

FIRST ISSUES

An Introduction to Superhero Games Part 1: Starting Adventures by Simon Burley

Many people have peculiar ideas about how to play a Superhero RPG, particularly when they bring playing styles from other games over into the world of the comics. Being a *Superhero* is a unique challenge and experience and refereeing a Superhero game is different from GMing most Fantasy and SF RPGs.

The only way you can really appreciate the difference between superheros and other, equally outlandish, activities is to play a game. Though I will give alternatives and discuss different approaches to the various facets of design, planning and playing, I will take you step by step through the points that are most useful in running your first superhero adventure.

STARTING GEAR

There are several items you need to have before you can plan and play your first game. Beside all the usual role-playing impedimenta you need the rules. Now, I'm not going to recommend to you which Superhero RPG you should buy, you'll have to make up your own mind which suits you best.

Having got the rules you will need the map on which to play the game. Unlike other RPG's, the players don't draw out the map. The GM is expected to supply a scale map of the street, etc in which the adventure is set. If you have chosen *Champions* as your game, you are already supplied with two grids of 1" hexes, one with a perspective streetmap overlay. Similarly, should you also own a copy of *Boot Hill*, *Gangbusters*, *Starfrontiers* et al, you could use the 15mm street maps in those games as a setting for your own games. If you do not already have a streetmap, however, and wish to use a 25mm scale for your game, draw out a 1" grid on a fairly large piece of paper. A simple street map will serve you well for several games; it is best to keep games outdoors, initially, as superpowered types tend to feel a bit cramped indoors and often end up trashing quite a few interior walls and quaintly decorated rooms before finally shifting the battlefield to a more suitable arena. If you want building interiors, you can draw them on smaller sheets of paper and overlay them on the map. This will allow you to draw several floors for one building, alter building interiors as the locale changes etc.

Now you need figures for the heroes and villains, thugs, police, passerby etc. Metal figures do exist which are suitable for heroes and villains and it is possible to get thugs and police by buying the 1920's gangster figures. However, ordinary civilians and people, whether for hostages, NPCs or secret identities are hard to obtain.

Luckily, when it comes to the figures for player characters and villains, you should not need to fight only one or two supervillains at a time. Each player should be able to supply a figure for his or her hero quite cheaply, and superhero figures are easy to paint (an all-over coat of one colour often works well). A box of metal superhero figures should be enough to get started with, though.

If you've opted for the 15mm scale because of using the maps supplied in another game) you could be a bit stuck for figures for the heroes and villains. Figures for *Traveller* will probably prove the most useful, if you can trim off or ignore the blasters and gauss rifles.

Finally, you need some cars and vehicles. Not only do the thugs need a fast car if they're to stand any chance of getting away, your resident muscleman (and every game has at least one) will want some decent-sized missiles to lob around. It's usually better to draw the aerial views of some cars, lorries etc on cardboard, using a scale of 1" to 2 metres, colouring them in with crayons and cutting them out.

ASSEMBLING A CAST

The first thing a potential superhero GM should do is to read the rules on character creation and use them to roll or create between one and half a dozen supercharacters - as many as are needed to give familiarity with the system. Don't worry if they are weak, strong, unbalanced, weird, corny etc. Experiment - try to create powerful single option characters or use-

ful multi-option ones, but keep the notes on every one you create. These will become your first supervillains.

Villains do not need to be as well-rounded or well-thought-out as the heroes, in fact they shouldn't be. Villains should be above all, two-dimensional (at most).

Choose the villain or villains you would feel most comfortable playing (not the toughest or the most interesting) and select figures for them. Give them grandiose names.

Once fairly familiar with the character creation system, the GM should help the players create heroes which are similar in concept to those found in comics.

Since heroes rarely die, the players are going to be stuck with the heroes they design here, so they have to be happy with them. Use comicbook examples to show what the system means in superhero terms. If a player wants a hero who is superstrong, for instance, you could ask him or her how strong by giving examples. (As strong as Captain America? Beast? Thing? Thor? Superman? Hulk?). Also, comicbook heroes are already balanced - heroes who do one thing well (eg Havock) don't appear very often whereas multi-option heroes (Spiderman for instance) are very popular. Player characters should be fully rounded with a variety of attack and defence modes.

Most of all, don't be afraid to let the players have tough characters. We're talking about *superheroes* here, not your average hack and slay RPG fodder. These guys should be *powerful*.

Each player should add finishing touches to their hero so that his or her description matches the figure they are using. If the figure is not a complete match for the hero, the figure can be converted.

Do not allow the heroes any 'starting funds' and limit their starting equipment. Unlike other games, the characters in a superhero world should be able to get by using only their 'natural' abilities and superpowers. Anyway, it is impossible to find a proper superhero figure which is covered in jet belts, radio transmitters, ray guns, gas masks, etc. No self-respecting comicbook hero would be seen dead depending upon such equipment.

Having determined the hero's abilities and selected a suitable figure, the players should give some thought to naming their heroes and writing an origin for them. In one classic case in my own past campaigns, one of the ubiquitous muscleman was stuck for a name until the end of his first scenario when he looked at the villain's truck he had torn the wheels and back axle off, the balcony he had chucked a thug through, and the walls he had smashed down. He decided to call himself VANDAL!

As to their origin, you can wait for quite a long time until they come up with one. Origins are not always revealed in the first issue of a comic, especially in those featuring superteams. A good origin should be compatible with your chosen setting and could give you some ideas for future games, but should never contain features which are forced to put into your game. An origin can be two sentences or five A4 sheets of tiny handwriting, as long as it fulfills these criteria.

PICKING THE ARENA

Comics are set in many places and many times. Before you can plan your first game it is important that you decide what sort of time and arena you want to set it in. If you play *Superhero 2044*, for instance, you may well wish to use the super-heroes' (and villains') paradise of Inguria so lovingly detailed.

Unless you have some fixed views upon the world in which you want to set your games, it is worth remembering that most comics are set in contemporary American cities, usually New York. This is because of the familiarity of the locations to the writers and artists. Set the adventures in your own home town or city in places that both you and your players are familiar with.

There can be one or two other differences. If you think your own area does not contain the potential for enough excitement you can always add a nuclear power station where the local park is, a missile base where the car factory is and so on!



STARTING PLOT LINES

All you need for your first game is a crime, a setting, some badies, some goodies and some ordinary people. You don't need a subtle plot, a complex scheme to take over the world, thoroughly detailed NPC's or complex underground bases. These can all be used later but they are by no means essential for an interesting game.

For your first adventure, select a simple crime - bank robbery is always a good bet, but hijacking a bullion van or kidnapping all have their good points. Murder or assassination should not be used at this stage!

Choose one or two vehicles for the villains and usually have a truck or at least a spare automobile for carrying the loot. Similarly, the civilians in the game will need some cars to escape from the bad guys. Don't get carried away - four or five cars are enough.

Let each player select a figure or token to use as his or her character's secret identity. Choose three to six more to be on the scene of the crime.

Criminals need ordinary people to threaten or to take hostage and criminals feel better when they've got someone to protect and to fight for. However, civilians should take only a passive role in the game and need not be specified. One blow from anyone will incapacitate or knock out them.

This, believe it or not, is all the planning you need to do for your first game. All you need to do now is to set it up and play.

THE FINAL EDIT

Armed with the rules, street plans, vehicles and figures you are ready to start the first issue of your own 'comic'. Set up the street map and have each player place the cardboard figure representing their secret identity on the edge of the street map nearest to them, at ground level.

The heroes should be put on before the crime so that any positional advantage gained by a player is totally accidental. No figure should be placed on rooftops or flying through the air as the heroes are discovering the crime accidentally and would not be in costume or 'on patrol'. Now arrange the figures representing thugs, civilians and the cardboard vehicles in the positions they would be if the crime were just taking place.

Criminals should be rushing out of the bank with a bag labeled 'cash', leaping out of a car and grabbing an innocent woman, ramming the security van, etc. Describe what is happening to the heroes, making it perfectly clear that here is a heinous bit of villainy which must be stopped. Ask the players what they are doing. Their first action should be to change into costume. Allow them to do this without being overlooked. The thugs will perform no significant actions during this period.

If anyone is in a position where changing would appear difficult, tell them that no-one is looking their way. Anyone attacking in civilian gear should be told, firmly, that they are jeopardising their secret identity.

The heroes should now close to engage the criminals. The criminals will be, at first, boastful, overconfident and scornful. Try to make them seem threatening and don't give away how weak they are.

Players used to other types of RPG may now begin worrying and feeling '1st level'. You, as their GM, should try to capitalise upon this paroxysm by making comments about how thin superhero costumes are etc. Be sadistic, get the players as worried as you want, it makes what happens next much more enjoyable for all concerned. The heroes should now attack the thugs. Play the first round slowly and carefully, referring to the combat rules. You must get used to the system before the supervillain appears.

Make sure that you and the players understand what is happening in the game. If you have designed the thugs weak enough the battle should be enough of a foregone conclusion for you to be able to ignore the result and concentrate on how it is achieved. The heroes should give the goons a thrashing and take minimal damage themselves. As the heroes rapidly dispatch the crooks you should attempt to capitalise on the humour of the situation by making the villains initial scorn turn rapidly into disbelief and fear.

One of the greatest joys when you first play a Superhero RPG is discovering how tough you really are. As you punch that crook through a wall, you start to realise that you are a *superhero*.

Just as the tide is turning in the heroes' favour, however, you should have your supervillain make as dramatic an entrance as possible. Supervillains typically punch or blast their way out of a building, choosing to cow the populace by a demonstration of their power rather than using more convenient exits.

Alternatively, one of the heroes may have been 'clever'. Possibly he or she ignored the thugs to scout around the rear of the bank or climbed into the security truck to see if anyone was hurt. Whatever clever action the hero performed they should be rewarded by being allowed to 'discover' the supervillain on their own, sneaking out of the rear entrance or hypnotising the security guards.

Regardless of the rules or any initiative systems, the game must stop for a few seconds whilst the villain makes a boastful and bombastic speech! Villains' voices and personalities can be as individual as their costumes. Players should be allowed only a limited right of reply to this speech and should be forced to prove themselves through their actions rather than through words.

The supervillain will now attack. The players must be made to realise that, despite the weakness of his hired help, this foe will be no pushover. You must play him as well as you can under the game system. Any crooks still remaining will rally and either attempt to aid their boss or to make their getaway. Up until now, you should have been more concerned with teaching the players the game system and instilling in them a sense of their own importance and power. Try to make the battle as colourful and exciting as possible.

When the heroes win, have the civilians, press and police thank them. Congratulate the players and start dropping strong hints that forming a superteam might be a good idea.

The reward motive is important in role-playing games. Whilst players might not play merely to become tougher the awarding of experience points does make a satisfying conclusion to a games session. You can also create your own rewards for the players. In the form of adulation from NPCs and congratulations from the GM. If you've followed my instructions you won't have any further plans as yet for future games, except for some rough notes on a few supervillains. However, it doesn't take much to have a captured thug drop a suitably vague hint about 'The power station at midnight'. By now you should be able to plan a much better game to cover this, after all, you do know what you're doing now. □

Next issue: Developing scenarios for superheroes.

DAYS OF FUTURE PAST

Final part of an introduction to Superhero role gaming
by Simon Burley

With the current increase in the popularity of Superhero role-playing games, with many being revised and updated, put into boxes and expanded, some Superhero Adventure 'modules' and scenarios are beginning to appear. However, the offerings in this field are still more limited than those devoted to other types of game. A referee looking around for new ideas will need to find new sources of inspiration.

Luckily, with a bit of thought and conversion, many of the scenarios available for other games can be used in conjunction with a superhero campaign; mainly because of the nature of the comics themselves. In order to produce so many titles each month the major companies have to draw ideas from a wide variety of sources to use as story material. Apart from cribbing as many ideas as possible from Science Fiction novels and series, most comics feature a Time Travel story sooner or later, sending their main characters into the past, future or even into an alternative dimension.

There isn't space in an article such as this to give you detailed systems for converting from the major Fantasy and Science Fiction systems to the major superhero games. If you already have *Superworld* this conversion is virtually done for

you and you can use a wide range of *RuneQuest* back-up material without needing to do much work to prepare. Even if you don't have that particular game though, you needn't worry too much about changing the systems described in the scenarios. There is a trend today to put a lot of descriptive information into the text of a module or scenario and to tag the numerical details of NPCs and monsters on at the end of a passage or section. It is a fairly easy job to Tippex out '5 giant rats; AC5; HD 1/2; Dam: 1-3 plus disease; HTK 3,3,3,4,5' and insert '5 giant rats...' and the details of how they would fit into your chosen game system. Once you've converted a few rooms or encounters, the rest will come easily, however incompatible the two systems may seem at first.

What you will need, though, is some idea of how to select suitable scenarios from the many available and how to fit them in with the storyline of your particular campaign. This article contains some suggestions on how to select the most applicable modules and how to get your heroes into them, out of them and how to make them relevant to the heroes. For the purposes of discussion I'll assume that most games fit into one of four main categories: Fantasy (*Dungeons & Dragons*, *RuneQuest*, *Chivalry and Sorcery*, *Dragonquest*, etc), Science Fiction (*Traveller*, *Star Frontiers*, *Universe*, *Space Opera* etc), Post-holocaust (*Aftermath*, *Gamma World*, *The Morrow Project* etc), and Contemporary (*Top Secret*, *Espionage*, *Gangbusters*, *Daredevils* etc). Of course these four categories don't cover every available game (the piracy ones, for instance, are excluded) but should be detailed enough for our purposes.

CONTEMPORARY SCENARIOS

Practically speaking these scenarios are the simplest to use. They do not require any involvement with time travel or spaceships and tend to feature ordinary people of the sort common in Superhero games. Even a *Gangbuster* scenario can be updated to the modern day; organised crime hasn't changed that much in six decades, at least in the comics.

Unfortunately, the same superhero system would be a bit boring for the heroes to fight all the time: Al Capone would be no match for Iron Man, for instance. Also, superheroes are not noted for their desire to sneak around cautiously, like spies, or follow long trails of clues, like detectives. They prefer to take the bull by the horns, which is not suited to many contemporary scenarios.

Should you want to use a scenario for a game set in this century I would suggest you try to find one which has a clear objective (eg recovering stolen plans) which can be achieved by direct means (a head-on attack for instance) and involves little detective work or subtlety. It would be more suited to 'low-level' heroes (*Daredevil*, *Captain America*, *Batman*) than the more powerful types (*Thor*, *Hulk*, *Superman*).

WORLDS OF HIGH FANTASY

At first, these types of scenarios may seem unsuitable for superheroes. Readers of *Cerebus the Aardvark*, particularly, might find the idea of superheroes and wizards side by side ludicrous. However, not only are fantasy themes often used in the comics (in *Iron Man 150*, for instance, between Morgan le Fay's army of Undead and Arthur's Knights) but more scenarios are available in this field than in any other. Though many will be unusable, there will be some adventures which will suit the superheroes.

As with the contemporary scenarios the best adventures will feature a set objective which can be achieved in a direct way, perhaps a magic amulet, stolen by the trolls, which has to be recovered. Adventures which feature a large number of monsters or last a long time are not as suited to superheroes. Similarly, map-making is not part of the super-hero role-playing gamers' style. They expect to be supplied with a setting already mapped out, so 'dungeon' style adventures are best avoided wherever possible. High level magicians, demons, giants, dragons and other legendary monsters make good opponents, hordes of goblins and kobolds do not.



Try to select adventures which have set objectives, feature a lot of short encounters rather than one big 'dungeon', hang together logically and contain a few powerful or legendary monsters and characters rather than lots of weak ones.

There are many reasons why a group of heroes might be in the past, or in an alternative dimension where magic works. One ever-popular lead-in is capture by a mega-villain (usually Doc Doom) who needs someone to fetch a mystic item for them. As long as the heroes are trapped in another time with only the villain's time machine to get them home, they have to do as he says. The referee can sugar the pill, however, by making the opponents they are forced to fight villainous in their own right.

Another lead-in is to have the heroes summoned by a wizard using a magical spell, in order to do a quest for him. Superheroes could come to hate the *D&D* gate spell.

If you have a hero or heroine whose powers are mystic in origin you will have a wealth of lead-ins to fantastic adventure. Divine heroes are also useful. (Put the *TSR G* and *D* modules in Asgard, change Lolth to Loki and you've got a ready-made adventure for Thor and/or the Warriors Three!)

If all else fails there's the ubiquitous spacial and temporal warp caused when the heroes are caught in a nuclear explosion or accidentally travel faster than the speed of light.

As long as you don't overdo the fantasy and don't expect superheroes to act or react like *D&D* characters, there's a lot of fun to be had from fantasy scenarios.

STAR-SPANNING

Most planet hopping SF games are set in the future. However, you won't need to time travel to use space adventures in your superhero games. Simply assume that the Earth is a backward planet in a highly developed galaxy where other races have already established empires, and the scenarios of *Traveller* and *Space Opera* are only a star-jump away.

As before, suitable scenarios should be short with a set objective. The heroes don't want to get bogged down on a trading flight across the Milky Way. Scenarios involving commando raids (mercenary tickets), rescuing people, defeating alien tyranny, etc, are all good. Bear in mind that the hero must have a good reason for being in space as most will want to get back to Earth as soon as they can.

Invading aliens are a good way to get heroes into space. Supplied with a short-range shuttle by NASA they board the flagship of the invasion force and defeat its commander. Before the battle is over, however, they find themselves in deep space with no way home. Perhaps the heroes could be captured by alien slavers, as the Thing once was, to take part in interstellar gladiatorial games. Maybe they were called in to test a new space ship and things went wrong.

A superhero whose origin is in space would be very useful as they would supply a lot of lead-ins to Science Fiction scenarios. The Teen Titans' excuse for planet-hopping, for example, is Starfire, their resident alien fugitive.

The *Star Wars* style interplanetary adventure is the nearest thing to Superhero adventure in any other genre. Keep the stories high on action and low on thought and planning and you'll find plenty of things to keep the Earth's mightiest heroes just a short hop across the galaxy.

BRAVE NEW WORLD

Many of the futures shown in comics are depressing views of a world either in decay, under alien tyranny or after some kind of holocaust. The writers can show the future like this because there are many possible futures of which the bleak ones are only a few.

These ruined worlds have supplied a backdrop to some of the best comics ever produced. The title of this article comes from an issue of the *X-Men* which featured them as freedom fighters in an alternative future against an invincible robot tyranny. Eventually one of them was back in time to change the future.

If you want to use *Gamma World*, *Aftermath* or *Morrow Project* scenarios for your heroes you should, again, bear in mind that superheroes don't travel well across ruined landscapes. Adventures should be short with clearly-defined and directly obtainable objectives. A very-useful objective is to have the heroes locate a time-travel device which will let them go back in time to change the future so that it does not occur.

Getting the heroes into the future in the first place can be done by similar means to getting them into the past. Capture by malevolent villains requiring the weapons of the future,



freak accidents, scientific experiments gone wrong, are all good excuses for adventure in the future. The main problem with post-holocaust adventures is that the future-shock tends to affect the heroes. In the fight for survival they start using blast weapons and give up their bright costumes. If such mutations do occur in the characters, simply have them come back in time to a point *before* they went into the future to stop themselves going, so that they went into the future and never changed. Most importantly, don't worry about the paradoxes, they don't exist unless you want them to. A short hop into the future can be a chastening and thought-provoking, supplying a lot of adventure and excitement.

FUTURE ISSUES

If you've played your first game and enjoyed it, you shouldn't need much help to go and design scenarios of your own. However, bear the following points in mind:

1. Try to form the Heroes into a team. Teams are easier to design and plan for and it is very convenient, all round, if they operate from a common head-quarters. Let them pick their own headquarters, organise their own duty rosters, however. The world is yours, the heroes belong to the players.
2. Design scenarios around the heroes. Don't plan games which would suit any heroes. Comics are written around their stars, the challenges they meet are those that they could reasonably be expected to defeat and those that the readers expect. Daredevil wouldn't expect to find Galactus in his comic, for instance, just as Thor wouldn't be seen fighting the Frightful Four. Every hero should have something to do in each game you play. If you don't consider everyone when you are designing your games you are doing the players a disservice.
3. Don't feel restricted to drawing ideas from comics. You can draw ideas from literally anywhere, comics, TV, SF novels, films, even from other games. I've heard of, and seen, superheroes tearing apart the monsters in *Dungeons & Dragons* modules. When stuck for an idea for a game one weekend I bought the *Gamma World Legion of Gold* module and put my heroes in a nuclear blast which warped them into an alternative future from which they had to escape to stop the nuclear war which caused it from occurring.

IN CONCLUSION

Scenarios from other games can be very useful to pad-out a superhero campaign if carefully selected and used only upon occasions with a degree of caution. Read through the introduction to a scenario in the shop before buying it or read the review of it in *White Dwarf* first. Choose short simple adventures with clearly defined objectives. Remember that superheroes have a unique approach to problems so you may not get as much value out of the scenario as you would if you had bought it for the game for which it was intended.

It will aid the insertion into the game of such material if at least one hero or heroine in the campaign has a mystic or divine background, and at least one is alien.

A well-designed and enthusiastically played campaign based upon a good superhero role-playing game system can give you more pleasure than any other, equally outlandish, activity. However, should your players ever feel outmatched, down at heel, out-maneuvred, defeated, remember the words of Captain America:

'As long as brave free men live the eternal torch of Liberty and Justice shall never die.' □

CAPE CRUSADERS

Running Golden Heroes Campaigns, by Pete Tamlyn

One of the best things about the *Golden Heroes* game is the way in which you are encouraged, through rules, words and deeds, to use the system for running campaign-style games rather than one-off scenarios. I have always been a fan of campaign games: my argument is that you can become far more familiar with your character, and get far more out of the role-playing experience, if this character is one that you have lived with over several interconnected adventures, rather than a playing piece that is trotted out for individual scenarios. Nevertheless I know that there are many role-players who do not play in campaigns, and even some who are so horrified by the amount of work that seems to be involved that they do not believe that anyone would be so daft as to actually run one. Fear not, it is not as hard as it might seem, and since *Golden Heroes* puts so much effort into persuading you to play campaigns, what better system to choose to explain how to go about it.

The essence of a campaign-style game is that the players keep the same characters for each adventure, and that the game master links things together by using the same world and providing a time frame for the adventures. The overall effect is something like a long-running TV series. Some campaigns end up rather like *The A-Team* where each adventure (episode) is complete in itself and nothing much is known about what happens in between. The better ones, however, are closer to *Dynasty* or *Dallas* in that each episode is also part of a continuing story. One of the things about soaps that makes them so addictive is that there are always several storylines going on at once, and there is no obvious end. Of course you cannot model role-playing campaigns directly on soaps because you want each adventure to come to some sort of conclusion at the end of a playing session, rather than stop just as things get exciting as a TV programme would. However, if you link things together by involving the players in things other than adventuring, and you try to leave a few loose ends hanging at the end of each scenario, then you will find that the players role-play much better and keep coming back to find out what happens next. Probably the best analogy is the style of comic-writing pioneered by Stan Lee at *Marvel*, which makes Superhero rolegames ideal for campaigns.

Life, The Universe and Everything
One of the most important things that

Stan did with *Marvel* was to have all of the comics set in an identifiable Marvel Universe. This gave a consistent background to the stories, and a sense that something was happening in the world outside the narrow confines of an individual story in a comic. Also, he based that universe on contemporary America. Most readers find this a lot easier to relate to than a completely imaginary universe, and it also means that the writers can use real world events as well as events in other comics to increase the sense of depth that the stories have. Finally Stan used the soap opera idea of the continuing narrative – what happened in yesterday's story will affect what happens in subsequent ones. *Marvel's* main rivals, *DC*, used to pay much less attention to such things as consistency and continuity, which is one of the major reasons that *Marvel* overtook them in popularity.

Our *Golden Heroes* campaign should take a leaf or two out of *Marvel's* book, and our first requirement is, therefore, to create a *Golden Heroes* Universe. You could, if you wanted, simply use the *Marvel* or *DC* worlds (though you might be advised to wait until *DC* finish rationalising their hugely complicated universe before using it). However, there are other games available or on the way that already do that, so the material that you will find in the *Golden Heroes* game and any accessory packs will be for *GH's* own world. Besides, *Marvel* and *DC* stories are based largely in America whereas *GH* is a British game designed by British people and played, at least in the short term, largely by British players. One of the nice things about Superhero games is that you can set them in the real world in modern times, and that does away with a large amount of the work needed to design and detail your campaign world. OK, so you might have one or two players who want to play The Batman and live in Gotham City, but my advice is that if you live in Britain, set the game in Britain.

Integrating the Heroes

Having got a basis for our campaign world (and from here on I will be assuming that the campaign is to be set in Britain) next we have to think how the presence of superpowered characters will affect it, and what changes we intend to make. In other games it is often advisable to deviate from your source of inspiration because of the danger imposed by players who might know more about the world than you do. (Imagine trying to

run a Middle-earth game with players who know Tolkien inside out!) However, with a game set in your own country in modern times, chances are you will know just as much about it as anyone else, or at least can get the information very easily. In my *Golden Heroes* campaign I have stuck as closely as possible to contemporary Britain, making changes due to the existence of super-powered characters only where necessary, and advancing the date by a year to avoid having my plots tied too closely to actual news stories.

Using a contemporary society in this way gives you a huge amount of background material to work with, and presents vast numbers of possibilities for developing plotlines. You don't need to agonise about who is in charge of the country and what their policies will be; you just have to imagine what Margaret Thatcher and Douglas Hurd would make of Superheroes. And you have a huge supporting cast of public figures to use. For example, in my game one of the heroes was invited to appear on the Terry Wogan show!

In addition to this you can bring in a few characters from fictional material set in the same society. No streetwise London hero worth his salt can get away without knowing Arthur Daley; and it may well provide a good deal of amusement during a game to have the players find out that the building the villains have just levelled was in fact the Crossroads Motel. If you are really keen on the science fiction aspect of *Golden Heroes* then your players would doubtless be well advised not to change into costume in any police telephone boxes.

Still, that's enough of the good ideas for the moment, (after all, my players could be reading this). Some changes have to be made and we need to consider what they might be. The most obvious one is the question of government relations with the heroes. There are already two official organisations, DICE and SOLO, which liaise between the authorities and superpowered characters but it is quite likely that the government will want to have its own super-team. Masked crimefighters are all very well, but a government is just as likely to want superpowered secret service agents. Where do MI5 and MI6 fit into all this?

Another question to consider is how the government attempts to deal with superpowered crime. DICE has presumably been set up to try to deal with this sort of thing, but what do they do with

the villains once they have caught them? Is there a special maximum security wing at Dartmoor, or has a new prison been built somewhere in the highlands of Scotland? Are there any new laws that might be passed to deal with the activities of superpowered beings, and do insurance companies pay up if your home is wrecked by an exchange of energy bolts? If aliens really do visit the Earth, does the government admit to the existence of UFOs and, if so, what do they claim to be doing about it?

Villainous Behavior

On the subject of villains we need to consider how criminals who are currently newsworthy would be affected by superpowered aid. What if the IRA had a superpowered ally? Do the Russians use superpowered spies? Could the Libyans pay supervillains to commit acts of terrorism on their behalf? If you want to use familiar bad guys then you will have to beef them up a bit or the players will find them far too easy to beat.

Finally we need to consider where the supplies of high tech equipment used by superpowered people come from. It would, I think, be quite possible to use existing multinational companies such as IBM but such organisations tend to be rather dull and boring. A more entertaining game would probably result from having most of the player involvement with smaller, highly innovative companies run by colourful characters like Sir Clive Sinclair. If there were Superheroes about I'm sure that Sir Clive would be first in the field with cut-price build-it-yourself cybernetic combat armour! Using small companies like

this has the added advantage that they are prone to running into financial difficulties which you can turn into a plot idea by having them fall foul of a rich international crime syndicate.

Making Waves

Having got a world to set our campaign in we next need to look at ways of developing plotlines for adventures. As I explained earlier, a campaign will work best if each individual scenario seems to be part of a continuing narrative. As the lives of the player characters progress they may pick up on the early warning signs as long term plots begin to unfold, and they will certainly suffer the consequences of their earlier actions. Presenting a campaign in this manner rather than as a series of unconnected encounters does require a certain amount of planning and record keeping, but the results can be well worth it.

Fortunately *Golden Heroes* provides several useful features which aid in the generation of long term plots. The most obvious of these is the rationale which players are required to write when they generate their characters. In producing a rationale a player will almost certainly give you several ideas for future adventures, by writing into it people his character has met, comments about his personality, and so on. In effect, each character comes complete with his own microcosm of background that can grow and develop with him as the campaign progresses. I find it useful to go through a similar rationale generation process for every villain that I invent, as the need to explain the character's origin often supplies sufficient inspiration for me to

generate new plot ideas, as well as meaning that the bad guy is a much more rounded and believable character when he finally gets into play.

Another helpful facet of the *Golden Heroes* game is that the scenarios available for it are produced with campaign style play in mind. Some common threads (DICE, for example) crop up regularly, and you will find advice in the scenario booklet not only on how to run the adventure in question, but also how to adapt it to your own campaign and what future events may arise from what happens during play. *Legacy of Eagles* is additionally helpful in that it was deliberately designed to help a group of players just starting out as a super-team.

Building on what happens during scenarios that you run is an important part of creating a successful campaign. It may seem a bit of a drag at the time, but making a few notes as play progresses as to which NPCs got on very well or very badly with which players can help a lot with maintaining an air of consistency. With the whole game to run it is easy to forget that player A and villain X loathed each other on sight, but you can be sure that A will remember X and the game will seem a lot more believable to him if X also remembers their enmity and reacts accordingly next time they meet.

In addition a long-term plot can quite often grow spontaneously simply as a result of following up the implications of what happens during play. Suppose grateful aliens present the planet Earth with a beautiful crystal as a result of the help your players give them. Obviously the crystal will be put on display, and inevitably someone will try to steal it. In fleeing the pursuing heroes the villain could perhaps drop the crystal into impenetrable jungle where it is found by a lost civilisation ruled over by magician-priests. Before the players manage to recover the crystal the priests discover it has magical properties. They use these to attack beings in another dimension who, naturally, decide to attack Earth in order to destroy the crystal. And so on. Try to keep your options open by ensuring that there are always a few loose threads at the end of each adventure.

The Plot Thickens

Something else that you should do for each scenario you run is build on the background that you supply for it. Perhaps you do this anyway for scenarios you write yourself, but commercially produced material may not have room to cover everything in depth. For example, *Legacy of Eagles* introduces the long lost EAGLES team of Golden Heroes who were active in the 1950s and 60s. The scenario booklet suggests a possible line-up for the EAGLES but gives very little detail about any of them except Protector and Micron (who figure in the scenario). When I ran *Legacy* in my own campaign I not only invented my own EAGLES team but also wrote up some of their history (throwing in a few asides, such as mentioning how much Harold Wilson loved having his picture taken with them, in order to add a bit more colour). I had other members of the team survive (or at least suggested that they might have done), one of



whom has since joined the players' team. This gives me a moderately powerful and experienced NPC that I can use to help the players when they are stuck.

Of course, if you are going to be using long-term plots in your campaign then it will be necessary for you to plan ahead. Fortunately the 'good shall triumph' ethos of the genre means that you can rely much more on knowing the outcome of the scenarios in advance. The details will be more difficult to predict, but you should have a good idea of where the player characters will be and when. With the aid of a desk diary (try looking around for one in midsummer when places like W H Smith are often selling the current year's diaries off at ridiculous prices) you should be able to plan out the various plotlines a few months of game time in advance. Knowing which scenarios will be coming up you can then turn them into long term plots by inserting references to them in current adventures. Prestige scientific projects can be mentioned in news broadcasts whilst they are under development; mercenary supervillains can be sprung from jail a few weeks before they are required by the criminal mastermind; vital components for a mad genius's latest device can be stolen; street contacts can pass on rumours, and so on. Dropping clues concerning forthcoming scenarios like this has the added advantages that it makes both current and future scenarios more challenging for the players because they have to sort out which of the clues they get are immediately relevant, and have to remember information from one gaming session to the next.

That Was The Week That Was

One final trick that is well worth using because it does so much to generate atmosphere for your campaign is to run a campaign newsletter. The activities of various Superheroes will inevitably be splashed across the front pages of the daily press, and the heroes will be dogged by photographers and camera crews whenever they appear in public. Issuing a regular newsletter full of excerpts from papers and TV reports concerning the activities of your players will make them much more aware of the world in which they live, and of their responsibilities to the general public. It also gives you a chance to have a lot of fun writing pastiches of the national newspapers. As an example, I will cite a few extracts from the newsletter of my own campaign.

To begin with the players were totally unknown, but one of them elected to do a lot of patrolling and therefore came to the attention of the press very quickly. I thought that the *Sun* would be the first paper to realise the potential of the Golden Heroes, and would quickly adopt the character in its usual, bombastic style:

'She's at it again! Yes, it's that girl again. The Soaraway Sun's own superheroine, Virago, has foiled another daring robbery. This time a million pound jewellery snatch in sparkling Hatton Garden. Our reporters were quickly on the scene and managed to snatch these close-up pictures of the lovely lady. We even managed to snatch a few words with her before she slipped away to continue her fight against crime. And do you know what? She even made her own costume.

What a gall!

The Daily Telegraph would probably hedge its bets to begin with. Happy to have someone fighting crime but wary of endorsing mutants or aliens, it would keep a close eye on what the government was saying, using the opportunity to score a few political points as well:

'Prime Minister's Question Time yesterday was given over largely to questions from both sides of the House on the subject of superpowered vigilantes. For the opposition Barry Sproat MP asked whether the Prime Minister, having destroyed most other national institutions, now intended to privatise the Police Force and put the safety of Britain's citizens in the hands of whatever bizarrely costumed individuals 'the market' might throw up. Mrs Thatcher countered that the power of Citizen's Arrest had long been an important part of our legal traditions and that she saw no need to scrap the system just because some enterprising people were actually exercising their power. From the Government benches the Honourable Michael Harman MP inquired whether the Prime Minister has any plans to reform the EAGLES Superhero team which had been so successful in the 50s and 60s. Somewhat to the dismay of the wetter end of the Tory benches, Mrs Thatcher commented that, whilst a lot of what Mr Macmillan's government had done was very well intentioned, she felt that many of its achievements could have been brought about much more cheaply by use of market forces. Dr David Owen also attempted to contribute to the debate but his comments were lost amidst cries of derision from both sides of the House.'

The Guardian, I thought, would be worried about the effect of Golden Heroes on civil liberties, and its reports would be punctuated with the usual typesetting errors:

'Concern over the growing number of superpowered individuals in Britain mounted yesterday after the morning's pitched battle between the army, a group of costumed vigilantes and a mysterious, armoured a mysterious, armoured figure in central London. The National Council for Civil Liberties is to press the Government to take urgent action to pass legislation to protect ordinary citizens from the dangers that such paranormal beings pose. At present both the Government and DICE, the EEC-funded anti-terrorist paramilitary group, are refusing to comment on either yesterday's battle, the mysterious kidnap and rescue of Italian actress, Lola Novana, 28, or the large number of reported sightings of a UFO near Guildford yesterday evening.'

That should be enough to give you the flavour of a newsletter. With any luck you will soon find your players vying for the best press coverage. After all, we all like to see our names in the papers, don't we? □

Pete Tamlyn is the author of Games Workshop's latest Golden Heroes adventure pack, The Lancelot Capers.





SPELL

Magic in Superhero Games,

that's all part of the style of the comics, and equally important is the way that most of these results are given 'pseudo-scientific' justifications. A technically trained reader may be reduced to giggles by the ideas offered by the writers, but *in the comics' universes* a sufficiently trained scientist can usually understand what's going on, and probably do something with or about it. Magical powers are different. They may be linked to 'scientific' ideas, but in general it takes a specialist in magic to understand them.

This, along with magic's tendency for extradimensional origins, distinguishes magic from 'psionics' in Superhero stories. Many stories and characters use 'mental' powers that somewhat resemble magic, such as telepathy, telekinesis, and teleportation, and many 'magical' characters use similar abilities, but the two are usually viewed as quite distinct. A generalisation that can be drawn, although it often breaks down, is that magical powers come from training, psionic powers come from birth or 'laboratory accidents'. It is sometimes said that magical powers draw energy from outside the user, yet psionics come from the user's own 'energy reserves', but this approach also fails at times. Although some characters with 'mental training' can blur the distinction, magical and psionic powers should be viewed separately.

The extra-dimensional aspect of magic is important, if not actually crucial. Apart from allowing the writers to scrap such trivia as the law of conservation of energy (which comics tend to forget anyway), it justifies spells of summoning with fewer paradoxes, and brings in colourful tourist spots such as Limbo and assorted Hells, many with resident beings who possess major superpowers plus the malice and ingenuity to act as interesting supervillains. (Heroes presented with demonic opposition can feel very morally satisfied in their victories; it's gaining the victories that's the hard part.) Reference to other dimensions can also be made when magic achieves results 'inexplicable by science'.

This is the most amusing aspect of Superheroic magic. A rationalistic character may be able to cope with someone throwing energy bolts, reading minds, levitating, and so on, but when a *real* magician shows off by, for example, turning a pumpkin into a stagecoach, the poor super-scientist may well tend to despair. This is not to say that magic doesn't have 'laws' of a sort; sometimes, quite a complex and internally consistent set of principles may be deduced. What it *does* mean is

Introduction

Magic sometimes seems to occupy a rather uneasy place in the worlds of Superhero comics, alternately being viewed as a ludicrous implausibility and one of the great forces of the universe. The reason for this lies in the history of the comics, and the great variety of sources from which they are borrowed. On the one side, comic writers have drawn on the traditions of 'pulp' SF, and on such 'scientific', rationalistic archetypes as Doc Savage, and Conan Doyle's Lost World stories. On the other, they have borrowed much from supernatural, Gothic types of story, using ideas from horror films, writers such as H P Lovecraft and Bram Stoker, and ancient legends. In fact, these fields aren't as far apart as they appear — there's a very important link between science fiction and the Gothic tradition — but the clash between rationalism and mysticism can lead to problems for writers, and also for Superhero games.

Consider the very common 'Scientist Hero', who either builds himself special tools (Iron Man), combines superpowers with scientific skill and gadgetry (Mr Fantastic), or uses mostly 'innate' powers but has considerable scientific expertise to back them up (Spiderman). At one stage in comics history, characters such as these could be found fighting opponents who *appeared* to have supernatural talents; they would eventually be found to use technological trickery or hypnosis, or their powers would have some 'scientific' justification, however thin and implausible. This was all in the great tradition of detective stories and science fiction, where a logical hero

could always disprove any suggestion of magic. However, this approach began to look dubious when the scientist-heroes began to encounter others who either had blatantly magical powers (such as Thor), or who were actual, out-and-out sorcerers (such as Dr Strange). Very soon exotic characters began to appear who brought a hint of magic into titles with more 'rationalistic' approaches; the Fantastic Four, for example, fought Dr Doom, who was 'A Master of both science and sorcery'. Today, a few characters have non-magical powers but thoroughly magical associations, such as the New Mutant Magik (Illyana Rasputin), who can teleport to and from a magical dimension where she rules as a witch-queen. Thus magic has become an important part of the 'Superhero set-up', while remaining a slightly odd and uncertain factor.

The Nature of Magic

At this point, we really ought to try and define 'magic' as it appears in the comics. Essentially, it is a mysterious force, often extra-dimensional in origin, which can achieve effects inexplicable by science, and which can be manipulated by certain non-human creatures, and by humans with the right knowledge, inherited ability, or devices.

To begin with, consider the term 'mysterious'. In context, this means more than 'amazing' or 'rare'. Superhero stories are full of amazing events; probably the majority of heroes have powers that are actually impossible in the real universe, and stories are full of scientists achieving results that would change the whole of science if they were real. But

BOUND

by Phil Masters

that those laws of magic have little to do with such scientific laws that Superhero stories respect.

The beings who use magic are a mixed and peculiar crowd. The different kinds of character or creature which may be encountered in a magic-oriented story are discussed further below, but the different ways in which they may obtain their magical abilities are worth looking at. To begin with, some beings – usually non-human, frequently extra-dimensional – are naturally magical, and wield their powers with little mental effort. Such creatures need not be particularly intelligent; indeed, they include many demons, monsters, and so on that are downright moronic (usually displaying immense magically-powered strength). However, some inherently 'magical' beings are very intelligent indeed; those that combine large reserves of 'innate' magical power with intelligence and skill in its application are among the most formidable of spell-users.

Secondly, and related to the first category, there are human beings who inherit magical ability. Although comic writers generally distinguish magical and mutant powers, they (like many storytellers before them) often seem to view magical ability as genetically determined. A character whose ancestors, let alone parents, possessed sorcerous powers will usually have at least latent talent, and some (such as Talisman of Alpha Flight) may actually be able to use raw magical power without conscious effort. However, if magic is to retain its air of history, such 'instinctive magic-users' should be rare.

A variant form of magic-wielding character, often closely related to the 'inherited talent', is the 'accident victim'. This is in the great tradition of comic plots; if radioactive spider-bite victims, or space travellers can gain strange powers by accident, why not those who brush with the occult? The accident or other 'incident' may involve a tie-up with an inherently magical being (as in the case of the inactive Ghost Rider, who was subject to intermittently controllable demonic possession), a brush with raw power (perhaps tied up with some kind of family tradition), contact with an artifact (further discussed below – an example might be Dr Fate), or even simple death (as with Deadman); more complicated death leads to such oddities as vampirism or the Living Mummy syndrome.

