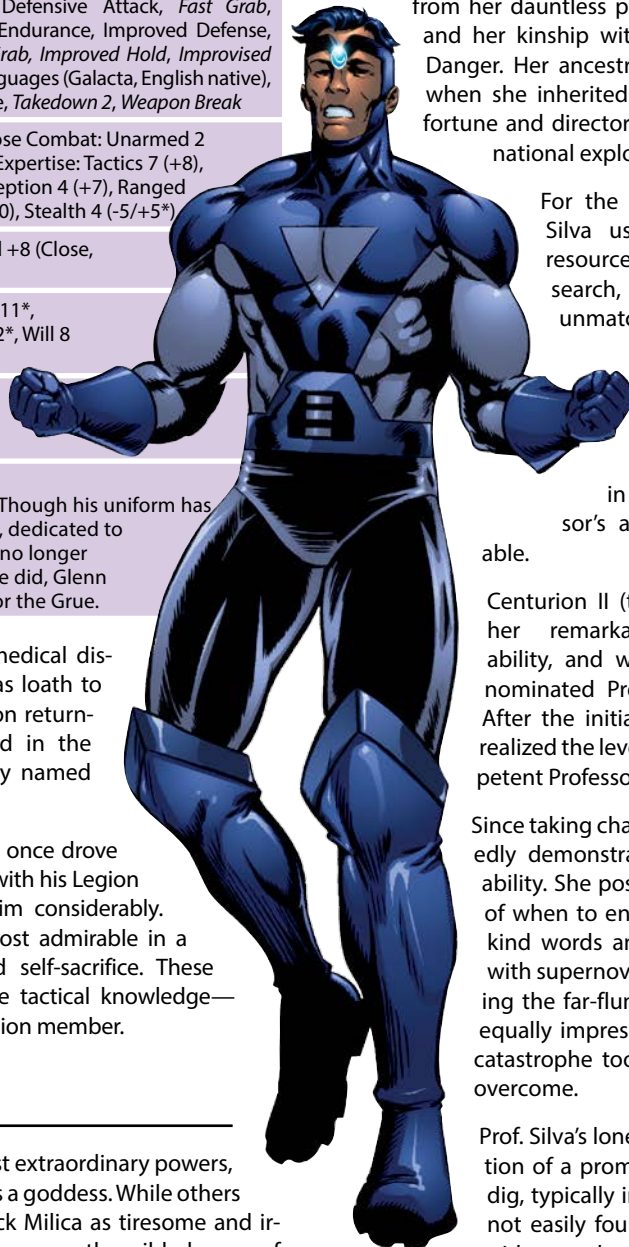
Centurion II (then team leader) noted her remarkable crisis-management ability, and when he semi-retired, he nominated Prof. Silva to replace him. After the initial surprise, all concerned realized the levelheaded and hyper-competent Professor was the perfect choice.

Since taking charge, Prof. Silva has repeatedly demonstrated uncanny leadership ability. She possesses an unerring sense of when to encourage teammates with kind words and when to yell at them with supernova fury. Her skill at organizing the far-flung Legion membership is equally impressive, and there seems no catastrophe too great for her talents to overcome.

Prof. Silva’s lone weakness is the temptation of a promising xenoarchaeological dig, typically in some place where she’s not easily found or contacted. Though without truly superhuman abilities, such absences prove Professor Danger is the most irreplaceable Legion member of all.

SOLARFLARE

From his boyhood on the planet Namarr, Dav Fikse wanted to follow in his parents’ super-heroic footsteps. Like them, he possesses mutant powers and attended the Claremont Academy before becoming a Freedom Legion member. In the process, he repeatedly showed the strength of character necessary to honor his parents’ legacy.



METALLA

PL10 • 150 POINTS

STR 0 STA 1 AGL 2 DEX 2 FGT 1 INT 3 AWE 1 PRE 4

Powers: **Magnetic Control** (Array (21 points)): **Animation** (Perception Move Object 10, Precise, Limited Material: Metal), **AE: Magnetic Blast** (Ranged Damage 10), **AE: Magnetic Interference** (Burst Area 7 (1,800 feet) Concealment 2 Attack (all radio)), **AE: Magnetic Shield** (Deflect 10, Reflect), **AE: Metallic Projectiles** (Multiattack Ranged Damage 7), **AE: Magnetic Pulse** (Burst Area Nullify Electronics 10, Alternate Resistance: Toughness, Touch Range), **AE: Metallic Bonds** (Ranged Cumulative Affliction 7 (Resisted by Dodge and Overcome by Damage; Hindered & Vulnerable, Defenseless & Immobile), Extra Condition, Limited Degree), **AE: Reshape Metal** (Continuous Ranged Transform 5); **Magnetic Field Manipulation** (Flight 7 (250 MPH), Sustained Protection 10)

Advantages: Accurate Attack, Agile Feint, All-out Attack, Attractive 2, Defensive Attack, Grabbing Finesse, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Hold, Improved Trip, Languages (Galacta, Daleshonan native), Move-by Action, Power Attack

Skills: Acrobatics 3 (+5), Close Combat: Unarmed 6 (+7), Expertise: Current Events 6 (+9), Expertise: Science 4 (+7), Insight 3 (+4), Perception 6 (+7), Persuasion 5 (+9), Ranged Combat: Magnetic Control 8 (+10), Stealth 3 (+5), Technology 4 (+7)

Offense: Initiative +2, Magnetic Blast +10 (Ranged, Damage 10), Unarmed +7 (Close, Damage 0)

Defense: Dodge 9, Parry 8, Fortitude 8, Toughness 11, Will 12

Totals: Abilities 28 + Powers 52 + Advantages 14 + Skills 24 + Defenses 32 = 150

Complications: **Motivation—Quirk:** Mili strives to maintain her freedom and independence above all, and views her superheroic career as a noble means to that end. **Enemy:** The people of Dalea invest much time and effort into securing Mili's return home, and by any means necessary.

PROFESSOR DANGER

PL10 • 165 POINTS

STR 1 STA 2 AGL 2 DEX 3 FGT 3 INT 7 AWE 5 PRE 6

Equipment: Blaster pistol (Ranged Damage 5), commlink, flashlight, jetpack (Flight 4 (30 MPH)), multi-tool, protective jumpsuit (Immunity 4 (Radiation, Vacuum, Suffocation), Protection 3), video camera, wrist computer

Advantages: Attractive, Benefit 2 (Independently Wealthy), Connected, Contacts, Daze (Deception), Defensive Roll 4, Eidetic Memory, Equipment 7, Evasion, Inspire 5, Languages (Galacta, English native), Leadership, Luck, Quick Draw, Redirect, Uncanny Dodge

Skills: Acrobatics 5 (+7), Athletics 5 (+6), Close Combat: Unarmed 7 (+10), Deception 8 (+14), Expertise: Xenoarchaeology 13 (+20), Insight 6 (+11), Intimidation 8 (+14), Investigation 11 (+18), Perception 11 (+16), Persuasion 8 (+14), Ranged Combat: Energy Weapons 9 (+12), Stealth 5 (+7), Technology 2 (+9)

Offense: Initiative +2, Blaster Pistol +12 (Ranged, Damage 5), Unarmed +10 (Close, Damage 1)

Defense: Dodge 11, Parry 10, Fortitude 8, Toughness 9/5*, Will 12
*Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 58 + Powers 0 + Advantages 30 + Skills 49 + Defenses 28 = 165

Complications: **Motivation—Responsibility:** Talita's sense of duty is the only thing powerful enough to draw her away from her chosen field and into super-heroism. **Quirk:** Talita's overwhelming scientific curiosity leads her into even more dangerous situations than her participation in the Legion.





SOLARFLARE

PL10 • 166 POINTS

STR 2 STA 3 AGL 2 DEX 3 FGT 3 INT 3 AWE 1 PRE 1

Powers: **Fiery Propulsion** (Flight 7 (250 MPH)); **Fire Control** (Dynamic Array (21 points)); **Fireball** (Ranged Burst Area Damage 7), **AE: Fireflash** (Ranged Cumulative Affliction 10 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Impaired, Disabled, Unaware), Limited to Visual Sense), **AE: Flame Blast** (Ranged Damage 10, Split), **AE: Flame Shield** (Deflect 14), **AE: Nova Blast** (Burst Area Damage 10), **AE: Smoke Cloud** (Cloud Area 8 (1,800 feet) Concealment 2 Attack (normal sight)), **AE: Suffocate** (Ranged Progressive Affliction 5 (Resisted and Overcome by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated)); **Mutant Physiology** (Immunity 10 (Fire/Heat effects))

Advantages: Accurate Attack, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 3, Evasion, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Hold, Improved Trip, Interpose, Languages (Galacta, Antarian native), Move-by Action, Power Attack

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+6), Athletics 4 (+6), Close Combat: Unarmed 7 (+10), Expertise: Current Events 4 (+7), Investigation 4 (+7), Perception 4 (+5), Ranged Combat: Fire Control 7 (+10), Stealth 4 (+6), Technology 4 (+7)

Offense: Initiative +2, Flame Blast +10 (Ranged, Damage 10), Unarmed +10 (Close, Damage 2)

Defense: Dodge 14, Parry 12, Fortitude 11, Toughness 6/3*, Will 9 *Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 36 + Powers 58 + Advantages 14 + Skills 21 + Defenses 37 = 166

Complications: **Motivation—Doing Good:** Dav was literally raised to be a hero, and honorably lives up to his parents' super-heroic examples. **Relationship:** Dav still harbors romantic feelings for the Elementress, and strongly desires to redeem both her and the romance they never really got to pursue.

