



Story Bible

Cryptic Studios, Inc.

Revision 2

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1 Revision History

Rev #	Date	Who	Description
1	3 August 2004	Sean Fish	Initial Revision
2	11 August 2004	Brian	Added villain groups to document.
3	5 October 2004	Sean Fish	Added Original Freedom Phalanx

2 Table of Contents

1 Revision History.....	2
2 Table of Contents.....	3
3 Introduction.....	4
4 Paragon City.....	5
4.1 History.....	5
4.2 Geography.....	21
5 Heroes.....	35
5.1 Freedom Phalanx.....	35
5.2 The Vindicators.....	39
6 Contacts.....	43
6.1 Stature Level 1.....	43
6.2 Stature Level 2.....	46
6.3 Stature Level 2.5.....	51
6.4 Stature Level 3.....	56
6.5 Stature Level 4.....	62
6.6 Stature Level 5.....	73
6.7 Stature Level 6.....	75
6.8 Stature Level 7.....	79
6.9 Stature Level 8.....	80
6.10 Stature level 9.....	82
6.11 Trial Contacts.....	83
6.12 The Hollows.....	86
6.13 The Shadow Shard.....	87
6.14 Store Contacts.....	90
6.15 Delivery Targets.....	92
7 Villain Groups.....	101
7.1 Banished Pantheon.....	101
7.2 Carnival of Shadows.....	120
7.3 Circle of Thorns.....	145
7.4 Clockwork.....	177
7.5 The Council.....	191
7.6 Crey Industries.....	196
7.7 Devouring Earth.....	235
7.8 Fifth Column.....	258
7.9 Freakshow.....	310
7.10 Gangs of Paragon City.....	334
7.11 Igneous the Magma Master.....	345
7.12 The Malta Group.....	348
7.13 Nemesis.....	371
7.14 The Praetorians.....	396
7.15 Rikti.....	406
7.16 Rularuu the Ravager.....	462
7.17 Sky Raiders.....	480
7.18 Tsoo.....	492
7.19 Vahzilok.....	517

3 Introduction

This guide is a reference document for City of Heroes. As content is added to the game, the document will grow with it. Anyone using this document should make certain that they have the current version.

Some of the content in this document is not yet known to players of City of Heroes. It is imperative that the secrets of City of Heroes remain intact. If there is a question regarding what is currently known, please contact Cryptic Studios.

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4 Paragon City

4.1 History

Welcome to Paragon City, the greatest city in America and home to the world's most famous heroes. The city has claimed for itself the title "birthplace of the hero," an assertion that may or may not be true. However, no one can deny the fact that today Paragon City is home to more super powered heroes than any other metropolis on the planet. Why? Because not only is Paragon City the largest city in the US, it also goes out of its way to support its hero population. In Paragon City, heroes fight crime and villainy with the government's approval and to the population's applause. Here a hero can rise to the heights of fame, fortune, and power as long as he keeps his image positive and the local authorities appeased.

How did Paragon City become such a haven for super powered heroes? To answer this question, one must look back through the city's own storied and sometimes tragic history.

4.1.1 Founding and the 20's

No metropolis in the world is more associated with heroes than Paragon City. What began as a quiet collection of colonial villages in the 18th century had by the time of the Civil War become a bustling port city. After the war it became a center for industry, science and commerce in America. Throughout the first quarter of the 20th century Paragon City truly rose to fulfill its name's promise. It was the height of everything a city could hope to become.

Then came disaster: the stock market crash in 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression. Decades of unbounded expansion left Paragon City particularly vulnerable to the depression's ravages. The economy collapsed, bringing social and political order crashing to the ground with it. Crime, organized and random, moved in to fill the void. The bootlegging gangs of the roaring twenties had already established themselves during Prohibition. Now the mob bosses, through bribery, intimidation, and murder, seized control of the city itself.

Paragon became a city where every cop was on the take, every politician under a mob boss' thumb, and one out of every two people was out of work. There was nowhere to turn for hope, no one to stand for the oppressed and downtrodden. And then came The Statesman. Born Marcus Cole, he began his transformation from a poverty born child to world hero after serving in the US Army during World War I. Instead of coming home in 1918 he headed east, bent on exploring the world now that he'd had a taste of it. Where he went and what happened to him during that lost decade remains a secret to this day. What is no secret is that when his ship pulled into Paragon City port in 1931 he was much more than the young private who had shipped out to fight for freedom in Europe.