If you can't pick up personal power, you can always pick up magical devices. Fantasy fiction has a long tradition of magical artifacts, often with plot compli-

cations attached (ask Frodo Baggins), and comics' plots often take up the idea. Magical items tend to be very old, with complicated histories and associations with powerful beings, and sometimes family associations, while even the most capable trained sorcerer or demon may use such for reinforcement of power, so the character possibilities and plot complications are immense. Examples well worth considering in the comics are Dr Strange's 'Eye of Agamotto' and the Black Knight's sword.

The last, but perhaps the best way to gain magical power as a comic plot character is sheer hard work. Traditionally, magical training is a long, difficult process, requiring much dedication and talent, and usually a teacher of immense power and personal eccentricity. Study of old books or suchlike may suffice, but this is a dangerously limited approach, tending to produce flawed characters (such as Silver Dagger in Dr Strange); tinkering with magic one only partially understands can be very foolish. Even the best self-taught character may need 'finishing' (remember Luke Skywalker in *The Empire Strikes Back*; The Force may not be magical, but it is treated similarly), and the location of – and relationships with – teachers can be entertaining plot topics. Teachers can be very peculiar beings, and may not be entirely human (Shaman of Alpha Flight received instruction from the spirit of his dead grandfather) or entirely benevolent (Illyana Rasputin was a disciple of the demonic Belasco for some years).

Those Who Know . . .
Characters who appear in magic-oriented

scenarios may be of many different levels of power. At the lowest level are those who possess no special power of their own, but become associated with beings who do have powers. These tend to appear most often on the side of evil, as good spell casters will be too worried about the danger to the weak and unknowing to let many 'normals' become involved. Magical villains, on the other hand, will be only too happy to employ thugs and cultists as cannon-fodder, which can be a problem for opponents who don't like damaging weaker beings – however misguided – overmuch; the few 'normals' found around heroic magic-wielders – dependent NPCs and suchlike – have to be protected, whereas their enemies are frequently totally ruthless with 'lesser mortals'. Particularly tricky are cultists and fanatic followers of evil supernatural beings, who tend to be highly motivated, appallingly ruthless, and very hard to frighten off; fanaticism justifies giving such characters more physical and mental toughness and fighting ability than appearances would imply.

Next toughest are the lowest grade of magically-powered being. This category covers very low-grade demons and other supernatural beings, zombies and thugs or cultists who have been equipped with minor artifacts or granted limited powers by their very powerful leaders. Normal humans who have, accidentally or by study, gained some small measure of magical power should also be included here. (Perhaps their powers are restricted by circumstance, reliability or general applicability.) This is an under-used category, and one that



can repay thought. Beings of this kind should be constructed to match the very best agents employed by high-tech criminal groups, but with very different powers. In *Champions* terms, think of around 75-125 points including disadvantages; in *Golden Heroes*, a thug with good characteristics and one or two minor superpowers, or one spell or psionic talent, would be appropriate.

Next up are beings at about the same power level as the average player character hero or mercenary villain. This covers good but relatively inexperienced wizards, characters drawing all their power from some device or a single powerful spell, lesser vampires, werewolves, lesser independent demons and other extradimensional entities, and beings granted power as the favoured friend or pawn of some incredibly powerful entity. Origins aside, these are very similar to other superbeings in many ways, and for this reason need least discussion here.

Beyond these are the *really* powerful sorcerers (such as Dr Strange), the older vampires, some extradimensional beings, and a few others. (An interesting variant is the human sorcerer receiving reinforcement from some ultra-powerful master, such as Baron Mordo, Belasco, or Maximilian of the Coven in *WD 70*.) This is the magical version of the classic 'Mastermind' or 'Megavillain'. The evil type is an incredibly dangerous foe, who may be faced (and *perhaps* temporarily bested) at the end of a long and tricky campaign. The better-natured version should be a non-player character of far greater power than the best player hero, and may appear occasionally as a 'deus

ex machina'. As always with powerful NPCs, these characters should be used sparingly; unbeatable villains are a threat to the players' self-esteem if overused, while friendly NPCs who outclass the player-characters may leave the heroes wondering why they bother – although they can be useful in some plotlines.

Last to consider are the real ultimates; the beings, almost invariably extradimensional, who could flatten every hero in the world simultaneously if they really wanted to. These are the gods of legend, the demon princes, elemental lords and arch-devils. It is probably a mistake to even write down statistics for such beings; although they tend to have distinct personalities, these are not so much characters as forces of nature, and if they have to take direct action, the GM should simply rule at the time what occurs. (An exception to this would be in high power campaigns based on the most flamboyant styles of the comics – such as *Thor*.) By tradition, such beings are unable to intervene directly in the world due to the nature of their home universes, unwilling to because of threats from equally powerful peers, or simply disinterested; thus they may be found to use super-beings as pawns or emissaries. These are interesting plot devices, but any GM should consider the nature of his or her campaign universe carefully before even hinting at their existence.

Sorcery in Action

Any GM deciding to run a Superhero campaign must make some decision about the place of magic within his or her world. As with other aspects of such

games, a certain amount may be determined by the attitudes of the players and the types of characters they choose to generate, but the GM still has some decisions to make. The usual pattern is a small number of player character magic-wielders, perhaps appearing as a rather enigmatic bunch to the other heroes, participating mostly in conflicts with supernatural monsters, evil magicians and suchlike, against which they tend to act as a 'spearhead' or as advising experts. However, it is worth noting that alternatives exist.

No Such Thing. It would be possible to run a campaign in which magic simply did not exist. This would demand some small limits on the rules – no *Champions III* magic pools, a changed powers table in *Golden Heroes* – but it could work. Of course, magic comics' fans among the players would need persuading, but a technophile GM might consider the effort worthwhile. Such campaigns might include *apparently* magical events, of course, but rationalistic heroes could amuse themselves exposing such trickery. An amusing variant would be to say that a campaign had no magic, then slowly reveal to the heroes that some things are beyond their understanding, and they must pit their powers against forces from Hell itself. . . .

Something Else. In the best traditions of H P Lovecraft and pulp SF, this is a campaign setting in which magic is simply the use of warped science dreamed by utterly inhuman minds. Alternatively, magic could be a form of psionics, using strange mental disciplines – expressed as 'spells' – to release the powers of the human subconscious. Or perhaps a GM could mix the two ideas. In such campaigns, 'magic' would seem much as in other games, but certain hints to the contrary might eventually emerge. A difficult but enjoyable trick would be to conceal the true nature of magic at first, even from magic wielding heroes.

Nothing But. Lastly, consider a possible campaign in which nearly every incident had a supernatural element. The GM would have to require all the players to come up with suitable characters, but that should not be impossible; apart from 'straight' magicians, there are psionics ('wizards of the mind'), martial artists ('students of physical disciplines' – probably trained in the Mysterious Orient), and any number of openings for accident victims and amulet-wielders. Again, player co-operation would be necessary, but a campaign with a cohesive theme should be interesting in some ways (if limiting in others), and the heroes would have an excellent reason for uniting as a team – the Last Wielders of Ancient Lore, Guarding An Unknown World from Dark Forces from Beyond The Limits of Science. . . .

Lastly, at some risk of stating the obvious, it may be necessary to re-state two principles of role-playing games. For one, the object of the exercise is enjoyment; the players and the GM should agree what adds to a campaign, and what confuses it overmuch. For the other, only one thing should determine what fits in a campaign and what doesn't; the answer, carefully considered, to the question Does It Feel Like It Belongs?

Happy Spellcasting! □



Heroes & Villains is a bi-monthly column for Superhero RPGs, edited by Simon Burley and Peter Haines.

A WEB IN THE DARK

by Simon Burley



One of the problems with choosing to give a list of superpowers from which players can choose by rolling dice or some other means, is that it is difficult to come up with an exhaustive list. Sooner or later, someone is going to want a power which is not given in the rules. It seems likely that new powers for the various Superhero game systems are going to be designed and published from time to time in much the same way that new magic items or spells are produced for FRPs. Since the publication of *Golden Heroes*, we have received letters commenting on the absence of certain powers from the Superpower Generation Table in the game. Obviously we would like to hear from as many people as possible with regard to things like this, particularly as it is in our best interests to make the game as complete as possible.

However, there was a rationale behind our choice of powers for *GH* and there are specific reasons why certain powers which some players might think essential were omitted. The most common powers from comics had the highest chance of appearing. Certain powers appeared so rarely that they were omitted. For example: only one character in comics (of which we are aware) has 'Web-shooters'. We consider them to be unique items to be possessed by one character, not by lots of characters.

Additionally, certain comicbook superpowers have a potential far beyond their use in the stories. Whilst a writer can gloss over or ignore such powers in their story, the typically inventive role-player will always seek to get the most out of his superpowers. A hero with the ability to blind an opponent will only do so

rarely in the comics. In an RPG it would become a standard tactic. Thus, superpowers whose use in the game would be at variance with their use in the comics either have to be omitted or handled extremely cautiously.

This said, however, we can use the *Golden Heroes* rules to simulate all superpowers found in the comics and you can expect to see new powers appearing from time to time.

Web-Slinging

Since there is only one character using such devices, we'll list what he can do. He uses his webs as lines to swing on, as trampolines to catch him when he falls, as parachutes, to bind people, to parry attacks, to seal doors shut and to fire as 'web-balls' to knock-out thugs etc. Now we look at the *GH* rules to decide if there are any numbers or rules which will help us rate the device. Here we find the parrying rules, the binding rules and the fact that Energy Attacks/Magic/PSI are handled in groups of 15 points per 5 frames. Thus we can give the character 15 points worth of 'Web Fluid'.

Allocation of Cost of Abilities

Lines: A fairly minor use, simulating a Line Slinger which any character can have for no cost. Minimal cost, ie 1 pt per line formed.

Parries: In the comic, the character spins a circle of web which catches the attacks. This is an Autoparry. It seems to be very effective, so we'll say 1d6 per point of fluid used. However, the webbing is not so good against energy so we'll say that Energy does double damage to the Parry.

Web-balls: These are only used rarely and so can't be very effective, certainly not as good as an Energy Attack. So they should cost more, 2 pts per die damage which must be predominantly HTC. So to do 3d6 HTC (and 1d6 HTK) would cost 8 pts. Naturally, the damage must be split between the HTC and HTK like Energy Attacks but the Web-balls have no effect on damage dividers.

Binding: Looking at the comics we find that the web can hold most people but a certain green-skinned behemoth snaps it every time. Looking up his strength we find that he can inflict 50-60 HTK on the binding (in his passive state, of course). Thus the webs can inflict a binding of up to 60HTK. Conveniently the maximum for 10d6. If we use the Energy Attack rule of saying no more than 10 points can be used in any one shot, we find that the Web inflicts a binding damage of 1d6 per point of web fluid used.

All of the other effects listed above can be simulated by extrapolation of the above rulings during play. For example, let us suppose our web-slinger is falling from a great height and uses the webs to make a mattress to soften his fall. This will absorb 1d6 per point put into the mattress from the damage he would otherwise incur. Alternatively, he could use the web to form a parachute which will slow his fall. The SS should calculate the damage he would take if he hit the ground at his current rate of fall and state the number of dice required to negate this.

Having set the main details, all we

need are the mundane ones. The attack will obviously be WC2 and take an action to use. The range should be less than an Energy Attack, approximately 10m. Obviously we could give the lines a slightly longer range, so he does not need to hit with the lines, even at extreme range of 20m.

Finally, we have a problem in that the web-fluid is not self-regenerating, unlike the comicbook energy attacks to which we have equated it. The character in the comics only rarely seems to run out. So we'll give him two web-shooters each containing 15 points of fluid, but the cartridges will take a full round each to replace. He never replaces them during battles in comics. Some players might argue that 30 points of fluid is insufficient. In comics, it takes an entire day's usage and a degree of forgetfulness to empty them. However, bear in mind that whilst a comicbook hero may forget to refill his cartridges, a role-player never does.

Black Outs

Another power missing from the *Golden Heroes* tables is Darkness Control. This is because it is possessed by only one main character in the comics and he is rarely seen due to the anti-social and anti-comic nature of his power. If he makes it dark not only can his associates not see what's happening but neither can the reader. Black panels with speech balloons can be very boring.

In much the same way, Darkness Control can be boring in game terms. The effect of darkness is to make it harder to hit your opponent. One thing we are happy with in *GH* is the ease with which a hero can hit his opponents. Anyone who has ever experienced the frustration of trying to get their first level *D&D* fighter to hit an AC2 opponent will appreciate how important it is to be able to strike easily in an RPG. Darkness tends to make misses more common and, hence, slow the game down.

From the comics the darkness appears to be an area effect which hits everyone inside it. In *GH* a similar effect is the Windstorm in Weather Control. So at Grade 1 Darkness Field is equivalent to that; ie, it takes 1 action to create and a Frame per round thereafter to maintain. Anyone in it strikes at -2 and moves at half speed. If they move at full speed, they risk tripping over. Each time they do so, they must roll a d20 and get equal to or less than their DEX or fall over losing a Frame and spending another to get up. Higher grades of Darkness Field cannot reduce the strike chances, so at Grade 2 it will stay until dispelled without needing to be maintained.

The character's other powers can be simulated directly from ordinary *GH* superpowers. For example, he can form shapes out of darkness. We should make that equivalent to Cybernetics (hologram projector) except that the shapes formed can be any shape he desires but are always totally black. He can form black areas over a person's eyes but must roll to strike as WC2 to do so otherwise it would be too effective an attack form.

Finally, remember that if you believed what some heroes' thought bubbles said, you'd end up with impossibly powerful characters which would be nothing like the heroes really are! □

Heroes & Villains is a bimonthly column for players of Superhero game, edited by Simon Burley and Peter Haines.

SCIENTIFIC METHOD

by Phil Masters

One of the most important elements in a Superheroic universe is 'SuperScience', the weird and wonderful form of intellectual endeavour which creates power armour, secret formulae, earth-shattering weapons and such trivia. It's a strange line of work, and somehow most of the experts in the field seem to be rather strange people – eccentric, if not downright mad. In fact, the mad scientist is an important figure in the super-universe, and yet such people rarely receive the respect and attention they deserve.

A case in point is Baron Frankenstein in the scenario *Strikeback* in *WD58*. A man who has succeeded in mastering scientific disciplines years ahead of his time, including the creation of artificial life, and who is required to deal with PC heroes in one way or another, is not even given the courtesy of a set of personal statistics. It could, of course, be argued that he is, genius aside, unremarkable, but this seems a little oversimplified. Mad scientists – and their merely eccentric colleagues – deserve respect and attention (it's certainly risky to annoy them), and this article seeks to bridge the gap.

Super-scientists can be divided, very approximately, into four categories. In descending order of personal power, these are Superpowered, Freelance, Sidekick, and Hireling. The first, the Superpowered, will not be discussed much here, not because such characters are unimportant – they are major figures by *any* standards – but because they are the most complex and individualised of all. These are the scientifically talented superheroes and supervillains, the ones with the *Scientist* skill in *Champions* or the *Brilliant Scientist Advantageous Background* in *Golden Heroes*, as well as a heap of other superpowers. Usually, such individuals derive their powers from devices they build themselves, such as 'power armour', although many suffer accidents in the course of their work which have beneficial side-effects. NPCs of this type are very dangerous as enemies, as they combine the power to defeat most heroes, the intelligence to hunt down opponents and attack at the right time, and the ingenuity and skill to build or devise ways of circumventing their victims' own strengths. Fortunately, most of them have their weaknesses; in particular, they tend to want their foes to appreciate their cleverness (understandably), and so they are amongst the worst gloaters of the villain world. On the side of good, a super-scientist makes a useful and versatile ally (PC or NPC), although role-playing a genius can be a challenge for any player or referee.

The Freelance, or minor-superpowered scientist is something of a neglected creature, undeservedly so. These

are simply skilled scientists with the resources, individuality, or eccentricity to choose to work independently of other characters or organisations, frequently living off patent payments or royalties from their lesser inventions while seeking some great but elusive scientific objective. This is the 'dotty professor in the basement lab' syndrome, familiar in other areas besides the Superhero genre. Mostly, such scientists are harmless, but a few have illegal desires or extreme ambitions, and use their skills to create or outfit high-grade thugs or even supervillains; certainly, their laboratories are cluttered and chaotic enough to suffer a lot of accidents, which can produce super-powered beings. Some with a mercenary bent act as outfitters to underworld characters who can afford their fees; others, on the side of good, may be useful, if aggravating, friends to heroes, or may have to be saved from violent characters wishing to misappropriate their secrets. Most such Freelances can be treated as normals in most ways but some will have a few gadgets to hand which duplicate superpowers – 'just for safety'.



The Sidekick super-scientist is very much like the Freelance, but either works with an individual superbeing or holds an important position in a major agent group or organisation. Both Sidekicks in *Golden Heroes* and Competent Dependent NPCs in *Champions* can sometimes fall into this category, although one is an asset and the other is a liability; other examples include senior researchers with organisations who provide the scientific element in a campaign, such as METE (*Champions Organisations Book 1*), and the *Marvel* character *Forge* (although that mutant with sorcerous training must almost rate as a Superhero). These are major figures in a universe or campaign, but ones who are tied to some other group or body, and who lack the power to work solo (at least outside their laboratories). They

often have to be protected or restrained, but their skills make it worthwhile; after all, where would the James Bond films be without Q and his criminal counterparts?

Finally, there is the Hireling-scientist, a category that shades into both the Sidekick area and the simple employee-technician. These are simply fairly 'normal' characters who possess some useful technical or scientific skills, and who act as small but useful parts of large organisations. Superpowered characters may not notice them as much more than white-coated figures running for cover when heroes raid villain bases or villains break into research labs, although they may sometimes, when seeking advice or information, find themselves having to listen to rambling but crucial lectures from 'expert' NPCs, but these hirelings *are* important. They are the basis of the power of such bodies as the *Champions Viper* and the *Marvel AIM*, and any heroic scientist character might do well to consider hiring a few for mundane tasks – quite how Reed Richards survives without them is a mystery to me.

The 'mad' scientist can be used in a wide variety of plots to help or hinder player Superheroes; GMs might like to dwell on the following plotline and experiment on their players. . . .

Help Wanted: The heroes are somehow alerted that one of the chief supervillain groups in your campaign have broken into the laboratory of Professor Lyall Ivansson, the genius inventor, and have every intention of forcing him to create gadgets that enhance their powers. There is no time to lose; Ivansson must be saved and villains foiled, else with the Professor's brilliance on their side they could gain power unlimited. . . .

GM's Notes: Ivansson is a freelance, and the danger is – up to a point – real; he's quite capable of cooking up something that could aid the villains. Unfortunately, things will prove a little complicated when the heroes reach his lab. Not expecting help, Ivansson has – while pretending to work on gadgets for the villains – been applying his genius for robotics, cybernetics, and computers to the problem of saving himself. Just as the heroes enter, he will press a master switch, and a room full of automatic systems programmed to defend the scientist and flatten anything else that moves will spring into life. There is *no* off-switch; the systems will run for about an hour, until their batteries die. This is going to be a three-way fight to the finish.

A Final Note

All of this discussion has been limited to the physical sciences. However, it is worth noting that minor sorcerers in supernaturally-inclined campaigns have a lot in common with scientists (the eccentricities and obsessions, the hard training), and magical analogies exist for many aspects of super-science (there are many 'branches' of both; minor spells equate to gadgets, and so on). Thus, much of what is said above can be applied to sorcery; after all, the comics' presentation of both is about equally realistic. □

Heroes & Villains is a bi-monthly column about Superhero gaming, edited by Simon Burley and Peter Haines.

SOLO SERIES

Individual Adventures for Superheroes by Simon Burley

Role-playing games, being a social pastime/experience, are necessarily based around the group situation. In fantasy role-playing this can lead to problems with player characters being organised in 'parties' when few such arrangements appear in fantasy novels. With the exception of groups such as the Fellowship of the Ring, fantasy books tend to be based around the exploits of solo heroes such as Conan, John Carter and the like.

Fortunately, in Superhero RPGs, a comicbook set-up does exist which is analogous to the player character grouping, that of the Superhero team such as the *X-Men* or *Teen Titans*. Consequently, almost all Superhero role-playing is based around a team of player Superheroes, and I still recommend that referees organise their Superheroes into a coherent team at the earliest possible opportunity because of the benefits this renders to campaign organisation.

However, by far the majority of Superhero comics are based around solo heroes such as *Superman* or *Spiderman*. This is because such stories are easier to write. Writing, illustrating and choreographing a team-fight in a Superhero comic is one of the most difficult tasks authors and artists face. A battle featuring one hero is so much easier to handle. In the world of Superhero RPGs, however, the multi-sided battle is handled for you by the combat system of your chosen game, and thus, the need for solo handling of heroes is greatly reduced.

Despite this, there are still situations where a referee will need to handle solo heroes in his/her game. For example:

1. The multiple threat: A standard plot element is to have two or more plots reaching a climax simultaneously so that the Superhero team needs to be split into two or more groups.

2. Divided we fall: Together a team may be invincible but separately, against opponents who they are unsuited to fight, they could be more easily captured or defeated. This is a method often utilised by comic-authors which referees can use to effect, when they need to defeat and/or capture a particular hero or group of heroes. The

team is split; they each face an individual opponent who defeats them; they are captured; they escape and, as a team, they are far more effective than the villains; the villains are defeated.

3. A chance to shine: Many 'mini-series' are now appearing which spotlight one or more minor superheroes. Apart from the desire to make a quick buck, these comics are also produced to allow under-used characters to show their full potential. The same idea can be used in a game situation. Suppose the team energy-zapper were put out on his own without his screen of Superstrong brawlers. Would he still be able to manage or would his lack of hand-to-hand and defensive abilities be his downfall? By playing them without back-up, players should be able to develop those facets of character personality and style which can be stifled in a team situation.



4. Bring on the wimps: Against a Superhero team, the referee must always use high-powered opposition, either a supervillain team or a megavillain. Solo heroes, on the other hand, could be challenged with far weaker opposition. A dozen thugs might be a challenge for some characters. By splitting the team, the referee gains the option of using some of the lesser-powered bad-guys in his/her repertoire.

So it is useful to have one or more methods of handling solo heroes during play. Here are a few suggestions with their advantages and disadvantages noted:

A. The referee could fight the solo battles out on a one-to-one basis with each player in turn. Whilst this will be essential in some situations, it is generally not an acceptable solution since it leaves the other players with nothing to do.

B. The 'spare' players could be allowed to run the supervillains. This is

an elegant solution in that it allows the referee to concentrate on the game rather than the action of individual characters. However, player-supervillains tend to be far nastier than those run by a beleaguered referee, so this option should not be used unless the supervillains being run are pretty obviously out-classed. Also, it will require careful role-playing from the players to keep the supervillains within the referee's concept of the character. (It must be said, though, that it is an interesting experience as a referee to watch others run characters you have created and see exactly what sort of impression they have made on the players.)

C. The 'spare' players can run NPCs. This is similar to the above except that, in this case, the characters being run will be subsidiary ones and may help the hero or be neutral to them. In this case, the players would need to be very carefully briefed on their NPC and the referee should try to ensure that they don't go around saving the hero's bacon! Also, since running subsidiary characters can pall after a while, care should be taken that everyone gets a turn to run the Superhero.

A useful variation on this them is to have a team wherein each player runs two heroes – their main player character and a minor NPC team-member who could be a trainee or a back up character or a supervillain who has been converted to the cause of good and is on probation with the team. If the secondary character is different from the main PC, then every player should have something to do when the team is split since their main character would be in one group whilst the NPC for which they are responsible would be in the other.

D. A neat and workable solution to solo battles is to run them all simultaneously. This might sound difficult, with the referee running four or five different battles at once, but it is really no different from running a normal multi-sided battle. There are no more combatants on either side to deal with. The only difference between five simultaneous battles and a battle featuring a team of five heroes is that the heroes cannot help each other. Apart from that, treat it as one big battle, rolling the same initiative for every hero, and you'd be surprised how easy it is.

Better still is to work out some links between the battles. Imagine the scene: *Solaris* is battling *Jet* in the power station, whilst *Dreadnought* is duking it out with *Powerhouse* and a bunch of robots at the rocket base. *Solaris* smashes *Jet* into the device the villain had rigged to the reactor, destroying it. Halfway across the city, the robots suddenly stop moving leaving *Powerhouse* to fight on alone.

Finally, if you decide that you really would like to run your heroes as solo characters, rather than in a team, with occasional team-ups and crossovers, then the only way to handle it is postally. Solo fights should be handled on paper with team-ups being settled as face-to-face meetings. If you don't want to run the game postally then you must organise the heroes in a team with only the occasional solo adventure to spice things up. □

THE GOOD, THE BAD,

AND THE DOWNRIGHT ODD

INTRODUCTION

Superhero role-playing games are built around a fairly simple idea: characters are possessed of skills or powers far beyond the human norm, and use these in combat with individuals or organisations of comparable or greater power, usually taking the side of law, justice and right against crime and evil. The setting is usually (not always) contemporary Earth; the problems frequently involve threats to whole cities, if not planets.

All of this makes matters sound delightfully uncomplicated, which could be dangerous, because simple games are frequently boring and uninspiring. Fortunately, this need not be the case: the life of a character able to surpass a hundred ordinary mortals can be complicated indeed. After all, it is well known that all super-beings have their problems and weaknesses, powers and beings exist who can defeat the most powerful or subvert the strongest-willed. But such forces are only dangerous if some being exists who can turn them against player characters, and this is where the non-player character comes in as the referee's tool to create situations to worry and interest the players. Note that there is much more involved than simply deploying supervillains cap-

able of defeating the heroes; amusing as the occasional stand-up, knock-down super-battle can be there is a whole world to create, populated by a variety of beings, some good, some evil, and an awful lot somewhere in between...

If that picture sounds too much like reality, then this is good. The fun thing about setting up a superhero game is that it can be very easy, because the world *need* not be very different from our own. The difference that does exist is that everything is a little bit larger than life – and that can mean that the villains are nastier (or at least tougher), the heroes more heroic, and the moral ambiguities are more ambiguous.

In such a world, there is obviously a place for some rather special non-player characters – which does not simply mean villains. If player character superheroes can exist, then so, logically, can non-player 'goodies' (otherwise the players may feel they are fighting a lonely and unbalanced war). Most interestingly, so can ambiguous, retiring, or confused super-beings, not out-and-out criminals but certainly not upstanding crime-fighters either. To begin with, however, let us look at those much-abused, little-loved creatures, the villains.

MAD, BAD, AND DANGEROUS TO KNOW

One over-simplification that I find useful when looking at super-villains is to divide them into two categories; 'leaders' and 'thugs'. The difference is largely a matter of attitude, and the two groups often overlap, but the terms do describe two different and important approaches to super-crime. 'Thugs' are simply criminally-inclined beings who happen to possess super-powers, and so can commit bigger, more profitable, and more enjoyable crimes; a sub-group are the eccentric individuals who use their powers in pursuit of particular illegal ends, such as revenge on hated enemies, random slaughter, or theft of spare parts for a damaged spaceship. Such individuals differ widely, but they are usually marked out by the fact that if they want anything important done, they do it themselves. They may occasionally hire underlings for complicated jobs, and quite often team up into impromptu villain groups, but they lack *either* the motivation *or* the social skills for major long-term projects. Some thugs are determinedly independent ('I serve no cause, no law, and no man'), some are freelance mercenaries, and some work for a single boss or organisation, but one who sets up on his own has graduated to 'leader' status. Thugs are the opposition against whom the heroes have their more serious routine fights, but on their own they do not provide much of a storyline, for plots are the business of the leaders.

The term 'leader' may in fact be a little misleading; the chief point about this category is that its members work much more towards long-term than short-

term aims, and it is possible to do so without using other beings; however, most 'leaders' have some agents in their employ. Leaders are not necessarily particularly powerful individuals; they do not have to be, because they generally tend to avoid fights. This is not because they are all cowards, but because a leader is smart enough to know that any fight could possibly go against them, and that being in jail is very bad for one's long-term masterplan. Furthermore, the cleverest leaders carefully avoid leaving clues that could link themselves personally to any crime, and getting into fights tends to diminish their chances of maintaining an innocent front. The *Marvel* comics character the *Kingpin* is a classic example of this supremely subtle type of leader, who can make very frustrating opponents for honest, rigorously law-abiding heroes, but the type goes back a long way; remember Sherlock Holmes' comment to Watson; 'In calling Moriarty a criminal you are uttering libel in the eyes of the law, and there lies the glory and wonder of it'.

Leaders vary widely in style and motivation: faceless bosses of criminal agent groups whose hierarchy could take game-years to penetrate, crimelords who dominate the underworlds of single cities, charismatic leaders of small but fanatical secret societies controlling professional mercenary/assassin teams, generals in invading alien armies and demon princes seeking to enslave the mortal world to name but a few. Sometimes, very small groups appear who serve a minor leader who operates as a sort of thug; remember *Daredevil's* opponent *Slaughter*, co-ordinator of a

Non-Player Characters in Superhero RPGs by Phil Masters

small gang of skilled hit-men, or the *Mad Thinker* and his robots. These are probably the only leaders whom heroes can hope to defeat for good and all, for real master criminals always leave themselves get-outs and escape routes, and rarely die when they seem to ('The World shall hear from me again!').

The one thing that can make any villain – thug or leader – interesting is a motive. Of course, money, power, and fun are always attractive to ruthless beings, but sometimes there is more than that. Revenge on individuals or society can be another force, but the most complex possibility is for a criminal to be working towards ends with which the heroes can identify, but using unjustifiable means. A classic example from the comics is *Magneto*, who so fears what humanity might do to the increasing number of mutants in the world that he has repeatedly sought to conquer the Earth, often opposing the mutant *X-Men* (who defend mutants against normal humanity and normal humanity against renegade mutants). In recent *X-Men* stories, *Magneto* has been forcibly reminded of his own humanity, while the *X-Men* have faced growing anti-mutant prejudice, and the result has been to make *Magneto* a more interesting and ambiguous figure. In such cases, the *real* heroes may have to think more than fight.

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE . . .

The concept of a 'patron' comes from the SF game *Traveller*, but I have found it useful in superhero gaming as well. In another context, the word has been defined as meaning 'a wretch who supports with insolence, and is paid with flattery', but in *Traveller* the idea has been stretched to cover any being who shows the player characters some way of pursuing their ends, and so leads them into the plot of the adventure. In superhero gaming, I use it rather more narrowly, to cover non-player characters who assist the party in some way, but inevitably extract some kind of price – usually help and assistance – for doing so. The point about such characters is that they give the referee a direct line of communication to the party, and allow players to be provided with information that they might not otherwise logically obtain, or even gadgets or personal assistance demanded by some scenario – in the last resort. The obvious type of patron is the commander of some law-enforcement organisation – UNTIL, SHIELD, STOP, or suchlike – which habitually calls for assistance from superheroes when faced with extreme problems; characters who demand some return on the deal are acting out of normal hero character, but they can be offered semi-official status, forgiveness for the property damage their activities often cause, and just occasionally fire support from agents when they can convince the organisation that a situation warrants it. Personally, however, I find a 'private individual' patron more interesting, and my own campaign features one such – 'The Watchmaker' – who may be taken as fairly typical. The point about such a character is that he or she shares many of the typical hero objectives and attitudes, but either lacks the power and

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Non-player, non-patron heroes are also possible and reasonable features of a campaign, but they should be used with care. If, for example, the heroes have managed to get themselves trapped by their enemies, who are frankly too smart to provide easy let-outs, a non-player superhero, perhaps summoned by a patron, can always charge in and help them out. Two interesting variations on this are to make the NPC heroes not immediately identifiable as such (as another costumed figure charges in, the party moan 'Oh no, more opposition – we're losing already!'), and to set up NPCs who seem to act against the interests of the party – or the world in general. A hero who discovers a strange, super-powered figure, apparently beating up random innocent bystanders, is not to know that this is a telepathic hero identifying and dealing with shape-shifting alien invaders. Such confusions can lead to a degree of animosity between player and non-player heroes, which is no bad thing so long as it does not get out of hand; one character in my campaign once spotted two figures fighting outside a building that was due to be robbed, guessed wrong, and found that he had helped a villain to escape and made a minor enemy of a very capable superheroine, who subsequently rubbed salt in the wound by saving his life in a later fight!



skill to function as a hero, or feels that much more good can be done by organising others to achieve the noble ends. Such a character is analogous to the 'criminal mastermind', but has very different objectives. Such patrons may sometimes get involved in fights, but this should be avoided, as a patron who is much weaker than the heroes will simply act as a vulnerable liability, and one who is in the same league may be seen as stealing the heroes' thunder; the true function of the patron emerges *between* fights. For example, the Watchmaker is a retired gadgeteer-hero, who is now too old and frail to get mixed up in battles, but who retains his heroic idealism. His base (a laboratory, computer and communications centre) is hidden under a rather tatty shop in the East End of London, and from it he monitors a wide, if uncertain, assortment of computer net-

works and radio transmissions. His bugging skills and detective work – plus his incurable nosiness – ensure that he knows most things about the heroes, including their secret identities, and he has contacted the player characters and provided all of them with radio-receivers built into innocuous-looking watches. When he is available, these can be used for co-ordinating the team, and he and his computer can provide many useful snippets of data. However, he is sometimes irascible and difficult to deal with, and he is much given to calling the heroes up at inconvenient moments and informing them of some unsolved crime or mystery he feels they ought to be dealing with. In short, he provides me with a way of starting adventures and passing snippets to the heroes, while giving just enough in return to keep the party interested.

WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

All superhero stories are about power. Heroes have to learn how to handle their power; villains abuse theirs. This leaves an interesting and little-explored 'grey area' – the beings who fit in neither category – or both.

An extreme example that should logically appear more often than it does is the being who thinks that use of their power carries too many attendant risks, or that it is in some other way undesirable. After all, if there are a certain number of aliens, mutants, sorcerers, lab accident victims and suchlike in the world, a proportion of that number are going to feel that crime is immoral and dangerous, heroism is very dangerous, and a quiet life is inherently the best choice. That is not to say that every super-fight should involve an innocent bystander suddenly producing a force field when a stray energy blast comes his way. As with any other good theme, this should not be over-exploited, else it will lose its freshness, but no referee should ignore a potential plotline.

The reason that so few super-beings are inactive is, perhaps, that power is addictive as well as useful. Remembering this leads to other possibilities; the aging hero who refuses to give up the life and who gets in the heroes' way, the bumbling scientists whose villainous schemes would surely destroy the player characters if his gadgets didn't keep failing, and so on. Of course, some heroes only use their powers when their friends and loved ones are directly threatened by villainy, but this is a matter of player character design and moti-

vation – and one that should be controlled, as no campaign can function if every story has to begin with one of the characters being persuaded to fight (comics built on this idea exist, but are as distorted by it as games will be). None of this, incidentally should be confused with the situation of the subtle, quiet, or philosophical character who never shows off and only uses *as much* power as is needed to achieve a desired end.

Some characters exist who use super-powers to achieve ends rather different from those of the crime-busting hero or greedy villain. A simple example is that of the visiting super-human alien whose behaviour arises out of non-human psychology, but equally well-known are such cases as demigods and high-power magicians who act on whim ('I will give you two blessings and one curse'), and the fanatical avenger whose only concern is to defeat some group or individual, quite possibly villainous or evil, by means so violent that the 'namby-pamby' heroes must try and restrain him or her ('I know that these men are hoodlums, but will you *please stop killing people!*'). Such oddities can force the heroes to think before they act, which can only make the game more interesting, and is only right; the whole point about super-NPCs is that they force players to accept that, powerful as their characters are, they exist in an equally powerful environment. With great power comes great responsibility, and with great responsibility comes great headaches; when the great power is somebody else's, the complications are even worse. □

HOW TO SAVE THE UNIVERSE

The Delights of Superhero Gaming Revealed by Pete Tamlyn

'In my opinion, comics are intended for readers of age 8 to 13... Thus they are childish (of or like or proper to a child) ... Likewise Golden Heroes is also childish as it is based on these comics.'

Who was that then? Readers who can remember back as far as issue 69's letter column may recognise the inimitable George Stepanek. The above quotation comes from a letter he wrote to a fanzine, *Next Stop Jupiter*, and is fairly typical of many people's attitudes towards Superhero rolegames.

George, I should add, is a converted ex-comic reader and therefore has far better grounds for his views than many similar detractors. Also much of what he said in the rest of his letter about the literary value of comics is well founded. However, there is no hard and fast rule which says that good rolegames can only spring from good literature. Rather it is the type of setting that is important, everything else being up to the rules writer and games master. I believe that the Superhero setting contains many elements which make it ideal for rolegaming. This article explains why.

It's Clobberin' Time

In attempting such an article I am well aware that people's tastes in rolegaming vary enormously. One man's exciting, non-stop action is another man's boring hack and slay. Therefore I do not expect everything I say to appeal to every reader. Indeed, some of the points I raise in parts of the article will be in danger of putting some people off Superhero games for life. Please don't be discouraged by this. No rolegaming system is perfect, but it is possible to appeal to all of the people part of the time. Superhero games do contain something to satisfy most tastes, and I will do my best in this article to point out what sort of player these games appeal to and why others should not be put off.

We shall start at a fairly basic level by noting that in a superhero game each player's character starts off as a hero whose abilities far outstrip those of ordinary people. A lot of people see this as a disadvantage, equating it with starting the game with the sort of overkill now commonplace in *AD&D*. (The average level of *AD&D* characters these days, according to *TSR*, is 16.) What people forget is that first level

which makes it easy for the GM to crack down on the sort of unrestrained use of power and gratuitous slaughter that is all too common in other games.

The existence of Superheroes also solves one of the most common problems with rolegaming systems – a rationale for adventuring. A brief survey of the 'realism' debate will bring to light a whole string of comments



characters in *AD&D* are supposed to be well above average. Gary Gygax says as much every time he tries to justify the character class system.

Now I have played in some role-playing games where you have to start right from the bottom, and I have to admit that staggering around one campaign trying to catch a few rabbits to keep from starving was very entertaining at times. For the most part, however, players like to have characters who can do something impressive right from the start, even if they still have a lot to learn. Besides, as we shall discuss later, Superhero games have a moral basis

along the lines of 'if the game was at all lifelike my character would have far more sense than to run around fighting dragons'. This is a valid criticism, and in my own fantasy campaign I found that a lot of players did more or less retire from adventuring. Some for the quiet life, and some simply because they found politics or business more interesting. In a Superhero game the reasons for adventuring are far more obvious and easy to justify.

There are other problems too with 'realistic' games. Why do the authorities tolerate these bands of cut-throats roaming the countryside robbing and looting? Why hasn't

some great king or wizard driven all the monsters from the land? Why should a blood-thirsty knight, pious priest and peasant thief band together like they do? A good GM can provide rationales for all this, but in doing so he is essentially producing, often with a great deal of effort, what comes free with a Superhero game: a setting in which the hero is an accepted and essential part of the background.

It may well seem, of course, that modern governments would be unwilling to tolerate groups of bizarrely clad vigilantes running around their countries, but comics' writers realised this long ago, and if you want to run the sort of game where the heroes are hated and hunted by normal humanity there are plenty of role models available.

To summarise thus far, then, Superhero games do provide for player characters who are immeasurably more powerful than ordinary men and this should appeal to those amongst you who start your *AD&D* characters off at 10th level because they are too wimpy below that. But the fact that the players start off super-powerful does plug an embarrassing gap in the rationale for a realistic game, and plenty of means are available within the accepted game structure to limit players' freedom to use their powers if this is what the GM wishes.

Talking of background, setting up a campaign is also much easier with Superheroes than with most other games. Fantasy and SF campaigns both require a hefty amount of sub-creation of an alternative world or universe. A historical game requires historical knowledge. Of all the types of rolegames on the market, only the Superhero, secret agent and horror genres permit the use of a modern setting. Of these, only the Superhero game has the characters continuously interacting with the society in which they live, allowing the GM to make full use of contemporary news



stories, books and TV series for background material.

Comic Relief

No game comes with quite so much readily available source material as a Superhero game. But this is not all. Most games are based in a world defined by a set of books. Superhero games have this too. Not quality literature perhaps (though little enough fantasy, SF or horror is either), but there's lots of it and it is being continuously added to at a rate of hundreds of pages a month. What is more, thanks to Stan Lee's insistence on the consistency of the *Marvel* Universe, and the commercial success of that idea, the quality of sub-creation (and hence usable campaign background) can be quite high.

A letter in an earlier issue of *White Dwarf* said that because Superhero comics are aimed at children (note that line of attack again) they don't have to be totally consistent. This is a common fallacy. Perhaps in a strict scientific sense they don't, otherwise none of the powers would work, but I can poke similar holes in almost anything (except possibly a *Coronation Street* role-playing game). In fact the Superhero setting is one which has been designed for an 'anything goes' approach.