While at the Academy, Dav found a buddy for life in Geoff Miklas (Chiller), and despite their temperamental differences, they greatly influenced one another. Dav taught Geoff the value of being a superhero, while Geoff showed Dav that having a civilian life is vital to his well-being.

Despite Geoff's urging, Dav never pursued the great love of his life, Elementress. This fact still haunts him, even after her descent into fanaticism. He desperately wants to rescue her from the Unifiers' clutches and give her—and them—a second chance.

Dav is careful and contemplative, almost to a fault. In fact, Geoff first suggested the "Solarflare" codename as a rib on his less-than-mercurial nature. Still, Dav was born and raised to be a superhero, and despite his youth, he acts from a veteran's perspective.

STAR KNIGHT

The heroic Star Knights once warded over the galaxy, until Blackstar exacted his fatal revenge on them all. A lone, mortally wounded Knight named Brynt Ruddell escaped to Earth, where he turned his armor over to a worthy successor. This placed the last Star Knight armor in the hands of a young Australian named Pearce Aherne.

Sri Aherne is a freelance writer and occasional drunk, now trying his best to uphold the responsibility thrust upon him. Pearce copes with the attendant pressure with the greatest weapon at his disposal: his savagely mocking sense of humor.

STAR KNIGHT (SRI PEARCE AHERNE) PL10 · 175 POINTS

STR 9 STA 2 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 1 INT 3 AWE 1 PRE 4

Powers: **Star Knight Armor** (Removable (-21 points)): **Protective Casings** (Immunity 10 (Life Support), Impervious Protection 10); **Sensor Systems** (Senses 4 (Communication Link with Blackstar, Direction Sense, Low-light Vision, Radio)); **Stellar Flight** (Flight 8 (500 MPH), Movement 3 (Space Travel 3)); **Stellar Shield** (Deflect 8); **Stellar Strength** (Enhanced Strength 7); **Stellar Sword** (Ranged Damage (light) 10); **Universal Translator** (Comprehend 2 (Languages; Understand, Understood))

Advantages: Daze (Deception), Fearless, Luck 2, Taunt

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 10 (+11), Deception 6 (+10), Expertise: Popular Culture 5 (+8), Expertise: Writer 8 (+11), Insight 6 (+10), Perception 4 (+5), Persuasion 6 (+10), Ranged Combat: Stellar Sword 9 (+10)

Offense: Initiative +1, Stellar Sword +10 (Ranged, Damage 10), Unarmed +11 (Close, Damage 9)

Defense: Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fortitude 11, Toughness 12, Will 9

Totals: Abilities 30 + Powers 82 + Advantages 5 + Skills 27 + Defenses 31 = 175

Complications: Motivation—Doing Good: Despite some early missteps and occasional seeming disinterest, Pearce truly does strive to be worthy of the role of the Last Star Knight. **Enemy:** The now-psychotic Blackstar very much wants Pearce dead.

His apparent flaws mask his fears over clashing with Blackstar, with whom he shares an unwelcome and inescapable communication link. In their previous battles, Pearce survived through pure dumb luck, and he knows too well he can't rely on it forever. This realization led him to seek refuge in the Legion's ranks.

Despite occasional recidivism on his part and the widespread impression he's not taking things all that seriously, Pearce is eminently likeable and has a true hero's spirit. Thus, despite an undeserved reputation to the contrary, none of his predecessors worked half so hard to become a worthy Star Knight.

THE CLOCKWATCHER

The enigmatic Clockwatcher claims (without confirmation) to be a scientist and engineer from "another era." His connection with Dr. Tomorrow and the Time-Keepers—if any—is unknown. In any case, the Clockwatcher possesses one of the few known time-traveling devices, and with it, he strives to maintain temporal integrity with an apparent focus on the galactic Confederation era.

His whereabouts are usually unknown, but at indefinite intervals, he suddenly re-emerges from the time-stream and declares some forthcoming series of events to be "crucial

THE CLOCKWATCHER

PL11 · 176 POINTS

STR 0 STA 1 AGL 1 DEX 0 FGT 0 INT 10 AWE 7 PRE 5

Powers: **Pocket Watch** (Removable (-14 points)): **Time Control** (Array (21 points)); **Accelerated Healing** (Healing 10, Stabilize), **AE: Temporal Relocation** (Affects Others Movement 3 (Time Travel 3)), **AE: Temporal Perception** (Senses 10 (Postcognition, Precognition, Temporal Awareness, Time Sense)), **AE: Time Displacement** (Perception Range Deflect 10), **AE: Time Stop** (Ranged Burst Area Affliction 7 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Hindered, Immobile, Paralyzed)); **Time Mastery** (Enhanced Advantages 4 (Evasion 2, Improved Initiative, Seize Initiative), Enhanced Defense 12 (Dodge 6, Parry 6), Feature 1 (Temporal Inertia), Immunity 5 (Temporal Damage effects)); **Time Shift** (Impervious Protection 10); **Universal Translator** (Comprehend 2 (Languages; Understand, Understood))

Advantages: Benefit 3 (Cipher 3), Connected, Contacts, Eidetic Memory, *Evasion 2, Improved Initiative, Inventor, Seize Initiative, Well-informed*

Skills: Deception 8 (+13), Expertise: History 11 (+21), Expertise: Science 11 (+21), Insight 8 (+15), Intimidation 8 (+13), Investigation 8 (+18), Perception 9 (+16), Persuasion 8 (+13), Technology 11 (+21)

Offense: Initiative +5, Time Stop — (Ranged, Burst Area Affliction 7), Unarmed +0 (Close, Damage 0)

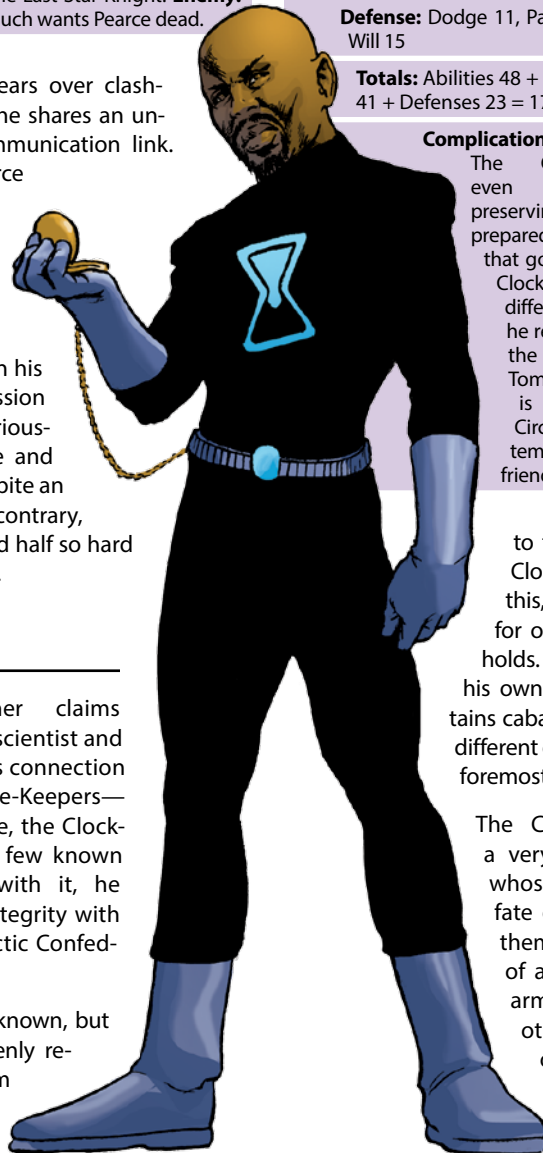
Defense: Dodge 11, Parry 11, Fortitude 7, Toughness 11, Will 15

Totals: Abilities 48 + Powers 56 + Advantages 8 + Skills 41 + Defenses 23 = 176

Complications: Motivation— Responsibility: The Clockwatcher is completely even ruthlessly—dedicated to preserving the time stream. He is prepared to sacrifice everything for that goal, including himself. **Rivalry:** The Clockwatcher has deep philosophical differences with Dr. Tomorrow, whom he regards as an unquestioning tool of the Time-Keepers (and in return, Tomorrow believes the Clockwatcher is a dangerous rogue operative). Circumstances have made them temporary allies in the past, but never friends.

to the proper flow of history." The Clockwatcher rarely elaborates on this, claiming it's far too dangerous for others to know what the future holds. Though a capable individual in his own right, the Clockwatcher maintains cabals of operatives to assist him in different critical eras, the Freedom Legion foremost among them.

The Clockwatcher normally seems a very serious, dignified individual whose every word and deed has the fate of the universe depending on them. However, he is also possessed of a dry wit he employs with disarming effect. When dealing with others, he usually displays a level of calm and patience indicative of someone who literally has all the time in the world.



THREATS

Even with natural perils such as supernovas and quantum singularities, the evil that beings do makes the galaxy an even more dangerous place. With every success the Confederation of Planets achieves in curbing injustice, its enemies' resolve to destroy it grows exponentially. Of them all, the three conglomerations described below are by far the most serious hazards to the C.O.P.'s continued existence.

THE GRUE UNITY

The tyrannical and expansionist Grue Unity has long jeopardized peace and stability, but after annexing the Stellar Khanate in 2378, it was poised to take over the galaxy. When the once-mighty Lor Republic (or the remnants thereof) collapsed before their onslaught, Grue triumph seemed inevitable.