Cole claimed to have unlocked the power of his own Inner Will, an obscure explanation at best. Whatever their true origin, it was undeniable that Cole possessed something that hadn't been seen since the age of the Greek Heroes: superpowers. Cole was strong beyond human limits and impervious to fists, knives and even bullets. However he'd come by these powers, Cole now found a cause to which he could apply them: saving his beloved Paragon City from itself. The would-be hero took on the name Statesman, an identity that personified all the values and ideals that Paragon City currently lacked.

The Statesman went after crime head on, going after gang bosses, corrupt politicians and other lowlifes with a vengeance. His costume allowed him to hide from police while still leave behind an indelible impression on the city's populace. In a few short months he had begun to make a difference. But his initial successes only served to unite the city's criminals against him. The tide began to turn when out of nowhere another costumed hero appeared in the city: the Dark Watcher. Soon after others appeared: The Dream Doctor, Maiden Justice, and others. Extraordinary men and women, inspired by the Statesman's example, were rising to meet the challenge.

Fighting organized crime called for a team of organized heroes. The Statesman, inspired by the shoulder-to-shoulder discipline showed by ancient Greek soldiers in the face of Persian tyranny, called his new team of heroes the Freedom Phalanx. Throughout the 1930's the Phalanx fought the good fight and cleaned up Paragon City. The city council and mayoral elections of 1936 swept a platform of pro-hero candidates that resulted in the passage of the Citizen Crime Fighting Act of 1937. This law made it legal for vigilantes to bring criminals to justice as long as they followed the same restrictions police officers use.

Thus in the space of just five years the Freedom Phalanx went from an ad hoc band of would-be heroes to a legally recognized, nationally praised crime fighting organization. The costumed hero became a part of the national psyche, larger than life figures that shone as beacons of hope in the darkness of the Great Depression. Other heroes joined the fight as well and super powered villains appeared and offered new, more dangerous threats. Paragon City itself strode in the forefront of these changes and its heroes soon transformed it from the most dangerous city in America to the pride of a nation. The age of the super powered hero had begun.

4.1.2 War Begins

While the 1930's saw the rise of the American Hero, in Germany they saw the rise of a totalitarian regime. The Nazis presented a growing threat to freedom in Europe and eventually the entire world. Hitler and his followers had transformed Germany into a powerful military industrial state with one of the largest and most technologically advanced armies in the world. By the time World War II broke out, the United States had finally begun to look beyond its own troubles and realize that they had larger problems to deal with.

In Europe, Great Britain held on by its fingernails, protected from German invasion by its air force, dwindling navy and dedicated but small bands of heroes such as the Dawn Patrol. The Nazis had just revealed their own team of super powered soldiers called the Storm Korps, thus changing the face of modern warfare forever. In Asia, Japan had already occupied huge swaths of China and Southeast Asia and now threatened American holdings in the Philippines and even the West Coast. It seemed inevitable that the US would eventually get drawn into the war. The American military sluggishly geared up for war and, based on events in Europe, began recruiting heroes into its ranks.

It was almost too little too late. On December 7th, 1941 the US was forcefully brought into the war with simultaneous attacks on each of its potential fronts. In Hawaii the Japanese launched a massive air strike against naval forces at Pearl Harbor. In Paragon City a cadre of Nazi heroes made a similar, equally devastating attack. Paragon City's harbor was the staging ground for America's lend/lease program whereby it transported military equipment to the beleaguered British Isles. The largest convoy ever had assembled at Paragon City, hundreds of cargo ships protected by a fleet of US Navy warships and submarines. In the space of a few hours, Nazi insurgents struck all across the harbor. Super strong soldiers ripped apart ships with their bare hands. Flight pack equipped storm troopers zipped across the water firing high-powered rocket guns into fragile hulls. Blasts of pure energy ripped through the night, leaving death and devastation in their wake.