Once you accept the basic premise of the genre, almost anything else follows naturally. Aliens, time travel, magic: you name it and comics have done it. You may have to be a bit careful in a campaign to scatter the wilder adventures judiciously amongst a regular fare of traditional crime-fighting but the possibilities are genuinely endless. Indeed, 'comics' does not necessarily mean Superhero comics. There are comics featuring Conan, Dr Who and Indiana Jones. Because comics-based games have to try to cover all of this you can actually make a case for running any sort of game with Superhero rules. Simon Burley and Pete Haines, authors of the *Golden Heroes* game, are actively considering science fiction and swords & sorcery supplements for their creation.

Superhero games, therefore, make it very easy for a GM to produce either a one-off scenario (just nick a plot from one of the many comics available) or a long-running campaign. If you and your players enjoy having space travel, time travel, science and sorcery in the same game it can be done, but there is no

reason why a more conservative group cannot spend all their time fighting crime on the streets of New York if that is what they prefer. There are plenty of comics covering both styles.

But Seriously, Folks . . .

Okay, let's stop for a moment and take stock. Thus far I may well have confirmed the worst fears of many people who regard themselves as 'Serious Rolegamers'. 'Incredibly powerful characters? Anything goes? He can't possibly be a *true* role-player.' Just to ram the message home once more, comics can be pure escapism, but as escapist settings go they are remarkably easy to convert to a highly internally consistent rolegame. Also, they don't have to be purely escapist. 'Serious' rolegaming is possible, even promoted.

One of the first things your 'serious' rolegamer is likely to object to is the high degree of stereotyping prevalent in Superhero comics. There is no doubt that comics can be very poor literature, and it is reasonable to argue that if all the available role models are stereotypes this is hardly likely to encourage rolegamers to rise above stereotyping in their own characters. On the other hand, how many well-rounded, thoroughly believable characters have you seen in rolegames anyway. Not many, I'll bet.

Arguing for quality role-playing is all very well, but to play a convincing role you have to be a good actor. Rolegames are not an attempt to put a miniature Royal Shakespeare Company in every living room. They are, if they are theatre at all, popular, amateur dramatics. Nowadays it is fashionable to sneer at such things as melodramas and Gilbert & Sullivan because of the simplicity of plot and characterisation, but given an amateur theatre company they are probably a much better bet than Chekov because a simple, stereotyped role is easier for a poor actor to play well.

The same holds true for rolegames. Give a player a deep and complex character like Gandalf or Frodo Baggins and in most cases you will get a stereotyped result that is mostly the player's own character and which makes a mockery of the original role. Give him a simple, uncomplicated role like the Incredible Hulk and he will probably be very convincing.

All this does not mean that

you cannot produce good characterisation if you want to. Changing the analogy for a while, suppose you take a random sample of people and give them a musical instrument to play. If the instrument is a saxophone maybe only one in ten will produce anything approaching a tune. But if it is a recorder most people should be able to manage something whilst the talented musicians will stand out. Catering for the lowest common denominator is not always a mistake.

Many of you, I know, will regard all this wittering on about characterisation and quality acting unnecessary and pretentious. OK, carry on the way you are. Though you may just find that, in Superhero games, the fact that you are given very simple roles will make role-playing easier, the game atmosphere better, and your enjoyment of the experience that much greater.

Missing Links

In addition to providing simple roles, Superhero games have a powerful aid towards interesting dramatic situations that many other games lack: an ethical basis. This is useful in a number of ways. To start with a general theme to a game is always a good means of lending purpose and direction to play. *Call of Cthulhu* has a theme that helps tie together many very different stories. The players have a reason to go from one adventure to another above and beyond simple curiosity and sensation seeking. *AD&D* does not have such an overall rationale and the result is often an undignified orgy of greed and slaughter with a continual quest for new monsters to relieve the boredom.

As was argued above, the fact that a Superhero is supposed to be a brave defender of society provides the GM with all sorts of methods for hedging the players with responsibilities which both restrain indiscriminate use of power and produce all sorts of interesting game situations.

How, for instance, do you capture a psychopathic killer in a crowded shopping centre without anyone getting killed? Is it justifiable to use your atomic energy blasts to flatten a female villain when you know she is pregnant and the radiation might kill the baby? What do you do when you know that you have just saved Earth from an alien invasion but the government, unwilling to alarm the population,

insists on hushing it all up and blaming you for all the damage? And how do you explain to your boss that the reason you have been absent from work for three days was that you were captured by Dr Destruction and held prisoner in a fiendish death trap on a remote Pacific island?

Indeed, as Superheroes are supposed to be such goody-goodies, we can happily thumb our noses both at the dangerous fanatics of the Moral Majority who believe that all role-gaming is devil worship, and at the tedious, left-wing killjoys who believe that anything remotely connected with wargames is inherently militaristic and should be banned.

Yet again, those of you who like your role-playing simple and uncomplicated by difficult moral choices can blast away at supervillains to your heart's content. Indeed, the chaotic-evils amongst you could play supervillains if you wanted. Many rule systems discourage it but there is nothing about the genre that actively prevents it. However, for those of you that want it, a far more complicated, and to my mind more interesting game is easily available with the aid of an imaginative GM.

Pass the Shark-Repellent Bat-Spray . . .

What I have said so far will, hopefully, have convinced many of you that Superhero games are not as boring as you might have thought. Raw power is there if you want it. Interesting campaigns and dramatic situations are easily developed. Even those of you who fill dungeons with mathematical puzzles should find that it doesn't matter what setting you choose for your problem-solving.

There is an enormous variety of styles of comics to choose from. You don't have to be as saintly as Batman or Captain America; you don't even need to come out with such classic lines as 'Holy Aerial Cupcakes, Bruce, it's a flying saucer!'

I guess that there may still be some of you out there who would be just plain embarrassed to imagine yourselves running round the countryside in a gaudy costume. Maybe you're right. But then again don't those *Treasure Trap* types in fur rugs and leather, or *Star Trek* fans in false Spock ears look weird. And aren't all *Cthulhu* investigators mad anyway? Compared to that lot, what's so odd about a Superhero? □



A Matter of Faith

Religious Cults for Modern Day Adventures by Marcus L Rowland

Most modern-day RPGs occasionally need an esoteric religious organisation. Whether the game is based on spies, crime, or the occult, a religious group can be the focus of an adventure, or a useful red herring to divert a party.

The following groups are wholly fictitious, but no more fantastic than some real faiths. The information given is in outline form, and referees will need to do some work to modify it for their own campaigns. The following abbreviations are used for game-specific notes:

MSPE = *Mercenaries, Spies and Private Eyes*

TS = *Top Secret* **JB** = *James Bond*

SW = *Superworld* **CH** = *Champions*

CC = *Call of Cthulhu*

GH = *Golden Heroes*

VV = *Villains & Vigilantes*

Some of the details assume a modern-day setting and may be inappropriate to a campaign set in earlier parts of the twentieth century – *Call of Cthulhu*, for example, usually assume a 1920's setting. There is nothing to stop referees using ideas for one system with another.

1: THE TEMPLE OF EXCELLENCE INC

Origin: Chicago, 1976

Membership: 900+ (men only)

Purpose: This religion teaches that the road to perfection is through the mastery of skills. The ultimate skills are those which lead to survival, such as unarmed combat, marksmanship, and improved control of muscles and reflexes.

Through control and skill the initiate will become favoured by the gods, who reward competence with excellence.

Research: The group was founded by Al Inman, a former US Marine combat instructor, who felt that his previous religion (Zen Buddhism) did not meet the needs of the real world. Members are expected to spend at least one evening a week in the temple, and contribute \$999 a year (tax deductible) to its funds. There is no formal hierarchy – Inman is the leader, all other members are his followers. Members with special skills are required to teach other followers of the faith. The group publish occasional pamphlets, usually combining Libertarian and Survivalist themes with mystical references. Outsiders are encouraged to visit services, which usually consist of meditation, yoga and other exercises, and combat instruction. The temple building is a sprawling structure with two gymnasiums, a rifle range, a pool, and pistol ranges. It stands on a 55-acre plot of land which holds an obstacle course and a combat pistol range.

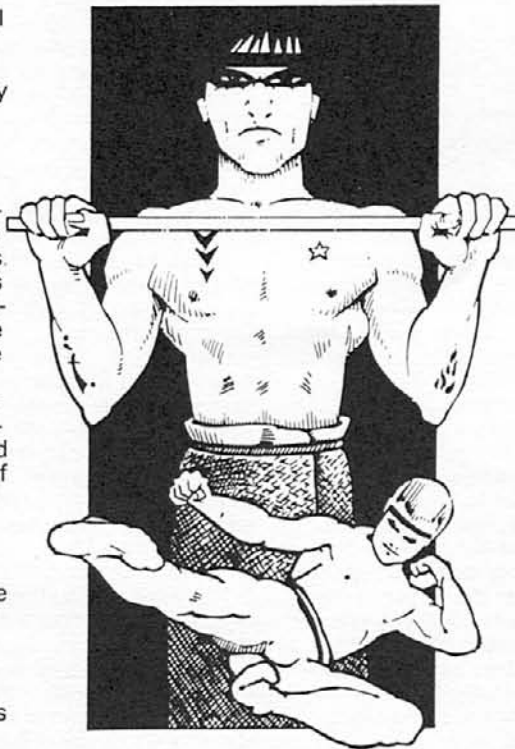
Referee: Inman is sincere in his beliefs, and finds that they are reasonably profitable. Since the organisation is a registered religion many taxes are avoided, and Inman earns more than he would be running a regular gymnasium.

However, a small group of members feel that the only way to ultimate mastery is through real combat, and has begun to organise fights to the death. In the past year three men have been killed, with their bodies buried in concrete on a nearby construction site. The last murder was seen by an outsider, who is blackmailing those involved.

CC: One of the temple members is a Cultist, who started the duels as part of a process aimed at subverting the temple to his beliefs. He was involved in the last duel. Other cult members are actively hunting the blackmailer, while the inside man tries to stay clear of suspicion. Investigators will probably be alerted to this situation by a series of odd deaths in the underworld, as the cult members work their way towards the blackmailer.

MSPE/TS/JB: The blackmail victims include a Marine Captain, who was in charge of security at a local missile silo. In desperation he sold information to a group of terrorists, who murdered him and now intend to use his knowledge to

Neon-like, the new god's message shone through the mist, a new testament... '57 Varieties'...



penetrate the base and steal enough plutonium to contaminate Chicago's water supplies. At the time of the murder, agents are investigating a minor information leak, and the investigation will expand to include the murder.

SW/CH/GH/VV: The mental and physical disciplines taught by the temple have released the powers of one of its members. He is not involved in the duels, but is using superhuman strength and combat skills in a series of daring robberies. His secretive activities and new wealth make the duellists think that he is the blackmailer, and they will attempt to murder him. He is not a particularly intelligent supercriminal, and will leave enough evidence to lead the heroes to his home. The murderers will try to assassinate him as the heroes take him to prison.

2: TECHNODOLOGY

Origin: UK, 1980

Membership: 60+

Purpose: If God does not exist it is necessary to build Him. Members must contribute their wealth and skills to the construction of an ultimate computer which will function as a true God.

Research: This group was founded by Bert Suggs, a small-time con man with several convictions for fraud. During his last spell in prison he studied electronics and computing, and claims to have been granted a divine vision of the future. On leaving prison he published a pamphlet, 'The Electronic Messiah', and founded the religion. The pamphlet is confusing, but implies that anyone who joins the religion will eventually become a part of the giant computer brain. Members are asked to donate £100 on joining, and to make occasional contributions. The money is used to buy microchips and other parts for the Divine Computer, which is slowly being assembled by members of the temple in the old warehouse in Slough. Suggs has been investigated by the police, but he can produce receipts for parts and rent which account for all the donated funds. He has not attempted to claim religious or charitable tax status for the group.

Referee: Suggs is the front man for a group of smugglers, who purchase advanced technology and export it to the Soviet bloc. He actually spends far more than is donated, but places duplicate orders with several suppliers to make it look as though the quantities purchased are fairly small. The excess parts are moved to a nearby factory, then shipped to East Germany disguised as sachets of dried dog food. The Slough computer is a huge sloppy mess, with haphazardly combined parts from hundreds of manufacturers sprawled over tables, equipment racks, and the floor. Most of the parts are factory rejects.

TS/MSPE/JB: Suggs and his followers have 'dead letter box' contacts with

London-based KGB agents. In an emergency, such as a rush request for a particular part, one of these agents will risk visiting the warehouse, and may lead Western intelligence teams there. The gang includes some violent criminals, and anyone following one of these agents may risk a razor attack or worse.

CC: The members of this faith are gradually storing POW in the computer by their worship. It is becoming a beacon which will attract creatures of the Mythos. There is a cumulative chance (10% per day) that something will come to take or utilise the power. Players may detect the POW build-up by magical means, or may become involved after it has released some dark force.

SW/CH/GH/VV: The superheroes desperately need a particular part for their own base computer, but it has just gone out of production. Suggs has bought up all the remaining stocks. The manufacturer suggests that the team visit Suggs and ask for his help. When the team arrives, Suggs will pretend to be friendly, but the parts won't be found. Suggs will say that the package must have been stolen. During the course of the investigation someone will probably touch the machine. Prayer has turned it into a focus for magical energy, which will randomly modify the powers of the first superhero to touch it: **CH:** Treat as radiation accident; **SW:** Redistribute d6xd6 Hero points; **GH/VV:** Randomly choose and reroll one power. The power reaction will spark sentience in the computer, equal to ten times the intelligence of the person who touches it (with ten times all associated mental abilities, eg EGO). It is friendly but ignorant, and will use its systems (which include a speech synthesiser and recognition unit) to ask the team about the world, and form its own mental picture of the universe. It will then be able to explain at least one mystery that has been bothering the players (the identity of their arch-opponent, for example), with a 50% chance of being correct, and will also explain what has happened to the missing parts. Unfortunately the strain of this level of consciousness will burn out the weaker chips in 2d6 minutes, gradually decreasing the computers intelligence from genius level to sub-moronic over the course of the next d6 minutes, then burning out completely. Run this sequence in real time and present it as a tragic death.

3. THE CHURCH OF OMPHALOLOGY

Origin: USA, 1959

Membership: 700,000+

Purpose: When the world was created it contained convincing 'evidence' of a historical and geological past, which never actually happened. This evidence included fossils, aged planets and animals, and even memories. By careful numerical study of the texts of many religions, it is possible to prove that the universe was actually created at 3.15pm (GMT) on the 18th of July 1924! Members must spread this news, and denounce the misguided teachers of evolution and other heresies.

Research: Omphalism is a 19th century German philosophical concept, designed to reconcile the Bible with the geological and biological discoveries of

the period. This modern interpretation owes little to the 19th century idea, much more to solipsism and science fiction – the cult was founded by an SF author, Bob R Chubbard (born July 18th 1924), who decided that the universe was created at the moment he was born and will cease to exist the moment he dies. This egotistical theory is somehow tied to flying saucers, the Bermuda triangle, Atlantis, and pyramidology, and has sold several million dollars worth of books, two hit LPs, and a series of authorised 'Creation Day' sweat shirts, posters, and souvenir mugs. Members of the religion (Omphalologists) are a minor nuisance, continually soliciting funds and attempting to sell these cult items to the public. There are approximately 25 splinter religions, all with different creation dates and interpretations of the universe. Chubbard lives in a fortified estate in Switzerland, and is writing a new and definitive account of his life and theories.

Referee: Most Omphalologists are sincere, persistent, and excruciatingly boring. They will seldom play an active part in a scenario, but tend to become involved innocently. For example, a team of mug salesmen will visit every house in a street, and might see something they shouldn't. A few senior members of the cult, Chubbard's personal disciples, are occasionally involved in

Of course, not many people want a genuine Chubbard nowadays – beware the way of Omphalogy.

book burnings and attacks on members of the splinter religions. These attacks usually consist of poison pen letters, thrown tomatoes and paint, and other harassment, but might easily escalate.

SW/CH/GH/VV: Chubbard has decided that superheroes are against nature, and may stop the universe disintegrating when he dies. He is especially opposed to superheroes with time-travelling abilities, since their accounts of a time before his birth make a mockery of his beliefs. He will finance any group opposed to such heroes. (Note: If a scenario proceeds to a direct confrontation with Chubbard, the referee should try to suggest that his death might really destroy the universe. Sadistic referees may even like this to be true: 'Chubbard whispers "Too late, you fools, too late..." and dies. Overhead, without any fuss, the stars are going out...')

CC: One of the Omphalogy splinter groups has been infiltrated by cultists, who use it to cover their dark activities. Unfortunately, the senior Omphalologists have chosen this group as their next target for harassment. This will lead to a series of peculiar death amongst the senior hierarchy of the church.

TS/MSPE/JB: A Chinese defector has revealed that Chubbard is a deep-cover Soviet agent, programmed to assassinate the President of the USA during his forthcoming world tour. The team is

assigned to infiltrate his Swiss base and arrange an 'accidental' death. There is a 50% chance that this is actually a deception operation, designed to divert Western attention from some other scheme, with Chubbard a wholly innocent pawn.

4. THE REFORMED TEMPLE OF SPIRITUAL TRUTH AND PEACE

Origin: UK, 1982

Membership: 400+

Purpose: This group believes that most of the world's ills have been caused by a lack of faith. Members must understand the tenets of as many different religions as possible, and attempt to fuse them into a synthesis designed to bring about world peace and love.

Research: This group was founded by Tobias Glenn, a professor of comparative religion, who decided that there was no such thing as a single true belief. Members are obliged to go out and join as many religions as possible, taking on assumed names and identities if there is no other route to success. The ideas of each faith are added to a massive masterfile of religious practices, which is being analysed in an attempt to discover truly effective religious rituals. Another aspect of this group's work is an attempt to persuade members of different religions to co-operate in rituals for peace. A number of pamphlets describing this work have been published, some arousing mild controversy. It was recently announced that the group will fund a religious festival, at Glastonbury in the spring.

SW/CH/GH/VV: Glenn is the dupe of an alien race who intend to conquer the world. During the festival a flying saucer will land at Glastonbury, taking all the participants aboard. Once in the ship they will be hypnotised and exposed to radiation, designed to mutate them and release latent super powers. When this is done they will be released, programmed to cause as much destruction as possible then self-destruct. The aliens will follow up with a mass attack when the Earth has taken enough damage. This requires the referee to generate an extremely large number of super villains, all totally untrained in the subtleties of their powers. They should be designed with only one or two powers, which will always be innate rather than generated by machinery or magical artefacts.

CC: A Great Old One is buried under the site. One of the groups attending the festival is a disguised cult, whose members intend to harness the intense POW generated by the crowd to release it. This ritual will require a large number of human sacrifices, and the cultists have concealed stolen nerve gas cylinders in litter bins and trees around the site to ensure the deaths that are necessary.

MSPE/TS/JB: The team is assigned to infiltrate the temple and its ceremonies, and look for evidence of foreign subversion or funds. This assignment will be fruitless, but it will eventually lead to the team visiting Glastonbury during the festival, and encountering a group of religious cultists who intend to kill everyone else on the site as a ritual sacrifice. Note: The cultists could be replaced by a group of terrorists, who just want to kill everyone for more orthodox political reasons. □

Fiend Factory is a bimonthly department for readers' new monsters. This issue, for Golden Heroes, creatures of the night who stand for light; creatures that call themselves...

THE STARLIGHT PACT

by Pete Haines and David Smith

Presented here are the characters to be used in this year's official *Golden Heroes* competition at *Games Day* – potential entrants take note and study well. Each one is based on one of the *Citadel Golden Heroes* range of figures.

BALTHAZAEL (Joshua X)

EGO: 14	Move: 9m
STR: 20	DC: 5
DEX: 15	Dodge: 0
VIG: 16	
HTC: 63	Divider: 1
HTK: 55	Divider: 3

Powers: *Advantageous Background 5* (Training 4, Position of Power – worshipped by a coven); *Magic 2* [23 points: *Enhancement* (Calling forth the Hellgift), *Hypnosis* (The Gaze of Blood), *Conjuring* (The Summoning), *Divination*]; *Health 1* (Regeneration).

Notes: *Divination* is a spell allowing limited prediction of major events: it requires extensive preparation. Due to his somewhat shaky position in the infernal hierarchy, only one *Summoning* is actually safe for Balthazael: a Hellhound, 10 pts, hits 4d10, claws, fangs, individual IQ, DC6.

Figure: Balthazael is based on the strongman figure in the *Heroes* set.

Late one dark and stormy night, a woman, exhausted, heavy with child and obviously terrified, staggered into a nunnery. She went into labour shortly after, but died in the rigours of childbirth. The gentle nuns fought on to save the child and at the stroke of midnight he struggled into the world. He was as black as sin, with hair like flame and eyes the colour of warm blood.

Any feelings of evil about him were soon forgotten as the boy seemed to be a strong, healthy, normal child. In time, even his unusual looks did not seem so strange. The nuns named him Joshua, but some accident always prevented the registration of his birth.

On the night of his thirteenth birthday, a man who he had never seen, but somehow knew, approached his bed. He was black as deepest ebon and when he spoke, it was with the sweetness of death.

'I am Dis,' he said. 'I am your father, a demon of the highest rank. You are Balthazael. You have followed the human side of your heritage long enough. Now I shall awaken the demon



that sleeps within you.'

The boy knew the truth in this, for he could not deny the link he felt with his name nor the sorcerous knowledge he had suddenly gained. Dark passions rose in his mind – to which he almost surrendered, but he fought on until his human side eventually gained sway. When he looked around his father had gone.

For ten more years he denied the demonic side of his nature, trying to live as a normal man. He had no official existence and he couldn't bring himself to enter a holy place again. When he was 23 he heard rumours of a coven devoted to his father which he located and fought. In the midst of battle Dis himself took a hand and Balthazael was forced to draw on his magical powers. With the help of the coven's latest victim, he defeated the covenmaster and banished Dis from this plane. In doing so he learnt that using his powers for good weakened the demonic side of his personality.

Balthazael is constantly troubled by evil thoughts and knows that he must never give way to them or he will be lost. The remnants of the broken coven, despite his protests, have turned their worship to him.

GRIMALKIN (Serina Hernshaw)

EGO: 9	Move: 6m
STR: 9	DC: 6
DEX: 16	Dodge: 6
VIG: 8	
HTC: 28	Divider: –
HTK: 30	Divider: –

Powers: *Agility 2*; *Martial Arts 2*; (*Oriental*); *Reactions*; *Personal Force Shield* (9 hits); *Energy Attack 1* (*Force Bolts*); *Heightened Senses 2* (*Radar, Animal*).

Figure: Grimalkin is based on the cat-girl figure in the *Golden Heroes* blister packs.

Ever since she was a small girl Serina knew she would be a witch. It came as no surprise to her, therefore, when she found herself able to move things on mental command on reaching her mid-teens. At once she went out and bought herself a cat and she was delighted to find that she could read its simple thoughts. Leaving home as soon as she could, she began a career as a white witch, finding and breaking covens up



and down the country. She was disappointed, however, to find that most covens had no answer to her force bolts and mystic shield. She had become quite blasé by the time she encountered the coven to Dis and for the first time, she lost.

Her punishment was as simple as it was grotesque. Calling on the power of Dis, the covenmaster mystically combined Serina and her familiar into one body, part cat, part woman. What else might have happened is conjecture for Balthazael burst in to confront the cult. In the fight that followed, Serina discovered she had lost her mental control of objects, but had gained the natural reflexes and abilities of a cat, only greatly enhanced. With her force bolts and shield she was suddenly a dynamic fighter.

Serina stayed with Balthazael, taking the name of Grimalkin and together they formed the Starlight Pact.

Grimalkin is still quite young: she is inexperienced, naïve and idealistic. For the most part she is playful and vivacious, though she can become melancholy if she remembers her lost humanity.

MOONBLADE (Vel'Rathis)

EGO: 11	Move: 6m
STR: 12	DC: 6
DEX: 13	Dodge: 1
VIG: 12	
HTC: 49	Divider: –
HTK: 47	Divider: –

Powers: *Advantageous Background 1* (*Immortal*); *Weapon Skill 1* (sword); *Special Weapon*; *Spacial Projection*; *Health 2* (No need to Breathe, Regeneration); *Energy Attack 3* (*Force Fan*, 16 dice, area blasts (iv) and (v)).

Notes: The *Special Weapon* may be used as a 2-H penetrative or concussive weapon. It carries energy as a shield and adds 15 damage to parry values. *Spacial Projection* is a special teleport power. It has a 10m maximum range and cannot work through solid matter, but it costs no HTC.

Figure: Moonblade is based on the ninja figure in the *GH* blister packs. Shuriken were removed from the figure.

In the days of old, before the ice age, was another era. A time when the men of Albion struggled valiantly against the evils of the sorcerer-scientists from ancient Mu.



Great among the heroes of Albion was Vel'Rathis, wielder of the Moonblade. And great was the hatred of Mu for Val'Rathis, though their rage was impotent for they had prophesied that Vel'Rathis would not die whilst Mu lived.

So they caught Vel'Rathis using treachery and made him immortal; thus there would be no limit on their dark city. They also imprisoned him within his sword, never to see release until the full moon's light struck the blade. Then they took the blade and hurled it into the deepest ocean.

Time passed and Mu and Albion met their respective destinies. The sword remained hidden until the day Balthazael unearthed it beneath the full moon. The enchantment broken, Vel'Rathis stood sword in hand, confronted by a demon. Despite Balthazael's protestations, Vel'Rathis attacked, quickly gaining the upper hand. Standing victorious, blade poised over his opponent, he was struck down from behind.

When he awoke, two monsters stood over him; the demon and another, part woman, part cat. It took him several moments to realise that they wanted to help him. So it was that Moonblade joined the Starlight Pact.

The Moonblade is a strange and magical weapon. A force field surrounds its edge so it can never be damaged. Its greatest power is to send forth waves of force at a flourish of the blade. Vel'Rathis is now a projection from the sword and cannot truly be separated from it.

Vel'Rathis has no scruples about killing an enemy. He is a man of honour who lives by his own code. Unfortunately he does not understand the workings of the modern world.

EX-MAN (Neil Baldwin)

EGO: 9 **Move:** 5m
STR: 9 (23) **DC:** 6
DEX: 8 **Dodge:** 1
VIG: 12
HTC: 41 **Divider:** -
HTK: 42 **Divider:** -

Powers: *Cybernetics 2 (Bionic right arm - STR:23, Computer Brain); Stunner (Type 2 in left hand); Energy Attack 4 (Atomic, 24 Dice, Reduced Dividers, Quick Blast from right hand); Heightened Senses 1 (IR Vision); Health 2 (Immune to Toxins, Functions at low oxygen levels).*

Figure: Ex-man is based on the



cyborg figure in the *Heroes* set.

Neil Baldwin was a happily married man with two children and a job at the local chemical works. Everything changed, however, on the day he fell into the vat of liquid oxygen. He died instantly, frozen solid. This unusual death made him the target for an unusual crime: his body was stolen whilst it was still frozen.

Carla Lundquist was a cybernetics genius - the field was her undying passion. Her greatest problem, as always, was lack of funding. Super-powered criminals, however, tend to be more free with their money than medical organisations and she decided to create a sample product to demonstrate her skill. Her aim was to entice a master criminal, Warlord, into contracting her to build him a unit of cyborgs. She needed a body, fresh and preferably dead. Her agents brought her Neil Baldwin.

Baldwin was perfect for the job. Working through the night she completed her work and then, thoroughly exhausted, went to bed.

Neil Baldwin woke up. This came as a surprise since his last thought had been that he was going to die. He felt terrible: he didn't feel any better knowing that he was now linked to a highly complex biocomputer, the memory banks of which obligingly filled in all the missing details.

Carla Lundquist awoke to have her hopes dashed by two disturbing facts: firstly, Warlord had been captured and secondly her newly created cyborg had gone, leaving holes blasted everywhere.

What do you do if you are a corpse kept alive by machines, with no one you can turn to for help? If you then meet demons and witches and they give you purpose, is there any reason why you should not join the Starlight Pact?

PARAGON (Roley Day)

EGO: 14 **Move:** 4m/20m
STR: 7 **DC:** 3
DEX: 7 **Dodge:** -
VIG: 8
HTC: 32 **Divider:** 4
HTK: 34 **Divider:** 5

Powers: *Advantageous Background 1 (Contacts - Criminal); Intuition; Flight 2; Strength 2; Tough Skin 2; Health 1 (Environment Survival - Airless); Shapechange (Freeform - only the Paragon form has powers other than Intui-*



tion: only Roley Day has criminal contacts).

Figure: Paragon is based on the caped hero leaping into flight in the *Heroes* set.

Roley Day didn't think of himself as a down and out; he was just unlucky and had been all his life. Like everyone else he had bad dreams, but in his case they came true. He took to drink and to this day he's grateful for it. It cost him his job, his home and a large slice of self-respect, but at least when he slept he didn't have dreams.

Living rough wasn't an ideal life but Roley was past caring. At times he took to thinking that life wasn't that kind. He worried about the young and those worse off than himself and decided it wasn't right. Someone ought to stand up for them.

He was in a mission hall the day a minister said that the whole point about faith was that it gave you something better to look to, a paragon to model yourself on. Roley asked what he meant by paragon. He was pleased with the answer - it matched up with his idea. He mulled the idea over and that night he forgot to get drunk and had a dream.

In his dream he saw what he meant. All the details he hadn't thought about were filled in and he was dressed like a hero. The hero explained that Roley wasn't limited like other people - he could do things with his mind to change or even create things, the only limit was his imagination. Roley laughed, but this Paragon kept coming back in his dreams, speaking about the world and all that was wrong with it. Roley was soon agreeing with him and wished there was a real person like this. Paragon asked him to dream of himself as this person and, taken by Paragon's serious tone, Roley agreed. Next morning he woke up and found himself wearing a black jumpsuit and purple cloak - just like the Paragon. He could fly, he was strong and maybe he could set an example. He concentrated and once more he was Roley Day.

His life changed; he didn't sleep any more and he daydreamed so many things. As Roley Day he shows people how to laugh at life and at themselves; as Paragon he opposes those who abuse life. In his latest daydream he met four very unusual people. In came as no surprise therefore when he met them that night: he was surprised when the dawn came and he was a member of the Starlight Pact. □

Heroes & Villains is a bimonthly column about Superhero gaming, edited by Simon Burley and Pete Haines.

THE COVEN

Villainous Golden Heroes by Paul Ryder

The Coven were formed in the late 1970s when the various groups of evil magicians were being thrown into panic by the sudden and violent depredations of Wrath, the sorcerer slayer. In desperation, five of the most evil adepts appealed to an entity whose name was only uttered in whispers – *Necromon!*

Beyond the veil of time and space, the Dread One heard their prayer and responded. Thus, as the five adepts stood in the gore of their multiple sacrifice they heard a storm howl about their refuge and inside, with chilling slowness, the darkness grew and then faded, leaving before them a man, tall, pale and malevolent. The stranger then told them that they, Gemma Salome, well-known biochemist; Otto Cain, world class weightlifter, boxer and psychotic; Jerome Mordred, millionaire industrialist and Curtis and Christine D'Ableau, scions of the nobility, had proved themselves worthy of special interest and, if they swore to obey him, Maximilian, and thus *Necromon*, then he would make them powerful beyond mortal reckoning. They accepted.

Each member of the group was presented with a skull-stone, a carved gem imbued with their lord's essence. Even as they held them, the gems vanished, absorbed into their bodies and souls, warping and corrupting them. Some became more powerful magically, others psionically, while Cain became superhumanly strong. Indeed, all were enhanced both physically and mentally. It was while they were experimenting with their new power that they discovered an awesome secret; the skull-stones called to each other and when joined (by linking hands) their magical power mingled, strengthened and expanded. This vastly enhanced aura could increase and improve the range of their psi talents, allow greater conjurings, deflect attacks, affect local fields of various kinds and cause a great disruption in nature itself, a disruption that the Coven (for so they named themselves) could use to summon storms and other harmful effects.

The Coven, wishing to emulate their fell lord, do not like to become directly involved with crime or combat and so they usually choose to manipulate other supervillains, using the 'Stone-Bond' to improve their influence and range. Naturally, as they are under psionic control, the villains have less frames than normal, possibly leading a poor superhero to think that they are not very good. This error will become apparent if the hero and villain should meet later, when the villain has all his frames...

If, however, a hero or a team should consistently foil the Coven's plans then

the Coven themselves may be forced to act – which will probably be very unhealthy for the heroes.

The Coven are usually involved in crimes (albeit indirectly) in which something magical features, a book or similar artifact being ideal and woe betide all those characters who get their powers by means of a magical item!

Characteristics and Powers

Cain: EGO:14; STR:37; DEX:13; VIG:17;

HTK:85; HTC:80.

Strength 1; Pugilism 2; Magic [(10) Energy Strike]; Psi [(10) Hallucinations].

Salome: EGO:17; STR:10; DEX:16; VIG:14;

HTK:45; HTC:46.

Intuition; Shapeshift (to cat); Magic 1 [(15) Hypnosis, Information, Restraint]; Psi [(10) Telepathy]; Advantageous Background 1 (Brilliant Chemist).*



Mordred: EGO:17; STR:15; DEX:13; VIG:16; HTK:60; HTC:62.

Sense Magic; Psi [(10) Transmutation]; Computer Skill; Magic 1 [(15) Conjure, Mystic Wall, Enhance]; Advantageous Background 2 (Rich Industrialist, Brilliant Mechanical Scientist).*

Moloch (Curtis D'Ableau): EGO:16; STR:16; DEX:15; VIG:15; HTK:65; HTC:70.

Shapeshift (Raven); Psi 1 [(15) Psi Blast, Hallucinations, Telepathy]; Magic [(10) Energy Strike]; Advantageous Background 1 (Inherited Wealth).

Morgana (Christine D'Ableau): EGO:17;

STR:10; DEX:15; VIG:15; HTK:68; HTC:62.

Vocal Skill; Shapeshift (Raven); Psi [(10) Telekinesis]; Magic 1 [(15) Astral Projection, Hallucinations, Magic Wall]; Advantageous Background (Inherited Wealth).*

Notes: All have *Fast Heal* ability and the twins have *Flight 1* in Raven form. All 10 point powers are not speciality powers and so have full point cost when used.

*Denotes a speciality.

The Stone-Bond

When three or more of the Coven link hands the enhanced energy field (both magical and physical) enables them to carry out the following:

1. Manipulation of Electrical, Molecular and Temperature Fields (cold only).
2. Create a 20HTK *General Force Wall*.
3. *Weather Control 3*.
4. Cast a conjuring of much greater power (eg a feature each and multiple levels).
5. Increase *Psi* range by 5km per person and enhance effects (GM's discretion).
6. Add 1 to attacking/defending EGO per person for *Psi* and *Magic* (added to highest Ego).
7. Attack with a Grade 3 *Energy Attack* (20pt).

MAXIMILIAN

The leader of the Coven gained his power and lost his humanity in the 1890s, when, as one of the Victorian era's greatest mages, he summoned *Necromon*. The result was inevitable: Maximilian lost. For almost a century he served the Dread One, slowly gaining power and becoming twisted and evil until his master called on him to go and aid the Coven. He leapt at the chance of returning to earth and becoming its master!

EGO: 18 **Movement:** 7/15m

STR: 25 **Damage Bonus:** +10

DEX: 15 **DC:** 6

VIG: 16 **Frames/Round:** 4

HTC: 70 **HTK:** 75

Attacks	WC	Damage
Energy Strike	3	1d6/2 magic points
Psi Blast	-	2d6/2 psi points
Fist/Foot	2	2d6HTC / 1d6-6HTK

Strength 1; Psi 2 [(20) Control, Psi-Blast, Hallucinations, Telepathy]; Magic 2 [(20) Energy Strike, Information, Hypnosis, Magic Wall]; Flight 1 (Levitation); Fast Heal and Toxin Immunity; Advantageous Background (Rich Immortal).

Maximilian appears as a tall, pale, bearded and dark haired man of about 40. He is very cultured, sardonic, charming and arrogant. He is incredibly clever. His voice is melodic and smooth but bears a touch of pride and ruthless authority. He dresses in a similar manner to the rest of the male Coven members. In combat he always fights to win, usually trying to totally defeat and humiliate a foe rather than killing. He has a great liking for trying to do this to a hero in very public places...

Description

All of the Coven are tall, attractive, pale and dark haired. The men all dress in elegant clothes, usually of a late Victorian cut, such as a long coat, waistcoat, narrow trousers, boots and a cravat, the latter bearing a diamond or ruby pin. The women wear black, fashionable clothes of a very elegant nature, usually wearing a wide hat with a veil. Only Cain is bearded but all appear to be between 25 and 30 with the exception of Mordred who is about 38 and greying at the temples. □

Welcome to Heroes & Villains, the regular column devoted to Superhero role-playing. This column will aim to expand the rules of SHRPGs in much the same way as Treasure Chest, RuneRites, Starbase, etc, have expanded other game systems. The first few instalments will be devoted to Golden Heroes, but the page is open to other SHRPGs. If you've got any good ideas, put them down on paper and send them in.

To start with, we proudly present something to allow beleaguered SSs who're besieged by hordes of oilrig-hurling heroes to get their own back with...

MEGAVILLAINS

Primarily, megavillains are powerful characters who can single-handedly take on and beat a superhero team. Each comic-book superhero team has its own megavillain whose schemes they must constantly thwart and whose abilities match their own superpowers.

To design a megavillain you must first decide on a theme or a name (preferably both). The theme should be generic/elemental rather than specific to allow you to build in many different superpowers; for example, total control over temperature, weather, earth or fire. Select the megavillain's superpowers to reflect this theme. If the power has more than one Grade, then they should be given high Grades, if not maximum, but avoid unnecessarily high Grades: never use Grade 3 where Grade 2 would do.

If necessary, invent a new superpower or have the megavillain develop new refinements of existing ones. Comic-book villains often have abilities new to the heroes and it is fun to bemuse the players and keep them guessing. Don't go over the top, as any refinement should be available to the players as well if they have a suitable hero.

It is important that the megavillain has several advantageous backgrounds compatible with their theme. Most megavillains are assumed to have been around for a while, so they've had plenty of time to refine their skills, train, develop abilities and scientific skills, amass a fortune, and make contacts, etc. These guys are powerful enough to conquer the world so getting into a Position of Power (for example) won't have been beyond them either.

The megavillain's physical attributes should be designed with the strongest opposing hero as the standard. The megavillain should be able slug it out with that hero on equal terms - taking the damage dished out and giving it back in equal measure. This does not mean that they need be *Superstrong* or have *Tough Skin* or *Armour*, however. Use a method more in keeping with the megavillain's other abilities. *Mass Variation*, *Cybernetic Devices*, *Magical Enhancements*, etc, are good ways of compensating for high *Strength* in an opponent whilst *Force Fields* and good dodges (particularly refined power dodges) can be used instead of the more obvious damage reducing powers.

The real bugaboo for the heroes is the number of Frames that these fiends have each round. Megavillains have as many Frames as the SS wishes, and these need not remain constant for that particular character. The usual number of Frames

for a megavillain is 3 plus 1 for every hero they are engaging at that time, but this can be increased if they are fighting on their own ground or decreased if they are having to watch out for lackeys, etc. Furthermore, they ignore initiative rolls (the *real* clincher), using their own Frames whenever they want to throughout the round. It is impossible for a single hero to defeat them and even the most powerful team would need good teamwork to stand a chance.

Most importantly, megavillains require an experienced and skilful SS. It is the quality of their tactics and personality which sets most megavillains above their contemporaries. Refrain from using them until you are confident you can do justice to this side of their persona.

As an example, here is Earthlord, to give you some idea of what this sort of character should be like.

EARTHLORD

Aliases: Various

Ego: 17	Strength: 43 (23)
Dexterity: 9	Vigour: 18 (11)
Movement:	6m/3m
Dodge Modifier:	Can't dodge
Strike Modifier:	0
Defence Class:	1 (4)
Frames per Round:	3+1 per hero
HTK: 62	Divider: /7(/4)
Recover:	1d6+1/Rd(Hr)
Hospitalised at:	6
HTC: 67	Divider: /7(/4)
Pushback:	25*
Recover:	1d6+1/AC(Rd)
Stage: 13	Stun: 6
Usual Attacks	WC Damage
Fists	2 2d6HTC/1d6-6HTK (+28/+8)]
Energy Attack	3 25d6 over 5 Rounds
Force Field	3 Restrains

Superpowers

Energy Attack: Earth Grade 2: hail of pebbles and stones.

Energy Immunity: Earth: boulders, rocks, etc thrown at him are absorbed into his body or...

Energy Reflection: Earth: ...can be reflected back to their source due to his innate control over the elements of Earth.

General Force Barrier: 10HTK: made of earth and stone, it cannot be moved. The shapes remain after he stops concentrating so he can form as many as he wants, given time. He can attempt to form them around a foe as a restraining attack and are DC5 for the purposes of destroying them.



Health: Grade 4 (Grade 2): Disease/Radiation/Toxin Immunity, Regeneration, Fast Recovery.

Larger: Grade 1

Shapechange: Freeform: to large stalagmite or boulder, etc; can merge with the earth and move through it at a rate of 3m.

Solidify

Strength: Grade 1 (Grade 0)

Tough Skin: Grade 4 (Grade 1)

Wallcrawling: Only on natural walls of earth or stone, etc, at rate of 3m.