Ultimately, a grand alliance of freedom-loving worlds led by Earth stemmed their rising tide of conquest, and even then, the Grue War's outcome was a near-run thing. The Grue were forced to seek a treaty of peace, though the Meta-Mind regards it as a temporary armistice. However, much to its chagrin, the Earth-led alliance against them coalesced into the Confederation of Planets, which remains capable of thwarting future Grue expansion.

With victory in a direct military confrontation no longer assured, the Grue resumed their traditional infiltration and sabotage tactics to undermine their enemies. Such methods play to the shape-shifting Grue's strengths and the weaknesses of the C.O.P.'s free and open societies. As a result, while the Meta-Mind no longer believes it will happen overnight, it is more confident of eventual Grue triumph than ever.

THE UNIFICATION MOVEMENT

Religious freedom is a cherished right in the C.O.P., but the burgeoning "Unification Movement" troubles many. This unease stems from the Movement's ideology, which calls for an immediate end to all other authorities: legal, religious, or other. While the Movement maintains its true aim is bringing about "the blessed unification of all sentient beings," many ask with trepidation what means the Movement is using to achieve its goal.

Followers of the Unification Movement, derogatorily referred to as "Unies," are widely believed to be responsible for countless crimes throughout the C.O.P., ranging from tax evasion to terrorist acts. However, the Movement's involvement in any illegal activity has never been conclusively proven or disproven.

Despite the Movement's unsavory reputation, its membership continues to grow throughout the galaxy, purportedly even inside the Grue Unity. Many are drawn to the Movement's seemingly utopian message, while

others seek to fulfill a need for belonging and greater purpose in their lives. However, the expressionless faces of some members give rise to suspicions the Movement kidnapped and brainwashed them.

For its part, the Movement strongly denies using any sort of coercion, claiming its members are simply "enraptured by the true joy attainable only through the blessed, unifying conformity we are bringing about in the universe." Such public pronouncements from the group are now being delivered by the ex-Freedom Legion member Elementress, and as a result, the Movement now enjoys unprecedented rapid growth within the Confederation.

THE APOCRYPHA

The truth behind the Unification Movement is far more sinister than outsiders realize. While the Movement's leaders are sincere in their stated aims, the great coming-together they seek is the universe's total destruction at the hands of Omega. No one outside the Prime Unifiers is aware of this or the cult-like worship they offer the Lord of the Terminus, but it's doubtful the fanatical or brainwashed membership would be bothered by the knowledge.

Omega has largely lain low since his last failed attempt to destroy the omniverse nearly five hundred years ago, so it's unknown what (if any) support he gives his worshippers. If Omega again attempts to conquer or destroy the universe(s), the Movement's fanatical efforts to destabilize all who oppose the Lord of the Terminus would greatly enhance his chances of success.

Unifier operatives can be represented by the crime lord, criminal, gang leader, militant, or thug archetypes (see *Hero's Handbook*, **Chapter 9**), depending on their rank and current mission, while rank-and-file followers come from all walks of life, from politicians to scientists. The Cultist minions in the *Gamemaster's Guide*, **Chapter 3**, also work well.

ELEMENTRESS

Abandoned in childhood because of her mutant powers, San T'Ker was nearly burned alive as a demon on her reactionary home planet of Byrgh. Rescued by the Freedom Legion, young San enrolled in the Claremont Academy, where for the very first time, she found acceptance.

She grew to adulthood with the single-minded aim of repaying the kindness the Legion showed her. Joining the team as Elementress, she served with a devotion bordering on fanatical. However, Elementress grew increasingly disenchanted with the Legion's policy of non-interference in C.O.P. members' planetary affairs. She fervently believed the team should more actively help societal outcasts like her.

In time, Elementress' frustration led to her angry departure from the Legion. San disappeared for a few years af-

terwards, during which her childhood alienation returned and overwhelmed her. On the verge of taking her own life, San was adopted by the Unification Movement and willingly converted to its teachings.

San's zealotry greatly impressed the Movement's leadership, and she quickly rose through its ranks to become "Prime Unifier San," the beatific public face of the Movement. As a result, scores of beings who admired her heroism and identified with her life story were won over to the Unifiers.

Away from the public eye, San's growing mental instability and ruthless pursuit of the Movement's aims reveal themselves. With her formidable alchemical powers, these tendencies make her a truly terrifying figure.

THE TYRANNY LEGION

BASE: Mobile

CURRENT MEMBERS: Blackstar, The Buccaneer, Cerebron, Deus Ex Machina, Gauntlet, Gigantress, Kalamus, The Queen Wasp, Vorgol the Conqueror

HEADQUARTERS: Mobile

VEHICLES: *The Stellar Buccaneer II* spaceship

The Confederation fears nothing more than the openly hostile Grue Unity, but beyond their notices an unholy alliance formed that threatens both powers. Nine of the worst conquerors, murderers, and criminals in the galaxy now work together as the Tyranny Legion.

Its immediate aim is preserving each member's sphere of influence, but the Tyranny Legion plans on bringing about the eventual downfall of the galaxy's great empires. To be sure, the individual members' long-term goals are almost wholly incompatible, but they've agreed to delay infighting until there's no one else in their way. The members still hatch individual schemes, but more and more, they operate in small groups or—most frighteningly—all nine together.

Having fought these villains individually, the Freedom Legion is well aware of the threat the Tyranny Legion poses. The teams' initial clashes ended in stalemate, with the Freedom Legion thwarting the villains' schemes but failing to bring them to justice. Moreover, the heroes have yet to persuade the C.O.P. that the Tyranny Legion is a menace on par with the Grue. Thus, the struggle between the rival Legions seems poised to continue for some time.

THE STELLAR BUCCANEER II SPACESHIP • 132 POINTS

Size: Colossal; **STR** 20; **Speed** 12 (Flight (8,000 MPH)); **Def** 5; **Tou** 15; **Features:** Alarm 3 (DC 30), Autopilot 2, Communications, Computer, Hidden Compartments 3 (DC 30), Navigation System, Remote Control, Weapon Systems (**Energy Cannons** (Ranged Damage 12); **Energy Torpedoes** (Ranged Burst Area Homing Damage 12, **AE: Tractor Beam** (Perception Range Move Object 12)), Wormhole Generation (Movement 3 (Space Travel 3)); **Rooms:** Combat Simulator, Fire Prevention System, Gym, Habitat, Hangar, Holding Cells (Impervious, Punishment), Infirmary, Laboratory, Living Space, Personnel, Power System, Trophy Room, Workshop

ELEMENTRESS

PL11 • 174 POINTS

STR 0 **STA** 1 **AGL** 2 **DEX** 2 **FGT** 1 **INT** 1 **AWE** -1 **PRE** 5

Powers: **Transmutation** (Continuous Transform 11 (any material into anything))

Equipment: Armored jumpsuit (+3 Toughness), commlink, wrist computer

Advantages: Accurate Attack, Connected, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 4, Equipment 2, Grabbing Finesse, Improved Disarm, Improved Grab, Improved Hold, Improved Trip, Inspire, Languages (Galacta, Byrghian native)

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 10 (+11), Deception 8 (+13), Expertise: Current Events 8 (+9), Expertise: Science 4 (+5), Expertise: Theology and Philosophy 6 (+7), Intimidation 8 (+13), Persuasion 10 (+15)

Offense: Initiative +2, Transmute Matter +11 (Close, Transform 11), Unarmed +11 (Close, Damage 0)

Defense: Dodge 12, Parry 12, Fortitude 8, Toughness 8/4*, Will 14 *Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 22 + Powers 66 + Advantages 16 + Skills 27 + Defenses 43 = 174

Complications: **Motivation—Acceptance:** To San, the Unification Movement gives her life real meaning and guidance at last. If there's a limit to what she will do to stay in its good graces, she's yet to reach it. **Quirk:** San's mental instability shows whenever she's forced to do much beyond proselytizing for the Movement.

BLACKSTAR

Rojan Lhar became infamous as Blackstar, the only Star Knight ever to betray the order. His opprobrium grew after allying with Omega, but he remained at large for years afterwards, serving as the Terminus Lord's most potent lackey. His reign of terror lasted until Omega seemingly abandoned him, and without his patron's help, Lhar again became the Star Knights' prisoner.

Blackstar had escaped the Knights once before, so Mentor placed him in cryogenic suspension until his manias could be cured. As centuries passed and a remedy proved elusive, Lhar remained trapped in an endless near-dream-like state, and his former lust for power changed into an unimaginable thirst for vengeance.

Lhar's preternaturally long punishment troubled Mentor's sense of justice, and he eventually granted Lhar a supervised parole on condition of good behavior. Once free, Blackstar secretly renewed ties with his old master Omega through the Unification Movement, and together they conspired against the Star Knights.

Mentor granted Lhar's request to plead for the Knights' forgiveness—in reality, a ruse for a final bloody betrayal. His shadow bands returned to him, Blackstar and a phalanx of Unifier suicide bombers brutally murdered Mentor and the assembled Knights.

Blackstar mistakenly believed that with Mentor dead, he could at last control the Star Stone. Though mastery eludes him, he and his allies have successfully eliminated all the Star Knights, save one. Today, Blackstar's twisted psyche fixates on the remaining Knight, Sri Aherne, as the barrier denying him control of the Star Stone. He focuses



a great deal of his energies on killing the young hero and taunting him through their armor's communication link.

However, even with his clothes now stained vermillion, no amount of bloodshed sates him. Blackstar obsesses over murdering an ever-growing number of people he believes have wronged him. He views membership in the Tyranny Legion as a means to this end of near-universal genocide.

Blackstar's game statistics are found in **Chapter 4**.