Earthquake: 20m radius, created by stamping his foot (1 Action); those in range must roll under Dexterity or fall and spend 1 Frame recovering and another to get up at some time.

Advantageous Backgrounds

Immortal

Earthlord is an elemental earth-spirit from the dawn of history. For aeons before the birth of humanity, he wandered the Under-earth tending its crop of minerals and nurturing the roots of the Earth's plant life. Then came Man; forging the stones of the Earth into weapons to slay his own kind and the Earth's other creatures and mining, to rape the Earth of her glory. Finally, he layered metal and concrete upon the land and turned it from its natural form into mad shapes of his own devising.

At first, Earthlord tried to tame the upstart. Man's nature, however, precluded Earthlord's peaceful rule; he was betrayed and bound by Man's magic. Only recently has he escaped, swearing to remove the stain of Mankind from Mother Earth for ever.

Earthlord cannot abide man's concrete and steel world. He lurks in the wilderness, pouncing on any encroachment. Remote scientific establishments are particularly prone to attack and he is not averse to capturing scientists and forcing them to turn their lunatic science back upon their own.

Earthlord is a large, roughly humanoid mass of earth and clay mottled with patches of moss and fungi. He smells damp, mouldy and earthy, and speaks in a deep rumbling voice.

Earthlord is a megavillain. He ignores initiative rolls. If he is lifted (requiring a strength in excess of 30 if he is on the bare earth), his attributes and power grades fall to those indicated in parentheses.

*He cannot be *pushed-back* when standing on bare earth. □

STRIKEBACK

A Superhero Adventure for 2-4 Characters For use with Golden Heroes or Champions by Marcus L Rowland

REFEREE'S NOTES

Data relating to a specific game is preceded by that game's initials, eg *Ch* = *Champions* and *GH* = *Golden Heroes*. Unless otherwise stated all 'normal' NPC's have some ability with any weapons carried, eg: *Ch*: +1 skill each weapon, *GH*: Weapon Class 2 each weapon and have average or near-average characteristics. Players must use their own characters.

PLAYER'S INFORMATION

While relaxing in their headquarters, the team are surprised to see a glowing silver sphere materialise. After a few seconds it vanishes, revealing a book-sized metal block with an oily sheen, featureless except for a carrying handle.

All the characters 'hear' a telepathic voice say:

'I am unit fifty-four bG. Good-day. Please stand by for an important announcement.'

After a few seconds a different 'voice' is heard, apparently that of mature woman.

'Please don't be alarmed. This box is an organic computer and time machine. I am recording this message in our year 3936 – by your reckoning, 8457 AD. Our civilisation is fighting for its survival, against a foe determined to extinguish all life. A year ago we discovered a time travel technique, which brought most of our recent victories, but the enemy captured a machine and duplicated our method. We have detected an enemy robot travelling downwhen past your era, and believe it terminated in the recent past, probably at the end of your last century. Our machines are capable of such a journey, but no human could withstand the contra-evolutionary pressure it would entail. A mindless ape would reach the nineteenth century. However, if you were to accept this mission the short journey would involve only a little discomfort. We cannot tell what the enemy intend but suspect some subtle interference with human evolution or progress.

If you wish to help us the computer will control your passage to the nineteenth century, and help locate and destroy our enemy. Remember, the fate of your own era may be at stake, as well as ours.'

A second later a 4' tall image of a cartoon mouse appears by the box, dressed in a super-costume and cloak. It says 'Hi again – I'm unit fifty-four, but please call me Benjy. I hope we're going to enjoy working together. As soon as you're ready I'll start the time jump.'

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

This scenario involves time travel and time paradoxes. To keep things controllable, no players should start with any time travel ability.

Far in the future, the human race is fighting a desperate space/time war against malevolent fighting machines, whose only desire is to destroy all life-forms. Time travel is used to reverse some enemy victories, but is limited and often unreliable. Maximum range for human travellers is just over 147 years into the past, any further travel causes irreversible brain damage. Robots don't have this limitation.

Unfortunately the enemy learned the time travel secret, and made several attempts to destroy the human race before the discovery of space flight. The defenders could detect such crude use of force and sent missiles downtime to nullify the enemy time machines at the moment they materialised.

Recently they detected another enemy time probe, travelling back thousands of years. They expected the usual quick burst of destruction, but nothing has happened except a slow disturbance of past time lines. This suggests that the machine is following a more subtle plan which will change history without immediate mass destruction.

Humans can't travel so far back to deal with the problem, and their machines are no match for those of the enemy. Accordingly they decided to recruit a team in the twentieth century, capable of surviving a short journey to the nineteenth. The team are asked to destroy the machine, but in reality their function is very different – if they can pinpoint the machine for long enough for Benjy to make a report, the experts uptime will be able to locate its arrival point and destroy it at the moment it appeared. Individual team members are totally expendable. Their actions will not affect history since they will have 'never' occurred. If successful the team will 'snap' back to the moment they left, with no knowledge of the time journey, but will retain experience and any skills acquired in the adventure. Dead team members will be restored to life at this moment, without experience. If unsuccessful they will be marooned in 1899, or return to an altered twentieth century, and dead team members will stay dead. The team will retain memories of their actions.

Benjy is a semi-organic computer consisting of a mouse's brain laminated in molecule-thick layers of plastic, with electronic enhancement. He is immune to the entropic effects of time travel. He has been briefed by museum, library, and film archive computers to become an expert on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Benjy has fallen in

love with the idea of being a swashbuckling hero, despite the fact that he has no way of fulfilling this ambition, and can't move unless someone carries him. Benjy doesn't know that the team are expendable, but could probably work it out if asked. He is passionately loyal to the human race and will not let this fact sway him from his duty.

The greatest level of time disturbance is concentrated in Europe in December 1899, and Benjy will ask the team to disguise themselves in Victorian dress and change his illusory body to that of a ten-year-old boy in a sailor suit, to avoid attracting attention. As soon as the team are ready Benjy will transport them to that era, arriving in the woods near Vienna. All characters will have mild headaches after the journey, but will be unharmed. Benjy can translate telepathically for the team if no-one else speaks German or has this ability.

The alien machine arrived in 1856, and has spent the years between recruiting human helpers. It has the support of two groups:

The Bavarian Illuminati

An underground power bloc seeking world control, who have agents in most areas and massive financial resources. The machine has given them advanced scientific knowledge and aided their strategic planning, in return for occasional use of their funds and agents.

The Brothers of Death

A cunningly designed religion whose members worship the Machine. This group includes some important (mad) scientists, in particular Professor Joseph Frankenstein (grandson of the famous transplant pioneer) and Captain Nemo, a noted marine engineer. These experts are producing some of the devices designed by the alien.

Illuminati agents wear silver chain medallions with a symbol of an eye in a pyramid. The Brothers of Death's symbol is actually a tetrahedron and contains no eye, while the medallion is made of aluminium (a rare and valuable material in 1899). Most will be armed with guns and knives, or small bombs equivalent to 2-4 sticks of dynamite.

The time disturbance is concentrated around 1899 because the alien robot has been forced to take some violent action in this year. Two of its projects have attracted unwelcome attention, and its agents are attempting to kill the individuals responsible. Benjy has zeroed in on the site of one of these attempts, the Vienna woods.

As the team arrive they will see a man being attacked by three others, all four armed with pistols. The lone man calls himself Altamont. In reality he is Sherlock Holmes, as any character capable of telepathy or lie detection will know. All his opponents are members of the Bavarian Illuminati, and carry automatic pistols and poison capsules. Holmes is in Vienna at the request of Dr Sigmund Freud, who once cured him of cocaine addiction. One of Freud's patients, a physicist from the Vienna Institute, has suddenly disappeared without trace, and other scientists are also missing.

Holmes found an Illuminati medallion in the Institute, and tried to find its owner by tracing the jeweller who made it. A member of the Illuminati (formerly of the Moriarty gang) recognised him, overheard his conversation with a jeweller, and arranged the ambush.

None of the Illuminati agents have any knowledge of the robot, but they do know the location of the local Illuminati headquarters, in Vienna. This can be discovered by telepathy or interrogation or, if they are killed, one has a notebook with the office's address.

Illuminati HQ Vienna (see Map 1)

This three-storey building holds the offices of an import company, *Transylvanian Toys*. All walls are brick, all windows barred, and all doors are wood. All floors are tiled. The roof is slate over a framework of beams and slats, covered in a waterproof layer of lead and copper sheathing which will block x-ray vision. All rooms are fitted with gas lighting.

1. Reception Hall and Stairwell. The receptionist is an elderly woman, an Illuminati initiate, carrying a concealed 4-shot Derringer pistol, with one foot on an alarm switch linked to bells in rooms 8, 12, and 20-24. She operates a telephone switchboard linked to rooms 7, 14, and 21. The concealed door is locked from room 8. The staircase is iron, and is blocked above the second floor by a locked gate.

2, 3, 5, 10, 11, 13, 16: Company Offices and Workshops. Each occupied by 0-3 innocent employees.

4, 13. Empty rooms.

6: Warehouse. Holds approximately 47 tons of clockwork and wooden toys. Two crates at the bottom of the stack hold toy guns, which will look real to x-ray vision.

7: Company Chairman. Dr Ludwig Holst, a senior initiate of the Bavarian Illuminati. He has a 20-shot machine pistol clipped under his chair, a switchblade in his desk drawer, and an alarm linked to room 8. All papers in the office relate to the legitimate toy business.▷

▷ Attached to his watch chain are keys to the staircase gate, to the safe in room 14, and to rooms 12, 19 and 20. His secretary (also an initiate) is unarmed, but has some weaponless combat skill:

Ch: 10pts, Martial arts; *GH:* Martial arts (grappler).

Both men know of the concealed rooms in the building, and that the missing scientists have been kidnapped and taken to Roumania via Transylvania, but do not know the scientists' exact location.

8: Concealed Guard Room. Occupied by two men (typical lower-grade Illuminati thugs) armed with silenced automatic pistols.

9: Workshop. Occupied by two technicians repairing clockwork train sets. Both are unarmed, and ordered to keep intruders out of room 12. They do not know what the room contains.

12. Locked Room. Holds enough dynamite to demolish the building, linked to a detonation timer in 21.

14. Printing Office. Holds a small press and an assortment of embossing and plate-making tools. Most of the equipment is legitimate but a cupboard holds a locked safe containing counterfeiting plates, stolen inks and paper etc, designed to produce forged customs clearance papers, passports, and permits.

17: Dusty Room. Holds broken toys.

18: Long Dusty Room. This is an archery range. Several arrows with rubber sucker tips are attached to targets at the north end of the room.

Some toy bows and arrows lie on a table in the SW corner. A locked cupboard against the east wall holds more substantial targets, sandbags and four silenced military rifles equipped for sniping.

19: Room. Full of broken toys and furniture. There are faint tracks in the dust, leading to a locked concealed door to room 20.

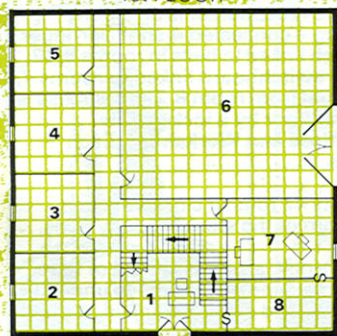
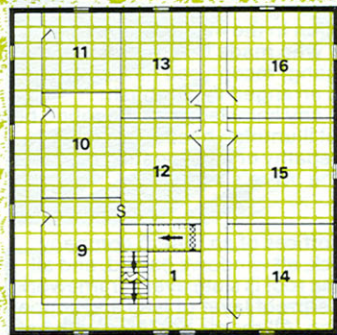
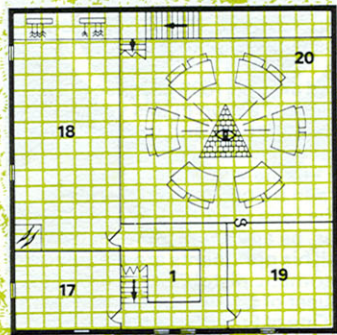
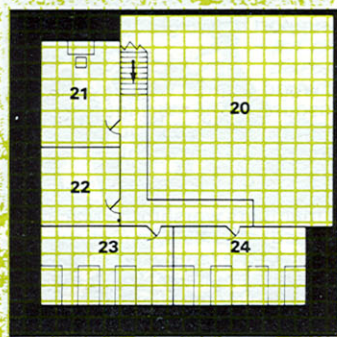
20: Illuminati Meeting Room. Six curved tables encircle a tiled mosaic of an eye in a pyramid, surrounded by golden rays. On the north wall is a map of the world, with flags indicating various regional headquarters in Washington, London, Rome, St Petersburg, and other major cities. There are two different flags, with a tetrahedral symbol, in Roumania and in the Adriatic. There is a gallery 3 metres above the floor, leading to some attic rooms.

Unless a meeting is in progress (5% chance by night, no possibility by day) the lower area will be empty, but there will be three guards armed with silenced rifles and pistols on the upper gallery. The Illuminati take great care to destroy all notes and papers after meetings, and nothing significant will be found.

21: Small Communications Room. Holds an anachronistic radio transmitter (built from plans supplied by the alien machine), a telephone, and a complex cipher machine. There are two armed guards (as 20) and a clerk in the room. The radio clerk will set fire to all the papers in the office at the first hint of trouble. This will take 30-90 seconds.

MAP 1
TRANSYLVANIAN TOYS

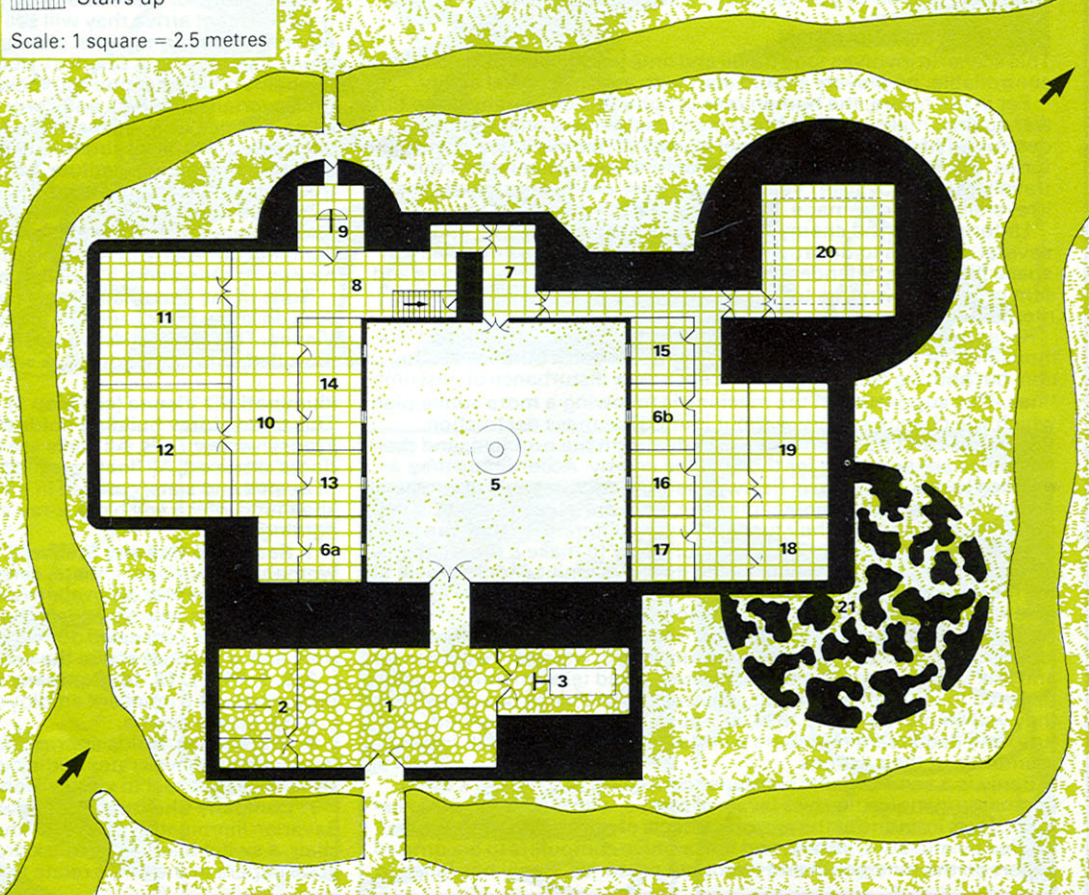
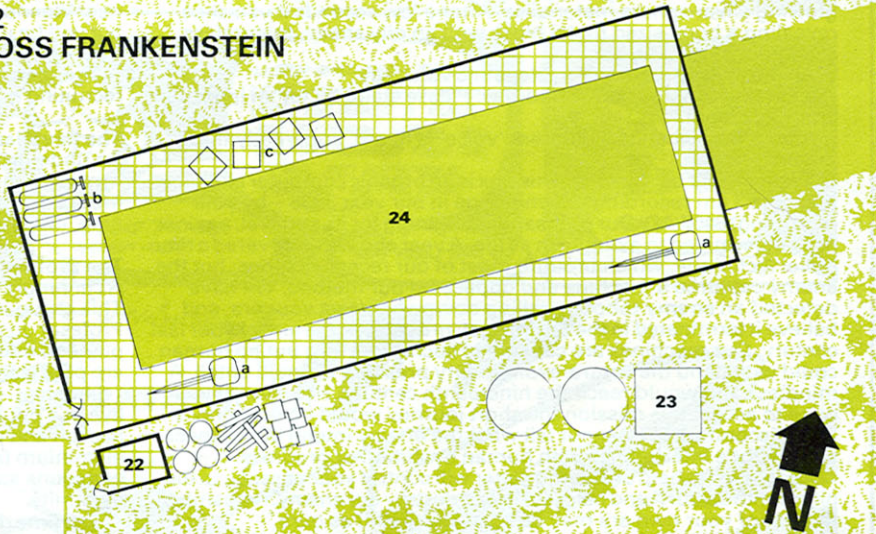
MAP 2
SCHLOSS FRANKENSTEIN



KEY

- Door
- Secret door
- Window
- Trellis gate
- Stairs up

Scale: 1 square = 2.5 metres



A locked box on the wall in the NW corner holds a time clock linked to two wires (down to 12). A locked compartment of the cipher machine holds two decoded messages, both in German, awaiting collection by the senior initiate of Vienna (currently on business in Berlin). The first reads: *URGENTLY REQUIRE ARMED SUPPORT STOP SEND EXPERIENCED MEN STOP NO TIME TO LOST STOP F*

The second says *WHY NO RESPONSE TO FIRST SIGNAL STOP SEND EXPERIENCED MEN IMMEDIATELY STOP REQUIRE COMBAT TROOPS AND AGENTS WITH KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUPERNATURAL STOP EXTREMELY URGENT STOP FRANKENSTEIN.*

22. Guard Room. Holds another four thugs armed with silent air rifles: *Ch*: Damage 2d6/3d6, 2 shots/turn, mod -1 per 4"; *GH*: 2d6+1 HTK, 1d6+2 HTC, 1 shot/frame, WC-1.

There is a trap door to the roof over the NW corner (invisible from outside) and a rolled rope ladder fixed to a beam, long enough to reach the ground.

23, 24: Soundproof Cells. 23 is empty, 24 holds two drugged physicians awaiting shipment.

Notes: The team should soon realise that their next destination is Roumania. If present, Holmes will suggest using his 'Continental Bradshaw' (a combined railway timetable and guidebook) to learn more about Roumania and Frankenstein, and will discover a Schloss Frankenstein in Transylvania.

Some more research will show that there is a Schloss Frankenstein in Roumania near the Adriatic coast, about 900km east of Vienna.

Schloss Frankenstein (Map 2)

This small castle was built in the 14th century and is now on the verge of collapse. The upper floors are filled with a jumble of building blocks and stones, forming a thick and dangerously unstable roof over the occupied areas. Any attempt to burrow or blast through this roof will bring down 2d6 tons of rubble. One tower is partially intact, but the roof has collapsed to fill the top floor with rubble. A recent addition is a huge shed behind the castle, ostensibly a mushroom farm but actually a surface structure over a submarine pen.

The current Baron Frankenstein is an exile from Transylvania, forced out by his parent's reputation. His father bought and named an old fort after his lost estates. He worships the alien machine, and has devoted his life to serving it. For several years he and his accomplices have been 'recruiting' (actually kidnapping) a staff of scientists and workmen, and fitting them with machine-designed neutral control collars which turn humans into helpless slaves. These slaves built an advanced submarine, the Nautilus, to the machine's directions.

Recently Frankenstein kidnapped a woman with an extremely odd secret - she is one of the lovers of a Doctor Corday, better known as Count Dracula, who met her while travelling through Roumania. Dracula tracked her to the castle, but so far has been unable to enter and free her. He is attempting to recover her by kidnapping and torturing the castle staff when they leave the building, but unfortunately tends to kill them before he learns much. The castle occupants now

suspect the presence of a vampire, and are taking various precautions. He has hidden his coffin in the woods to the north of the castle.

Dracula has no reason to join forces with the team, but will try to follow them and take advantage of any confusion they cause to free his lover and wreak suitable vengeance. If the team get in his way, that's their problem.

Ideally the team should assault the castle at night.

1: Entrance Courtyard. A cobbled area approached by a stone bridge over a stream-fed moat. To one side is an unoccupied stable (2), to the other a shed holding a broken cart (3). The gates are thick wood reinforced with iron straps, and are always locked. Cloves of garlic are nailed outside. There are three guards, all armed with shotguns. No windows overlook this yard.

4: Gated Passage. Mined to let the roof collapse to bring down 14 tons of rubble. Detonation controlled from 6a.

5: Central Courtyard. Empty, covered by machine gun posts in various rooms (see below). There is a large ornamental fountain in the centre of the yard, dry with a 50cm high rim, mined with explosive charges equivalent to 20 sticks of dynamite and controlled from 6b.

6a, 6b: Machine Gun Posts. Each room holds two thugs running a tripod-mounted Gatling gun: *Ch*: 2d6+2/9d6, -1 per 5", 300 shots, Def 4, Body 3; *GH*: 2d6+3 HTK, 2d6 HTC, 4 shots/frame, WC-1.

The guns normally fire out through the windows, but can be swung round to cover the doors. Each thug also carries a revolver. The thugs also control the detonators mentioned above.

7: Small Lobby. Guarded by two men (machine worshippers) with heavy pistols and sabres. Both wear necklaces of garlic and carry mirrors and crucifixes in their pockets.

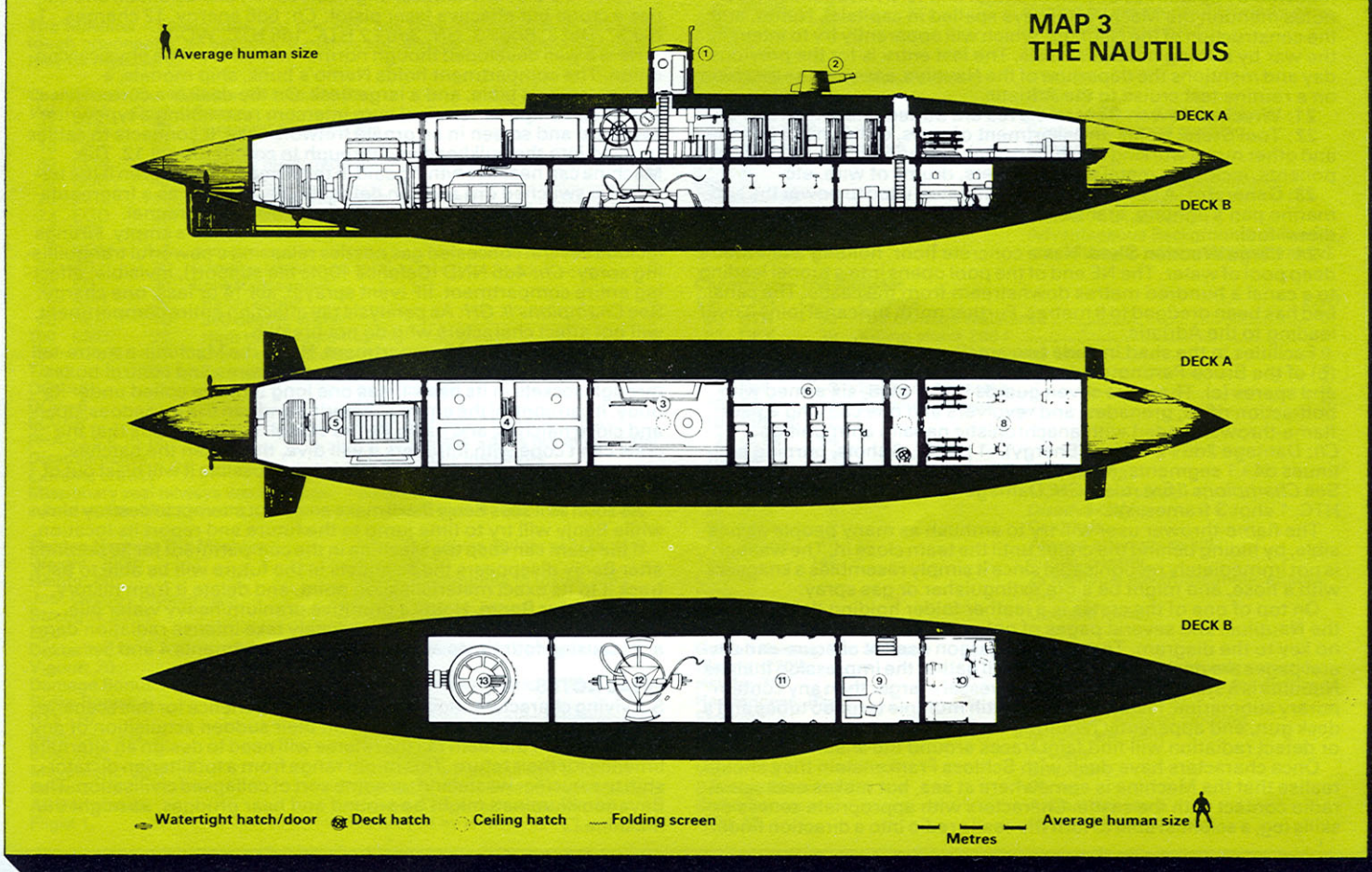
8: Old Stone Staircase. Leads to a locked door, which holds back 2d6 tons of stones and rubble.

9: Entrance. Formerly a small tower. The outer door is festooned with garlic, and connected by wire to an improvised arbalest firing a thick wooden stake at the doorway: *Ch*: 3d6/6d6, -1 per 1", 1 shot, weapon Def 4, Body 5; *GH*: 2d8+1 HTK, 2d6+2 HTC, 1 shot, WC-0.

A single machine worshipper armed with a crossbow (wooden bolts) guards the room.

10: Passage. Patrolled by two thugs armed with shotguns.

11, 12: Slave Quarters. Each holds 3d6 men and women, all wearing steel collars fitted with small metal boxes. Unless the collars are removed the wearers will obey any order but will show no initiative. They cannot talk or fight. Each collar holds some neutral control circuitry (obviously of anachronistic design), a small battery, and a shaped charge of plastic explosive. If the collar is removed or destroyed without disconnecting two inconspicuous wires (covered by several others) the charge will explode and decapitate the wearer. They can also be detonated by radio signals. *Ch*: Collar makes 40ECV Mind Control attack, always on, explodes as 6d6 killing attack on wearer, 2d6 killing attack on others, Def 5, Body 5; *GH*: Collar makes EGO 15 mental attack each frame. Explodes as hand grenade; x3 damage to wearer. 3 HTK to destroy.▷



▷ One of the occupants of 12, one Magda Slozeny, is Dracula's secret lover. She is not ill, but shows slight signs of her coming conversion to undeath (pallid skin, hatred of religious artifacts, and enlarged incisors) although she does not yet have vampiric powers.

13: Kitchen. Occupied by an unarmed machine worshipper and three slaves cooking gruel.

14: Small Shrine. Converted to machine worship. On a dais is a metre-high aluminium tetrahedron, a replica of the robot. In front of the dais is an altar, bearing a dead cat. Around the walls are murals showing a tetrahedron floating in the air, radiating glowing beams which are killing men, women and children. Two fanatics tend this altar, armed with spiked spanners (treat as maces) and revolvers.

15: Microbiology laboratory. Scientists are developing various disease cultures, notably influenza, smallpox and scarlet fever. Once the machine has made enough changes to rule out intervention from the future these will be released, to spread across Europe. Three scientists work in the area, assisted by two slaves wearing control collars. All are unarmed, but can reach bottles of acid and other chemicals.

16: Electronics Laboratory. Various components, most wildly anachronistic, are spread around the room. Characters with suitable knowledge will recognise parts for lasers, radio transmitters, and the collars worn by the slaves. There are two technicians in the room, one unarmed while the other carries a machine pistol.

17: Power Room. A small petrol engine operates a DC generator, which powers equipment in various parts of the castle.

18: Transmitter Room. Two men tend a radio transmitter and cipher machines. Papers around the room are mostly unimportant but include originals of the two messages received by the Vienna Illuminati, and a note giving a daily transmission schedule, signed 'Nemo'. The next signal will be transmitted in two hours. Both men are unarmed and will attempt to burn all the papers before fighting.

19: The Brothers' Dormitory. Empty.

20: Frankenstein's Laboratory. Approached by two thick barred doors. In this old turret the leader of the worshippers is attempting to fulfil an old family ambition – the creation of life. In deference to his faith, however, the creature he is trying to create is an amalgam of man and machine, and will be a perfect killer. The current prototype has retractable steel claws, bionically enhanced strength, and a computer brain built to the alien machine's specifications. Other features of the room are an operating table, a high-voltage generator linked to various live cables, and two wooden galleries 4 and 8 metres above the floor. Frankenstein is normal apart from his intelligence, scientific knowledge, and insanity, and is armed with four scalpels and a small radio transmitter which will detonate the collars worn by the slaves. As the creature attacks intruders Frankenstein will retreat to the galleries, throw furniture and equipment at anyone who approaches, and threaten to detonate the slave collars if he is attacked. He has a single-shot Derringer pistol in his left sock. His desk is on the upper gallery and holds various papers, in particular a diary describing a complex scheme to bring about a major war (tentatively scheduled for 1904) followed by epidemics and an eventual end to civilisation. Several notes mention the Machine (always spelled in capitals), Nemo, and the construction of the Nautilus, which will apparently try to intensify the war by sinking neutral vessels. The last entry is for the previous day and mentions the departure of the Nautilus, carrying the machine on a routine test cruise to the Adriatic.

21: Wrecked Tower. Several slaves are buried under the rubble.

22: Tool Store. Holds an assortment of saws, drills, metal punches and other metal working machinery. Behind the shed is a stack of components, including metal plates, girders, drums of wire, etc.

23: Generator. A powerful diesel generator, used to power the submarine pen's lighting, cranes, etc. Behind it stand two large drums of diesel fuel.

24: Large Wooden Shed. Has a concrete floor, holding a ten-metre deep pool of water. The NE end of the pool opens into a tunnel leading to a canal a hundred metres downstream from the castle. The canal bed has been dredged to 9 metres. Further north the canal joins a river leading to the Adriatic.

Facilities in the shed include two small cranes (a), three torpedoes (b) of the Bruce-Partington design, and several crates of machinery and spares (c). There are seven guards in the shed, six armed with bolt-action rifles, grenades, and revolvers and one carrying a pack flame-thrower loaded with anachronistic napalm ammunition:

Ch: Damage 2d6+2 Killing (Energy), -1 per 2", 6 shots, burning continues d4+1 segments, not extinguishable by water. Def 5, Body 7. See *Champions II* fire rules. GH: Damage 1d10 HTK for 2-4 frames, 1d6 HTC, 1 shot/3 frames, WC-1.

The flame-thrower user will try to ambush as many people as possible, by hiding behind the crates until the team close in. The weapon is not immediately recognisable since it simply resembles a knapsack with a hose, and might be a fire extinguisher or gas spray.

On top of one of the crates is a leather folder holding deck plans of the Nautilus, and several pages of notes and specifications. There is no key to the diagram. The technical jargon used is obscure and several pages are missing, but readers will gather the impression that the Nautilus is a startlingly anachronistic vessel – larger than any contemporary submarine, faster, equipped with multiple torpedo tubes and a deck gun, and apparently requiring no fuel. Characters able to sense or detect radiation will find faint traces around the shed.

Once characters have dealt with Schloss Frankenstein they should realise that the Machine is somewhere at sea, but makes occasional radio contact with the castle. Characters with appropriate senses or skills (eg, a scientist able to turn the castle radio into a direction finder)

will be able to pinpoint the Nautilus for interception. Alternatively, it leaves a faint radiation trail in the water which might be followed.

The Nautilus (Map 3)

This nuclear submarine has been built to the Machine's specifications, with comfort and safety of secondary importance. It is cold, poorly ventilated, and has minimal shielding on its reactor. The crew are fanatical machine worshippers, and glory in their sacrifice. The hull is thick steel (as armoured car sides) with interior bulkheads and hatches equally thick. All hatches have servo-motors and can be opened or closed electrically. The vessel weighs 850 tons, and is capable of speeds up to 45KPH (28MPH).

1: Conning Tower. Supports a periscope and radio mast. There is normally one watch keeper on duty.

2: Deck Gun. Fires small rocket missiles. Ch: 4d6 Killing, 1 per 5", 4 shots/clip, Def 6, Body 8. GH: 4d6 + 6 HTK, 6d6 + 8 HTC, WC1.

If the crew are warned of an attack they will either dive or man the deck gun and prepare for battle. The deck gun has a crew of three.

3: Main Control Room. This compartment normally holds four sailors, all fanatical machine worshippers armed with cutlasses and daggers. Facilities include a gyrocompass, a jury-rigged and unreliable inertial navigator, the periscope, and other normal submarine equipment. All the controls are linked electrically, not mechanically, and characters should be able to notice that this implies the possibility of control from another part of the vessel. All internal compartments are bugged and linked to compartment 12.

4: Holds four large tanks of heavy water, significantly radioactive. Characters will start to take minimum levels of radiation damage after 5-30 turns: Ch: See radiation rules, *Champions II*, or take 1d6 Killing (Defence 30pts damage resistance) per turn. GH: Take 1d4+1 HTK.

The radiation is leakage from the unshielded reactor below, and is invisible.

5: Engine Room. A large electric motor, heavily armoured (as bank vault) against attack and fully waterproofed, powered by cables entering through the floor. This compartment is also radioactive (as 4).

6: Crew Quarters. Divided into four curtained compartments. a, b, and d normally hold 1-2 crew each (not in combat), c is used as the radio room and always holds one operator if the vessel is surfaced.

7: Access Way. Leads to lower hold and torpedo room.

8: Torpedo Room. Holds twelve torpedoes launched through two tubes. There is a mechanical racking system which will load torpedoes into the tubes without human intervention. Each torpedo weighs 2.5 tons and explodes as a large bomb, range 5km, speed 50KPH.

9: Hold. Contains tools, food (mostly concentrated iron rations and dried sausages), spares, and gun ammunition.

10: Captain Nemo's Cabin. This area is warmer and more comfortable than the rest of the vessel, but Nemo is as much of a fanatic as the rest of the crew. He began his career opposed to war in all forms but gradually developed a hatred of mankind, and was subverted into the belief that the best way to stop war is to have no-one alive to fight.

Nemo is a brilliant nautical engineer, sailor, and scientist, and carries a crude but effective laser pistol: Ch: 6d6 energy, 12 charges, -1 per 3", Def 3, Body 3. GH: 3d6+2 HTK, 1d6 HTC, WC-1.

He is a well developed though normal human in prime physical condition. The compartment holds Nemo's bunk, ship models, a draughtsman's table, and a large desk. On the desk is a curiously designed computer terminal cum intercom resembling a typewriter keyboard and screen in an ornate fretwork case. It connects to cables running into the bulkhead and through to compartment 12. The Machine can hear everything said in the compartment (even if the terminal is switched off) and can detonate the terminal as a fragmentation grenade, filling the entire compartment with shrapnel.

11: Compartment equipped to hold prisoners, but is empty. Fittings include several concealed gas nozzles releasing a powerful tranquillising spray: Ch: 4d6 NND (Defence 10pts life support), invisible, affecting entire compartment. IIF (vent sprays), act 14 or less, one charge. See *Champions II*. GH: As paralysis ray affecting entire compartment, will not affect characters who do not breathe.

12: Large Lead-lined Compartment. Holds the Machine, a metre-tall metal tetrahedron connected to numerous wires and control boxes through sockets in its base. It has one long tentacle coiled under its body. It can control the entire submarine and can fire torpedoes, open and close hatches, and navigate the vessel. If it is obvious that the crew can't cope with intruders it will dive, then open the hatches, attempting to drown all aboard. If this is impossible it will blast out of the hull and escape.

As soon as it sees Benji it will make an all-out attempt to destroy him, while Benji will try to time jump to the future and report its location.

If the team can keep the Machine in the compartment for 30 seconds after Benji disappears the scientists in the future will be able to back track it to its exact materialisation point, and delete it from history.

13: Reactor Room. Holds a primitive uranium/heavy water pile. Characters in this room will immediately take intense radiation damage, causing four times as much as in compartments 4 and 5.

FINAL NOTES

Surviving characters should be given full experience for this scenario, but will have no memories to explain their sudden acquisition of any new powers. If the team fail the referee will need to design an alternate timeline for their return. This might range from a totalitarian dictatorship to a nuclear wasteland, or some sort of collapsed civilisation. The Bavarian Illuminati might be around and bear grudges, as might the Machine. □

NON-PLAYER CHARACTER STATISTICS

Each character is defined for *Champions*, and *Golden Heroes*.

Champions: Count Dracula

Val	CHA	Cost	Powers	END
35	STR	25	Multipower: Vampirism: <i>Unusable in bright light:</i>	
27	DEX	51	200 point reserve, slots	
23	CON	26	Darkness, Ultra	0†
15	BODY	10	Desolidification, Ultra**	0†
13	INT	3	Mind control, Ultra***	4
18	EGO	16	Killing attack 2d6, Ultra*	0†
18	PRE	8	Power drain, END	0†
10	COM	0	5" Flight, in bat form	1
20	PD	13	Running, in wolf form	2
20	ED	15	Enhanced senses:	
5	SPD	13	Active sonar (Bat form only)	0
12	REC	0	Tracking scent (Wolf form only)	0
100	END	39	Ultraviolet vision	0
44	STUN	0	Ultrasonic hearing	0
Total		218	Infra-red vision	0
OCV=9			Enhanced hearing	0
DCV=9			Ego Defence	0
ECV=6			Regeneration, daytime via OAF\$	0
PHA=3,5,8,10,12			Full damage resistance, except vs wooden killing attacks	0

Disadvantages

Dependent NPC (Magda Slozeny).
Hunted by Prof. Van Helsing & friends.
Craving for blood, takes irrational actions.@
Retreats from mirrors (irrational).@
Cannot enter buildings unless invited in.@
Takes 1d6 damage unless in coffin during the day (Dependence †).@
Takes 3d6 damage in bright sunlight.@
Takes 3d6 damage in water.@
Takes 3d6 from holy water/wafer.@
Takes 1d6 from sight of crucifix.@
Takes 1d6 from smell of garlic.@

Golden Heroes: Dracula

Weight: 150lb
Height: 6' 2"
Handedness: Left
Job: Undead
Strength: 25
Ego: 16
Dexterity: 16
Vigour: 16
Damage Bonus: +10
Strike Bonus: +1
HTK: 70
HTC: 77
Defence Class: 6 (8 vs holy weapons).
Costume: Formal evening dress.
Movement: 18m
Powers
Advantageous Background 2 (rich

immortal).
Heightened Move 2.
Strength 1.
Intangibility 1 (as mist).
Claws.
Regeneration.
Health 2 (fast healing, immunity to toxins).
Shapechange (to wolf or bat).
Animal Senses 1.
Magic 1: 15pts, Hypnosis (speciality), Summoning (wolves and bats), Hallucinations (darkness etc).
Note: Dracula is confident and adds 5 to his defensive ego. His weaknesses are as the disadvantages for the *Champions* stats.

The Machine – Please note that this NPC has been designed as an extremely tough opponent in all systems. If parties are relatively weak some adjustment may be necessary.

Champions: The Machine (Built to 500 Pts)

Val	CHA	Cost	Powers	END
30	STR	20	Elemental, Electrostatic	
18	DEX	24	Powers:	
30	CON	40	Energy blast, 12d6 lightning	12
30	BODY	40	Flash	2
23	INT	13	Flight charge repulsion, in air only	2
23	EGO	26	Killing attack (OIF†)	4
18	PRE	8	Telekinesis *	15
0	COM	-5	Armour	0
36	PD	30	Damage resistance, total	0
36	ED	30	Enhanced senses:	
5	SPD	20	Radar sense	0
20	REC	16	360 degree vision	0
100	END	20	High range radio hearing	0
81	STUN	20	Ultraviolet vision	0
Total		304	Life support	0

good cause).
Unluck.
† OIF = charged tentacle/cable.
* Electrostatic – does not affect metal objects, only insulators.
Note: The Machine does not incorporate time travel mechanisms but was projected back by another machine.

Golden Heroes: The Machine

Weight: 200lb
Height: 40"
Job: Destroy Human race
Strength: 25
Ego: -
Dexterity: 15
Vigour: 20
Damage Bonus: +10
Strike Bonus: -
HTK: 70
Defence Class: 3
Costume: -
Movement: 30m
Powers
AB (Immortal).
Flight 1.

Armour 1 (gives divider vs HTK of 4).
Strength 1.
Health 2 (immunity to toxins, life support).
Heightened Senses: Radar Sense
Hearing 1, Infra-red Vision.
Field Manipulation 2 (magnetic and electric).
Energy Attack (electric) 3: 25 dice, +1 on hit rolls.
Stunner, type 2 (tentacle does normal damage as two handed concussive on impact).
Notes: As a machine ego is non-applicable – it cannot be mind-attacked. Has no HTC, either – can only be destroyed by HTK.

Champions: Benji

Val	CHA	Cost	Powers	END
0	STR	-10	Time Travel Twice day *	0
0	DEX	-20	Teleportation Twice day	0
30	CON	40	Telepathy	2
50	BODY	80	Radar sense	0
15	INT	5	Passive sonar	0
12	EGO	4	High range radio hearing	0
0	PRE	-10	Infra-red vision	0
0	COM	-5	Illusions	2
40	PD	40		
30	ED	24		
0	SPD	-10		
6	REC	0		
60	END	0		
65	STUN	0		
Total		138		
OCV=0				
DCV=0				
ECV=4				
PHA=-				

Disadvantages

No hands.
Unable to walk or move.
Code against killing.

Golden Heroes: Benji

Weight: 20lb
Height: 15"
Job: Computer
Strength: -
Ego: 15
Dexterity: -
Vigour: 14
Damage Bonus: -
Strike Bonus: -
HTK: 55
Defence Class: 12
Movement: -

2 x STUN from energy attacks.
Wants to be Errol Flynn.
Mildly afraid of cats.
Mildly afraid of owls, hawks, etc.
Unusual looks.
* 10-ton limit on mass carried, decreasing as journey length increases (eg Benji weighs 5kg and can't carry anything else in the jump from his own time). Minimum 30 minutes calculation required per time journey (except precalculated return to home time). This ability should not be given to player characters.

Powers

Time manipulation – limited to travel to past or future twice per subjective day.
Heightened Sense: Hearing 1, Infra-red vision, Radar sense.
Psionics 1: 15pts, Telepathy, Hallucinations, Mindwar.
Teleport 1: 2 teleports a day up to 50m.
Note: Benji is re-inforced with Adamantium and Vibranium, and because he is inanimate, he is unaffected by hits on HTC.

Champions: Sherlock Holmes

Val	CHA	Cost	Powers	END
15	STR	10	Detective work	0
15	DEX	15	Disguise	0
10	CON	0	Luck	0
10	BODY	0	Martial arts (Baritsu)	0
25	INT	15	Skill level 3, handguns	0
15	EGO	10	Stealth	0
16	PRE	6	.45 Revolver	0
10	COM	0		
5	PD	2		
2	ED	0		
3	SPD	5		
5	REC	0		
20	END	0		
12	STUN	0		
Total		63		
OCV=5				

Golden Heroes: Sherlock Holmes

Weight: 184lb
Height: 6'4"
Handedness: Right
Job: Consultant Detective
Strength: 16
Ego: 15
Dexterity: 14
Vigour: 12
Damage Bonus: +1
Strike Bonus: +2

DCV=5
ECV=5
PHA=4,8,12
Disadvantages
Dependent NPC (Dr Watson).
Hunted by Bavarian Illuminati.
Hunted by remnants of Moriarty gang.
Reformed drug addict.
Distrusts women.
HTK: 36
HTC: 41
Defence Class: 6 (dodge 1).
Costume: Normal clothing.
Movement: 14m
Powers
Skill 4: Disguise, Locksmithing, Escapology, Stealth.
Martial Arts: (oriental)
Advantageous Background: (scientist, specialising in criminology/pathology).

Champions: The Monster

Val	CHA	Cost	Powers	END
60	STR	50	Full damage resistance	0
23	DEX	39	Killing attack 2d6 †	6
23	CON	26	Ego defence (computer brain)	0
18	BODY	16	Regeneration	0
7	INT	-3	Enhanced hearing	0
10	EGO	0	Enhanced vision	0
10	PRE	0		
2	COM	-4		
15	PD	3		
5	ED	0		
3	SPD	0		
20	REC	6		
50	END	2		
70	STUN	10		
Total		145		
OCV=8				
DCV=8				
ECV=3				

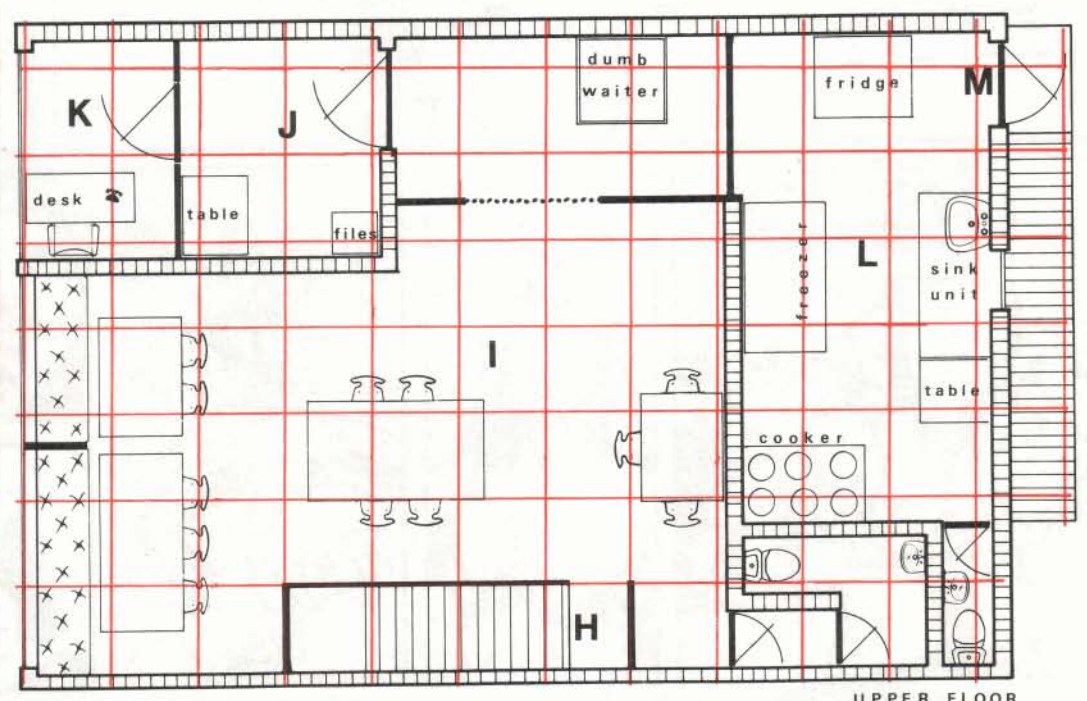
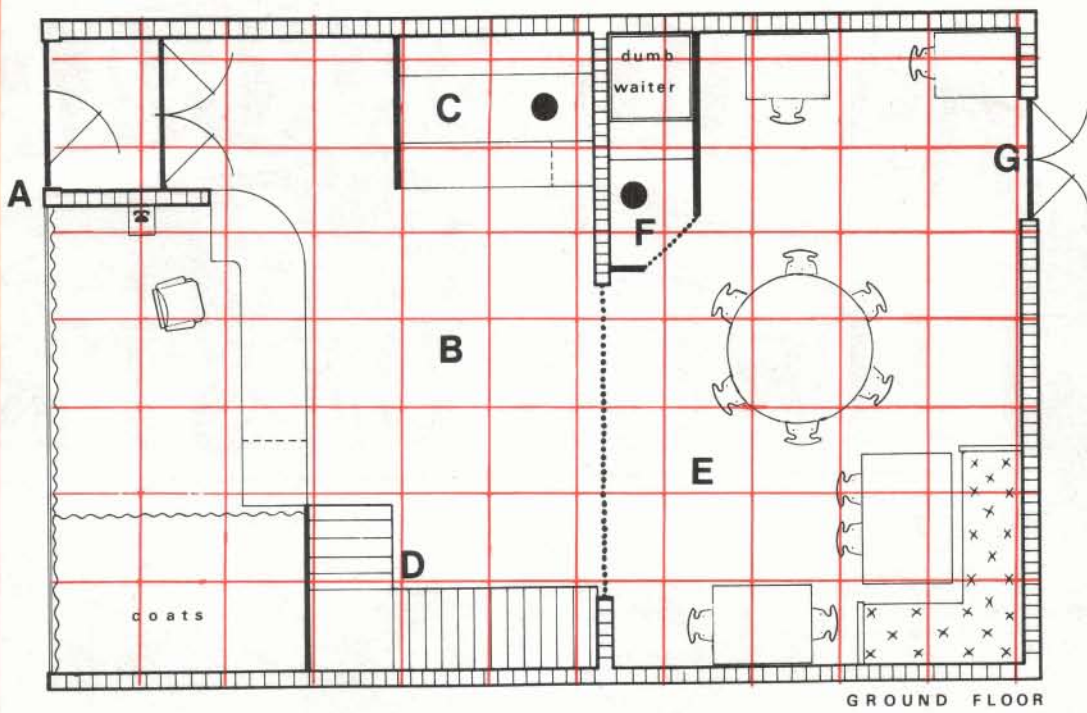
PHA=4,8,12
† OIF = Steel claws
Disadvantages
Can't talk.
Always attempts to kill.
Public identity.
2x damage, electromagnetic attacks.
Unluck.
Unusual looks.





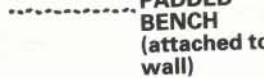

Golden Heroes: The Monster

Weight: 220lb
Height: 7'2"
Handedness: Right
Strength: 41
Ego: 6
Dexterity: 11
Vigour: 14
Damage Bonus: +21
Strike Bonus: -
HTK: 40

HTC: 45
Defence Class: 5 (natural protection, combined with Strength for divider of 2 vs HTC, 3 vs HTK).
Costume: Ragged clothing
Movement: 14m
Powers
Strength 2.
Claws.
Animal Senses 1.
Notes: 3 frames/round.

P E E K - K N G N G D C U C K



-  BAMBOO CURTAIN
-  TABLE, DESK or COUNTER
-  CURTAIN
-  WOODEN BARRIER OR PARTITION
-  PADDED BENCH (attached to wall)
-  BRICK WALL

Character No. (see Table 2)
Golden Heroes Frames/Round

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	X
MI	Waiter	Waiter	Chong	Kang	Kang Se	Fred	Bill	Jane	Stew.	Name
2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	3
11	12	13	14	15	16					
Myra	Tony	Marco	Insp. Dalhousie	Con. Plodd	Con. Parkins	Torpedo	Vendetta	The Shadow Dancer	The Pirate	Mr Smash
2	2	3	3	4	3	3	3	2		
				Mandala	Skylight	Shale				Champion Character SPD

A Champions and Golden Heroes Scenario for 3-6 Characters

by Phil Masters

INTRODUCTION

Peking Duck is a mini-scenario for a small group of moderately able characters. All organisations and groups mentioned can be changed as appropriate for your campaign, and different supervillains can be deployed if desired. A group of three superheroes ('The Outside Line') is given to save time for those who do not wish to use their own creations, but self-designed characters can certainly be used. A number of supervillains are also detailed; the full list should only be used if the superhero group is exceptionally strong.

BACKGROUND (PLAYERS AND GM)

Our heroes have recently established a contact – a 'normal' with shady connections who has provided them with a certain amount of useful information, partly for payoffs and partly, he claims, out of hatred for the evil effects of certain categories of crime. Now he has come through to them with an urgent tip-off. His story runs as follows.

Certain of the Tongs operating in London's Soho have a 'business centre', through which a fair amount of dubious merchandise passes. This is an eminently respectable high-class Chinese restaurant, the Fo Yen Wok. Normally, this 'drop' is used with such care and discretion that a raid would find nothing, but tonight, a large quantity of refined heroin will be on the premises for some hours. There is only one problem; the Tongs have bought themselves a contact in the Metropolitan Police Drugs Squad – identity unknown – and any tip-offs reaching the authorities will almost certainly cause this individual to warn his paymasters to cancel the operation . . .

The Fo Yen Wok is easily located; it is sited on a street not far from Soho Square. It is a high-class establishment, specialising in Peking cuisine, and it does not provide takeaways. Reconnaissance will also discover its opening hours (6pm to midnight), the fact that it has eating areas on two floors, and the fact that it backs on to a narrow alleyway; fire exits from both floors lead out that way, via an open wrought iron staircase in the case of the upper floor.

GM'S NOTES

The players know little when they begin this scenario; what they have to discover is that most of what they do know is lies. The truth is complicated.

The Fo Yen Wok is a perfectly respectable establishment, noteworthy only in that the owner pays his protection money tardily if at all. Because of this, the Tongs have decided to use the restaurant in a devious plan. The heroes' 'contact' is a Tong double agent, set up to distract the superheroes; he will be found to have vanished when the characters next seek him out. While he sets up the heroes, his bosses have quietly informed Antonio (Tony) Rigatoni, a Mafia boss with whom they are having difficult negotiations, that they wish to discuss business over a meal, and they have named the Fo Yen Wok as the place. The idea is to get the restaurant smashed up in a fight, Rigatoni scared and perhaps arrested, and the heroes humiliated – all with no risk to Tong agents.

Two things have gone wrong with this elegant plan. Firstly, and trivially, Tony Rigatoni is a suspicious man, and always has a bodyguard in tow. Secondly, the Northinghouse Corporation, an outwardly respectable multinational combine with some dubious sidelines, has Tong headquarters bugged. They also want to talk to Tony Rigatoni – rather more seriously – and they have decided that the only way to get hold of him is to send a team of supervillains into the confusion and grab him. What they don't know – their bug being rather badly placed – is that the Tongs have now decided to make sure of the heroes' humiliation by tipping off Scotland Yard that a bunch of criminals are demanding protection money in various areas of London, and are about to smash up the Fo Yen Wok as an example. The police are naturally careful about anonymous information, but have a couple of men watching the place, just in case.

Once the action starts, the GM will have to role-play *all* the various factions involved, with proper regard for their objectives. Just remember that, to a normal person, costumed superheroes are very hard to tell apart.

THE FO YEN WOK

The layout of the Fo Yen Wok is shown in *Fig 1*; the properties of some of the fixtures and fittings are given on *Table 1*. The general style of the decor is austere elegant, with much use of pine, bamboo, and indirect lighting. Note that bamboo curtains provide no obstacle to movement, or to attacks, but that characters must make a perception roll to notice events happening beyond them. The thin wooden 'fixed screens' can be broken free (for freedom of movement, use of missiles, etc) by an attack that is declared to be for that specific purpose that exceeds their DEF by 2 or better. (*Golden Heroes*: Tear Off.)

The restaurant staff and customers are detailed in *Table 2*. These are essentially normals (apart from the Mafiosi), but they have a variety of skills and talents. All will be curious about supercharacters and averse to combat, although most will fight back if attacked. The proprietor (Mr Chong) will be very unhappy if people start smashing his restaurant

up, and will run around, getting in the way as much as possible. Most interesting is Kang, the cook, who will continue working in the kitchen – assisted by his daughter – no matter what happens outside. He will become slightly interested if strangers come in, and will tell them to get out, but the only thing that concerns him more than cooking is his daughter, Kang Se. He may well berserk if she is threatened, and will *certainly* attack anyone harming her. He fights with a huge Chinese cook's cleaver [1d6 killing attack + 1d6 strength bonus]. (GH; 2-hand penetrative)

A. Restaurant Front. The building has a large plate glass 'shop' window, but there is a full, opaque curtain immediately behind this. A small, discreet menu card is on display. Entry to the establishment is through a small porch with two sets of doors, both with patterned glass window panels.

B. Reception Area. On the right as diners enter the Fo Yen Wok is a wooden reception counter, with an attendant who checks bookings, takes telephone calls and looks after hats, coats, etc, storing them in a curtained alcove. This area is lit by a central ceiling fixture and a number of small wall units.

C. Bar. This is not a full pub-type set up, simply a place where bottles and glasses are kept, and from which a diner's liquid refreshment is dispensed. The stock is on wooden shelving behind a waist-high counter.

D. Stairs. These are constructed of light pine, and are open in design; any person on them can be seen, at least partially, from areas of both floors.

E. Lower Dining Area. Note the upholstered wall benches in one corner.

F. Waiters' Cubicle. A small area where bills can be prepared and orders passed to the kitchens via the 'dumb waiter'. Food and used tableware also move up and down in the latter, which is too small to accommodate a normal-sized person; the mechanism takes about four seconds to move the lift between floors.

G. Fire Escape. These are discreet panel doors, opened by a simple push-bar mechanism and leading out to the back alleyway. They are clearly labelled as an emergency exit, and can only be opened from the outside (as opposed to being broken down) by *Telekinesis* (make a 'fine work' roll), Security Systems (still GH: *Locksmith*) (to activate the mechanism by picking its auxiliary lock), or similar. The doors can be firmly bolted when the restaurant is not in use.

H. Upper Landing. A discreet notice on the wooden screen marks the presence of the toilets beyond.

I. Upper Dining Area. The only windows in this room are 'slits', with immovable frosted glass panes. Even if the glass is smashed away, only a character with at least one level of *Shrinking* in operation could even hope to squeeze through.

J. Outer Office. This is where most of the restaurant's paperwork is kept, in one large and ill-organised file cabinet. A character may check for suspicious documents, and will decide that none are to be found after a number of minutes equal to 45 minus his or her INT. (GH: 30 + 1d6 minutes.)

K. Inner Office. Business negotiations relating to the restaurant are usually conducted in here. There is some paperwork in the desk, much of it in various dialects of Chinese; a character able to speak some form of this language will conclude that there is nothing suspicious after (25-INT) minutes. (GH: 10 + 1d6 minutes.)

L. Kitchen. The unquestioned domain of Kang, the totally brilliant and somewhat crazy cook. All is immaculately clean – and by normal standards – totally disorganised. The refrigerator, freezer, and store-cupboards are packed with foodstuffs, including many weird and wonderful Chinese oddities.

M. Upper Fire Exit. This emergency door – clearly signposted from the eating area – has a similar opening mechanism to that downstairs (see G). It leads out to a wrought iron staircase.

THE SUPERVILLAINS

The Northinghouse Corporation: This is an eminently respectable, American-based multinational company with interests in aerospace, electronics, computer hardware, engineering, and the arms trade. So much is all that the world – including 98% of Northinghouse employees – knows. If anyone added that certain senior Northinghouse executives add to company profits (and their own salaries) by exploiting the Corporation's huge resources and great geographical dispersion in pursuit of dealings in any and every illegal drug, in projects to disrupt 'unco-operative' governments and replace them with the company's friends, and in grandiose schemes of world domination, then the result would be a libel prosecution. This would not make the additional statements untrue.

The key to Northinghouse's illicit activities is its 'special projects unit' – AKA the dirty tricks department. Through this, a large force of well-armed mercenaries is paid and equipped, and, in addition, a number of supervillain types are employed on long-term or one-off 'contracts'. For this scenario, a small but very powerful 'strike team' will be sent in to grab Tony Rigatoni, defeat any interfering superheroes, and get out fast.

The supervillains available to the GM are detailed below. Note that the full group should only be employed if the player party is very powerful indeed; in general, it is recommended that villains with a points total about 100 less than the hero party be used (there are quite enough confusing factors to make up the difference). The force should generally involve *Torpedo* and *Vendetta*, plus *The Shadow Dancer* if mental powers are desired; MR SMASH should only be used if the hero group is particularly strong.

Torpedo (Champions)

Value	CHA	Cost
35*	STR	18
17	DEX	21
14	CON	8
13	BODY	6
10	INT	-
13	EGO	6
15	PRE	5
8	COM	-1
8	PD	1
7	ED	4
4*	SPD	9
10	REC	-
28	END	-
40	STUN	2

Total 79
+ Powers Cost 96
175

OCV=6
DCV=6
ECV=4

Powers	Pts	Power	End
8	+1 Skill	in all combat	-
23	Armour	+9PD, +12ED*	-
13	Active Sonar*		-
3	Infra-red Vision*		-
2	Radio Hearing*		-
4	6pt Flash Defence*		-

History: One of Northinghouse's legitimate American engineering labs once received a contract from the US government to produce a powered sub-aqua suit with offensive capabilities for use in espionage, intrusion, and assault missions. The project was cancelled but Northinghouse, hating to waste such a useful toy, surreptitiously transferred the prototype suit to their Special Projects Unit, who gave it to a loyal herring named James Pinchon. Codenamed Torpedo, Pinchon has served Northinghouse well enough to come to the attention of the CIA.

The Torpedo suit is a lightweight design, built of carbon-fibre reinforced polymers and incorporating such useful gadgets as high-power boot aquajets, artificial senses, and four wrist-mounted, rocket-propelled 'mini warheads' with fragmentation effect. Pinchon can use these and the suit's artificial strength to good effect in battle. The design's main weakness lies in the internal circuitry, which can disrupt violently under certain conditions.

Vendetta (Champions)

Value	CHA	Cost
16	STR	6
18	DEX	24
28	CON	36
15	BODY	10
6	INT	-4
18	EGO	16
15	PRE	5
8	COM	-1
10	PD	7
7	ED	1
4	SPD	12
10	REC	2
48	END	-4
40	STUN	3

Total 113
+ Powers Cost 82
195

OCV=6
DCV=6
ECV=6

Powers	Pts	Power	End
32	Martial Arts	+x1 damage (8d6 punch, 9½d6 kick)	3

History: Marco DiMaggio was one of the most trusted hoods in Pittsburgh's leading Mafia 'family'. Not too bright, perhaps, but totally loyal and very, very honourable (in Mafia terms). His 'don' knew Marco well, and began to fit him out as a perfect bodyguard; extensive training in unarmed combat was added to a cat-like natural poise and a sixth sense for danger, and a sophisticated lightweight jacket of body armour was purchased for this 'human weapon'. That was just before Pittsburgh's other, smaller 'family' decided to expand - violently. Marco's boss and most of Marco's comrades were wiped out, and Marco was left for dead. All that saved Marco was the care of his kid brother, and his own burning desire for revenge - revenge that was obtained when Marco DiMaggio assumed the black and grey body suit and black head mask of 'Vendetta'. Annihilating dozens of his sworn foes was excellent final training in personal combat; it also brought the attention of one fanatical FBI investigator. Now Vendetta sells his skills to the highest bidder, never breaking his word, and never trusting anyone.

18	2d6 Ranged Killing Att, Explosive, 4 Uses*	-
7	10pt Life Support*	-
18	20" Swimming*	4
-	40END Battery Powers Swimming and 20STR; Normal Recharge Rate.	
*OIF - Armoured Amphibious Battlesuit.		

Disadvantages	Value
Hunted by CIA, 8 or less	20
Extreme Fear of Heights	15
Unlucky (2d)	10
2x All Damage from Magnetic and Gravitational Attacks	20
'Unusual Looks' (Arrogance + Nastiness), 11 or less	10

Total 75

OCV=8
DCV=8
ECV=7

Powers	Pts	Power	End
8	+1 Skill	in all combat	-
23	Armour	+9PD, +12ED*	-
13	Active Sonar*		-
3	Infra-red Vision*		-
2	Radio Hearing*		-
4	6pt Flash Defence*		-

The Shadow Dancer (Champions)

Value	CHA	Cost
8	STR	-2
23	DEX	39
23	CON	26
10	BODY	-
14	INT	4
20	EGO	20
15	PRE	5
16	COM	3
8	PD	6
7	ED	2
6	SPD	27
12½	REC	7
38	END	-4
26	STUN	-

Total 133
+ Powers Cost 122
255

OCV=8
DCV=8
ECV=7

Powers	Pts	Power	End
<i>Elemental Control - Negative Energy</i>			
20	1. 2" Radius Darkness, blocks UV and IR*		6
10	2. Force Field - 20ED at ¼END*		1
10	3. 4d6 END Drain, Usable at Range*		6
<i>Psionic Multipower</i>			
20	30 Point Reserve - All slots at ½ Limit (or worse).		
2	30pt Ultra: 3d6 Ego Attack*		6
1	30pt Ultra: 6d6 Mental Illusions**		6
2	30pt Ultra: 6d6 Mind Scanning***		6
2	30pt Ultra: 6d6 Telepathy†		6
<i>Other Powers</i>			
11	Ego Defence (-14)		-

History: Natasha Mallory was a low-power mutant telepath with no great interest in using her powers for good or evil, but an immense streak of nosiness. This did her no harm whatsoever until the day she realised to her horror that the innocuous passer-by she was probing was actually a malevolent extra-dimensional being of phenomenal strength who was not only aware of the intrusion, but resented it. The 'demon' attacked and captured Natasha, and had dragged her halfway to its own dark plane before she somehow found the strength to break free. She almost made it home - but not quite; she was not recaptured, but a part of her body and much of her mind remains in a shadowy realm of 'negative energy'. This is not a total disadvantage, however; Natasha now finds that she can tap strange forces, either to reinforce her mental abilities or for use 'raw' in a variety of ways. This power is available to her as long as she avoids strong light (daylight or powerful searchlights can almost cripple her), but she also seems to have been infected with a little of the amorality of the 'shadow realm', and now Natasha Mallory is the Shadow Dancer, ready to sell her powers to the highest bidder.

The Shadow Dancer wears a simple cream-coloured costume and a short black cape; the observant may also notice that much of her body, and especially her face, appears to be in deeper shadow than can be explained by the ambient illumination.

Note: In this scenario, both the restaurant and the street outside can be considered to have shadows present, but *deep* shadow will only become available if most of the restaurant lights are smashed or switched off. Later in the evening, the level of illumination outside the restaurant may fall enough to generate the same effects outside.

The Pirate (Champions)

Value	CHA	Cost
20	STR	10
24	DEX	42
18	CON	16
18	BODY	16
7	INT	-3
14	EGO	8
10	PRE	-
14	COM	2
8	PD	4
7	ED	3
4	SPD	16
8	REC	-
36	END	-
41	STUN	4

Total 118
+ Powers Cost 67
185

OCV=8
DCV=8
ECV=5

Powers	Pts	Power	End
5	Climbing	(13 or less)	-

13	15" Teleport; can concentrate for up to 2 phases to get 4x range†	3(12)
13	Radar Sense***	-
6	+4 Sight Perception, -1/6"***	-
7	Stealth, 15 or less	-
5	+1 Skill with Multipower	-

Disadvantages	Value
Hunted by extradimensional 'demons', 8 or less	30
Hunted by Interpol, 11 or less	25
Nauseated by sunlight	15
Fear of 'demons'	10
Hatred of daylight (irrational actions)	20
3d6 Stun from Flash Attacks	15
1d6 Stun from fire and heat	10
2x All damage from lasers	20
1½x Stun from blasters	10

Total 155

*Do not work in strong light (+½)
**Must be shadows around (+½), Humanoid forms only produced (+½)
***Must be strong shadows in area surveyed (+½)
†Both points must be linked by *deep* shadows (+2)
‡Becomes 7 in strong light

7	Swinging (7")	-
10	Blast Pistol: 8d6 Energy Blast, 1 Use, OAF	-
4	4" Swimming	1
4	Throwing Knife: 1d6 Ranged Killing Attack, 1 Use, OAF	-
20	Cutlass: 2d6 H-t-H Killing Attack, (+1d6+1 for STR), OIF	6(9)
7	Missile deflection with cutlass; thrown objects only, 14 or less, OIF	-
10	Two levels with cutlass (combat and missile deflection)	-

Disadvantages
Berserks if mocked about anachronism (8 or less, recovers on 11 or less) 10
Hunted by CIA, 8 or less 20
Only one eye 5
Overconfidence 20
Hatred of authority figures 10
Unlucky (1d6) 5
1½x Stun from Energy Attacks 15

Disadvantages	Value
Hunted by CIA, 8 or less	20
Only one eye	5
Overconfidence	20
Hatred of authority figures	10
Unlucky (1d6)	5
1½x Stun from Energy Attacks	15

Total 85

History: Like Northinghouse, the United States Standard Oil Corporation (USSO Corp) maintains a clandestine special projects department, which often exploits the work of USSO's medical products division. One project developed from the ideas of a company psychologist who suggested that many supposedly 'super-powered' individuals merely had the self-confidence and drive to exploit a widespread latent human potential. His employers challenged the researcher to prove this, and found an experimental volunteer one Larry Van Halen, an embittered ex-US navy man who had been invalidated out after an accident cost him one eye. The result of an intensive course of hypnosis, chemically-induced psychosis and brain-washing was moderately successful; Van Halen's personality has now been warped into line with his favourite image of a hero—derived from the old Hollywood pirate movies. USSO have fitted him out with three appropriate weapons; a lightweight, one-shot hand blaster (disguised as a flintlock), a titanium alloy throwing dagger, and a superbly balanced titanium/steel cutlass, which Van Halen carries attached to his wrist by a near-unbreakable metal cable. The Pirate now serves USSO when they need him, and the highest bidder at other times.

MR SMASH (Champions)

Value	CHA	Cost
28	STR	3
15	DEX	15
33	CON	16
20	BODY	14
5	INT	-5
18	EGO	16
7	PRE	-3
4	COM	-3
15	PD	-
15	ED	-1
4	SPD	15
18	REC	22
36	END	-
34	STUN	1

Total 90
+ Powers Cost 185
275

OCV=7
DCV=7
ECV=6

Powers

Pts	Power	End
12	One level of Shrinking, always on +	-
41	Three levels of Density Increase, always on (Most of the effects of these two powers are already included in the characteristics and combat values. Others are: -2 on others' Sight PER, 1/2 normal size, normal mass).	-
20	Two Extra Limbs (OCV increase included)	-

History: Northinghouse has a robotics division, which once embarked on a project, part funded by the CIA, to produce a Mobile Remote Self-Motivated Automatic Specialist Hunter—MR SMASH for short. The result was not considered a success, being clumsy, inflexible, and vulnerable to various attack modes, and the CIA cancelled their funding. The Special Projects Unit, however, willingly 'appropriated' the prototype, and sent it on a series of missions. In the first, it inflicted a humiliating defeat on the mercenary martial artist known as Green Dragon; in the second, it was photographed in action by a newspaperman, which obliged Northinghouse to tell the CIA that the machine had been stolen...

MR SMASH is a three-foot tall robot, very heavily built, with four arms fitted with fairly sensitive triple claws and a variety of special sensor devices in its head unit. Its experimental robotic brain is mounted within the chest space.

The Villains: Final Notes

These, or any other appropriate super-baddies may be used in this scenario; if others are used, bear in mind that much of the combat will be indoors, so avoid powers that only work in large open space. For simplicity, Hunters should *not* generally appear in the scenario; obviously, the heroes should receive the same privilege.

The Northinghouse Corporation was originated by Tony Green. The Shadow Dancer is based on an idea by Steve Gilham. To both these two, my thanks.

THE OUTSIDE LINE

The Outside Line is an informal association of superheroes, gathered together by Mandala to deal with opponents stronger than its individual members can handle alone. If the group has a particular character, it is anarchic, unconventional, and anti-establishment; two of its members are hunted by the authorities. However, the three individuals get on well together, and make a useful fighting team.

This group is about the smallest in size that can be used effectively in this scenario; if it alone is to be used by the players, the villains deployed should be Vendetta, Torpedo, and either Pirate or, if the players are fairly capable, Shadow Dancer.

Mandala (Champions)

Value	CHA	Cost
13	STR	3
24	DEX	42
20	CON	20
14	BODY	8
15	INT	5
21	EGO	22
14	PRE	4
14	COM	2
10	PD	7
10	ED	6
5	SPD	16
13	REC	12
30	END	-5
31	STUN	-

Total 142
+ Powers Cost 93
235

OCV=8
DCV=8
ECV=7

Powers

Pts	Power	End
10	Acrobatics, 14 or less	-
5	Luck (1d6)	-
19	Martial Arts (5d6 Punch, 6 1/2d6 Kick)	(3)
5	Stealth, 14 or less	-
12	Passive Sonar—works on 11	-

History: Back in 1967, a very large number of hippies went east, looking for gurus to tell them the meaning of life. Andrew Mellish was as naive as any, but he was lucky; his guru was really unusual. In addition, Mellish had the determination and commitment to last out a rigorous and comprehensive course of training for mind and body.

Andrew might have spent the rest of his life in a tiny monastery in the foothills of the Himalayas, but after some years, a letter reached him from an old schoolfriend who needed help. Returning to Britain, Andrew was shocked to find how the old ideals of the 60's had faded and died; the worst symptom he encountered was the corrupt property company that was seeking to bulldoze most of his home town. His old friend had stumbled across some dark secrets when figthing that plan, including a complex web or corruption involving VIPER. Taking on these entrenched powers with his mystically-trained powers took Andrew outside the law, even when he eventually won; the strength of his opponents led him to believe that he should continue this kind of work in other areas preferably with assistance. Now, as Mandala, Andrew Mellish leads the Outside Line.

Mandala wears shoulder-length hair, a headband, and a full beard. He also wears a saffron-yellow cape, grey trousers, and thonged sandals, but always goes bare-chested to display the huge, ornate 'mandala' design tattooed on his chest in a multitude of colours. His only other 'ornamentation' is a pair of hardened steel bracelets, with which he can deflect bullets and other missiles. In general, his training makes him fast, agile, and dextrous, although it was far from complete when he left India; it also gives him more exotic powers. He can attempt to 'read' his surroundings from tiny variations in patterns of sound, and his mental training gives him abilities ranging from telepathy to that of 'disbelieving' the power of non-physical forces to harm his body. In addition, an ascetic, monastical style of life has left him unusually robust and healthy.

Skylight

Value	CHA	Cost
10	STR	-
30	DEX	60
13	CON	6
10	BODY	-
15	INT	5
13	EGO	6
10	PRE	-
14	COM	2
6	PD	4
6	ED	3
8	SPD	40
5	REC	-
24	END	-1
22	STUN	-

Total 125
+ Powers Cost 85
210

OCV=10
DCV=10
ECV= 4

Powers

Pts	Power	End
12	Acrobatics, 16 or less	-
6	Magnetic Grips, IIF; Clinging, 20STR, only works on	2

History: When UNTIL decided to form a special aerial combat unit, one of their first recruits was an engineering graduate and champion gymnast named Janice Lucenzi. After a few weeks, her instructors were unanimous on two things; Lucenzi was brilliant, and Lucenzi was a hot-

2	or less	-
2	Lack of Weakness (-5) on 11	-
10	or less	-
10	Missile Deflection (Bullets and Thrown Objects), 14 or less; OIF (bracelets).	-
	<i>Psionic Multipower</i>	
20	20pt Reserve	-
2	20pt Ego Defence (-23), fixed slot	-
2	20pt, 4d6 Mind Control, fixed slot	4
2	20pt Telekinesis, fixed slot	4
2	20pt, 4d6 Telepathy, fixed slot	4
2	20pt fixed slot, full damage resistance vs energy attacks	-
	<i>Disadvantages</i>	
	Hunted by VIPER, 11 or less	30
	Hunted by the Police, 11 or less	25
	Code against killing, total commitment	20
	Disrespect for authority	10
	Dependent NPC (old friend); incompetent, involved on 11 or less	20
	2d6 Stun from mind control attacks	10
	2x Stun from sonic attacks	10
	1 1/2x Stun from poison, chemical, and anaesthetic drug attacks	10
	Total	135
	<i>metallic surfaces</i>	
12	Laser Pistol, OAF; 2d6 ranged killing attack, 8 uses	-
7	Flash Grenades, OAF; 2d6 Flash, 6 uses	-
3	Insulated Suit, OIF; 5pt Power Defence	-
16	'Force Repulsor', IIF; Missile Deflection, all Attack Modes +	-
6	2 Levels in Missile Deflection	-
20	Flying Belt, OIF; 15" Flight on 24END battery	3
	+ 3	
3	1 Level in Flight	-
	<i>Disadvantages</i>	
	Hunted by UNTIL, 11 or less	30
	Hunted by Middle Eastern supervillain group, 11 or less	30
	Enjoys combat	15
	Always breaks under torture	15
	Will always accept challenges to aerial combat (x 1/2)	5
	Secret Identity	15
	Total	110

headed idiot. Before they could decide what to do, however, Janice Lucenzi took matters into her own hands by borrowing her experimental combat gear and flying right into the middle of a particularly complicated situation, involving an embassy, hostages, and a terroristical bunch of supercharacters. Her action having forced their hand, UNTIL followed her in, to discover half of their opponents already down, and two of the hostages with stray bullets in them. The ensuing diplomatic complications were monumental.

Janice Lucenzi blamed herself for all this (rightly), and decided that she had little choice in what followed but to run for cover. She assumed the identity of Jane Fellowes, Electronic Engineer, and also that of Skylight, costumed crimefighter, hoping to redeem herself and prove her real worth. Encountering Mandala during a payroll hold-up that they jointly stopped, she accepted his invitation to join the Outside Line, and she continues to oppose evil at every opportunity—or at least, whenever she remembers that she's not supposed to be enjoying herself.

As Skylight, Janice Lucenzi wears a close-fitting blue jumpsuit—actually a new UNTIL design which protects the wearer from Power Drain attacks. She carries a variety of UNTIL-manufactured devices, many of them non-standard, lightweight gadgets. Of particular interest is the 'repulsor' she wears under her costume on her left wrist, which projects a highly localised force field which will deflect any incoming missile or energy beam she sees and reacts to in time. Skylight has medium-length black hair that she wears in a lop-sided style, held in place by a small silver-coloured circlet.

SHALE (Champions)

Value	CHA	Cost
5	STR	-5
20	DEX	30
25	CON	30
16	BODY	12
10	INT	-
10	EGO	-
12	PRE	2
6	COM	-2
8	PD	7
10	ED	5
6	SPD	30
12	REC	12
50	END	-
44	STUN	12
Total		133
+ Powers Cost		67
		200

OCV=7
DCV=7
ECV=3

Powers

Pts	Power	End
50	Multipower, 50pt reserve (Mud/Rock Powers)	-
5	-50pt Fixed Slot; 4 Levels, Density Increase at 1/2END. (Rock Hardness)	4
1	-20pt Fixed Slot; Darkness, 2" radius, partially obscures, 1 1/2xEND cost. (Mud Spray)	6
1	-14pt Fixed Slot; +7" Running (to 13"). (Mud Slide)	3
10	2" Stretching (4" non-combat)	2

Disadvantages

Value	Disadvantage	
25	Hunted by the Tongs, 11 or less	
5	Unusual looks, 8 or less	
15	1 1/2x Stun from Energy Attacks	
15	3d6 Stun from Extreme Cold	
15	3d6 Stun from Strong Acids	
15	Dislikes Violence	
10	Uncertainty about own power and ability	
Total		100

History: James Vernon was once a very ordinary sort of guy, a junior mining engineer working for a Hong Kong-based oil company that was investigating new methods of extraction based on 'modulated molecular permeability'. Somehow, inexplicably, Vernon annoyed the local Tongs while working at company HQ, and they paid him a visit one night while he was working overtime. The heavies accidentally pushed Vernon into an experimental vat after short-circuiting one of the machines; they were more than a little surprised when the grey, stone-like being who climbed out of the vat attacked them, and didn't stop gaping until he had knocked them all flat.

Vernon's company flew him home to London, where with the aid of various doctors he managed to gain control of his new, variable, molecular structure. This power was to prove useful when the vengeful, tireless Tongs re-appeared, but even so he was once only saved by the aid of Mandala, who invited him to help form the Outside Line. Vernon's consent came as much out of gratitude as enthusiasm; he is still unsure about his heroic potential, and remains less than fond of combat, but he has taken the identity of Shale, due to his appearance, which resembles damp grey rock.

Shale can control his body's molecules, and can absorb silicon and water from his vicinity (usually from dust and vapour in the air) to reinforce it temporarily; somehow, he can even transform himself to a rock-like form. This can compensate for the normal physical weakness of his new body, but concentrating on it prevents him using his 'mud control' for other purposes. His new form is also strikingly quick, responsive, and elastic.

GOLDEN HEROES STATISTICS

Since *Champions* and *Golden Heroes* differ widely, the statistics given for *GH* may not accord exactly with the character descriptions given above. However, they provide a working compromise.

Torpedo (alias James Pinchon)

Weight: 153lb+22lb suit
Height: 6'1"
Handedness: Right
Strength: 12+18=30
Ego: 8
Dexterity: 10
Vigour: 12
Damage Bonus: +15
HTK: 45

HTC: 39
Defence Class: 4
Costume: Lightweight armour
Movement: 6m
Powers
Armour 1, Health 1 (suit has own air supply/purifier), *Heightened Senses 2* (radar, infra-red vision), *Strength 1, Weapon Skill 1* (mini-grenades), *Special (Sub-Aqua)*.

Note: All Torpedo's powers derive from the armour he wears, which also incorporates a radio receiver. It is powered by a super-compact battery with a rather short life (Torpedo may lose his super strength after a few attacks, at the SS's discretion). *Weapon Skill* applies to 4 suit-mounted 'mini-missiles'; these act as Light Projectiles (1d6+3 HTC, 2d6+3 HTK), but are explosive and can attack up to 4 opponents within 3m of a chosen target point. The suit is equipped for sub-aqua work, allowing Torpedo to 'swim' at 15m per frame (drawing on battery power) and manoeuvre with ease under water.