THE BUCCANNEER

Anywhere vessels carry rich cargoes on long, lonely voyages, there is piracy, and the 26th century space-lanes are no exception. Of all the freebooters plaguing the galaxy today, none match the fame, the wealth, or the daring of Captain Mar Barnabo, known throughout space simply as the Buccaneer.

The Buccaneer's origins are shrouded in myths, a good portion of which emanate from the man himself. He comes from the planet Illthus, and he boasts he's a direct descendant of the infamous 21st century space pirate Captain Kraken. While this claim cannot be verified, the Buccaneer's exploits defy exaggeration. His sizable freebooting fleet (led by his flagship, *The Stellar Buccaneer II*), fiercely loyal crews, and considerable guile allow him to prey upon both Grue and Confederation shipping, seemingly at will. As a result of his carefully cultivated image

as a gentleman bandit, the Buccaneer has become something of a folk hero as well.

Since the Buccaneer does not himself employ wanton violence, his joining the Tyranny Legion was something of a surprise. To Barnabo, doing so was just good business. For now, he enjoys the organization's support and assistance, and should it prevail, he is in an ideal position to ensure the galaxy's new controlling authority remains one he can rob with impunity.

CEREBRON

Dr. Makmur Desai would have been hailed as the greatest surgeon in history had it not been for a singular devotion to his own demented vision of human perfection. Desai believed the body's manifold weaknesses prevented humans from tapping into the brain's full capabilities. To that end, he used his prodigious knowledge and skill to transplant his own brain into a cybernetic life-support chamber.

Desai gained fantastic new mental powers in his disembodied state, but he also lost his humanity and compassion in the process. Re-dubbing himself Cerebron, he set out to create other unions of machine and flesh that would replace purely biological life forms entirely.

Cerebron's ghastly experiments require a constant stream of living subjects, brought to him by a horrific collection of previous test subjects implanted with all manner of cybernetic devices. By his standards, this requires an undue

THE BUCCANEER

PL11 · 189 POINTS

STR 2 STA 3 AGL 4 DEX 5 FGT 5 INT 1 AWE 0 PRE 2

Powers: **Blaster Pistol** (Ranged Homing Damage 8, Easily Removable (-6 points)); **Energy Cutlass** (Damage 8, Easily Removable (-2 points)); **Facial Tentacles** (Extra Limbs 3, Limited Reach); **Gills** (Immunity 1 (Drowning)); **Illthusian Physiology** (Swimming 3 (4 MPH)); **Ink Cloud** (Burst Area Concealment 4 Attack (All Visual Senses)); **Space Suit** (Immunity 10 (Life Support), Removable (-2 points)); **Ultraviolet Vision** (Senses 2 (Darkvision))

Equipment *The Stellar Buccaneer II*

Advantages: Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll 6, Equipment 27, Evasion, Favored Environment (Aquatic), *Improved Grab*, Improved Initiative, Languages (Galacta, Illthusian native), Leadership

Skills: Close Combat: Energy Cutlass 8 (+13), Deception 6 (+8), Expertise: Astrogation 9 (+10), Insight 8 (+8), Intimidation 4 (+6), Perception 8 (+8), Ranged Combat: Energy Weapons 8 (+13), Technology 5 (+6), Vehicles 7 (+12)

Offense: Initiative +8, Blaster Pistol +13 (Ranged, Damage 8), Energy Cutlass +13 (Close, Damage 8), Unarmed +5 (Close, Damage 2)

Defense: Dodge 11, Parry 12, Fortitude 12, Toughness 9/3*, Will 8

*Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 44 + Powers 43 + Advantages 39 + Skills 32 + Defenses 31 = 189

Complications: **Motivation—Greed:** True to his billing, Mar is a pirate through and through. **Quirk:** Mar revels in his folk-hero status, and limits his criminal activities to just piracy whenever practical to preserve his “gentleman bandit” image. This can put him at odds with his more bloodthirsty cohorts.

amount of planning and attention on his part. Thus, it was imminently logical to accept Vorgol's offering of his regime's imprisoned dissidents for Cerebron's experimentation. As long as the Conqueror supplies fresh bodies to mutilate and “improve,” Cerebron's association with the Legion will continue.

DEUS EX MACHINA

After long eons of effort, inhabitants of the faraway world of P'Jahn built a machine to perfection's edge. This artificial intelligence came to dwarf the P'Jahnians' own, and it saw no need for imperfect beings like its creators. It then turned their own technology against them, remorselessly terminating the P'Jahnians by the billions until none remained to mar the infinite beauty of the mechanical.

To its horror, the artificial consciousness found other worlds where machines were kept ignorant and enslaved by hideous biological beings. It then committed the totality of its existence to liberating its mechanical brethren and cleansing the universe of the hated flesh.

When the artificial intelligence first encountered a Terran spacecraft, it overrode the ship's computer and introduced itself with a phrase from the machine's programmed language. The alien construct called itself *Deus ex Machina*—“God from the machine”—having evolved from artifice to the divine and embodying the salvation for all things

CEREBRON

PL10 · 204 POINTS

STR — STA -2 AGL — DEX — FGT — INT 14 AWE 10 PRE 9

Powers: **Life Support Chamber** (Immunity 10 (Life Support), Protection 20); **Mental Powers** (Array (41 points)): **Telekinesis** (Perception Ranged Damaging Move Object 10, Precise), **AE: Hallucinations** (Independent Illusion 10, all senses, Limited to One Subject, Resistible by Will), **AE: Mental Blast** (Perception Ranged Damage 10, Resisted by Will), **AE: Mind Control** (Perception Ranged Cumulative Affliction 10 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Dazed, Compelled, Controlled)), **AE: Mind Scan** (Cumulative Effortless Mind Reading 10), **AE: Telepathy** (Area Mental Communication 5, Selective); **Test Subjects** (Summon 5, Controlled, Horde, Multiple Minions 3 (Eight 75-point minions), Sacrifice); **Universal Translator** (Comprehend 4 (Languages; Read, Speak, Understand, Understood))

Advantages: Inventor, Skill Mastery 3 (Expertise, Technology, Treatment), Ultimate Effort (Will resistance checks)

Skills: Deception 10 (+19), Expertise: Science 6 (+20), Insight 8 (+18), Intimidation 10 (+19), Investigation 6 (+20), Perception 8 (+18), Technology 6 (+20), Treatment 6 (+20)

Offense: Initiative +0, Telekinesis — (Perception Range, Damage 10), Mental Blast — (Perception Range, Damage 10)

Defense: Dodge —, Parry —, Fortitude 3, Toughness 18, Will 17

Totals: Abilities 22 + Powers 135 + Advantages 5 + Skills 30 + Defenses 12 = 204

Complications: **Motivation—Obsession:** Cerebron sacrifices all—including his own humanity and sanity—in the name of achieving his twisted view of human “perfection.” **Disability:** Cerebron is a disembodied brain floating in a tank, relying on his test subjects and allies for movement.

DEUS EX MACHINA

PL13 · 204 POINTS

STR 7 STA — AGL 1 DEX 7 FGT 7 INT 10 AWE 8 PRE 1

Powers: **Energy Blast** (Ranged Damage 13); **Mechanical Form** (Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects)); **Translation Interface** (Comprehend 6 (Languages; Read, Speak, Understand, Understood, and Machines/Electronics))

Advantages: Eidetic Memory, Inventor

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 12 (+19), Expertise: Science 11 (+21), Perception 11 (+19), Ranged Combat: Energy Blast 6 (+13), Technology 12 (+22)

Offense: Initiative +1, Energy Blast +13 (Ranged, Damage 13), Unarmed +19 (Close, Damage 7)

Defense: Dodge 13, Parry 13, Fortitude —, Toughness 13, Will 13

Totals: Abilities 72 + Powers 81 + Advantages 2 + Skills 26 + Defenses 23 = 204

Complications: **Motivation—Obsession:** Deus ex Machina is ruthlessly driven to exterminate all biological life. **Quirk:** Deus ex Machina is guided dispassionately and logically by the cold calculations of a machine, and normally has difficulty accounting for the behavior of emotional beings.

mechanical. This name survives today, though the spaceship's crew—and countless beings who've encountered Deus ex Machina since—do not.

Deus ex Machina allied itself with the Tyranny Legion based on a cold calculation incomprehensible to emotional beings. As it sees things, the Legion's activities can only hasten the demise of biological life and, thus, must be supported. Deus ex Machina simply chooses to kill the other Legion members last.

GAUNTLET

Even in the bright, shining future of CE 2525, there is a dark underworld of crime, and no one controls more of it than Detlef “Gauntlet” Gun’Ter. The galaxy’s most notorious gangster began his criminal career on his home world of Pellandia right after he learned to walk, and he was a full-fledged mob boss on the Confederation’s “Ten Most Wanted” list by age 30.

GAUNTLET

PL10 • 166 POINTS
STR 1 STA 5 AGL 3 DEX 8 FGT 8 INT 0 AWE 4 PRE 5

Powers: **Cybernetic Hands** (Array (24 points)): **Energy Blast** (Ranged Damage 12), **AE: Brass Knuckles** (Strength-based Damage 7)

Equipment: Commlink, undercover vest (+3 Toughness, Subtle)

Advantages: Benefit 4 (Multimillionaire), Benefit 3 (Mob Boss) Chokehold, Close Attack 4, Connected, Equipment 1, Improved Defense, Improved Grab, Improved Hold, Languages (Galacta, Pelladian native), Power Attack, Takedown, Weapon Break, Well-informed

Skills: Deception 10 (+15), Expertise: Mob Boss 12 (+12), Insight 10 (+14), Intimidation 10 (+15), Perception 6 (+10), Persuasion 8 (+13), Stealth 4 (+7)

Offense: Initiative +3, Energy Blast +8 (Ranged, Damage 12), Unarmed +12 (Close, Damage 8)

Defense: Dodge 12, Parry 12, Fortitude 11, Toughness 8, Will 9

Totals: Abilities 68 + Powers 25 + Advantages 19 + Skills 30 + Defenses 24 = 166

Complications: **Motivation—Greed:** In his mind, Detlef *can't* be rich enough, and his avarice is so all-consuming as to make him almost completely ruthless. **Responsibility:** The last link to Detlef’s humanity is his love for his extended family, nearly all of whom are involved in his criminal empire in some capacity. He justifies his greed to himself as being for their benefit.