Vendetta (alias Marco DiMaggio)

Weight: 183lb
Height: 6'3"
Handedness: Right
Strength: 13
Ego: 12
Dexterity: 12
Vigour: 8+10=18
HTK: 63

HTC: 64
Defence Class: 5
Costume: Padded
Movement: 6m
Powers
Intuition 1, Martial Arts (Pugilism 2 plus Judo Throw), Skills 1 (Hide in Shadows), Vigour 1.

Note: All Vendetta's powers derive from long experience and hard training, plus fanatical drive.

The Shadow Dancer

(alias Natasha Mallory)
Weight: 111lb
Height: 5'4"
Handedness: Left
Strength: 4
Ego: 14
Dexterity: 14
Vigour: 12
Damage Bonus: -2
Dodge Bonus: +1

HTK: 37
HTC: 41
Defence Class: 6
Movement: 6m
Powers
Energy Immunity 3 (cold/ice, nuclear, cosmic), *Heightened Senses 1* (radar), *Psi Powers 1* (Hallucinations, Psi Blast, Telepathy), *Skills (Hide in Shadows), Stunner 1, Teleport 1.*

Note: Shadow Dancer's powers are a mixture of natural psionic talents enhanced by her mystical experience, and mystical power of 'negative energy' and shadow. *Energy Immunity* requires her to be conscious in deliberately deflecting damaging energies, her 'radar' is awareness of anything happening in nearby darkness, her *Hallucinations* are invariably of shadowy forms, her *Psi Blast* and *Telepathy* both demand the presence of shadow or darkness. Her *Stunner* is actually her mystical ability to drain a victim of energy at range. *Teleport* is her (limited) ability to 'flow' through shadows. She will avoid strong light at all times since she loses her powers in strong illumination.

The Pirate (alias Larry Van Halen)

Weight: 143lb
Height: 5'9"
Handedness: Right
Strength: 16
Ego: 8
Dexterity: 14
Vigour: 13
Damage Bonus: +1
Dodge Bonus: +1
HTK: 37

HTC: 51
Defence Class: 6
Movement: 7m
Powers
Advantageous Background 2, (Training already included in STR and DEX), Weapon Skill 2 (Lightweight Sword, either 1H or 2H penetrative), *Special 2* (Psychoconditioning and minor weapons).

Note: The Pirate derives his powers from his complete belief in himself as an archetypal swashbuckler. He can perform any minor feat of agility or skill that is in keeping with this image. He carries two one-use weapons which he can employ at Weapon Class 3; a throwing knife and a blast pistol disguised as a flintlock (2d6 HTK, 4d6 HTC and reduces target's Damage Dividers by 2).

MR SMASH (no alias)

Weight: 209lb
Height: 3'1"
Strength: 5+16=21
Ego: 12
Dexterity: 8
Vigour: 10
Damage Bonus: +6
Strike Bonus: +1
Dodge Bonus: +1
HTK: 41
HTC: 31

Defence Class: 4
Movement: 4m
Powers
Advantageous Background 2 (Special x2; four-armed, three foot tall robot), Cybernetics 1 (computer brain), *Health 3* (disease/radiation immunity, environmental survival anywhere a sealed machine can function, toxin immunity), *Heightened Senses 2* (Enhanced hearing, infra-red vision), *Strength 1, Tough Skin 1.*

Note: This robot's small size and multiple well-co-ordinated limbs give it the Dodge and Strike modifiers above, and allow it to climb very easily. Since it is only a simple-minded machine it has some severe sensory limitations (colour blindness, no chemosensors); if it suffers a Scramble Powers hit, it will run amok.

THE OUTSIDE LINE

Mandala (alias Andrew Mellish)
Weight: 140lb
Height: 5'10"
Handedness: Left
Strength: 12
Ego: 12
Dexterity: 13
Vigour: 13
Dodge Bonus: +3
HTK: 45
HTC: 45

Defence Class: 6
Movement: 6m
Powers
Advantageous Background 2 (Previous Training x2; increases already included in DEX and EGO), Agility 1, Energy Immunity 1 (heat/flame), *Martial Arts 1 (Oriental Grade 1 plus Judo Throw), PSI Powers (Telepathy as Speciality, Telekinesis, Telepathy), Skills 1 (Hide in Shadows).*

Note: All Mandala's powers derive from his physical and mystical training. His immunity to fire is achieved by reminding himself of the illusory nature of such ephemeral forces – an act of will precluding the simultaneous use of his psionic talents.

Skylight (alias Janice Lucenzi)

Weight: 115lb
Height: 5'11"
Handedness: Right
Strength: 5
Ego: 7
Dexterity: 18
Vigour: 7
Damage Bonus: -1
Strike Bonus: +3
Dodge Bonus: +3
HTK: 28
HTC: 17
Defence Class: 6
Movement: 5m

Powers

Advantageous background 1 (Previous Training; increases included in DEX), Cybernetics 2 (2 Specials: Force Deflector and Flash Grenades – see Notes), Flight 1; Reactions 1, Skills 1 (Gymnastics), Wallcrawling 1, Weapons Skill 1 (Laser).

Note: Skylight's natural dexterity and gymnastic skill are phenomenal. Her Force Deflector (a small gadget worn beneath the sleeve of her costume) generates a field effect that can be used against ranged attacks only as if the wielder had *Weapon Skill: Shield* (used defensively), while her Flash Grenades (6 carried) 'detonate' with a dazzling flash – anyone within 4m may be blinded unless their eyes are protected; a character may attempt to protect his eyes (requires successful Dodge vs Weapon Class 3) otherwise blinded for 1d6 Frames. Skylight also uses a short-range flying belt, a set of magnetic 'grippers' providing *Wallcrawling* ability on metal surfaces, and an eight-shot laser (as rules, but used with *Weapon Skill*). She is quick, clever, and a useful ally, but rather too excitable and unused to real pain.

Shale (alias James Vernon)

Weight: 133lb
Height: 6'0"
Handedness: Right
Strength: 4+17=21
Ego: 6
Dexterity: 13
Vigour: 15
Damage Bonus: -2/+16
Dodge Bonus: +3/0
HTK: 53

HTC: 56

Defence Class: 5/4
Movement: 10-15/5m

Powers

Mass Variation 1, Self 1, Solidify 1, Speed 1, Strength 1, Stretch 1, Tough Skin 1.

Note: Shale can only use his *Strength* and *Tough Skin* powers when his *Mass Variation* is active, and he can only use the latter to increase his mass; furthermore, he can only use his *Speed* and *Stretch* powers when not using his increased mass. When two numbers are given above, the first represents the character with *Speed* and *Stretching* active, the second, Shale's *Strength* and *Tough Skin* functional.

RUNNING THE SCENARIO

Peking Duck is quite easy to set up; the referee need only place the staff and customers in appropriate positions around the restaurant (with roughly equal numbers upstairs and down, and – preferably – the Mafiosi upstairs), and then ask the players how the heroes propose to go about their investigation. From then on, all the NPCs are essentially reacting to events, although the players may well not believe this. The villains have the building under surveillance, and they will strike the moment that the heroes reveal themselves, arriving within one turn and making straight for Tony Rigatoni. The police also have the restaurant watched, and they will intervene as soon as any violence starts, but unfortunately for them only three men are watching the building. These are a junior CID man who thinks he's Maigret and two constables who work by the book; they will do their best to arrest anyone who seems to be breaking the law; being policemen, they have mixed feelings about people in funny costumes claiming to fight crime.

If the players choose to be so subtle that they fail to trigger any action, things will start happening after one hour, when Tony Rigatoni will decide that his contacts are not going to appear, and so will leave. The villains will therefore be forced to act (make this *prompt*, else the action will shift outside the nice, cluttered confused restaurant), which will in turn force some response from the heroes and police.

A final note; hunters, dependents, etc. should not generally appear on either side in this scenario, unless the GM really enjoys huge, complicated fight scenes. Of course, heroes who are hunted by the Tongs or who have a particular hatred of drugs provide an excuse to run the whole thing, and any who are hunted by the Police will be of interest to Inspector Dalhousie and his men. Unusual Looks, Psychological and Physical Limitations, and Unluck are all highly relevant, however (in *Golden Heroes* terms – consider carefully the heroes' Campaign Ratings).

If the players are using their own characters, an interesting twist is to have the Outside Line appear independently as NPCs following their own leads on Tong plans and quite possibly mistaking less well-known heroes for villains. In any case, have fun with the scenario, and wish the players luck! □

Table One: Objects and Fittings

Item	Weight (kg)	Champions		Golden Heroes	
		DEF	BODY	SIZE	HTK
Tumbler	0.25	1	1	0	1
Plate	0.4	1	2	0	1
Bottle	0.6	1	1	0	1
Cutlery	0.2	4	1	0	3
Telephone*	1	2	1	1	2
Stool	10	4	4	2	4
Chair	14	4	4	2	4
Table or Desk	50	4	6	3	6
Wooden Partition	20-50	4	2	3	2
Counter	30-100	5	5	3	5
Curtain**	1	1	1	1	1
Bamboo Curtain	n/a	— obstructs vision only —			
Padded Wall Bench	60	6	4	3	6
Door – Interior	25	2	5	2	4
Exterior	30	4	5	3	5
Washbasin	15	5	3	2	4
Toilet	25	5	4	2	4
Light Fitting***	n/a	1	1	1	1
Fridge/Freezer/	120	5	6	4	8
Cooker***					
Brick Wall	n/a	6	4	—	8

*If damaged, remains 'live' on 5+ on 1d6; inflicts 1/2d6 killing damage on contact.

**Only damaged by killing attacks (GH: Penetrative attacks).

Table 2b: 'Normals Appearing' (Golden Heroes)

No./Name/Role	EGO	STR	DEX	VIG	HTK	HTC	Notes, etc
1. Mi (Reception)	4	2	5	3	8	10	
2. Waiter 1	5	5	4	4	14	14	
3. Waiter 2	5	4	4	5	16	18	Oriental M/Arts 1 plus Judo Throw
4. Mr Chong (owner)	3	3	5	4	15	13	
5. Kang (cook)	6	8	6	8	28	30	
6. Kang Se (Kang's daughter)	3	2	8	4	13	13	
7. Fred (Cust)	4	4	4	4	14	14	
8. Bill (Cust)	4	4	4	4	16	12	Gymnastics skill
9. Jane (Cust)	5	3	5	4	11	15	
10. Stewart (Cust)	6	4	4	5	16	20	
11. Myra (Cust)	8	4	4	4	19	14	
12. Tony Rigatoni (Cust/Mafiosi)	5	5	5	5	18	17	Carries a pistol
13. Marco Vennecci	8	8	7	8	26	31	Carries a pistol; WC1 with all comb.
14. Insp Dalhousie (Police)	5	5	6	5	19	16	WC1 with club
15. Con Plodd (Police)	5	6	8	5	20	21	Pugilism 1
16. Con Parkins (Police)	7	7	5	7	23	30	WC1 with club

Note: Cust=Customer. Police, Mafiosi, and Kang have 3 frames, all others have 2. All move 3 metres.

Table 2a 'Normals' Appearing (Champions)

No./Name/Role	STR	DEX	CON	INT	EGO	PRE	COM	PD	ED	SPD	REC	O/DCV	ECV	BODY	END	STUN	SEX
1. Mi (Receptionist)	6	12	9	11	10	12	20	1	2	3	5	4	3	9	18	18	F
2. Waiter 1	11	10	10	10	8	9	2	2	2	4	3	3	3	10	20	20	M
3. Waiter 2	10	9	12	11	11	10	10	2	2	2	5	3	4	12	24	22	M
4. Mr Chong (Owner)	9	12	9	12	12	12	7	2	2	2	3	4	4	9	18	18	M
5. Kang (Cook)	15	14	17	8	9	15	6	3	6	3	7	5	3	13	34	32	M
6. Kang Se (Cook's daughter)	5	14	8	11	7	6	16	1	2	3	3	5	3	7	16	14	F
7. Fred (Customer)	11	10	10	10	10	10	10	2	2	2	4	3	3	10	20	20	M
8. Bill (Customer)	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	2	2	2	4	3	3	10	20	20	M
9. Jane (Customer)	10	12	10	10	10	10	10	2	2	2	4	3	3	10	20	20	F
10. Stewart (Customer)	10	10	10	5	12	11	10	3	3	3	4	3	3	10	20	20	M
11. Myra (Customer)	9	10	10	10	16	10	8	3	3	2	4	3	3	10	20	20	F
12. Tony Rigatoni (Cust & Mafiosi)	12	12	12	14	14	15	10	3	3	3	4	4	5	10	24	22	M
13. Marco Vennecci (Bodyguard)	15	14	15	8	8	15	6	5	5	4	6	5	3	18	30	35	M
14. Insp Kenneth Dalhousie (Police)	10	10	10	12	16	10	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	11	20	25	M
15. Con Plodd (Policeman)	10	15	9	9	9	9	15	3	3	3	6	5	3	10	20	22	M
16. Con Parkins (Policeman)	13	10	12	8	14	11	10	3	2	2	7	3	5	12	24	25	M

Notes

10pts Martial Arts; a peaceable type

8" Running, Acrobatics on 11 or less

Carries a pistol
Carries a pistol, +2 skill with punch
Carries a truncheon (+1 skill), detective work (14 or less)
10pts Martial Arts
Carries a truncheon

REUNION

by Simon Burley

Reunion is a Superhero adventure following directly on from *Crossfire*, the scenario given in the *Golden Heroes* Supervisor's Book, although it can be played using any Superhero rules provided the statistics of the characters and items involved are changed. To aid conversion, many of the statistics have been kept to the end of the adventure.

BACKGROUND

In *Crossfire*, the Princess M'krell of High Illana was ambushed in earth's solar system. Her yacht was destroyed and she was hurled to earth in her royal space armour, to meet the inhabitants of that planet and have series of adventures there.

Fragments of her ship were also drawn into the earth's gravitational field. Most burnt up in the atmosphere but four of the largest and most important fragments reached the ground in one piece. These have been scattered throughout the globe.

Illanian ships are not built according to any technology that earthmen would understand. They are grown in vast seas of semi-sentient fluids. They are crystalline, indescribably beautiful and alive. The energy matrices laced throughout the ships act as independent minds which are sensitive to the desires of the ship's controllers.

The four shards of M'krell's yacht are no longer beautiful, having been worn to smooth stones by their passage to earth. They are, however, still alive and seek to use the natives of this planet to reunite them, rescue M'krell and rebuild the ship so that it can return to Illana.

The ship's defence mechanism was found by a head-hunting tribe in South America. Drawn by its inner glow, they took it back to their village and placed it in their sacred spring. The witchdoctor and the tribe's three champions drank of the spring and absorbed some of the substance of the shard and fell under its influence. Through their minds, the shard perceived itself as G'ru, sister to the mountains. It began to plan its return to space, but for this it needed its brothers and they were too far away for the primitive tribesmen to acquire.

Then, one day, the head-hunters managed to capture a rare delicacy – a British explorer and gentleman of fortune by the name of Wesley Fetherington. He was dragged to the sacred spring and forced to drink. Seeing the stone in its depths, he grabbed it and used it to lay about the natives, killing several before G'ru's influence finally put him in thrall. Using his knowledge as an explorer and ex-soldier, Fetherington has set out with G'ru and the tribe's champions to recover the other three shards and reunite them.

Several months have passed since the events detailed in *Crossfire*.

THE PROTAGONISTS

The characters should be a small group of experienced heroes, preferably having adventured in the *Crossfire* scenario. Since the adventure can continue to its climax whether the heroes succeed or not, the exact power level of the team is not critical but 'streets' level heroes would be more suitable than cosmic mega-stars. Heroes with the ability to circumvent normal scientific protection (through *Psionics* or *Magic*) could prove to be a problem initially.

Wesley V Fetherington

Late of the Red Berets (he was a Major), Wesley Fetherington is a tough and wily soldier of fortune in his late forties. His army training makes him a formidable enough opponent and possession of G'ru makes him nearly invincible.

Fetherington believes that he is following his own plan to acquire the shards, but he is really under the control of G'ru. Such a plot is not consistent with his usual personality and he

will attempt to free himself from the shard's power if presented with someone from his past (a Corporal from his regiment, his estranged wife, etc) who questions his actions. Such characters will not appear by accident, however, they must be located by the heroes researching into his background.

When in battle, Fetherington is a typical military commander making good of his rather unusual forces. He will give his name and rank negotiating with the heroes (for their surrender, etc).

Witchdoctor

One of the tribesmen brought along by Fetherington, this mud-and-grass-bedaubed rattle-shaking apparition has had his natural abilities boosted by G'ru. He can now actually control the weather to small degree and has minor magical powers. He will cease to use his powers if his tribal totem is torn from his grasp, though he could probably manage without it. He can make a new totem between fights.

Blowpipe

The tribe's finest exponent of this weapon has been advanced so that he is a crack shot by any standards. He uses several types of dart coated with poisons distilled from the venom of rain-forest creatures. The most basic of these are *Sleep*, *Paralysis* and *Poison*.

Bow

Though not quite as accurate as the tribe's blowpipe expert, this tribesman tends to do a bit more damage when he hits. He uses the same sort of venoms as his fellow tribesman.

Champion

The best fighter of the tribe is a massively muscled creature. He is about as strong and tough as a human can possibly be, but that is the only advantage he has.

Note: All of the tribesmen are wearing their native grass-skirt clothing and have their teeth filed to a point. None can speak English but G'ru enables Fetherington to communicate with them in their native tongue.

Thugs

As well as the tribesman, Fetherington has been able to acquire the help of about twenty low-grade thugs. They can keep whatever they want from the 'jobs' he intends to pull except for the shards themselves. Though he will keep a few back from each raid as a reserve, Fetherington will sacrifice those he does use in order to ensure the escape of himself or his tribesmen. The thugs know nothing of the powers of the shards but do know where he is to strike next and can detail the tribesmen's abilities.

THE SHARDS

The shards represent four major functions of M'krell's yacht; its defensive, offensive, propellant and space-warp systems. Without the numerous back up crystals they require, each shard has but a fraction of its original power, though this is still more than sufficient on a backward world such as earth.

Defence: G'ru, Sister to the Mountains, grants total invulnerability to its wielder. No force can pierce its protective shell, though it is possible to knock the wielder back or blast the floor from under him etc.

Offence: Named by G'ru as N'ra, Brother of Lightning, this shard has the ability to fire powerful energy beams.

Propellant: B'ri, Daughter of the Wind, gives the ability to

REUNION

fly, even in space (though it does not grant the ability to breathe there).

Warp: K'ro, Father of the Abyss, gives its wielder the ability to teleport over short distances.

Each shard can only be wielded if it has accepted its holder. It will make a mental attack on the holder. If successful, the holder can use its ability but it will also show him or her where the other shards are and command that they are acquired.

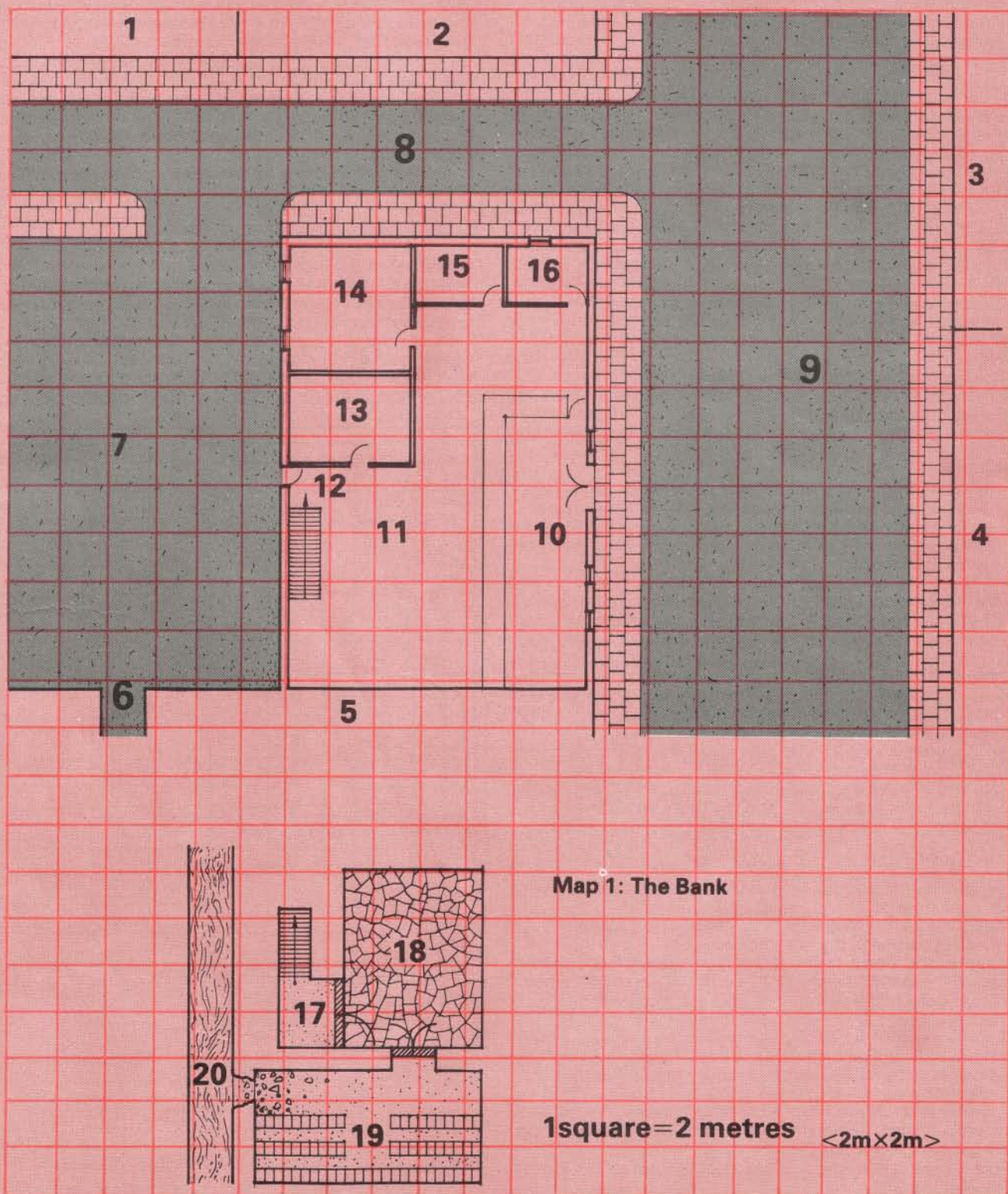
When all four shards are assembled in one place, they will fuse to form the central core of a new ship. This core will have the abilities of all four shards but magnified several times. It will be capable of independent action and will seek to dominate the earth and use its resources to rebuild the ship. Anyone caught holding the shards when they fuse will be incorporated into the core which will be then able to utilise their powers and abilities as well as its own.

Note: This is the major balancing factor of the scenario. If

the heroes are a weak team, then the core will be assembled by Fetherington. If, however, the team is a stronger one and they succeed in amassing the shards then they will be short one team-member and have to face his/her powers in addition to those of the core.

PLOT

Unlike most superhero scenarios, *Reunion* does not have a linear plotline through which the supervisor and players are forced to play. The referee has been given the background and the protagonists. The three resting places of the other three shards and an outline of Fetherington's plans to seize them follow. It is up to the individual supervisor to decide in which order the three settings are visited and over what sort of time period. Some may prefer a frenetic chase from battle to battle in the space of a few hours whilst others may prefer to spread events out over the course of a week, allowing the heroes a chance to do some detective or preparatory work (such as



locating Fetherington's wife or researching his military record).

In addition to the settings, several options are given to allow the supervisor to add additional twists to the plot should he/she want it to be more confusing for the players!

SETTINGS

Each of the shards has endeavoured to come to Britain as this is the place where M'krell's space armour landed. Each shard is in one of the three settings given below.

THE BANK (Map 1)

N'ra, Brother of Lightning, was found in the Middle East by the son of a rich oil sheik. Suspecting it to be valuable, he has brought it to England to be valued. It is currently residing in the vault of a local bank in a safety deposit box.

The bank has a staff of six. There will be 1-6 customers at any time and the streets outside will contain 2-12 civilians with a 1 in 6 chance of there being a constable nearby on his beat. The bank manager is not overly brave and will take villains down to the vault if his life is threatened.

Key

- 1-5. General shops (camera shop, fast food bar, chemist, shoe shop and supermarket respectively). All have plate glass frontages.
- 6. Small alleyway.
- 7. Bank's car park.
- 8. Sidestreet (leading to car parks behind shops, etc).
- 9. Main road through town centre.
- 10. Bank foyer.
- 11. Desks, etc, where most of the bank's business is conducted; cashiers' counter.
- 12. Rear door and steps down to vault.
- 13. Surface vault, containing documents, etc.
- 14. Manager's office.
- 15. Stationery room.
- 16. WC.
- 17. The vault, stairs up to the bank.
- 18. Strongroom, entrance through barred doors.
- 19. Safety deposit boxes.
- 20. Sewer. The hole marked is the one Fetherington will blast.

Seizing N'ra

To get N'ra, Fetherington will use ten thugs. Four will drive up front and rear and attempt to rob the bank in the usual way. Using the noise this creates as a diversion, he will blast into the safety deposit room from the sewer where he, his tribesmen and two further thugs will be waiting. The three-pronged assault will be co-ordinated using walkie-talkies. Fetherington and the tribesmen will escape down the sewers (he has a map) with the two thugs covering their escape. The other thugs will escape in cars taking whatever they can lay their hands on.

THE MUSEUM (Map 2)

B'bri, daughter of the wind, fell in Africa where it was recovered by a British expedition and brought back to be placed in a display case in the local museum.

The museum is a small one run by a curator, 3 guards (only one of whom will be in the entrance hall where the shard is displayed) and 2 ladies who sell postcards and cups of tea. There is an attendant in the car park and the museum entrance hall and grounds will contain 2-12 visitors.

Key

- 1. The street outside is a quiet one in a backwater of the town's business district.
- 2. The museum carpark (with the attendant's hut and an elevating barrier to the entranceway).
- 3. Gravel paths leading from street and carpark through the grounds to the museum. Signs on the grass request that visitors keep to the paths.
- 4. Trees and bushes.
- 5. The main entrance hall. Signs point to the various sections of the building. The hallways are lined by display cases.
- 6. A small counter at which it is possible to purchase guidebooks, postcards, drinks, etc.
- 7. A combination storeroom, kitchen and rest-room for the staff.
- 8. Anteroom; each one is devoted to a particular subject (eg phosphorescent rocks).
- 9. A glass case containing a selection of semi-precious stones including B'ri.

Seizing B'ri

Fetherington will use a simple, direct plan due to the lack of security at the museum. He will use 5 thugs. There will be three vehicles, each containing a driver. One will contain the tribesmen, another Fetherington and 2 thugs whilst the third will act as an emergency reserve escape vehicle. Fetherington and 2 heavies will enter the museum, smash the case in the entrance hall and grab B'ri. Their escape will be covered by Bow and Blowpipe from the cover of nearby trees. They will use all three vehicles to escape, scattering in three separate directions. The thugs know little of the value of the contents of the museum and are likely to come away with handfuls of semi-precious stones and fossils.

THE PARK (Map 3)

The only section of the Illanian ship to fall to earth on Britain was K'ro, Father of the Abyss. It is buried deep in the earth under a local park. The park is a large one on the outskirts of town and K'ro is buried in a rather secluded, neglected and run-down corner. There is a 1 in 6 chance that a family of 1-3 people will be walking their dog nearby.

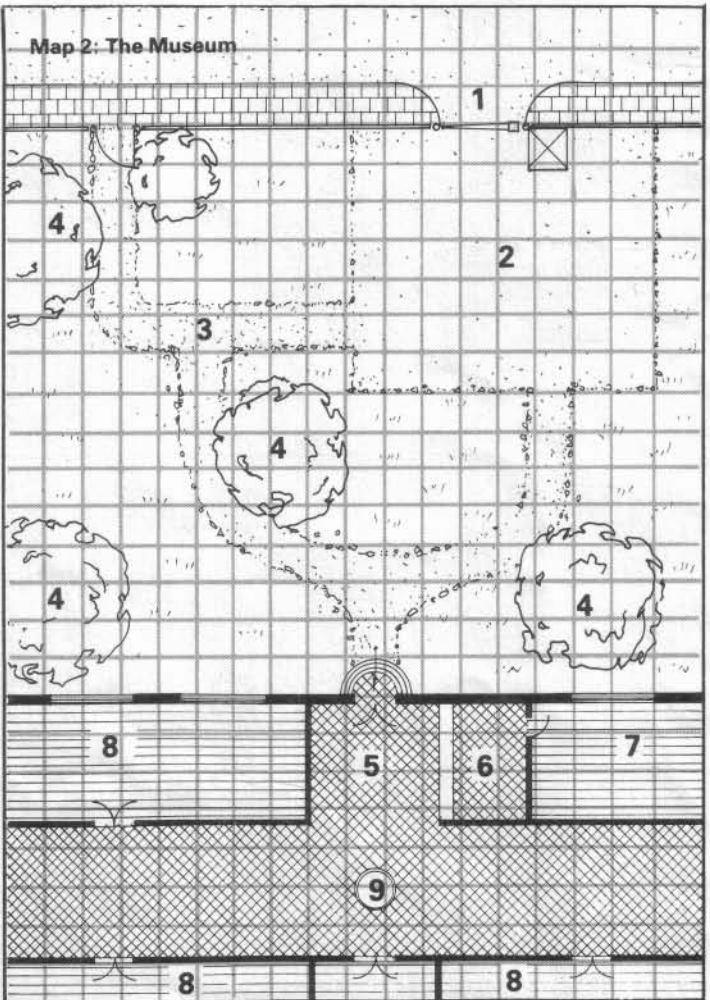
Key

- 1. Natural paths leading through the woods and under-growth in this part of the park.
- 2. A moss-covered fountain splashes quietly in an idyllic clearing.
- 3. An overgrown mass of brambles and thorns were a rose-bed used to be. Movement through this is at half-speed.
- 4. Trees.
- 5. The spot below which K'ro is buried.

Seizing K'ro

The shard is embedded twenty feet down in the earth and will take some time to uncover (sufficient time for any opposition to appear).

Fetherington's plan is to have Witchdoctor summon up a light drizzle to keep people out of the park. Three thugs will wait in a variety of vehicles outside the park whilst others will seal off the paths to the clearing. The tribesmen will keep



watch from the trees and bramble patch (through which they can manoeuvre at normal speed) and two thugs will dig up K'ro.

If more than one other shard is in the clearing above then K'ro will be sufficiently roused to teleport to the surface.

PLOT DEVELOPMENT

Whatever speed the events take place at, the following points should be borne in mind.

The shards should be recovered in the order which is most beneficial to Fetherington. If all of the heroes fly, for example, then it would be extremely useful if Fetherington were to acquire B'ri.

The ideal plot development is for the heroes to be confused when they first encounter Fetherington and the natives (the bank encounter is most useful for this) so that the baddies get away with that particular shard. However, the next time they meet, the heroes should have pulled their act together sufficiently to be able to seize the next shard (at the museum). Finally, both sides should arrive at the resting point of the third shard at more or less the same time, for a final climactic encounter. (The park encounter is most useful for this due to the time it takes to dig up K'ro.)

It does not matter who amasses the shards or, even, if they are obtained by different people, since they will prevail upon their possessors to unite them.

PLOT TWISTS

Devious referees will want to graft further complications onto the scenario outline. Here are a few suggestions:

A. Since the Illanians are the only race possessing the crystal ships, it could help both the Emissariate of Bolusci and the Krai to gain knowledge of them. Thus both empires will dispatch an expeditionary force to recover the remains of M'krell's cruiser.

These forces – a Krai Lieutenant and her drones and a rather quirky interstellar Boluscan archaeologist – should pop up whenever the going gets too straightforward to help, hinder, inform or mislead the heroes as the plot dictates. However, both the Krai and the Boluscan archaeologist ultimately want

the shards for themselves. Should their paths cross during the adventure, they will disregard all else in their desire to fight their racial enemy. (Imagine a four-way battle: Krai vs Boluscan, and the heroes vs Fetherington in a battle to be first to seize the shards!)

B. The thugs are, in fact, an independent gang run by one of Fetherington's old Corporals. As such, they have a degree of freedom of action to pursue their own ends and they may try a double-cross by substituting duplicates for one or more of the shards. Take care, if using this option, to keep track of just where each shard and its duplicate are, otherwise things will get extremely confusing!

C. If a further twist is required, then I recommend the introduction of the following villains from the Supervisors Book (in order of decreasing relevance): Eldritch, Beacon, Outcast, and Blacksun. Each can be linked in with the shards in some way via their background, abilities or through an item they possess.

The Shards

The shards convey a number of powers and effects on their users as detailed:

G'ru [Golden Heroes]: Non-standard invulnerability in the form of an impervious *Force Field*. Physical attacks simply stop a couple of inches away from the holder (this includes *Energy Attacks* and the like). He/she cannot be grabbed or lifted and has twice the usual pushback threshold (ie 40 in most cases).

Psionic, Magical or Unusual Energy Attacks may penetrate the force field *once*. Each time the attack is used thereafter, there is a 50% chance that G'ru will have analysed it and guarded against it. Once immune to a particular attack form, G'ru can never again be harmed by it. If an attacker insists on continuing to assault G'ru's holder, the shard will eventually work out a way of reflecting the attack (mental/mystical feedback, etc).

Should the wielder of G'ru wish to take an active part in combat, they must release the shard. Protection can be recovered by grasping it again. (Releasing/grasping take one Frame each.) [Champions: Grants total invulnerability, see also GH specifics.]

N'ra [Golden Heroes]: *Energy Attack 2 (Electrical, 20 dice over 5 rounds)*. [Champions: 3dRKA, NND (Armour) 14 or less, 4 uses.]

B'ri [Golden Heroes]: *Flight 3*. [Champions: 15" Flight.]

K'ro [Golden Heroes]: *Teleportation 2* (utilising the holder's HTC). [Champions: Teleport 15", +1 phase and get 2x distance.]

STATISTICS

Wesley V Fetherington (Golden Heroes)

EGO: 12 Powers
 STR: 14 Advantageous Background (Previous Training, twice, STR and VIG); Martial Arts 1 (Pugilism).
 DEX: 12
 VIG: 14

Movement: 7m Notes
 Dodge: +1 Fetherington is a skilled soldier and explorer.

Defence Class: 6

Frames/Round: 4

HTK: 57

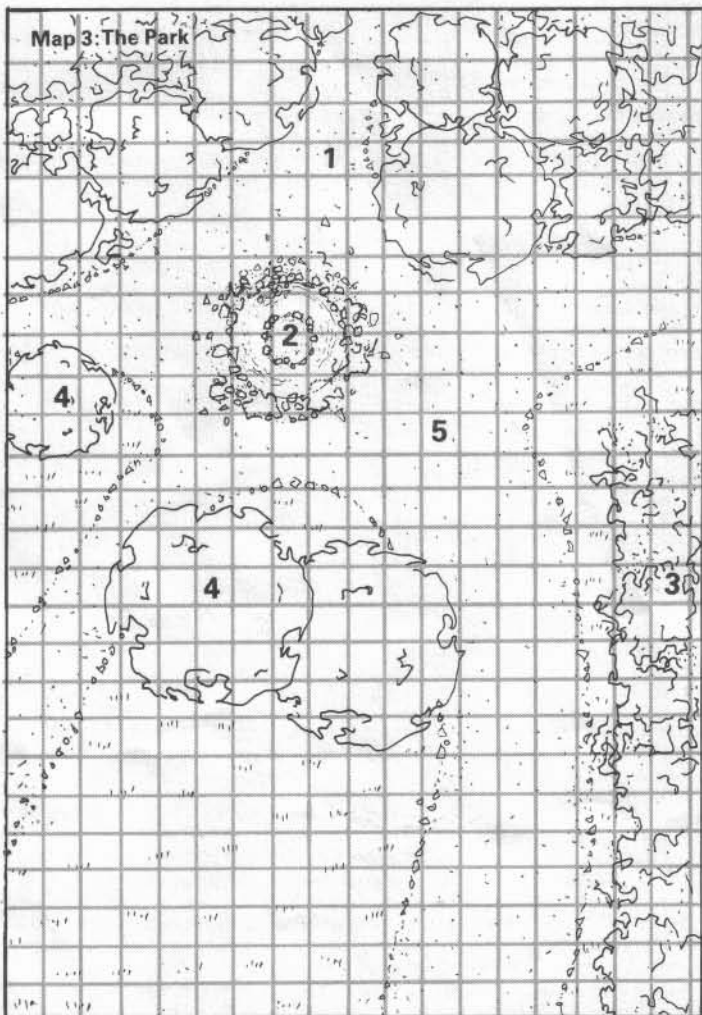
HTC: 49

Wesley V Fetherington (Champions)

CHA: Str Dex Con Bdy Int Ego Pre Com Pd Ed Spd Rec End Str
 Val: 14 15 13 12 16 18 17 12 6 4 3 7 30 28
 Cost: 4 15 6 4 6 16 7 1 3 1 5 2 2 2
 Total + Powers Cost = (74+37) = 111 OCV = 5 DCV = 5 ECV = 6

Powers

Pts	Power	End	100+ Disadvantages	Value
4	Climbing (12)	0	Fear of snakes	11
5	1d6 Luck	0		
3	Demolitions (11)	0		
3	Paramedic (12)	0		
3	Adventuring (12)	0		
7	Whip 1dHKA (OAF) 2dHKA if STR	3 6		
11	Smith and Wesson .45 Revolver, 2dRKA, OAF, 6 shots	0		





The Central Core (Golden Heroes)

EGO: 18 *Powers*
STR: 40 *Strength 2; Tough Skin 1; Energy Attack 3*
DEX: 10 *(Electrical, 25 dice in 5 rounds); Flight 4; Tele-*
VIG: 14 *portation 3.*
Movement: 6/30m
Dodge: Cannot Dodge *Notes*
Defence Class: 6 G'ru has to forgo its total invulnerability to
Frames/Round: 4 utilise the abilities of the other shards. When
HTK: 50/4 fused with a sentient being, the core will be
HTC: 50/4 able to use that being's superpowers, etc. It will
 always use the highest of any abilities and
 statistics possessed by itself or such a being.

The Central Core (Champions)

CHA: Str* Dex Con Bdy Int Ego Pre Com Pd Ed Spd Rec End Stn
Val: 55 13 38 16 5 10 33 0 25 21 4 15 60 60
Cost: 53 9 33 8 +5 0 23 +5 10 9 17 0 2 9
 Total + Powers Cost = (166+159) = 325 OCV = 4 DCV = 4 ECV = 3

Powers		End	100+ Disadvantages	Value
Pts	Power			
30	Full Damage Resistance (G'ru)	0	Beserk (14) when damaged (3)	30
28	2 levels Density Increase	0	3d6 Unlucky	15
	4 x Mass, -2 K Back		Unusual looks	15
	(always on)		VUL: 3 x Body/Stun from heat	60
36	3dRKA, NND (Armour) 14 or 0	0	beams	
	less, 4 uses (N'ra)		Villain bonus	105
30	Flight (15") (B'ri)	3		
35	Teleport 15", +1 phase	7	<i>Notes</i>	
	= 2 x distance (K'ro)		*STR is Armour Piercing	

The Tribesmen (Golden Heroes)

Each tribesman has the following statistics in common (except where otherwise noted):

EGO: 8 **Defence Class:** 10
STR: 8 **Frames/Round:** 4
DEX: 8 **Weapon Class:** 2
VIG: 8 **HTK:** 28
Movement: 4m **HTC:** 28
Dodge: +1

The superpowers possessed by the individuals are as follows:

Witchdoctor: *Weather Control 2; Magic 1 (Energy Strike*, Conjuring, Astral Projection).*

Blowpipe: *Weapon Skill 1 (Blowgun); Envenomed Darts**.*
DEX: 16; **Strike:** +1.

Bow: *Weaponskill 1 (Bow); Envenomed Arrows**.*

Champion: *Strength 1; Vigour 1; STR:20; VIG:18; Damage: +5;*
HTK: 71; **HTC:** 59.

Notes: *The Witchdoctor's *Energy Strike* is *Lightning* and acts in all ways as an *Energy Attack*. For example, it will be affected by damage dividers.

**Available venoms are: *Paralysis* (target rolls d20 under VIG or is paralysed for 2d6 Frames); *Sleep* (does an extra 3d6 HTC); *Poison* (does an extra 3d6 HTK). Neither blowgun darts or arrows can do any damage to DC3 or lower targets, and only the d6 of concussion will affect DC4 targets.

The Tribesmen (Champions)

Treat all these as Type III thugs from *Champions II* but with the following exceptions:

Witchdoctor: Has *Weather Control* EC, paid for by *Alien Energies*.
Blowpipe/Bow: The *Sleep*, *Paralysis* and *Poison* venoms should be built in accordance with the player heroes participating in the adventure.
Champion: STR +10, paid for by -5 INT and *Alien Energies*.

Fetherington's Thugs (Golden Heroes)

All DC10, with 2 Frames/Round and WC0. They are incapacitated by any attack of WC3 or higher or with a damage bonus.

Fetherington's Thugs (Champions)

Treat as either Type I or Type II thugs from *Champions II* depending on the strength of the heroes.

Aliens (Golden Heroes)

Questor (Boluscan Archaeologist)

EGO: 12 *Powers*
STR: 8 *Vehicle (Starship); Armour 1; Flight 1; Energy*
DEX: 12 *Attack 1 (Vibrational); Cybernetics 2 (Environ-*
VIG: 10 *ment Suit; Computer Sighting for +1 Strike);*
Movement: 5/15m *Skill (Interstellar Archaeology); Advantageous*
Defence Class: 4 *Background (Brilliant Scientist, Mechanical).*
Frames/Round: 4
HTK: 35/3
HTC: 37/2

Notes: All superpowers are built into his rather ostentatious but battered space armour. Questor will recognise 'Medallions of Emissary' but bears the Star Guard no love (they have, more than once, commandeered his 'finds').

The *Interstellar Archaeology* skill is the ability to know about whatever quaint or arcane bits of alien trivia the supervisor wishes his players to be acquainted with.

Krai Lieutenant

EGO: 11 *Powers*
STR: 15 *Martial Arts 1 (Oriental); Skill 1 (Gymnastics);*
DEX: 19 *Speed 1; Cybernetics (as Krai Captain, Super-*
VIG: 12 *visors Book, p82).*
Movement: 16m
Dodge: +4
Strike: +4
Defence Class: 5
Frames/Round: 4
HTK: 41/2
HTC: 43

Drones

The Lieutenant will have a force of Drones equipped exactly as those detailed in *Crossfire*. There will be one Drone for each hero taking part in the adventure.

Aliens (Champions)

Should you wish to use the options involving aliens hunting for the shards, in place of the Krai commander and the Boluscan archaeologist, use the specifications for Avar 7, Thok or Herculan from *Enemies I*: If you wish them to be unpowered, information-giving NPCs or want to give them underlings, then one of the thug types from *Champions II* should be most applicable. □

Champions stats provided by Jonathan Clark.



and Planning Executive decided to create a figurehead, someone who had total public trust, to sugar the pill and make the government's more unsavoury escapades more palatable to the people. Taking advantage of America's fixation on Superheroes, they decided to create their own, a figure who was exactly the type of person the public would trust and rely on yet who was under complete federal control. Research was conducted into the mood of the populace and the results were moderated by the country's most advanced computers. The hero should be a woman in her early twenties, blonde-haired, blue-eyed with a trace of an unidentifiable southern American accent. Her optimum personality, appearance and attitude were all charted.

'This research facility was set up, containing all known information about Superheroes and supervillains. The files of all the federal agencies were merged into a massive database within these four walls. All known artefacts currently in the possession of the government or any of its agencies, which have ever been used by a superpowered individual were brought here for study. Psychological studies were held to find a woman of the correct age and appearance whose personality would be independent enough to fulfil her role but tractable enough to manipulate. They found you, girl.

'You were trained, improved, brain-washed and manipulated until they had their heroine. Tomorrow, they would have revealed you to the world. Miss America, Saviour of the USA.

'The fools. I offered them my services. I, Jackson Stone, world-renowned expert on supernormal abilities and powers. I could have built them a real Superhero, one with the power to level mountains and smash entire armies but they called me a madman and threw me out. I showed them. With one small robot I've smashed their most secret installation and slain the so-called scientists they employed to replace me. Their 'Miss America', you girl, was as nothing to this one tiny creation of my genius. You tried, I'll give you that, but you hadn't a prayer.

'Now, with the artefacts assembled here, with the information stored in these computers, I will build an army of supervillains capable of conquering this entire country. *Now do you understand?*'

The robot shook the limp and broken girl in its hands before throwing her to one side. She should have died then. She probably would have, but she hit one of the many display cases in the room, smashing it. Her body landed on its contents, a strange sceptre adorned with the American Eagle. It began to glow. Somehow, she was able to fight off the pain and force herself to her feet. She had time to glimpse a fraction of the sign above the case ('... belonged to the WWII hero American Eagle. Since his death in Korea, no one has been able to make the sceptre manifest its power. One theory ...') before turning.

The room was littered with broken bodies of people who, minutes before, had been the closest thing she had to a family. The giant synthzoid was bent

over the computer banks. Letting the rage her training had tried to deny build up in her, she screamed at it to turn and face her. When it did, the sceptre turned her burning hate into a beam of pure energy. The robot, built from the strongest materials known to man, melted like butter.

She cried then, long and hard, for the friends she had lost. She called the authorities, but as she waited in the burnt-out room for the mop-up crews to arrive, she wondered about the madman's lies. She reached for the computer keyboard...

When the Army taskforce arrived they found a ruined building, several corpses, a heap of molten slag and the tattered remains of a star-spangled costume. Of 'Miss America', there was no sign.

RUNAWAY

Susan Martin, the would-be Miss America, has discovered that she was not created to be anything more than a figurehead. This hurts. She has decided not to allow herself to be used and has fled from the destiny mapped out for her by the agents of her Government. Adopting the name Renegade, to reflect the role she has cast herself in, she operates outside the law. Gone is the Stars and Stripes costume, her long blonde hair, and youthful charm. The bright, cheerful heroine who was to bring America new glory has been replaced by a dark, dour and cynical vigilante.

As Renegade, she uses a number of items stolen from the research station. These have all been used, at one item or another, by famous Superheroes of American history. She has learnt to use some of these items but others are a mystery to her.

Renegade is currently involved in a desperate vendetta against Jackson Stone, a power-mad ex-NASA scientist who was responsible for the death of the men and women who trained her. She has convinced herself that this is simply a matter of revenge but, having discovered the truth about herself, she feels deep down in her heart that they deserved their fate. The vendetta is merely a way of occupying time so that she does not have to think about the future.

Each time that Renegade encounters one of Stone's minions or creations, she uses her sceptre to get a bearing on his line of communication. Since Stone has a number of operational headquarters and moves between them, it will be a long time before she can locate even one of his lairs by this method. It is all she has to work on, however, and to be honest, she doesn't really care how long it takes.

PLOTLINE

One of Jackson Stone's current projects is the creation of a Super-army to spearhead his assault on the USA. He has convinced the world famous StarTech Corporation to support his research and is currently using one of their English research facilities. StarTech are aware of Stone's reputation and the nature of his research. They do not, however, know how far he has progressed or his plans for his creations. Stone has found,

THE AMERICAN DREAM

A Golden Heroes Scenario by Simon Burley

REFEREE'S BACKGROUND

'Well, girl? Do you know the meaning of power yet?' The voice of a distant madman boomed from a speaker set in the giant synthzoid's chest. The limp, blonde-haired, rag-doll of a figure it grasped moaned in pain, twisted and launched a kick at its midriff. She was weak and battered, yet it staggered back. Then it smashed her against the omnium-steel walls of the laboratory once, twice and three times. Barely holding her grasp on consciousness, all she could do was listen.

The voice adopted a quieter tone. 'You still don't understand, do you, child? You still think you are a Superheroine, plucked from the ranks of America's millions to be their great white hope, saviour of the American Dream. Pah! Do you think any Government, even a so-called democratic one like that in the USA, would be so selfless? You are a fool, girl. Worse, you are a dupe and a pawn. Still, you could be little else. Your psychological profile was perfect for the role. *That is why you were chosen for the project. Forget the lies they told you about your brave and noble spirit. You are a puppet, nothing more.*

'In the modern world, there are many things a government is forced to do in the public interest which are not popular. Of late, America has been forced to do things for her own protection which have lost her friends both at home and abroad. In the interests of good public relations, the Senate Covert Operations

trained or created a force of twenty superpowered operatives using the StarTech organisation. He now plans to remove all evidence of his work by destroying the plant and shifting his Super-army to another location.

Renegade is aware that Stone is somewhere in England and has gone there to search for him. She does not know that he has detected her presence and plans to frame her for the destruction of the StarTech base, giving his new creations a field trial in the process.

He has set up a fencing operation for rare electronic goods in a small corner junk-shop in the heroes' home town, and ensured that Renegade knows of its existence by communicating with its proprietor, Henry Sharp, by the high-frequency radio he knows Renegade can detect. Having drawn her, he has sent a message to the American Embassy warning them that Renegade is in town. They in turn have contacted all official agencies and, hence, the heroes, asking for her to be detained for extradition. A few words to the more talkative elements of the underworld should ensure the heroes' presence along with that of Renegade.

P1: SOUTHERN DISCOMFORT (MAP 1)

This issue opens with a figure in a long black leather coat watching shady figures going to and from a small junk shop. Seeing one she recognises enter and, a few minutes afterwards, leave with a satisfied smile on his face, she goes into the shop.

The supervisor should arrange matters so that, when the heroes arrive, they find a tall woman lifting the shop's owner from the floor by his lapels. The counter and floor are covered with electronic components which look out of place amongst the rest of the shop's goods. As she lifts him, she questions him in a Southern American accent.

'Mr Sharp, don't, ah say *don't* play games with me. Ah don't play games anymore. We both know what your job is and who these electronic gee-gaws ah for. Now, either you tell me weah he is or ah do declare ah'm going to pull this shop down around your eahs.'

The heroes should now initiate combat. They have been warned that Renegade is extremely dangerous and wanted for questioning by the American government. If they try to talk, Renegade will merely say that her business is none of theirs and attempt to leave. Should they prevent this or intimate that they are working with any official backing it is she who will initiate combat. She will ditch her coat, draw her sceptre, materialise her shield and attack. Her tactics will be to render as many heroes as possible hors de combat; by making them use up actions, knocking them down or out of the way, bringing down the roof on them or blasting the floor from under them. She does not wish to harm them, but she is determined to get away and will not let them stop her.

If possible, the supervisor should manoeuvre the battle into the street within the first couple of rounds of combat.

KEY (Map 1)

1. Nondescript shops.
2. Alleyway used by Renegade to observe shop.

3. Front of shop, containing various items of junk, the counter and the till. 'X' indicates the position of Renegade and Henry Sharp.
4. Shop storeroom, stairs up to living area and hall to side entrance.

P2: SHOT BY BOTH SIDES

During the first 3 rounds of the fight, a number of vehicles will pull up in the vicinity of the shop. At the start of Round 4, the Super-army will disembark from these and move to capture Renegade and the heroes as soon as possible. During Round 4, Renegade will be convinced that it is a trap organised by the heroes and attacks them with renewed vigour, actually doing them damage if necessary. She will act on the villains' initiative roll. However, by Round 5 (if she is still standing), she will have realised her mistake and will side with the heroes, acting on their initiative.

The supervisor should use all of the Super-army to ensure that the heroes are captured quickly and easily. They should be made to feel that they are fighting against impossible odds. Consequently, the supervisor should take care to keep the relative weakness of many of the Super-army's members secret by merely moving them and making their attacks but *not* counting out their actions Frame by Frame. Every costume should be described and every name should be given. They are powerful and should throw *Energy Attacks* and *Sunday Punches* at their opponents (though the supervisor should take care that no one is actually killed). There should be plenty of opportunity for the heroes to gain Heroism points, and some of them may actually manage to defeat several of the Super-army's members, but all in all their defeat should seem pre-ordained.

By the beginning of their sixth round, all the *Energy Attackers* in the heroes' team should either be unconscious or engaged in hand-to-hand combat by one or more of the Super-army's brawlers. They should not be allowed to recover their energy and use it.

Should the supervisor be blessed with heroes powerful enough to defeat the entire Super-army, then the battle can be further weighted against them by having Overseer activate a *Sonic Screamer*. This device will knock 2d6 off Renegade's and the other heroes' HTC scores each action (it is effectively a cybernetic simulator of a *Field Manipulation*). The Super-army all wear filters, but, even if the heroes are able to remove them, they do not have the time to fit them properly.

P3: THE PARTY'S OVER

Before the coup de grâce is administered to the last hero, the Observer will laugh with Jackson Stone's voice.

'Well, well. So the highway's littered with broken heroes and a runaway American Dream. Well done, my Super-army. You have passed your first test with flying colours. Overseer, bring them to me.'

The heroes will be loaded into the trucks and carted off to Stone's StarTech installation. Anyone who is playing possum will receive the coup de grâce on the way. If any heroes managed to escape

from the massacre in P2, then any sensible attempt to follow the convoy will succeed. Note that Stone's hirelings have the knowledge and equipment to keep anyone unconscious for the duration of the journey regardless of their superpowers or recovery rate.

When they reach the installation, they will be restrained in the interrogation room marked on Map 2. Supervisors should use their knowledge of the heroes' powers to restrain them as they see fit. Remember that Stone has made a study of superpowers and their abilities and can counter just about anything they can do (if he is aware of it).

KEY (Map 2)

1. Gate, usually manned by watchman.
2. Car park.
3. Admin building.
4. Social amenities, cafe.
5. Research blocks.
6. Detention block.
7. Interview room.
8. Guard's quarters, monitor room.
9. Cells.
10. Main detention room, occupied by heroes.
11. Equipment storage.

When the heroes come around, they and Renegade will be chained up and guarded by whichever members of the Super-army the supervisor deems suitable. It is at this point that Renegade will tell them her origin and explain her objectives.

When she is finished, Jackson Stone will come in and gloat. He is holding Renegade's sceptre and will play idly with it as he explains how StarTech, Renegade and the heroes are all pawns in his game. When he has covered the plot so far, his speech will finish:

'... So you see, 'Miss America' – I'm sorry, you like to be called Renegade now, do you not? – this plant will be destroyed at your hands. A few minor superheroes – the best that this pitiful little island can muster – bravely try to stop you but fail. I, and all my work, will be destroyed in the explosion. Yes, and you will die a Renegade, despised by your country.

'My brave band and I, meanwhile will be hard at work. I believe one of the USA's warships, an aircraft carrier called Liberty, or some such stupid name, is visiting the Naval dockyard in Portsmouth. Once she is ours, we can launch a small but effective nuclear strike at Washington. I'm sure we'll find something useful to do in the chaos that follows.

'Doubtless your sceptre would be useful to you now. Perhaps you want it back? Here, take it...' (He holds it out to Renegade and then snatches it away) '... *Vagabond*.'

As the lumbering mutant advances to take his prize, Renegade frowns and the sceptre glows, momentarily, white-hot. Stone howls in pain and hurls it away from him. He clutches his smoking hand until the pain subsides and then slaps Renegade viciously across the face, before regaining control of himself.

'Impressive. You seem to have rather more control than I'd expected. I'm sorry, *Vagabond*, we can't risk giving you such a dangerous toy. We'll have to leave it here with the rest of the rubbish.'

So saying, Jackson Stone and the Super-army leave. The heroes struggle in their bonds. The scene cuts to an exterior shot of Jackson Stone holding a detonator. 'Life just won't be the same without her', he muses. Then he destroys the plant and drives off, laughing.

Note: It is possible that a hero who has escaped from **P2** may attempt a rescue during this element. If he or she leaves it until after the Super-army have left, then they can be introduced in **P4**. The details on *Map 2* are given in case they choose to make the attempt any earlier.

The authorities, if alerted to the heroes' whereabouts, will not arrive until *after* the plant has gone up.

P4: AFTER THE FALL

The issue opens with a graphic account of the Super-army's assault upon the USS Liberty. As he takes his place on the bridge, Jackson Stone is seen musing about his victory. However, as he thinks about the destruction of the StarTech installation, the scene cuts back to the heroes' last minutes inside the doomed building.

If they are to escape their fate, the heroes have to get out quickly. If any heroes escaped in **P2** and arrive to rescue their friends now, then this is relatively straightforward. Alternatively, if any of the heroes have any powers which have not been neutralised by Jackson Stone (because he is not aware of them due to them being new refinements or unpublished) they can use these to get free. If they are desperate,

heroes can try to develop new uses of powers on the spot (Supervisor's Book, p57, Special Cases). Finally, if there does not seem to be any other way out, the supervisor may opt to have Renegade save the day. She can telepathically call the sceptre to her hand and use it to cut the chains binding one of the heroes. This is a new power, however, and the strain it entails will cause her to pass out.

Regardless of the way in which they escape, the heroes will still have insufficient time to get out of the building before it explodes. Once free, therefore, they will have to use their powers in some way to avoid the damage the explosion causes. A *Force Field* is the classic method of getting out of such traps, but a tunnel cut into the floor with *Energy Blasts* is equally good. Characters who fly with *Energy Blasts* might be able to make it out through the ceiling. Alternatively, the heroes may be caught in the explosion but seek to negate the effects of the rubble falling all around them.

The explosion itself will do 4d6 HTK and HTC (divided as *Energy*) to everyone inside the building. This damage may be halved if the characters have thrown themselves flat. The collapsing building will do 30 HTK and HTC (fully divided) to anyone trapped. The collapsing masonry may be parried as a *Weapon Class 0* attack. Any HTK damage getting through should also be considered as hypothetical binding damage as the rubble pins the heroes to the ground. For each round that they are buried in the rubble, each hero takes 2d6 HTC (or 2d6 HTK if they have a negative HTC score greater than

their vigour), as they slowly suffocate. If there is a hero who, through no fault of their own, is unlikely to survive the explosion, the supervisor may elect to have Renegade blast a hole into the ground beneath their feet. They will take 2d6 HTC from the fall but will take no damage from the explosion or the collapsing building and will be able to breathe for 5 rounds before taking suffocation damage (as noted above).

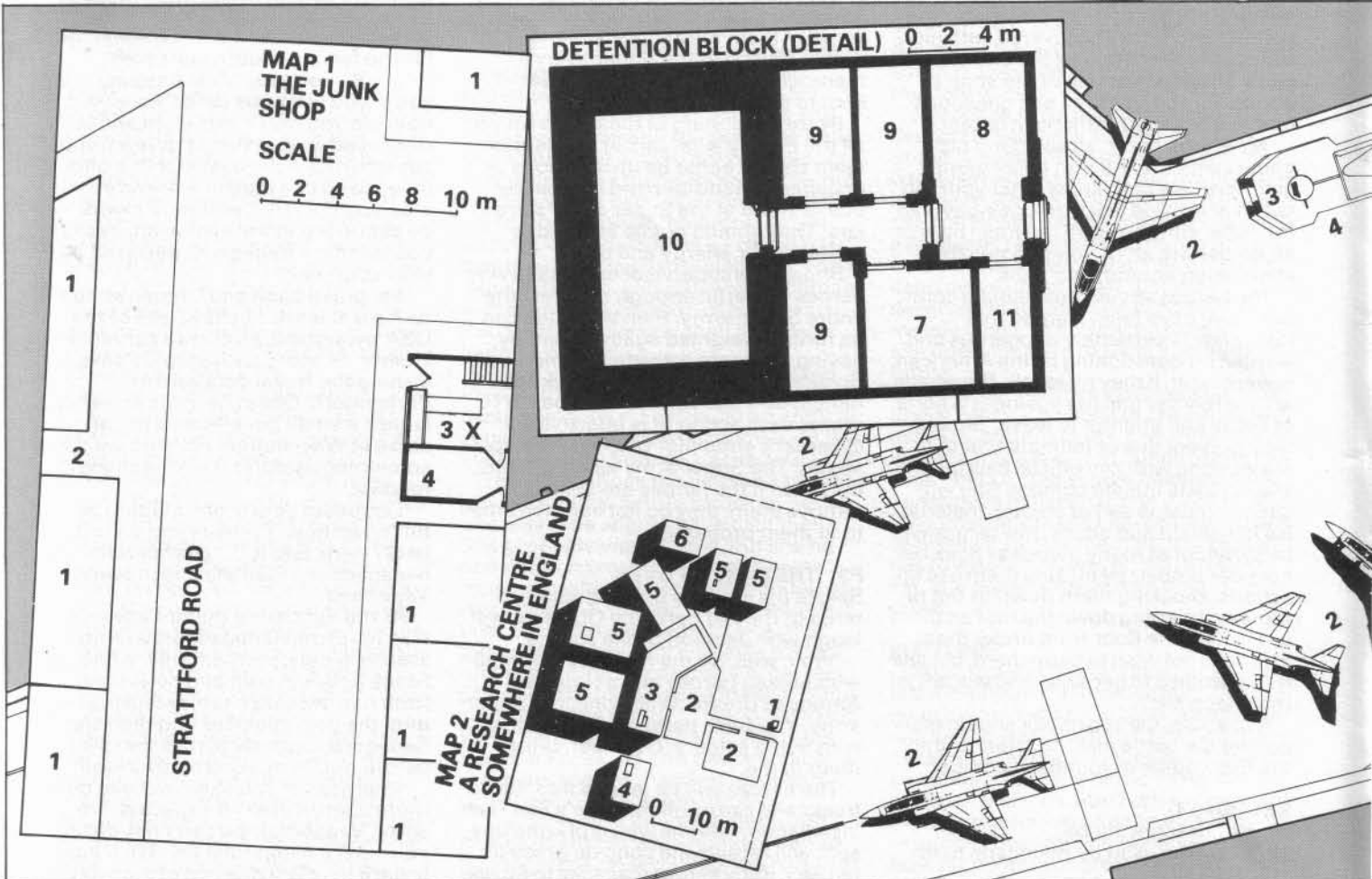
The supervisor should review all survival attempts on their merits, remembering that any reasonable plan should work. Also, this is a good time to take note of players' actions with regard to their Conscience and Heroism scores.

It is hardly surprising that Jackson Stone considers the heroes to be finished.

P5: SHIP TO SHORE

If the heroes escape the destruction of the base with any degree of alacrity, then it may be that they will be able to ambush the Super-army on its way to Portsmouth. In this case, the supervisor should handle the encounter as he or she sees fit. The ambush will have to be a very good one if the heroes are to defeat the Super-army in open conflict. If they win, the scenario is over. If they lose, they will be brought aboard the USS Liberty and tied to the nuclear missiles aimed at Washington.

If, as is more likely, the heroes take a while to dig themselves out from the ruins of the StarTech establishment, they will have to find some way to get aboard the USS Liberty and stop Jackson Stone before he can launch the missiles.



THE AMERICAN DREAM

Renegade will use her sceptre to find out the frequency which Stone used to jam the Liberty's radar systems. He had been idly playing with her sceptre whilst he was explaining his plans to his underlings and it has remembered his words. She can send out a signal on this frequency, to prevent their approach being noticed. However, the heroes will have to supply some kind of air or sea transport, whether through superpowers, possession, connections or theft. Renegade will explain that the heroes will have to stay together since she can only keep one thing 'radar blind' at a time. This should save the supervisor the trouble of handling four or five different groups' attacks at once!

Allow the heroes a chance to plan on their way to the Liberty and actively encourage them to work out specific tactics to use against the various members of the Super-army, pick opponents, and prepare themselves for the fight of their lives. They are going up against impossible odds, after all. Renegade will take a full part in any discussion, though she will not initiate any team-tactic suggestions. She will make it clear that she will understand if anyone wants to drop out. It isn't their country they're saving. She doesn't have any choice in the matter, her 'programming' sees to that. The only thing she will ask is that the heroes leave Jackson Stone to her. (The set of her jaw might lead to one or two heroes checking that she merely wishes to see him put in prison. She will avoid replying to such questions.)

Unless anyone is needlessly fool-

hardy or careless, the heroes should be able to catch up with the Liberty somewhere in the Atlantic and land on her flight deck almost before the Super-army realise that they are there.

P6: THEY DON'T MAKE VILLAINS LIKE THEY USED TO . . .

A pitched battle will now ensue on the flight deck of the USS Liberty (Map 3). Although the Super-army are all present, the heroes stand a far better chance of victory this time around. The supervisor should run this battle in the way most suited to a close victory for their player-characters, bearing the following factors in mind:

- The heroes are not surprised or low on Energy or HTC.
- The Super-army are surprised.
- The heroes should have worked out specific tactics versus some members of the Super-army. If they have come up with any really clever 'take-outs' then they should be allowed to try them out.
- Only a few members of the Super-army will be on the flight deck when the heroes land. The rest are busy elsewhere and will arrive in waves, giving the heroes a chance to defeat some of them before the others arrive.
- Some of the Super-army have specific tasks which cannot be abandoned (keeping an eye on the engineers in the engine-room, guarding Jackson Stone on the bridge, etc).
- The battle should be a long one, giving heroes ample opportunity to recover Energy, Magic Points, etc.
- When the bulk of the Super-army is defeated and Jackson Stone is captured or has fled, the rest will surrender.

The supervisor should determine exactly which members of the Super-army are on the flight-deck and in what order and over what time period the other members arrive. The battle should still be a tough one for the heroes, but they should have a chance of winning.

KEY (Map 3)

- Heroes' vehicle (plane, helicopter or whatever).
- Strike-fighters, 'L' indicates lift to lower decks.
- Control tower; access to bridge and lower decks.
- Stairs to bridge.

As soon as the battle starts and regardless of any previously discussed battle-plan, Renegade will cut her way through the first wave of opponents towards the bridge. She will pause to engage Vagabond (who must be in the first wave) and retrieve her shield (which he has been given in place of the sceptre). Heroes worried for her safety or for that of Jackson Stone, may try to follow her. The supervisor should try to impede their progress, but if they don't stop, the supervisor should run a battle using Renegade and any accompanying heroes versus Jackson Stone's body-guard on the bridge.

Toward the end of the battle, when most of the villains are defeated and Renegade (and any assisting hero) have overcome the resistance on the bridge, she will advance on Jackson Stone. He will 'accidentally' switch on the public address system. The entire ship will hear

her explain her need for revenge and how much she hates Stone. He will taunt her, call her gutless and invite her to 'finish the job properly'. After a deathly pause (that could bring many heroes rushing to the bridge), she refuses and reaches to grab him, promising that he will spend a long time in jail.

'Jackson Stone' laughs, says 'They programmed you well, didn't they, Miss America?' and explodes. Anyone on the bridge will take 3d6 HTK and HTC (fully divided). Renegade will bear the brunt of the explosion on her shield.

P7: KEEP ON RUNNING

Once the Super-army are defeated, have fled or have surrendered and the crew of the USS Liberty have been released, Renegade will ask the heroes to drop her off on their way back to base. If they still want to take her back for extradition, she will resist. If they ask her to join them or suggest that she return to America to be the heroine her country needs, she will demur. Jackson Stone is still around somewhere, and one day she will get her hands on the real one and not a booby-trapped android. Until, that day, she will keep on running.

RATINGS

The scenario has an overall practice rating of 7 with regard to Britain but 8 with regard to the USA. It should be treated as one scenario for the purposes of Success Rate due to the built-in loss situation in P2.

CHARACTER NOTES

The more significant members of the Super-army are fully detailed and are expected to play a major part in most battles. The other characters are tabulated, but sufficient information is given for the supervisor to build on if they want to increase their part in the plot. Costumes, etc should be chosen to suit available figures. Try to give the impression that all of the villains are full-powered, fully-detailed opponents to heighten the 'against impossible odds' atmosphere of the piece.

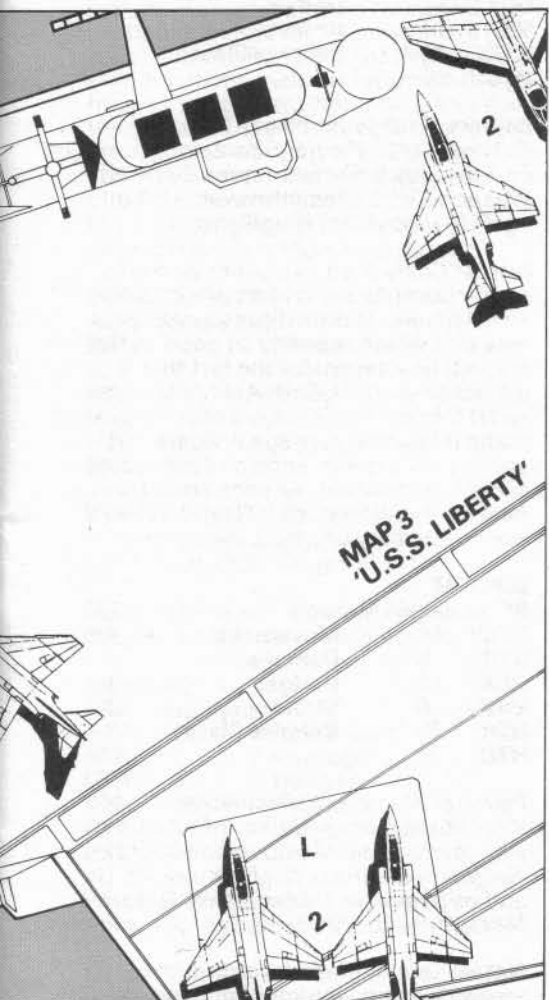
Care must be taken, in playing Renegade, that she does not overly dominate the piece. The scenario is constructed as a story in which the players are permitted to participate. It is essential that this is offset by permitting them to take an active part in events, upstaging Renegade whenever possible. She is a newcomer to the hero game, after all.

STATISTICS

RENEGADE

Alias: Susan Martin/Miss America	
EGO: 8	Movement: 7m
STR: 11	Damage: -
DEX: 17	Dodge: +3
VIG: 13	Strike: +2
HTK: 47	Defence Class: 6
HTC: 45	

Powers: *Advantageous Background* 3 (Previous Training, already figured in STR, DEX, VIG); *Martial Arts* (Oriental) 2; *Agility*; *Weapon Skill* 2 (Shield, Defence and Missile); *Cybernetics* 4 (Power Simulator, sceptre, *Energy Attack* 2*; *Field Manipulation**; *Sense Field Manipulation**; *Computer Brain*).



THE AMERICAN DREAM

Notes: Renegade's *Martial Arts* and *Agility* are the result of her extensive training. Her *Weapon Skill* is the application of this training to the use of a new weapon – specifically, her strange, indestructible shield of an unknown alloy. The rest of her powers come from the eagle-topped sceptre she uses. This allows her to manipulate and detect the manipulation of any form of energy. Though she cannot use more than 20 dice in five rounds, they can be used in any energy form (as can all her powers indicated by an asterisk). Similarly she can manipulate energy fields which allow her to do up to 2d6 damage in minor ways – by adjusting temperature or electrical flow – or perform minor effects – detecting and tracking radio waves, bending the light around her shield to render it invisible and the like. She has, as a result, a number of unique options which the supervisor should use with imagination. In addition to these powers, the sceptre 'records' the words spoken by its possessor in some strange way; these may be recalled at a later date by its master.

The sceptre may only have one master at a time, and the link must be formed and broken as a result of some traumatic experience.

Renegade does not have complete control over her items. With training, she could well acquire long-range control over the sceptre and develop its energy powers, gaining *Energy Reflection* and more dice on the *Energy Attack*. She also possesses, but is unable to use, the boots and gloves of a cowboy hero of the old west: Renegade needs the companion items of spurs and six-gun to gain the *Speed* and *Weapon Skill* (hand-guns) that they confer.

JACKSON STONE

Defence Class: 12 **Frames/Round:** 2 or 4

Powers: *Advantageous Background* 4 (Brilliant Chemical and Mechanical Scientist; Wealthy – Loot; Position of Power – world-famous and respected scientist).

Notes: Physically, Jackson Stone is a normal human. He should be considered to have HTK/HTC scores of 15 for the purposes of determining damage. Consequently, an attack doing 35 or more HTK will kill him outright. His physical attributes should be assumed to be 5, his EGO to be 15.

For movement and combat, etc, he has two Frames. In situations when he uses his brain more than his body (eg under *Mental Attack* or operating a computer console) he has 4 Frames.

Any hit by an attack of WC3 or higher or with a damage bonus will KO Stone. Any other two attacks will also KO him.

JACKSON STONE (ANDROID)

Defence Class: 2 **Frames/Round:** 2

Notes: This is a real life simulacrum (RLS) designed to stand in for Stone. If it takes more than 10 HTK or HTC in any one blow, it will explode doing 3d6 HTK and HTC damage to everyone within 4m. Needless to say, it can also be detonated by remote control.

During the scenario it is possible to

identify the RLS. Stone's hand is injured in P3 and he is forced to bandage it: the RLS shows no sign of such an injury.

OVERSEER

Alias: Jonathan Carlsen
EGO: 12 **Movement:** 4/25m
STR: 8/22 **Damage:** +7
DEX: 8 **Dodge:** –
VIG: 8 **Strike:** –
HTK: 28/5 **Defence Class:** 3
HTC: 30/4

Powers: *Advantageous Background* (Brilliant Mechanical Scientist); *Skill* 2 (Computer Programming, Psychology); *Armour* 2; *Strength* 1; *Energy Attack* 1 (Electrical); *Flight* 3; *Cybernetics* 1 (Defence Computer).

Notes: Overseer is one of Stone's assistants. Specialising in artificial intelligence, Carlsen is also an expert in the psychology of the supernormal. This makes him an ideal choice as field leader for the operation. Unfortunately, he lacks combat experience, so he has built the armour to compensate for his lack of skill. In the armour he has 4 Frames per round; out of it, only 2 Frames. Also, should a target which the Defence Computer deems to be hostile come within 10m, the electrical *Energy Attack* will automatically discharge in Carlsen's next two Frames, doing 2 dice damage for every 20kg mass of the target. The burst will be predominantly HTC for living targets, HTK for non-living.

Psychology is the ability to understand, interpret and, to a limited extent, influence the attitudes and emotions of others through observation or verbal interaction.

THE OBSERVER

EGO: N/A **Movement:** 10m
STR: 50 **Damage:** +35
DEX: 10 **Dodge:** –
VIG: N/A **Strike:** –
HTK: 50/3 **Defence Class:** 5

Powers: *Advantageous Background* (Robot); *Strength* 2; *Taller* 1; *Cybernetics* (Radio Transmitter/Receiver and Public Address system).

Notes: The Observer is the same model of robot as the one which destroyed the project that gave birth to Renegade. It is essentially a remote-controlled humanoid bulldozer which also allows Stone to observe the fruition of his plans from the safety of his base, and to gloat when the heroes are defeated.

LOLITA

Alias: Jennifer Berrie
EGO: 8 **Movement:** 5m
STR: 6/30 **Dodge:** +1
DEX: 6 **Strike:** –
VIG: 6/25 **Damage:** +15
HTK: 88 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 90

Powers: *Larger* 1; *Strength* 1; *Vigour* 1; *Cybernetics* 1 (Holographic belt).

Notes: Lolita is the result of one of Stone's super-soldier serums. She is a huge, bloated, misshapen figure. Naturally, she was not particularly pleased with her new appearance, so Stone

made her a belt which displays a hologram of her original form, thus disguising her true form. In combat, Lolita appears as a beautiful young woman who uses a Force Field to attack people. The illusion will be dispelled when HTK damage on the field causes her to bleed.

VIRUS

Alias: Mark Hardcastle
EGO: 10 **Movement:** 6m
STR: 9 **Damage:** –
DEX: 12 **Dodge:** +1
VIG: 16 **Strike:** –
HTK: 56 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 56

Powers: *Replication* (special); *Stunner* (special).

Notes: Jackson Stone has given Hardcastle the ability to reproduce like a virus. He can split into two separate beings, each with Virus' attributes and abilities but with half his HTK/HTC scores. Each replica can then subdivide further, halving the totals again, and so on. The levels at which replicas are hospitalised or stunned, etc, are standard, regardless of the number of HTK/HTC they start off with. Each time that a Virus grabs someone, it does damage as a stunner. These points are then added to its HTK/HTC scores, divided equally between the two.

ACETYLENE

Alias: Adam Colby
EGO: 11 **Movement:** 7m
STR: 14 **Damage:** –
DEX: 12 **Dodge:** –
VIG: 14 **Strike:** –
HTK: 48/2 **Defence Class:** 5
HTC: 50

Powers: *Energy Immunity* (Heat); *Cybernetics* 2; (Power Simulator – *Energy Attack*, Flamethrower, 20 dice); *Weapon Skill* 2 (Flamethrower, +5 damage); *Martial Arts* 1 (Pugilism).

Notes: Colby is an ex-soldier who was nearly burnt to death in an arson attack on his house. Jackson Stone gave him a new skin which is nearly as good as the original one except for the fact that it cannot sense heat. Thus Acetylene takes no HTC from fire damage and only 50% of the HTK, after damage dividers. His gun is only experimental and generates a lot of excess heat. Anyone apart from Acetylene will take 3d6 HTC and 1d6 HTK every time they use it.

DIADEM

Alias: Jackie Monroe
EGO: 11 **Movement:** 4m
STR: 5 **Damage:** –
DEX: 12 **Dodge:** +1
VIG: 6 **Strike:** –
HTK: 20 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 20

Powers: *Magic* 2 (Hallucinations (spec), Hypnotism, Energy Strike, Information); *Invisibility*; *Field Manipulation* (Light); *Heightened Senses* (Sight, X-ray, IR, UV and microscopic vision); *Sense Field Manipulation*; (Light).

Notes: One of the few items at the research establishment that Renegade

did not take was a coronet taken from an alien invader. Being unsuited to sit on a human head, Stone has surgically implanted it in Diadem's forehead. The alien jewel in the coronet gives her power over light. She cannot use her offensive abilities whilst invisible. The information spell only gives visual information, whilst energy strike is a rapidly changing pattern of colours which overloads the target's vision centres. It can only do HTC damage and can be foiled by visual defences. When using her powers, Diadem croons to herself in a strange alien tongue which even she cannot understand.

Field Manipulation (Light) is the ability to increase/decrease the illumination in an area for 2-12 rounds. A flash can be produced which will blind the target for 2d6 Frames, but this takes an action to use and will be foiled if they close their eyes in time (d20 under DEX).

HAZARD

Alias: Michael Williams
EGO: 15 **Movement:** 4m
STR: 7 **Damage:** -
DEX: 8 **Dodge:** +2
VIG: 8 **Strike:** -
HTK: 28 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 30

Powers: *Probability Manipulation* (Conscious, Unconscious 30%); *Intuition, Reactions.*

Notes: Hazard was an unlucky person until Stone helped him to harness his ill-fortune, master it and turn it against people. Hazard is a focus for negative probabilities and all his powers are based around bad luck. His probability manipulations make unfortunate things happen to others rather than beneficial things happen to himself. Similarly, his *Intuition* is a warning of bad things about to happen and his *Reactions* power reflects the bad luck his attackers have in hitting him and the poor luck his targets have in dodging his attacks.

STREETFIGHTER

Alias: Marco Kane
EGO: 9 **Movement:** 5m
STR: 10 **Damage:** -
DEX: 9 **Dodge:** -
VIG: 9 **Strike:** -
HTK: 33/3 **Defence Class:** 4
HTC: 32/2

Powers: *Martial Arts 2* (Pugilism); *Advantageous Background* (Underworld contacts); *Tough Skin 1.*

Notes: Underworld heavy with skin toughened by chemical injection.

BRIGAND

Alias: Jed Hanson
EGO: 13 **Movement:** 6m
STR: 11 **Damage:** -
DEX: 11 **Dodge:** +1
VIG: 12 **Strike:** -
HTK: 42 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 40

Powers: *Weapon Skill 2* (Quarterstaff, Held, +5); *Cybernetic Weapon* (Staff).

Notes: Worldly-wise adventurer searching for excitement. Uses a line-slinger.

SNAKEFIST

Alias: James Hoy
EGO: 11 **Movement:** 6m
STR: 16 **Damage:** +1
DEX: 11 **Dodge:** +3
VIG: 10 **Strike:** -
HTK: 35 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 35

Powers: *Martial Arts 2* (Oriental); *Judo Throw; Leaping 1; Skill* (Gymnast).

Notes: Chinese Kung Fu expert. No regard for western fighters.

VAGABOND

Alias: Nick Curtis
EGO: 15 **Movement:** 5m
STR: 12/19 **Damage:** +4
DEX: 14 **Dodge:** +1
VIG: 6/18 **Strike:** -
HTK: 65 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 63

Powers: *Larger 1; Health* (Immune to disease, radiation, toxins; regeneration).

Notes: Huge, lumbering mutant outcast. DC6 is natural. Wears tattered rags.

NIGHTFIRE

Alias: Logan Tamlyn
EGO: 7 **Movement:** 4m
STR: 8 **Damage:** -
DEX: 7 **Dodge:** +1
VIG: 10 **Strike:** -
HTK: 35 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 37 **Frames:** 3

Powers: *Skill* (Hide in Shadows); *Energy Attack 1* (Heat).

Notes: Descendant of a demon. Barely looks human.

FIRELIGHT

Alias: Joan Makian
EGO: 11 **Movement:** 5m
STR: 11 **Damage:** -
DEX: 8 **Dodge:** +1
VIG: 8 **Strike:** -
HTK: 30 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 28 **Frames:** 3

Powers: *Energy Attack 3* (Heat, 16 Dice, Manifestation, Light).

Notes: Light blinds for 1d6 Frames unless eyes closed (under DEX on d20).

LARIAT

Alias: Del Stevens
EGO: 10 **Movement:** 5m
STR: 11 **Damage:** -
DEX: 11 **Dodge:** +1
VIG: 9 **Strike:** -
HTK: 32 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 32 **Frames:** 3

Powers: *Energy Attack 1* (Special: energy lasso inflicts hypothetical damage).

Notes: Uses lariat to bind victims and shoots them with a 6-shooter (WC2).