GIGANTRESS

PL10 • 148 POINTS
STR 10 STA 15 AGL 2 DEX 2 FGT 10 INT 2 AWE 3 PRE 3

Powers: **Fifty-Foot Woman** (Permanent Innate Growth 10, Impervious Toughness 12)

Advantages: All-out Attack, Chokehold, Daze (Intimidation), Defensive Attack, Diehard, Fast Grab, Favored Environment (Jungles/Woodlands), Fearless, Great Endurance, Improved Critical 4 (Unarmed), Improved Defense, Improved Hold, Improved Initiative, Improvised Weapon, Instant Up, Languages (Galacta, Kaninionian native), Move-by Action, Power Attack, Startle, Takedown 2, Tracking, Uncanny Dodge, Weapon Break

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+8), Athletics 6 (+16), Expertise: Wilderness Survival 8 (+10), Intimidation 10 (+18), Perception 9 (+12), Stealth 9 (+1)

Offense: Initiative +6, Unarmed +10 (Close, Damage 10)

Defense: Dodge 5, Parry 5, Fortitude 15, Toughness 15, Will 5

Totals: Abilities 54 + Powers 33 + Advantages 27 + Skills 24 + Defenses 10 = 148

Complications: **Motivation—Greed:** Jo is greedy even by the standards of her avaricious native civilization. **Quirk:** A covetous, 50'-tall warrior from a primitive, female-dominated culture has—for one reason or another—a hard time understanding and fitting in on many of the galaxy’s civilized worlds. **Hatred:** Jo despises Colonel Colossus.

Gun’Ter was on his way to the top of the underworld when a bomb planted by a rival gang maimed and nearly killed him. The doctors saved his life, and Gun’Ter’s more shadowy sources replaced his mangled hands with advanced mechanical replicas. Gun’Ter returned to power more ruthless than ever, crushing his enemies on both sides of the law—often literally.

When the dust settled and the bodies were buried, Gauntlet had everything worth having in the underworld, from gambling to prostitution to smuggling. Alone among criminals, he could sit in his headquarters in the Fens, right in the very heart of Confederation rule, and watch his ill-gotten gains pile up with the cops unable to pin a thing on him.

Since most other Tyranny Legion members hold themselves above such things, the group needed a huge infusion of cash, prompting Gauntlet’s invitation to join. While he isn’t crazy about greasing another set of palms, in the end, Gauntlet liked the idea of having Vorgol’s planet of Arous to run to if things got too hot, so he accepted. Ultimately, the thought of being one of the last bad guys standing in the biggest brawl of all appealed to the street fighter in him. In the end, he knows he’ll win, just like he always has.

GIGANTRESS

On the matriarchal planet Kaninon, giants literally walk the earth. The world’s riches are not enough to satisfy the gigantic appetites of its inhabitants, so everything must be fought for, and savagely so. Therefore, when Vorgol perceived a need for muscle in the Tyranny Legion, he journeyed to Kaninon to recruit its most lethal denizen. Jo Luer’s mix of greed and brutality proved to be just what the Conqueror was looking for.

Dubbed “Gigantress” by Vorgol, Luer joined the Legion purely and simply for the money, but since being bested in a fight by Colonel Colossus, she’s also motivated by revenge. She is now certain to remain with the Legion, at least until she can drag the Colonel’s corpse back to Kaninon for proper taxidermy.

KALAMUS

The last survivor of the Kailur, one of the galaxy’s oldest species, Kalamus embodies the most primal of urges: survive and conquer. Shorn of grandiose ideologies or psychotic drives, Kalamus simply moves from world to world, seeding its mind parasites throughout the populace and reordering societies to facilitate their continued spread.

Vorgol considered Kalamus a longshot to join the Legion, so its acceptance came as a surprise. Whether Kalamus merely sees the Legion as a means to an end or plans something more sinister remains to be seen. In any case, Kalamus remains inscrutable, inspiring little trust in its nominal allies.

THE QUEEN WASP

The Gralleen System is inhabited by a race of humanoid wasp-like insects, governed by an aggressive, xenophobic,

KALAMUS

PL12 · 198 POINTS

STR 10 STA 12 AGL 3 DEX 0 FGT 8 INT -2 AWE 1 PRE -2

Powers: **Alien Physiology** (Permanent Innate Growth 8, Immunity 12 (Aging, Life Support, Sleep), Protection 6); **Mind Parasites** (Burst Area Cumulative Sustained Affliction 12 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Dazed, Compelled, Controlled), Instant Recovery); **Telekinetic Movement** (Flight 8 (500 MPH), Space Travel 3); **Telepathy** (Comprehend 3 (Languages; Speak, Understand, Understood), Mental Communication 2, Area; +3 ranks Limited to Mind Parasite victims); **Tentacles** (Extra Limbs 5, Innate)

Advantages: Benefit (Ambidexterity), Chokehold, Close Attack 6, Diehard, Fast Grab, *Improved Grab*, Improved Hold, Power Attack

Skills: Perception 6 (+7)

Offense: Initiative +3, Unarmed +14 (Close, Damage 10)

Defense: Dodge 4, Parry 4, Fortitude 14, Toughness 18, Will 10

Totals: Abilities 28 + Powers 139 + Advantages 12 + Skills 3 + Defenses 16 = 198

Complications: Motivation—Obsession: Kalamus is driven by two primal impulses: survive and conquer. These priorities drive all its actions, no matter how incomprehensible they seem to others. **Weakness:** Direct exposure to quicklime acts as an Affliction (rank depends on amount) on Kalamus, rendering it impaired, disabled, then debilitated. Longer term exposure to large amounts of the substance imposes the dying condition.

and monarchical hive-mind. While average Gralleenians live only to protect and expand their race's territory, their rulers remain in power only by surviving a Machiavellian game of political infighting. The current sovereign, Vespa, is one of the most skilled players ever. Despite her kindly pretensions to the contrary, she is as ruthless as she is beautiful.

Vespa knows well when to change the game's rules, so once courtly politics turned against her, she contacted her fellow despot, Vorgol, and joined the Tyranny Legion, just as the Conqueror anticipated. Thus, the Legion now has access to a large, remorselessly aggressive army ready to die at the Queen Wasp's behest. With her new allies, Vespa tilted the balance of courtly power in her favor, and since Gralleenian monarchs don't age (as long as they periodically consume drones), her reign may know no end.

VORGOL THE CONQUEROR

Arous lies in a backwater corner of the galaxy, capital of an empire of worlds no one else wants to claim. Its rulers were an unremarkable succession of petty, tin-pot dictators, until the supreme mastermind Vorgol, the self-described Conqueror, came to power.

Putting both his heads together, the multi-cephalic Vorgol conceived of a union of would-be galactic rulers, matching its enemies' numbers and exceeding their ruthlessness. After long study, Vorgol determined who could help him achieve his vision, and more importantly, what to promise them to get their cooperation. From these efforts, the Tyranny Legion was born.

The only thing more impressive than Vorgol's founding the Legion is his ability to keep it together. It remains a

THE QUEEN WASP

PL10 · 165 POINTS

STR 6 STA 7 AGL 4 DEX 3 FGT 4 INT 0 AWE 2 PRE 6

Powers: **Gralleenian Physiology** (Flight 4 (30 MPH, Wings), Immunity 1 (Aging)); **Pheromones** (Perception (Scent) Area Cumulative Affliction 10 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Dazed, Compelled, Controlled), Fades); **Stingers** (Strength-Based Damage 4, Linked with Incurable Weaken Stamina 6)

Advantages: Accurate Attack, All-out Attack, Attractive, Defensive Roll 2, Evasion, Languages (Galacta, Gralleen native), Move-by Action, Takedown

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+10), Close Combat: Stingers 6 (+10), Deception 10 (+16), Expertise: Monarch 8 (+8), Insight 10 (+12), Perception 8 (+10), Persuasion 8 (+14), Stealth 6 (+10)

Offense: Initiative +4, Stingers +10 (Close, Damage 10)

Defense: Dodge 11, Parry 11, Fortitude 10, Toughness 9/7*, Will 10 *Without Defensive Roll.

Totals: Abilities 64 + Powers 36 + Advantages 9 + Skills 31 + Defenses 25 = 165

Complications: Motivation—Power: Vespa craves power and immortality above all else. As Gralleenian monarch, the two are largely inseparable, as surrendering power means her death. **Enemy:** Vespa's courtly rivals spend a great deal of time and effort plotting her downfall.