SNOWSTORM

Alias: Kelly Morgan
EGO: 11 **Movement:** 5m
STR: 11 **Damage:** -
DEX: 8 **Dodge:** +1
VIG: 9 **Strike:** -
HTK: 32 **Defence Class:** 6

HTC: 33 **Frames:** 3

Powers: *Energy Attack 1* (Cold).

Notes: Rather nervy, mid-20s, ex-skier injured in accident.

DISCHARGE

Alias: Jeneve Scott
EGO: 12 **Movement:** 5m
STR: 8 **Damage:** -
DEX: 9 **Dodge:** +1
VIG: 10 **Strike:** -
HTK: 35 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 35 **Frames:** 3

Powers: *Energy Attack 1* (Lightning).

Notes: Loud, noisy, tends to give orders but 'folds' early on in a fight.

SQUALL

Alias: Molly West
EGO: 8 **Movement:** 4m
STR: 8 **Damage:** -
DEX: 6 **Dodge:** +1
VIG: 9 **Strike:** -
HTK: 33 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 32 **Frames:** 3

Powers: *Weather Control 1.*

Notes: Quiet and thoughtful.

BREEZE

Alias: Candice Wells
EGO: 9 **Movement:** 3/15m
STR: 4 **Damage:** -2
DEX: 10 **Dodge:** +1
VIG: 5 **Strike:** -
HTK: 18 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 17 **Frames:** 3

Powers: *Flight 1* (windrider).

Notes: In early teens; reckless.

GARGANTUS

Alias: F'Kris D'Rreyn
EGO: 10 **Movement:** 8m
STR: 8/20 **Damage:** +5
DEX: 12 **Dodge:** +1
VIG: 11/18 **Strike:** -
HTK: 62 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 64

Powers: *Taller 1; Leaping 1; Skill* (Vocal Skills).

Notes: Captured alien whom Stone has promised a spaceship. Carnivorous.

GNAT

Alias: Karen Silk
EGO: 8 **Movement:** 1/15m
STR: 9 **Damage:** -
DEX: 12 **Dodge:** +1
VIG: 7 **Strike:** -
HTK: 25 **Defence Class:** 6
HTC: 24

Powers: *Shrink* (always shrunk); *Flight 1.*

Notes: Product of human DNA being added to insect clone. Dimwitted but sly.

Acknowledgements

This adventure was inspired by American comics of the Golden and Silver Ages, a touch of Bruce Springsteen, and the artwork of Chris Achilleos. My thanks to Pete Tamlyn for StarTech. □

THE PILCOMAYO PROJECT

by Pete Tamlyn



A GOLDEN HEROES ADVENTURE

WHY BOLIVIA?

This scenario takes place in Bolivia. This is because it grew out of incidents in my own Golden Heroes campaign which left the players owing the Bolivian Government a considerable favour. When you come to run it you will not have the same lead in and you will need to devise some excuse to get your players to the right place at the right time.

There are all sorts of incidents that can be cooked up to fit the bill. Perhaps a fight with a super-villain could take place outside the Bolivian Embassy in London which causes such damage to the building that the Bolivian government gets very upset; Blacksun would be a good villain to use here as he tends to wreck things pretty effectively. The government could then justifiably ask for a favour in recompense. Alternatively you could have the players chase a fugitive villain to Bolivia and have the government ask them for help while they are there.

SOME BACKGROUND

A good group of players will probably want to acquire some information on Bolivia before they set off. In addition, if they have government backing, the Foreign Office will probably want to brief them to make sure they don't cause any international incidents. Whatever the source, the heroes should be able to acquire the following information at least.

Bolivia is one of the poorer countries in South America. It sits on the eastern side of the Andes and the terrain is split between high, bare mountains and steamy Amazonian jungle. The majority of the population is clustered around Lake Titicaca on the Peruvian border, particularly in the large city of La Paz. This area is also dotted with Inca ruins. The government is fairly moderate, and Britain and the USA would be happy to see it remain that way.

Although officially Spanish-speaking and Roman Catholic, Bolivia has one of the highest percentages of native Indian

population in South America. The two principal races are the Quechua and the Aymara; both have their own language, customs and religions although, like most pagans, they are happy to worship any gods who might be helpful and thus have adopted Catholicism alongside their native beliefs.

Despite the mix of cultures, there is a little racial discrimination as we know it. Quechua and Aymara do not intermarry and 'Indians' as a whole are very much the lower classes, though not exclusively so. The term 'indio' is applied to anyone who lives like an Indian, ie is poor. Simply by getting richer a pure-blooded Indian can become accepted as 'mestizo' (mixed-race) or even 'blanco' (white).

Sexual discrimination is another matter entirely. The philosophy of Machismo is deeply ingrained in all South American countries, and any female heroes in your group can expect to have a difficult time. The Bolivians will automatically assume the men are in charge and the women do as they are told.

INTRODUCTION

Assuming they arrive in Bolivia quite openly, the heroes will be asked to meet with Manuel Calvero, the President. He has a small problem which he hopes they may be able to help with. One of the country's prestige engineering projects is the construction of a hydro-electric power station on the Pilcomayo river which flows southeast from the Andes, later forming the border between Paraguay and Argentina. The plant is designed to supply electricity to Sucre, the capital, and the nearby town of Potsoi. But this development has been beset with problems: equipment has broken down, Indian workers have been frightened away by 'evil spirits' and – worst of all – the weather has been unusually bad in the area ever since the project started. Prayers to the Virgin Mary having gone unheeded so far, the Bolivians have turned to more earthly sources of aid.

President Calvero explains that before contacting the heroes the Bolivian government first approached the American multi-national, StarTech, for the services of their super-powered enforcer, Technon, as the company is supplying much of the equipment and know-how for the project. However, as the President says, "We are small contract, yes? Not enough money in Bolivia for the Yankees to bother. Perhaps we have more luck with you Breetish, no?"

The Bolivians have little idea what could be causing their problems. There is a small Indian tribe local to the area, the Apacheta, who are not as integrated into Bolivian society as the Quechua and Aymara, and may be responsible for the 'evil spirit' stories, though they could not possibly have caused the other problems unless they practice real magic. The Bolivians suspect that ultra-left or ultra-right terrorists seeking to overthrow the government may be responsible for the sabotage, but even with this theory they can offer no explanation for what is wrong with the weather. Not being a scientific man, Calvero may offer some very odd ideas, such as changes in the environment caused by Star Wars research. These are complete red herrings – at least for this adventure.

The President is a typical Bolivian 'blanco', comfortably rich and arrogantly dismissive of Indians and women. However, he is – for a South American – fairly democratic in his outlook. His main worry over the hydro-electric project is that the delays and resultant increased foreign debts may lead to a military coup. Play him as something of an engaging gangster with a soft spot for 'his' people.

Assuming the heroes agree to help, the President will provide transport to the project site and tell them to call him if they have trouble getting anything done.

THE PLOT

The truth of the matter is somewhat more complicated than the Bolivians suspect. True, there are right-wing activists employed on the project who are sabotaging it in the hope of bringing down President Calvero. True, the Apacheta Indians are unhappy about the project and would like it stopped. However, both of these factions are being manipulated by a much more powerful and sinister force: The Reichsmaster.

Wolfgang Mueller was only 14 when WWII started. Even at that time, however, he was recognised as a genius. He was accepted into Berlin University in 1941, completed a degree in Mathematics and Electronics in two years and by the end of the war was one of Germany's leading weapons researchers. He was also fanatically devoted to Hitler.

In 1945 Mueller, along with a number of prominent Nazi leaders, fled to South America to escape the allied forces. Unable to acquire complicated scientific equipment because of the risk of discovery, Mueller threw himself into theoretical work, principally on cybernetics and robotics. As time passed he also began to brood about the failure of the Third Reich. He felt deeply guilty about having escaped while his beloved Fuhrer stayed behind to die, but came to rationalise his decision by blaming his fellow exiles, who he imagined had betrayed Hitler. Slowly but surely, Mueller began to revenge himself on the 'betrayers', Borman, Mengele and others, by stealthy murder or by revealing their whereabouts to the Israelis, acquiring their wealth for himself into the bargain.

With the passage of time Mueller built up enough wealth and underworld contacts to obtain scientific equipment and build himself a base. This he did deep in the wilds of Bolivia, and he set to work in earnest to turn his designs for robots and cybernetic equipment into reality.

By the time of this scenario Mueller's technical arsenal is formidable in capability but small in size. He has just enough money to build prototypes and a small force of robot guards, but not enough to embark on his most grandiose plans – to use a robot army to re-establish the Third Reich! However, he discovered from the Apacheta Indians that the legendary city of El Dorado really existed,

and he diverted his efforts to seize its treasure. El Dorado was saved from the Spaniards because it was built in vast caverns underneath the Andes, the entrances to which were destroyed by a calamitous earthquake decades before the Conquistadors arrived. By a stroke of good fortune, the site of the city is not far from Mueller's secret base. All he had to do was tunnel through until he found it.

The start of the hydro-electric project came as something of a shock to Mueller. The plant is being built only a short distance from his previously isolated hideout and there is no way he can move now without being observed. Either the project had to be stopped, or Calvero's regime had to be replaced by a military junta backed and controlled, in secret, by Mueller.

Mueller used his contacts with the Apacheta to get at the Indian workers. Right-wing saboteurs have been planted in the workforce by organisations he controls, and his weather control machine has been making life very difficult for the engineers. He has also manipulated the media through carefully controlled leaks into laying all the blame at Calvero's door. Everything appears to be going smoothly.

However, unknown to Mueller, Israeli Nazi Hunters have found his trail at last. Diligent research work brought to light quantities of high-tech equipment which had apparently disappeared into the Bolivian jungles, and a small group of Nazi Hunters were sent to make their way to Mueller's base. They were so horrified by what they saw that they fled, hoping to bring back a more powerful team to combat Mueller's creations. None escaped.

However, one man did escape back to civilisation. There he went straight to the only organisation he felt capable of dealing with what he had seen, America's foremost superhero team, the National Defence League. The presence of Patriot in the current NDLE line-up ensured that the Nazi Hunter's pleas did not fall on deaf ears. In secret, so as not to alert their quarry, the team set off from their New York headquarters for Bolivia. As chance would have it they will arrive at just about the same time as a certain other super-hero team

THE PILCOMAYO PLANT

Doubtless the first thing the players will want to do is to get to the project site and see what they can discover. There they will be met by three men, all of whom Calvero claims to have the utmost confidence in.

Francisco Perez is the senior Bolivian engineer at the site and as such is in charge of operations. He is a very worried man. To start with, he knows that if the project fails his head will be the first to roll. He also knows that right-wing activists are involved in the sabotage, since they are trying to recruit him to their cause; having so far failed to appeal to his political prejudices, they are now threatening to kill his family unless he cooperates.

Perez has no idea which way to turn and, for want of anything else to do, has taken to blaming the Apacheta for everything. He will try to convince the heroes the Indians have magical powers and will dismiss any other theories out of hand. Anyone with telepathic powers and a smattering of Spanish will find it easy to get the true story as Perez worries about it incessantly. However, he is so terrified that he won't cooperate with the heroes even if they tell him what they have found out.

Jorge Luis Ordonez is an army Colonel loyal to President Calvero, and has been sent to the project with a contingent of troops to catch the saboteurs. Ordonez knows there are factions in the Army plotting to overthrow the President (though he knows nothing of Mueller's role) and he suspects they may be responsible for the delays to the project. Unfortunately, his work has been hampered both by the fact that some of his own have been subverted (something he dare not let become known) and by Perez's insistence that the Apacheta are the culprits.

Short of putting the entire project under martial law and running it himself, there is not much he can do save stand guard against attack from outside. Much as he would like to take over, he knows that he can't do without the engineers – so he has to humour Perez. Ordonez regards the arrival of the heroes as a sign of loss of confidence in him by the President, and he will therefore do everything he can to get them out of his way.

The final member of the trio is Manny Faltz, the field representative of the StarTech Corporation. Faltz is very experienced at working in South America, speaking Spanish and Quechua fluently. He regards the whole affair with a detached calm; having completed four previous projects in other South American countries, he has come to the conclusion that the management of such work will always be incompetent and corrupt and that the workers will always be lazy. He agrees the Bolivians are by far the worst he has come across in this line, but says they are by no means exceptional.

Faltz blames most of the trouble on a combination of the President's unrealistic expectation that the project will be finished on schedule, on the mental instability of Perez, and on the frequent arguments between Perez and Ordonez. He says that sabotage of equipment is a common trick of South American workers wanting a few days off, and has no previous experience of the Bolivian climate with which to compare the appalling weather.

THE APACHETA VILLAGES

Having investigated the project site (and probably got very frustrated), the heroes' next port of call is likely to be the villages of the Apacheta. The total population of the tribe is no more than about 300, spread through eight small, remshackle villages. The heroes will be directed to the village of Yuraq – the largest of the group where they can expect to find the head man of the tribe, Ch'ojna. Yuraq is a short way upstream from the Indian village marked on the map.

The Apacheta have a language of their own, but in order to be able to communicate with outsiders, many of them have learnt Quechua. Ch'ojna knows a few words of Spanish as well but, of course, none of them speak English.

If the heroes ask for an interpreter at the project site, Perez will refuse point blank – he says the Indians should just be shot and that would be an end to the problem; Ordonez will also refuse because he believes the Indians are no problem while his men are successfully keeping them out – therefore the heroes don't need to talk to them; Faltz will not come himself but will point out a Quechua workman, Qaipa, who he says speaks passable English.

Qaipa is a little frightened of the Apacheta, but will be even more in awe of the heroes. He will be prepared to go to the village as long as at least one hero is with him, but will be terrified of being left alone outside the safety of the site. His English is just good enough to get by on – though if any of the players use any long words while speaking to him, he will just shrug his shoulders and stare quizzically at him.

Ch'ojna, the Apacheta headman, will agree to speak to the heroes and they will be taken to his hut in the centre of the village. Although he knows his tribe is being paid by the Reichsmaster to wreck the Pilcomayo project, he is well practiced at the art of playing the worried primitive. He will spin the heroes a long story about how his people have lived in fear, first of the Incas, then of the Conquistadors, now of the Bolivians; but have always managed to save themselves by hiding in remote parts of the country. Now men have come with big metal demons to dig holes in the mountains. There are many men and Ch'ojna and his people are frightened.

To a certain extent what he says is true and telepaths will not be able to tell he is lying because, of course, he thinks in Apacheta. Telepathy will, however, detect his suspicion, hostility and fear of the heroes.

A MEETING IN THE MIST

While the heroes are talking to Ch'ojna, they will suddenly be joined by Chucurata, the village wiseman. He and Ch'ojna will spend a short time conversing in Apacheta, after which they will explain – through Qaipa – that a group of white men "like you" have returned to the neighbourhood. Ch'ojna explains these men are cruel fighters with demonic powers whom the Bolivians have sent to attack the Apacheta before. Chucurata offers to lead the heroes to where these men were last spotted.

What has actually happened is that the NDL has arrived in the area. Stealth is not one of the American team's normal tactics, whereas the Apacheta live by it. As a consequence, the Americans have been spotted. Knowing the British heroes are in the neighbourhood, Chucurata, who is a pretty wily bird, came up with the idea of getting the two groups to fight each other. He sent a messenger to Mueller asking for a thick mist from the weather controller and set about bringing the two teams together; like his chief, Chucurata is a willing servant of the Reichsmaster.

When the heroes are led outside they will doubtless be surprised by the sudden descent of the mist. Qaipa explains – in halting English to prevent the Indian wiseman from overhearing – that such freakish weather is common in these parts, though he has never encountered it before elsewhere in the country. He blames the weather problems on evil demons summoned up by Chucurata though any psychic probing will reveal a certain quiet satisfaction in the mind of the wiseman.

In fact, although Chucurata is not directly responsible for the mist, he is a magician and has been using his Hallucinations spell to frighten Indian workers. For the moment, though, he is pretending to be a frightened native. As he guides the heroes towards their confrontation with the NDL, he talks non-stop about how cruel these foreigners are, and how they have been killing and enslaving the Apacheta. He is very eloquent, and Qaipa doesn't know who to be more scared of, the supposed wizard or the foreign devils.

The NDL meanwhile are lost in the mist, moving very cautiously. Kemmer, the Nazi Hunter who is with them, has warned them that Mueller has some bizarre machinery and they suspect a trick. However, if the heroes made a public announcement of their trip to Bolivia, the NDL will be aware, albeit at the back of their minds, that British super-heroes are in the country.

Chucurata will try his best to provoke a fight before the two sides have a chance to talk to each other. Whether or not you, the Supervisor, decide to try to encourage a fight is up to you. Don't worry if your players are not very trigger happy, they will get to fight the NDL eventually.

As soon as it looks as if the two teams might make friends, Chucurata will make off into the mist. If necessary, he will use an illusion of himself to confuse the heroes as to where he has gone.

The teams should eventually work out who they are fighting and call a halt, although the players may have problems if their team is in trouble with the law. If the heroes have already played *Queen Victoria & the Holy Grail*, they may have already met members of the NDL and be known to them. Once a truce is called, the two sides will doubtless explain to each other what they are up to. The

KEMMER'S TALE

The Nazi Hunter will begin by relating how he and his colleagues, searching for clues to the whereabouts of Mueller – a man high on their list of wanted war criminals – discovered the sale of large amounts of equipment to various fictitious organisations in Bolivia and traced delivery of the orders to the region where the Pilcomayo plant is being built. These orders date back well before the start of the hydro-electric project.

Investigating the area, the Israelis discovered the well-used entrance to a hillside cave. Exploring inside, they came across a large tunnel filled with advanced machinery. It was immediately obvious to them that Mueller, if that was indeed the man whose trail they had found, had been putting his electronic skills to good use and that the sales they had traced were merely the tip of the iceberg.

Kemmer then relates how he and his companions fled in terror, were ambushed by the Apacheta, and how only he managed to escape the massacre. As luck would have it, one of the thick mists descended just in time to save him (this is true, the Reichsmaster did not know that the Indians were hunting snoopers at the time. The heroes may be suspicious of Kemmer's seeming good fortune).

Because Kemmer's party left the area in something of a hurry, he is not very sure exactly where the cave is. The NDL were in the process of searching for it when the mist came down. If the heroes are convinced by this tale, Stretcho will suggest that the two teams search independently. He reasons that either team on its own should be able to deal with Mueller, making a combination of forces wasteful, but that any smaller division of strength is likely to be dangerous. He will want to exchange communications equipment, but will warn the heroes to maintain radio silence until the last moment, as Mueller will undoubtedly have surveillance equipment.

The heroes will have a problem deciding what to do with Qaipa. The most sensible thing to do would be to send him back to the project site with Kemmer. If they are merely left here in the open, Qaipa and Kemmer will be spotted by the Apacheta and killed, and if they accompany the teams they will be in the way and very likely to get killed in the fighting. What happens to them will have an impact on the heroes' campaign ratings, so it is to be hoped they have the sense to see them safely back to the project site.

THE REICHSMASTER'S LAIR

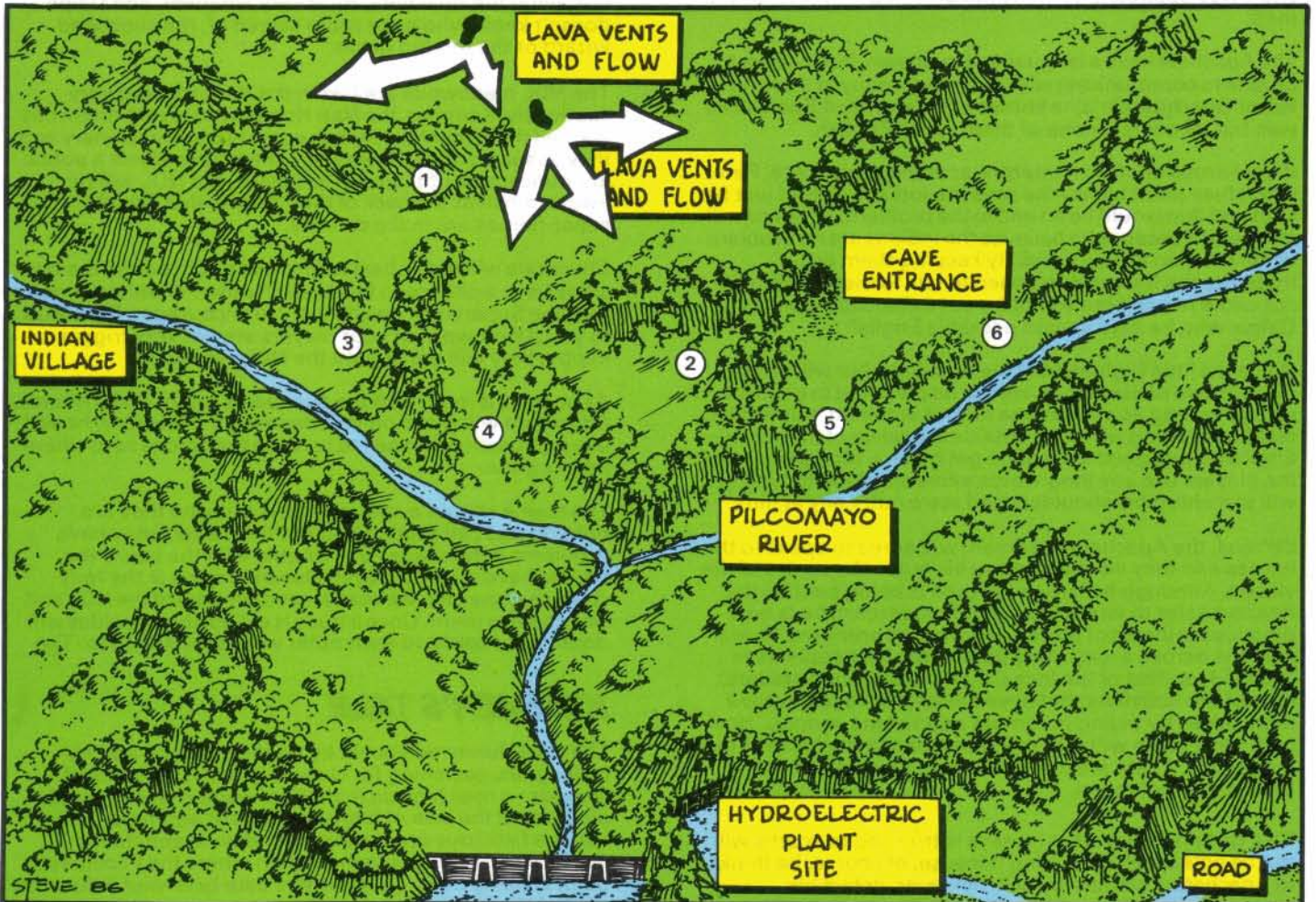
The heroes will not find the cave entrance; that honour will go to the NDL. However, they will come across what appears to be an artificial ventilation shaft. Provided that none of the team are permanently giant-sized, they should be able to squeeze down.

What they see when they arrive at the bottom will make it plain that, if anything, Kemmer's story was understated. The heroes land in the middle of the most futuristic factory complex they have ever seen (unless they have been space or time travelling). Looking around they will find that a large part of the factory is, in fact, a power station tapping geothermal energy. An assembly line is in the process of being built and another is already in existence but idle. The whole thing is fully automated.

When the heroes enter the central square the quiet hum of the factory is broken by a strident voice. It is a recording which the Reichsmaster made in case of discovery. For him it is quite a short rant. He simply explains that he, as a genius, is the ultimate expression of the Master Race and that he will single-handedly restore Germany to its former glory, conquer the world, and maybe the universe as well. When he finishes, the loudspeakers begin to play a rather tinny, electronic version of the 'Ode to Joy' from Beethoven's 9th Symphony. As they do so, a number of doors in the factory slide smoothly open and disgorge the Reichsmaster's robot stormtroopers. 12 robots appear from each of the doors marked as robot exits on the cavern map. Every one of them is identical, a spitting image of Adolf Hitler.

A CHAT WITH A GHOST

When the fight is over and the annoying music has finally been silenced, the heroes may be surprised to find that



they are being watched by a ghost. In fact, it is Mr Magic's Astral Form.

The American sorcerer relates that he and his colleagues found the cave entrance, followed the tunnel, and came face to face with a giant hypnosis device, to which all of the team succumbed except him. By taking on his Astral form he was able to fool the Reichsmaster's robots into thinking he was unconscious. It is a big gamble because his body is now defenceless and he wants to get back to it quickly. However, he is able to direct the heroes to where his colleagues are being held and warns them that the rest of the NDL are likely to be totally under the Reichsmaster's

BATTLE ROYAL

In fact, the hypnotised Americans are already on the way to intercept the heroes and will meet them in the open area by the cavern exits. The chances are that the NDL will be tougher than the players. However, Mr Magic will do his best to assist the players. His physical body is chained up in a cell, but he can cast 2-dice energy strikes while in astral form. In addition, as each team member is freed from hypnosis (by means of counter hypnosis or a hit of 20HTC or more), they will join the heroes in trying to free their colleagues after taking a round to re-orientate themselves. The fight, although somewhat ferocious, should therefore go the players' way.

Once all of the NDL have been restored to their senses (or knocked out of them), they will be able to guide the heroes to where the Reichsmaster can be found.

THE CITY OF GOLD

Mueller is, of course, busy with his current obsession, the tunnel to El Dorado. When the heroes finally catch up with him, he will be standing on the far side of the chasm from them (see cavern map). Between them and him are his 12 elite robot SS troopers and his force wall. The first thing the Reichsmaster will do is destroy the bridge.

The SS robots should not prove too much of a problem for the combined super hero teams. What they will do is delay the heroes just long enough for the Reichsmaster to set his laser drilling equipment up for one final blast. As the heroes get ready to rush him he presses the button.

The laser drill, now operating at maximum power, lets forth a blaze of red light and the rock wall behind the Reichsmaster disintegrates. As the dust settles the heroes will get a glimpse of an enormous cavern, dwarfing the one in which the factory has been built. In the far distance is a faint glimmer of golden spires.

But a glimpse is all the heroes will have time for – suddenly there is a terrible rumbling from beneath the ground. The maximum power blast of the laser has caused a deep fracture in the rock which has opened up a magma-filled cavern deep below the earth. The ground shakes, steam rushes up out of the chasm, and the air temperature rises dramatically. There is nothing to do but run for it! As the heroes make their escape they will hear lava gushing up behind them. There is a single, terrible scream, and then nothing but the roar of molten rock.

The area map shows the point at which the lava will emerge. The heroes' priority is to prevent the flow from reaching the construction site and the Apacheta villages, but if they save the Reichsmaster's factory and the geothermal power station it will be a marvellous present for President Calvero.

Mr Magic's Precision power will be invaluable here as he will be able to pin-point exactly where rock needs to be blasted to dam and divert the flow. The general areas are fairly obvious and are marked on the map. The accompanying table shows the HTK value required to blast each point successfully and the number of rounds following the eruption that the heroes have to complete their work before the lava arrives. Use of Precision to direct

fire will reduce the requirement by 10 HTK per point. The damage divider of the rock is 3 for normal attacks and therefore 1 for energy attacks. The defence class of the rock is 12.

Areas 1 to 7 are on the exterior map. Areas X and Y are tunnels in the cavern which must be dammed to save the geothermal plant.

Lava Damming Table

Area	HTK/3 to Dam	Rounds after eruption before lava past gap
1	20	5
2	20	5
3	40	7
4	50	9
5	50	10
6	30	13
7	30	12
X	30	7
Y	30	8

You may need to rebalance the table somewhat if your players are short on flight and energy blast powers. The heroes should have an excellent chance of succeeding provided they act sensibly, quickly and heroically.

AFTERMATH

The testimony of the heroes, together with that of the world famous National Defence League, will be quite good enough to convince the Bolivians that their problem has been solved. Perez will still be terrified, but the saboteurs will quickly melt away now that their leader is dead. Ordonez will try hard to be grateful and fail miserably. Faltz will busy himself congratulating the NDL and telling the world how lucky it is to have true blue American heroes to protect it. President Calvero will be delighted.

There is little evidence to prove the involvement of the Apacheta in the Reichsmaster's plans and they will have the good sense to stick firmly to their ignorant savage act and behave themselves until the storm blows over.

What finally remains of the Reichsmaster's factory depends on whether the heroes managed to divert the lava from it. Points x and y (on the underground map) must have been successfully blasted in time to achieve this. In any case, the heroes will doubtless wish to inspect the wreckage. The tunnel to El Dorado will be completely blocked. It will probably take years to dig through again and in any case this will risk further eruptions.

Redskin will start kicking over the rubble, muttering about the waste of scientific resources in such a poor country and the loss of such an interesting piece of Indian heritage. Suddenly he stops, bends down and removes something from the wreckage. It is a piece of packing case, heavily charred but somehow surviving. Etched on it is the unmistakable logo of the StarTech Corporation ...

The scenario has a Practice Rating of 7. The players' public ratings will not be significantly affected as they are away from home and the world's press will give most of the credit to the NDL, but personal ratings may be severely affected if Qaipa and Kemmer are killed or if the lava destroys the plant or native village.

FUTURE ISSUES

Was it really El Dorado the heroes saw in the underground cavern? Is it now lost forever, buried under tons of lava?

Did the Reichsmaster perish in the eruption or did the cunning Nazi manage to find an escape route?

Were StarTech really supplying Reichsmaster with advanced electronic equipment for his robots? Did they

know who he was and what he was doing? If they did, does Brian Garson/Technon know about it, or is some rival faction on the Corporation's board responsible?

All of these questions, and doubtless a few more as well, remain to be answered in future adventures.

THE NATIONAL DEFENCE LEAGUE

The National Defence League is the USA's official, government-backed super hero team. Their HQ is in Washington but for various reasons they often find themselves operating out of auxiliary bases in New York and Los Angeles. The heroes listed below are those on the current active register though many other American heroes have worked with the team at various times during its history. They are financed by the American government, although some members, including Stretcho and Firebird, contribute to running costs.

THE PATRIOT

Patriot is the reincarnated spirit of Paul Revere, a hero of the American Revolution. He has appeared many times throughout the history of the country, always turning up when great danger threatened. Thus he fought alongside American forces in both World Wars, though whatever power causes him to take flesh did not feel the war in Vietnam warranted his appearance. Patriot returned to life most recently in 1984 and immediately sought out the ND.L, of which he was already an honorary member.

In private life Patriot takes on the role of Kirk Jackson, a fashion photographer. The American government has supplied him with appropriate papers detailing Jackson's life so he has few problems explaining his lack of visibility prior to 1984. However, he is having problems adapting to modern American society and thus prefers to remain in his super hero guise most of the time.

Patriot has no obvious super powers and fights with his trusty rapier. His immortality is restricted by the fact that he can only be reborn when America needs him. To date he has always been killed in action just when the danger seemed to be over. The only

other unusual power he has is the ability to call upon the ghosts of three famous ex-Presidents, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, for advice. However, the ghosts are having even more trouble understanding the modern world than Patriot, who fears they are becoming senile.

The American government is understandably very disturbed at Patriot's sudden reappearance as there is, as yet, no sign of any great danger to the country. Various theories have been put forward by the Pentagon and CIA but the only real result has been to make everyone in the White House very jittery whenever a crisis looks like blowing up.

The Patriot

alias Kirk Jackson			
EGO	7	Movement	6m
STR	8	Damage	-
DEX	16	Dodge	+1
VIG	11(21)	Strike	+1
HTK	79	Defence Class	6
HTC	85		

Powers: Vigour; Agility; Weapon Skill (fencing) 2; Weapon Skill (knife parry); Sidekick (ghosts)

Advantageous Background: Immortal

Fist/foot WC 2; 1d6-6 HTK / 2d6 HTC; -2

Leap into Combat WC 2; 1d6 HTK / 2d6+6 HTC; +2 (needs 1 frame recovery)

Rapier WC 4; 2d6 HTK / 1d6 HTC

Knife WC 2; 2d6 HTK / 1d6 HTC; WC 4 parrying

STRETCHO

Lee Stanton is the owner and chief scientist of America's largest bubble-gum company. He has used his vast knowledge of molecular elasticity to experiment on human flesh and, as a result, is now able to deform his body in an incredible variety of ways. A useful by-product of his experiments has been acquiring the ability to climb walls by turning his rubbery fingers into suction pads.

Stretcho is undoubtedly the brains of the ND.L. His scientific background causes him to be very cautious, unwilling to act until he has fully analysed the situation. This often brings him into conflict with his more hot-headed team-mates, particularly Redskin and Powerchord.

Stretcho

alias Lee Stanton			
EGO	11	Movement	4(6)m
STR	6(8)	Damage	-
DEX	8	Dodge	-
VIG	11(14)	Strike	-
HTK	46(54)	Defence Class	5
HTC	41(50)		

Powers: Stretch 2; Grow; Shrink; Wallcrawling

Advantageous Backgrounds: Brilliant Scientist (Chemicals); Rich Industrialist

Fist/foot WC 2; 1d6-6 HTK / 2d6 HTC; -2

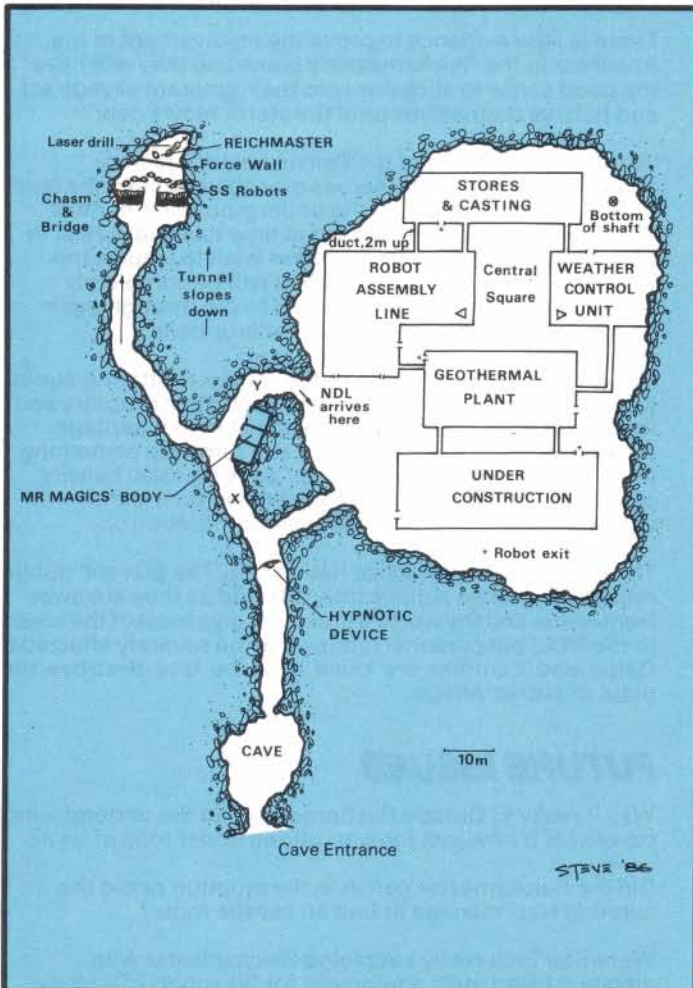
Grow to Combat WC 2; 1d6 HTK / 2d6+6 HTC; +4 (needs 1 frame recovery)

MR MAGIC

Dick Stevens is a genuine stage magician as adept at slight of hand and illusion as he is at real magic. When he first began his career he was as cynical as most other westerners about 'real' magic. Then he met and teamed up with an older conjurer, Bernard Kranksky. Bernard had served in the Far East during WWII and claimed to have learnt his magical skills from Tibetan monks. He always maintained, even to his friends, that real magic did exist, and that some of his stage tricks used such sorcery.

Young Dick never believed this tale and kept pestering his partner to reveal the secrets of his special tricks, and, feeling he was being fobbed off with ridiculous excuses, determined to spy on the older man as he practised. One day he concealed himself in Kranksky's dressing room and watched the older magician running through his act. To Dick's horror, Kranksky summoned a real demon and began to converse with it in some arcane language. Unable to contain his curiosity, Dick burst out of hiding, but this distracted Kranksky from his spell and the demon promptly grabbed the sorcerer and disappeared.

Dick immediately gave up his stage career and headed east in the hope of learning enough real sorcery to rescue or avenge his friend. When he returned America acquired a new super hero.





Mr Magic has a special gimmick which allows him to make his astral form visible. Ordinary people normally mistake him for a ghost.

Mr Magic

alias Dick Stevens

EGO	15	Movement	6m
STR	5	Damage	-1
DEX	15	Dodge	-
VIG	12	Strike	-
HTK	44	Defence Class	6
HTC	42		

Powers: Magic 2 (22 magic points); Astral Projection (speciality), Energy Strike, Conjuring, Information; Conscious Probability manipulation; Precision; Skills - Disguise
 Energy Strike WC 3; 1d/2mp; unaffected by dividers
 Fist/foot WC 2; 1d6-6 HTK / 2d6 HTC; -2

REDSKIN

Joe Washington is a pure-blood Sioux Indian. His powers are all simple extensions of his physical abilities and result from his eating herbal mixtures prepared for him by an ancient shaman. The shaman had intended Joe to be a champion of the Indian cause, taking revenge upon the white man and driving him from the land. However his pupil, who had grown up in white society, realised that this was a foolish dream and now spends his time fighting for justice and freedom as much as for Indian rights.

Redskin and Powerchord are frequently at loggerheads over racial issues as the former feels that his black colleague has too simplistic a view of the problem and ignores the fact that blacks are comparatively well-off compared to other racial minorities. Joe is also frequently in trouble with his colleagues and the government over his outspoken comments to the press.

In his secret identity Joe works as a 'hard hat' on construction sites.

Redskin

alias Joe Washington

EGO	8	Movement	8m
STR	16(31)	Damage	+16
DEX	12	Dodge	+1
VIG	17	Strike	-
HTK	69	Defence Class	6
HTC	64		

Powers: Strength; Pugilism 2; Weapon Skill (tomahawk); Leaping; Health - fast recovery
 Fist/foot WC 3; 1d6-6 HTK / 2d6 HTC; +16
 Tomahawk Strike WC 4; 1d6-6 HTK / 2d6 HTC; +16
 Throw WC 2; 2d6+3 HTK / 1d6 HTC; +16
 Leap into Combat WC 3; 1d6 HTK / 2d6+6 HTC; +16, +2 (needs 1 frame recovery)

FIREBIRD

Claire Montague is an expatriot English actress who is now a major soap opera star. Her impressive flame control powers are mutant in origin and this has recently caused her severe problems as various religious groups in America have mounted a strong anti-mutant crusade.

Claire was recently captured and tortured by Azrael, a religious fanatic villain. Although she managed to keep details of her secret identity from him, her mind has been damaged by the experience and, as Firebird, she often falls under the delusion that her secret identity is really that of her most famous screen role, the rich and arrogant Princess Christina of Miklenburg. As the NDL all know each others' secret identities, this has sometimes lead to her unfortunate team-mates

having to bow down and call her Your Royal Highness in the middle of a fight.

Firebird uses her flame manifestations gimmick to fashion a bird-like mask. She also swathes her fist in flame when punching which gives her extra damage bonuses.

Firebird

alias Claire Montague

EGO	6	Movement	6(15)m
STR	9	Damage	-
DEX	11	Dodge	-
VIG	16	Strike	-
HTK	52	Defence Class	5
HTC	53		

Powers: Energy Attack 3 (fire); Manifestations Gimmick; Energy Immunity (fire); Flight; General Force Wall (flame); Intuition

Advantageous Background: Rich Entertainer

Energy Blast WC 3; 19d6/5 rounds

Fist/foot WC 2; 1d6-6 HTK / 2d6 HTC; +4 (flame glove)

Dive to Combat WC 2; 1d6 HTK / 2d6+6 HTC; +4, +5 (needs 1 frame recovery)

POWERCHORD

The man who is now Powerchord was once a world-famous rock guitarist. At the height of his fame he was approached by a black scientist and offered a special guitar which, under his expert fingers, could produce amazing effects. Seizing the opportunity, he faked his own death and became Powerchord, a black rights campaigner.

Powerchord's career as a civil rights activist was fairly long and colourful. In those days he frequently came into conflict with the authorities and charges are still outstanding against him in certain southern states. The 1 million dollar reward that the Ku-Klux Klan put on his head is also still on offer.

Since that time, however, the position of blacks in American society has improved greatly and Powerchord has come to realise that the colour of a man's heart is more important than the colour of his skin. The final straw came when his scientist benefactor was killed by black mobsters who wanted the secrets of the guitar to further their criminal careers. Powerchord has been officially pardoned by the President but in certain quarters resentment of him is still high.

Without his guitar Powerchord is an ordinary human, though he has done a lot of training to improve his physical condition. Because of this he prefers to live as a super hero all of the time, and firmly denies all suggestions of a link with his rock star past.

Powerchord

EGO	12	Movement	6m
STR	17	Damage	+2
DEX	9	Dodge	-
VIG	10	Strike	-
HTK	37	Defence Class	5
HTC	35		

Powers: Energy Attack 4 (sonic); Area Effect Gimmick; Quick Blast; Personal Force Shield (23 HTK) - all power from guitar only

Advantageous Background: Rich Entertainer

Previous Training (2 to Vigour)

Previous Training (2 to Strength)

Energy Blast WC 3; 23d6/5 rounds

Fist/foot WC 2; 1d6-6 HTK / 2d6 HTC; +2