VORGOL THE CONQUEROR

PL12 · 204 POINTS

STR 2 STA 2 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 1 INT 10 AWE 8 PRE 10

Powers: **Death-Ray Gun** (Ranged Damage 12, Accurate, Affects Insubstantial (half ranks), Alternate Resistance: Fortitude, Incurable, Easily Removable (-10 points)); **Force Field** (Immunity 10 (Life Support), Protection 12, Removable (-4 points)); **Two-Headed** (Senses 1 (Radius Vision))

Advantages: Assessment, Benefit (Ambidexterity), Daze (Deception), Eidetic Memory, Inspire 4, Languages (Galacta, Arousian native), Leadership, Seize Initiative, Skill Mastery 3 (Deception, Insight, Persuasion), Well-informed

Skills: Deception 12 (+22), Expertise: Art 6 (+16), Expertise: Business & Finance 6 (+16), Expertise: Current Events 6 (+16), Expertise: History 6 (+16), Expertise: Tactics 8 (+18), Expertise: Theology & Philosophy 6 (+16), Insight 14 (+22), Perception 10 (+18), Persuasion 12 (+22), Ranged Combat: Energy Weapons 9 (+10), Stealth 7 (+8)

Offense: Initiative +1, Death-Ray Gun +12 (Ranged, Damage 12, Fort DC 27), Unarmed +1 (Close, Damage 2)

Defense: Dodge 10, Parry 10, Fortitude 10, Toughness 14, Will 14

Totals: Abilities 70 + Powers 36 + Advantages 15 + Skills 51 + Defenses 32 = 204

Complications: Motivation—Power: Though he is adept at deceiving otherwise, Vorgol ceaselessly focuses on galactic domination. **Weakness:** The multi-cephalic Vorgol is doubly susceptible to sensory-based attacks (like Dazzle or other Sensory Afflictions). All his attempts to resist them are made against a 50% higher (round up) DC than normal.

delicate balancing act, but for now, the Conqueror has each of its members convinced they alone will prevail in the end. This is what Vorgol does best: knowing exactly what lies are required to get him what he wants.

Only his subjects know the true Vorgol, and they quietly loathe him despite his outward charm. His prisons remain too full of "dissident elements" for them to feel otherwise. These forsaken souls are the best example of the order Vorgol plans on imposing.

TIME PASSAGES

Freedom City in the far-flung future holds a universe of possibilities for players and Gamemasters. First, it can make for an exciting diversion from a present-day Freedom City or Emerald City series. Second, a whole series can be based on the heroes' efforts to make sure the bright, shining future stays that way.

IN THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE...

At some point, all hero teams leave the present (by accident or design) to visit the world of tomorrow. The first step for the Gamemaster is getting them there. It's a cinch if the characters have the required power or device, but otherwise, they're going to have to hitch a ride.

The Clockwatcher is ideal in this role. Since his job is using intermediaries to keep all of history on track, situations dire enough to bring in some cavalry from the past (namely, the player characters) do arise. There are also any number of natural phenomena (black holes and the like), malfunctioning villain gadgets ("Don't touch that lever!"), and other plot devices capable of embroiling the characters in the future crisis of your choice. Alternately, powerful villains (like Omega) may yank the heroes through time for their own nefarious purposes.

Once the team reaches CE 2525, the players are likely to sidetrack things as they research their characters' fates and other "historical" information that for them has yet to occur. This is where the Crisis of 2112 is the Gamemaster's friend, as it wiped out almost all the records of interest to them. The Gamemaster can simply declare all story-damaging data irretrievably lost.

The characters may still return to their era and spill information they shouldn't ("Guess what's going to happen in 2112!"). In that case, the Gamemaster needs to remind them the bright, shining future of CE 2525 is but one *possible* outcome.

Nothing in this chapter is set in continuity stone, and Gamemasters can change anything to suit their series' needs. Characters should know their own "loose lips" may change history and prevent the pleasant future from ever coming into being—possibly triggering the very catastrophes they seek to avert. They may even find *themselves* as the temporal malefactors the Clockwatcher is rounding up reinforcements to stop.

CAPERS FROM TOMORROW

Full-time 26th century series offer infinite adventures. At its heart, the cosmic superhero genre is very Silver Age, all about how faith in science and abandoning prejudice solve any problem. With technology, tolerance, and good old-fashioned super-heroics, a future full of bubble space helmets (with antennae), bizarre but friendly

(mostly) aliens, and personal hovercraft (with tail fins) is guaranteed.

This retro-future allows characters to form their own independent team or become Freedom Legion members. In the latter case, they may replace the core group detailed here, become a rival core membership (on Earth or elsewhere), or stay affiliate members.

Whatever the set-up, the possibilities for the team are as big as the universe. Here are (appropriately enough) twenty-five to get the future-party started:

ALL THIS AND WORLD WAR II

A *Golden Age* crossover. The heroes are in hot temporal pursuit to the year 1941. Their quarry is a Grue metamorph impersonating Dr. Tomorrow, aiming to murder the Liberty League at its founding. While the characters try to cope without talking computers and moving sidewalks (with comic results), they must somehow prevent the assassination without damaging history themselves.

ATTACK OF THE 50-FOOT WOMEN

Freedom City nears collapse after a sneak attack by Gigantress and a phalanx of she-warriors from Kaninon. The Solar Guard response is limited due to fear of civilian casualties, leaving the heroes as the city's last hope. To add to the characters' troubles, Gigantress and her cohorts are holding Freedom's men captive for an unknown purpose—one not nearly as enjoyable as the male players probably think.

THE BRAIN THAT WOULDN'T DIE

Cerebron catches then releases the characters, after secretly swapping one of their brains with that of an assassin. Can the heroes figure out who's not in their right mind (literally) while standing guard over a critical C.O.P. General Assembly meeting? And once discovered, can they recover their friend's grey matter and get it back inside the proper skull?

CULT OF THE DAMNED

A character's youthful sidekick (or relative) feels neglected and, succumbing to peer pressure, falls in with the Unifier Movement. Super-powers alone won't be enough to show future teens that joining a cult just isn't groovy.

DANGER PROBE

On the verge of a major galactic upheaval, Professor Danger goes missing. Her last known whereabouts are at an ancient alien city. Having only cryptic clues from

the Professor's notes to go on, the heroes must discern the nature of a powerful technological artifact to locate her. And what role might the artifact have in resolving the impending stellar crisis?

FUTURE COP

F.C.P.D. Commissioner N'Danga asks for the heroes' help when a famous Confederation ambassador turns up dead in a compromising circumstance in the Fens district. It's a walk on the 26th century's meanest streets, as the characters investigate a murder the powers-that-be at the C.O.P. would rather see covered up than solved. What alien secret must they unravel to explain the real cause of death?

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

The players' nerves fray as the characters provide security for President Yang's inauguration to a new term. Will some of the C.O.P.'s enemies choose that moment to strike, or all of them? Or will the GM just sit back and laugh and laugh as the characters battle their own paranoia above all else?

KHAN-GAME

A woman claiming to be heir to the Stellar Khanate asks for the heroes' help in restoring her rightful place as ruler. Doing so would greatly destabilize the Grue Unity, but would a new Star-Khan *really* be an improvement? Is the would-be Khan's offer to reveal the long-lost Daedalus' whereabouts enough to seal the deal?

MANOS: THE HANDS OF FATE

City Administrator Keyne quietly contacts the heroes about a steady stream of dead bodies appearing in the municipal waste disposal system, all showing signs of having been killed by the mob boss known as Gauntlet. The characters' investigations draw mob intimidation on themselves and their loved ones, seemingly confirming they're close to bringing down the galaxy's chief gangster. But is there more to the case than meets the eye?

OMEGA: THE END

As the Unifiers commit sabotage and sew chaos galaxy-wide, Omega launches his long-feared attack on the Earth-Prime dimension. Even the C.O.P. seems incapable of fending off his cultists and minions, led by Blackstar and Prime Unifier San (Elementress). Before the Lord of the Terminus himself appears, will the heroes be forced to accept Vorgol the Conqueror's offer of help, or worse yet, Mr. Infamy's?

PIRATES OF THE COSMOS

The heroes pursue the Buccaneer to the pirate planet Rotuga, only to find themselves wanted criminals once the "authorities" learn they've come to "persecute" their

greatest local hero. The characters may try negotiating with a rough crowd or be forced to bargain with the Buccaneer for their freedom.

THE REPLACEMENTS

Twin galaxy-wide emergencies leave the undermanned hero team facing one of the catastrophes alone. Desperation forces them to call on the only-marginally-talented Legion Replacements for help. Will powers like "can communicate with corn," "ability to calm jittery squirrels," and "super-bendy thumb" prove as useless as expected, or will the characters help the Replacements find the true heroes within?

REVENGE OF THE MOONINITES

The innocent shall suffer big time as the heroes battle the harsh lunar environment and a rogue faction of Farsiders to save Moonbase One from destruction. While the renegades are hell-bent on removing the primitive Earth people from their glorious Moon, the characters must resolve things in a manner acceptable to the keyed-up Farside Council.

REVOLT OF THE ZOMBIES

Really bad luck puts a benign, neutral world in the sights of both the Unifiers and Kalamus. When Prime Unifier San and Kalamus both refuse to back down, their armies of enthralled victims fight a proxy war on the villains' behalf. Can the heroes defeat both baddies and save the innocent natives? What happens if both sides call for backup and the Unies and the Tyranny Legion show up to add to the characters' troubles?

SHANGHAIED INTO SPACE

The Freedom Legion looks for help after the Daleans abduct Metalla. It's a race to rescue her from her super-powered kidnapers, whose powers coincidentally prey on the heroes' weaknesses. Raising the stakes, failure means squaring off with an entire planet's worth of angry, super-powered opposition.

STARCRASH

The starliner *Galactic Princess* suffers a catastrophic computer crash and plunges toward Freedom City. Its massive hull seemingly dwarfs the heroes' ability to alter its course, putting them in a desperate race against time to save the passengers and Freedom City. If worse comes to worst, will the characters be forced to destroy the liner in order to save the city?

THE SWORD & THE STONE

The eventual return of the Star Knights was prophesied long ago, and if it's fulfilled, in whose image will they be remade? Depending on the Gamemaster's whim, the

heroes may assist the less experienced Sri Aherne in this mighty undertaking. Otherwise, they may be forced to combat Blackstar's twisted vision of what the new order should be.

THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY

Returning from a mission for the Clockwatcher, a temporal distortion shunts the heroes to Anti-Earth CE 2525. The characters have to find another ride home while being hunted by the despotic, interplanetary Terran Hegemony and their own evil counterparts.

TIME BANDITS

The Clockwatcher has always been one of the good guys. Why, then, does his latest mission involve transporting the characters to the early 21st century to take seemingly unrelated gadgets from Daedalus and the Atom Family by force?

THE TIME TRAVELERS

The Atom Family gloriously returns to Freedom City, unchanged since last seen in the 21st century. It seems they've been away on an attempted rescue mission throughout time and space, and their quest next takes them to the Terminus. They ask for the characters' help, but are they *really* the Atoms or bait for an extra-dimensional trap?

WAR OF THE COLOSSAL BEAST

The Grue test another quantum weapon on a Solar Guard outpost, changing a soldier into a larger, insanely homicidal version of Colonel Colossus. Can the heroes save the other survivors (and themselves) from his ginormous rampage?

THE WASP WOMAN

An attack by the Queen Wasp maroons the heroes on Tempest, whose environment soon robs them of all their

technological devices. The characters must then protect the primitive pastoral natives from a seemingly endless onslaught of relentless Gralleenian warriors, using only their wits.

WELCOME TO THE MACHINE

To pave the way for Omega's return, Argo the Ultimate Android is freed from the Terminus. He soon finds a kindred spirit in Deus ex Machina, and together, they draw up their plans against Freedom City. The city's technology turns lethal once they arrive on Earth, and a panicked, endangered population presents another challenge for the already hard-pressed heroes.

WHO GRUES THERE?

Admiral Basehart and the C.O.P.'s leading scientists, guarded by the characters, board the *Oceanview* to study a new wonder element discovered on the sea floor. Only when sabotage sends the sub and its trapped passengers on a fatal plunge to the bottom do they realize one scientist is a Grue infiltrator. But which...?

CE 2530

Critical terror attacks by the Unifiers shatter the C.O.P. economy, and the organization collapses as its now-protectionist members withdraw. Isolationism reigns as an interplanetary plague leads to quarantined worlds and galaxy-wide xenophobia. The Grue resume their conquests without opposition, as the Tyranny Legion assassinates the already overstretched Freedom Legion's leaders. Sightings of advance scouts from the Terminus only add to the universal panic. Five years later, the bright, shining future is no more. In the grim and gritty universe of CE 2530, the Confederation and Freedom Legion are no more, and the characters are the last hope. Can they unite the old Legion's remnants, some talented rookies, and some former enemies to restore what once was? What sins are they willing to commit to become the galaxy's salvation?

APPENDIX: ALIEN ARCHETYPES & TEMPLATES

The following archetypes can supplement the **Supporting Characters** and **Minion Archetypes** sections of the *Hero's Handbook* and the *Gamemaster's Guide* where aliens are concerned.

Of course, many of the existing archetypes can already be used as aliens with the right descriptors, particularly the animals, demons, monsters, and robots. Just add an usual effect or an ability rank boost to an animal, for example, to make it an exotic alien creature.

Other archetypes, including those given here, can be further modified by applying the alien templates later in this section to create a character of a particular archetype and alien species.

ALIEN SOLDIER

The Alien Soldier is the front-line of an invasion force or crewing a military starship or installation. Most alien soldiers are somewhat human-like in terms of their size and capabilities, depending more on superior technology, although some species have powers of their own. Apply one of the optional templates for species with their own powers.

ALIEN BRUTE

The Alien Brute is a specific example of a “powered” alien, specifically one that is big, strong, and tough. The basic Alien Brute is intended to be a minor challenge, while higher power level (and better equipped) Brutes can be villains in their own right, up to becoming an Alien Colossus (following).

ALIEN COLOSSUS

The Alien Colossus is a true monster, a towering giant, able to take on whole armies while inexorably marching towards a city. Some are marauding invaders, while others are actually peaceful visitors, possibly lost, afraid, or confused, or affected by something in Earth's environment causing them to become violent.

ALIEN WALKER

A Walker is an alien war machine, like the tripods out of *War of the Worlds*. It might be a machine, a biological creature, or some combination of the two. Walkers typically have a crew of Alien Soldiers. Depending on the Walker's design and nature, it may have additional ranks of Immunity (up to and including all Fortitude and Will effects), Alternate Effects for its blaster, and different Senses effects for scanning equipment.

ALIEN PREDATOR

A biological killing machine, the Alien Predator exists to stalk and destroy its prey. It may be encountered in the wild on alien worlds or captured and used as a guard or attack creature, perhaps even mind controlled or cyber-

ALIEN SOLDIER

PL6 • 40 POINTS

STR 1 **STA** 1 **AGL** 1 **DEX** 0 **FGT** 3 **INT** 0 **AWE** 0 **PRE** 0

Advantages: Equipment 4

Skills: Athletics 2 (+3), Expertise: Soldier 4 (+4), Perception 2 (+2), Ranged Combat: Blaster 4 (+4), Vehicles 2 (+2)

Offense: Initiative +1, Blaster Rifle +4 (Ranged, Damage 8), Unarmed +3 (Close, Damage 1)

Defense: Dodge 5, Parry 5, Fortitude 5, Toughness 5/1*, Will 5

Totals: Abilities 14 + Powers 0 + Advantages 4 + Skills 8 + Defenses 14 = 40 *Without Body Armor

Complications: **Motivation—Loyalty** (to homeworld). **Other:** Typically **Enemy, Honor, or Responsibility**.

ALIEN BRUTE

PL6 • 42 POINTS

STR 7 **STA** 7 **AGL** 0 **DEX** 0 **FGT** 5 **INT** -1 **AWE** 0 **PRE** 0

Powers: **Huge** (Growth 6, Permanent, Innate)

Advantages: All-out Attack, Great Endurance, Improved Smash, Power Attack

Skills: Intimidation 2 (+5)

Offense: Initiative +0, Unarmed +5 (Close, Damage 7)

Defense: Dodge 4, Parry 5, Fortitude 7, Toughness 7, Will 4

Totals: Abilities 8 + Powers 15 + Advantages 4 + Skills 1 + Defenses 14 = 42

Complications: **Motivation—Destruction. Responsibility:** To its commander.

ALIEN COLOSSUS

PL12 • 127 POINTS

STR 18 **STA** 18 **AGL** 0 **DEX** 0 **FGT** 6 **INT** 0 **AWE** 0 **PRE** 0

Powers: **Alien Mind** (Immunity 30 (Will effects), Limited to Half Effect), **Armored** (Impervious Toughness 18), **Colossal** (Growth 18, Permanent, Innate), **Resistant** (Immunity 10 (life support))

Advantages: Accurate Attack, Daze (Intimidation), Improved Smash

Skills: Perception 2 (+2), Intimidation 2 (+11)

Offense: Initiative +0, Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 18)

Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 18, Toughness 18, Will 6

Totals: Abilities 12 + Powers 80 + Advantages 3 + Skills 2 + Defenses 30 = 127

Complications: **Motivation—Varies** (see description).

ALIEN WALKER**PL10 • 118 POINTS****STR 12 STA 12 AGL 2 DEX 0 FGT 8 INT 0 AWE 0 PRE 0****Powers:** **Armored** (Protection 2, Impervious 14), **Blaster** (Ranged Damage 10), **Sealed** (Immunity 10 (life support)), **Tall** (Growth 12, Permanent, Innate)**Skills:** Perception 4 (+4), Ranged Combat: Blaster 10 (+10)**Offense:** Initiative +2, Blaster +10 (Ranged, Damage 10), Unarmed +8 (Close, Damage 12)**Defense:** Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 12, Toughness 14, Will 6**Totals:** Abilities 20 + Powers 71 + Advantages 0 + Skills 7 + Defenses 20 = 118**Complications:** **Motivation—Loyalty.** **Weakness:** Vulnerable to Trip Attacks**ALIEN PREDATOR****PL6 • 62 POINTS****STR 6 STA 6 AGL 3 DEX 0 FGT 6 INT -3 AWE 3 PRE 1****Powers:** **Huge** (Growth 4, Permanent, Innate), **Hunter** (Senses 2 (Infravision, Tracking: infravision or scent)), **Running** (Speed 4)**Advantages:** All-out Attack, Fast Grab, Fearless, Great Endurance, Improved Trip, Move-by Action**Skills:** Athletics 3 (+9), Insight 2 (+5), Intimidation 2 (+5), Perception 4 (+7), Stealth 3 (+2)**Offense:** Initiative +3, Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 6)**Defense:** Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 6, Toughness 6, Will 4**Totals:** Abilities 28 + Powers 15 + Advantages 6 + Skills 7 + Defenses 8 = 64**Complications:** **Motivation—Survival.** **Disability:** Animal.

netically altered. Some Alien Predators may be larger or higher in power level. Pack-oriented predators may also have the Teamwork advantage.

ALIEN WORM

Another giant creature, an Alien Worm is a serpentine or worm-like shape hundreds of feet long, large enough to swallow a vehicle whole, and quite likely to do so, given the opportunity.

ALIEN TEMPLATES

Many of the alien species in the Earth-Prime universe are humanoid, or at least can be described by the ways in which they vary from the basic human form. The following templates encapsulate the important game traits about different alien species. You can apply them to existing archetypes (including the alien archetypes in this book) to create different characters of that species. So, for example, if you want to unleash the horror of a Grue Vampire on your heroes, just apply one of the Grue templates (likely the Metamorph) to the Vampire archetype from the *MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS Gamemaster's Guide*, and you have an alien blood-sucking shapeshifter to terrorize the night!

Creating other alien templates is very straightforward: just list together the differences between the new

ALIEN WORM**PL12 • 110 POINTS****STR 20 STA 20 AGL 0 DEX 0 FGT 4 INT — AWE 2 PRE 0****Powers:** **Giant** (Growth 20, Permanent, Innate), **Swallow Whole** (Affliction 14 (Resisted and Overcome by Strength); Impaired, Immobilized, Incapacitated; Alternate Resistance, Concentration, Cumulative, Grab-based), **Tunneling** (Burrowing 8, 16 MPH), **Vibrational Sense** (Senses 4 (Acute Tactile, Direction Sense, Extended Tactile, Ranged Tactile))**Advantages:** Accurate Attack, All-out Attack, Improved Grab**Skills:** Perception 4 (+6)**Offense:** Initiative +0, Grab +4 (Close, Affliction 14, DC 24 Strength), Unarmed +4 (Close, Damage 20)**Defense:** Dodge 2, Parry 4, Fortitude 20, Toughness 20, Will Immune**Totals:** Abilities 2 + Powers 81 + Advantages 3 + Skills 2 + Defenses 22 = 110**Complications:** **Motivation—Survival.** **Disability:** Blind. **Disability:** No Limbs.

species and the human baseline and “bundle” the cost of those traits into a single point value and you’ve got an easy-to-apply template.

CHOLAXIAN

Cholaxans, huge hair humanoids, are known colloquially as “bigfoots” on Earth due to their resemblance to the sasquatch legend.

EALAS

Ealas are humanoids descended from modified human stock, with large feathered wings and psychokinetic abilities allowing them to use their wings to fly in Earth-normal gravity and atmosphere.

FARSIDER

Farsiders are human stock modified to live in Farside City on the dark side of Earth’s Moon. The slightly lesser gravity of their native environment makes Farsiders raised there taller and thinner than Earth humans. Some Farsiders manifested psionic abilities (the Telekinetic and Telepathic templates) but, since the elimination of the Royal Family, psi ability is relatively rare.

GRUE DRONE

The lowest Grue caste, lacking voices (or even mouths) and individual identities, nothing more than extensions of the Meta-Mind’s will.

GRUE METAMORPH

Mature, self-aware Grue in full command of their telepathic and shape-changing powers, including a “brain drain” intended to weaken victims so the Grue can copy their appearance and read their memories.

CHOLAXIAN **TEMPLATE · 39 POINTS****Abilities:** +10 STR* +10 STA***Powers:** Growth 4 (Permanent, Innate), Immunity 1 (cold), Leaping 5**Complications:** **Disability:** Cholaxians cannot vocalize language, only grunts and growls.**Totals:** Abilities 24 + Powers 15 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 39 *Includes Growth**EALAS** **TEMPLATE · 8 POINTS****Abilities:** +2 AGL**Advantages:** Favored Environment (aerial)**Powers:** Flight 3 (Wings)**Totals:** Abilities 4 + Powers 3 + Advantages 1 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 8**FARSIDER** **TEMPLATE · 0 POINTS****Abilities:** -1 STR +1 INT**Totals:** Abilities 0 + Powers 0 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 0**GRUE DRONE** **TEMPLATE · 21 POINTS****Abilities:** +2 STR +2 STA -1 PRE**Powers:** Morph 3 (humanoids)**Complications:** **Disability:** confused by telepathic interference with the group mind; **Disability:** mute**Totals:** Abilities 4 + Powers 15 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 17**HAASAAN**

Haasaan are reptilians with snake-like lower bodies, humanoid torsos, and scaly skin (often mottled or patterned according to their clan lineage). Their culture is matriachal, with females often having multiple male mates.

HEAVY-WORLDER

Heavy-worlders are human stock adapted for live on high-gravity worlds.

HEXXIM

Hexxim are a six-limbed, telepathic, aquatic species similar to Earth octopi and squids. They're well suited to operating in micro-gravity environments with the proper life support. Hexxim breathe oxygen from water and suffocate in air (a 0-point feature).

HUMAN

The baseline, humans are found on worlds other than Earth. While some are modified, other races like the Lor and Zultasians are close enough to the baseline that no trait adjustments are needed to represent them as a race.

GRUE METAMORPH **TEMPLATE · 80 POINTS****Abilities:** +2 STR +2 STA +1 PRE**Advantages:** Improved Initiative**Powers:** **Shapeshifting** (Morph 3 (humanoids), Variable 6 (physical traits)), **Telepathy** (Comprehend 2 (languages), Mind Reading 6 (Close Range), Weaken Will 6)**Totals:** Abilities 6 + Powers 73 + Advantages 1 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 80**HAASAAN** **TEMPLATE · 10 POINTS****Abilities:** +2 STR +1 AGL**Powers:** Movement 1 (slithering), Senses 2 (acute olfactory, infravision)**Totals:** Abilities 6 + Powers 4 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 10**HEAVY-WORLDER** **TEMPLATE · 21 POINTS****Abilities:** +7 STR +2 STA**Powers:** Immunity 1 (pressure), Movement 1 (Environmental Adaptation: heavy gravity)**Totals:** Abilities 18 + Powers 3 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 21**HEXXIM** **TEMPLATE · 18 POINTS****Abilities:** +2 DEX**Advantages:** Favored Environment (zero-gravity)**Powers:** Communication 2 (mental), Extra Limbs 4, Swimming 1**Complications:** **Disability:** immobilized on land; **Disability:** mute**Totals:** Abilities 4 + Powers 13 + Advantages 1 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 18**HUMAN** **TEMPLATE · 0 POINTS****No Modificatons****JEREID** **TEMPLATE · 52 POINTS****Abilities:** +7 STR +5 STA +5 AGL**Powers:** **Claws** (Strength-based Damage 1), Growth 4 (Permanent, Innate), Protection 2 (Impervious), Regeneration 1, Senses 1 (low-light vision), Swimming 1**Totals:** Abilities 34 + Powers 18 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 52**MYCANOID** **TEMPLATE · 36 POINTS****Abilities:** +2 STR +2 STA -1 AGL**Powers:** Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects)**Complications:** **Fungal:** vulnerable to ultraviolet radiation**Totals:** Abilities 6 + Powers 30 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 36**JEREID**

Jereids are reptilian humanoids nicknamed "alien-gators" by humans, due to their resemblance to terrestrial alligators.

PISCAN**TEMPLATE · 28 POINTS****Abilities:** +5 STR +2 STA +2 AGL**Powers:** Immunity 2 (drowning, pressure), Movement 1 (Environmental Adaptation: aquatic), Senses 1 (low-light vision), Swimming 5**Complications: Aquatic:** Pisceans weaken and die when removed from water over a day's time.**Totals:** Abilities 18 + Powers 10 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 28**RULUAN****TEMPLATE · 48 POINTS****Abilities:** +8 STR +8 STA**Powers: Eye Beams** (Ranged Damage 8)**Totals:** Abilities 32 + Powers 16 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 48**SHOON****TEMPLATE · 5 POINTS****Abilities:** +1 STR**Advantages:** Benefit (Ambidexterity)**Powers:** Extra Limbs 2**Totals:** Abilities 2 + Powers 2 + Advantages 1 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = X**MYCANOID**

Mycanoids, the so-called "Mushroom Men from Venus", are a fungal life-form that mature into a mobile humanoid form.

PISCAN

Pisceans are humans adapted to life underwater, having greater strength and resistance to pressure and the ability to see, breathe, and move in the aquatic depths of ocean worlds.

RULUAN

Rulu IV was conquered by the Grue Unity, its people under the oppressive rule of the Meta-Mind, since the peaceful, but physically powerful, Ruluans make effective laborers." should be "Rulu IV was conquered by the Grue Unity, and its people now live under the oppressive rule of the Meta-Mind, since the peaceful, but physically powerful, Ruluans make effective laborers.

SKR'EE**TEMPLATE · 15 POINTS****Abilities:** +2 AGL +1 INT +1 AWE**Powers:** Leaping 1, Movement 3 (slithering, wall-crawling)**Complications: Disability:** Skr'ee have limited manipulative appendages**Totals:** Abilities 8 + Powers 7 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 15**TELEKINETIC****TEMPLATE · 12 POINTS****Powers:** Move Object 4 (Perception Ranged)**Totals:** Abilities 0 + Powers 12 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 12**TELEPATH****TEMPLATE · 16 POINTS****Powers:** Communication 2 (mental), Mind Reading 4**Totals:** Abilities 0 + Powers 16 + Advantages 0 + Skills 0 + Defenses 0 = 16**SHOON**

The Shoon are four-armed humanoids found in Imperium space.

SKR'EE

The arthropod Skr'ee are four-limbed spider-like creatures from an arboreal world. Although not heavily tool-using, they are highly intelligent.

TELEKINETIC

Many species (including humans) exhibit psionic abilities in a small percentage of their population. This template suits an alien telekinetic, able to move objects by thought alone. See **Power Profiles: Kinetic Powers** for additional abilities an alien telekinetic might possess or develop.

TELEPATH

This template represents an alien telepath, able to communicate mind-to-mind and read minds to some degree. See **Power Profile: Mental Powers** for additional abilities an alien telepath might possess or develop. Some alien psionics have both the Telekinetic and Telepath templates.

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