The Freedom Phalanx roused itself to take on the Nazi attack, but by the time they organized a response the attack was nearly over. The Germans made a fighting retreat as the sea burned with flaming oil and thousands sank to watery graves. In the wake of such disaster, Congress was quick to declare war on both Axis powers. The first into the fight were those very heroes who had been burned during the raid on Paragon City. The Freedom Phalanx, its ranks swelling with new volunteers, made a harrowing journey across the Atlantic to help reinforce the Dawn Patrol in England.

Paragon City became the main recruiting ground for super powered soldiers. The US Army set up a special training facility in the city and amended the recruitment laws to allow costumed and anonymous heroes to enlist in the war effort. Heroes from across the country and throughout the Western Hemisphere came to the city and learned to not only use their powers and abilities but also how to fight as part of an

army. Fighting mobsters and costumed maniacs in the streets was one thing, but fighting thousands of armed troops led by trained, super soldiers was quite another. By 1942 the first group of new recruits was formed into the 1st Hero Brigade and was ready to ship off to England.

As the 1st Hero Brigade gathered for its send off in Liberty Plaza, the ground shook with a tremendous roar and a preternatural blackness blocked out the sun. Up from beneath the city streets came Nazi Super soldiers wearing the red and black uniforms that would soon become feared up and down the Eastern seaboard: the Fifth Column had made itself known. The Nazi troops had been in hiding ever since the December 7th attacks, waiting for a chance to strike again. This time, the villains did not have so easy a time. The fighting First Brigade rose to the occasion and won the first of many epic battles against Nazi forces both at home and abroad. Beaten but not defeated, the Fifth Column fled back into hiding, only to return time and again over the next four years. As for the 1st Hero Brigade, they shipped off to Europe to take the fight straight to the enemy.

4.1.3 The War Continued

America's super powered elite forces, the First Hero Brigade, saw their first action overseas in the deserts of North Africa. Tragically, it became immediately apparent that heroes could die in war almost as easily as normal soldiers. In the first engagement, the Hero Brigade took the German panzers head on and got the worst of it. Costume clad men and women who were used to dodging through street toughs and gangsters found that an exploding tank shell was often much tougher to dodge. Even the more powerful heroes, those capable of taking on a tank or two on their own, found that three or four panzers often proved too many. Scores died in those early battles, but the Hero Brigade's leaders learned much from those costly mistakes.

The Americans decided that heroes could better serve the cause by performing special operations and surgical strikes rather than working in large, military style units. The First Hero Brigade separated into dozens of small strike teams and spread out across North Africa. Among the most successful of these new teams was a group that called itself the Sand Kings. Made up entirely of heroes from Paragon City, the Sand Kings were street level heroes headed by the mysterious Dream Doctor. With the help of the Doctor's mind control and illusion powers they became the new model for how heroes could be most effective in the war.

The Sand Kings lived and fought behind enemy lines, operating totally free from the normal chain of command. They specialized in sabotaging Axis equipment and kidnapping high-ranking Nazi soldiers. Allied watchmen would routinely stumble across sedated and bound German officers, delivered like Christmas presents to American intelligence. The Sand Kings caused so much disruption and chaos that the German High Command was forced to divert much of its own super powered resources to the North African front, providing relief for the besieged Britain.

In the British Isles things were desperate. The Dawn Patrol had originally opposed war with Germany and was still reeling from the public relations backlash that came with the war's outbreak. They fought bravely alongside the RAF during the Battle of Britain and escorted Royal Navy and American convoys across the Atlantic, taking terrible losses in the process. However, they found their greatest challenge in fighting off the Storm Corps, Germany's elite super soldier cadre. After the fall of France, The Storm Corps began a prolonged series of raids into the British Isles. Their super powers allowed them to cause tremendous damage, much more than normal Special Forces operations could ever hope to accomplish.

The most daring Storm Corps raid came within a hair's breadth of striking a tremendous blow against British morale. Three Storm Corps super soldiers, led by the nefarious Eisensturm, managed to breach Buckingham Palace's defenses and kidnap his royal highness the King of England. Alistair Sutton, leader of the Dawn Patrol, chased the kidnapers down and fought Eisensturm to a standstill in the Scottish Highlands. He bought enough time for the rest of the Dawn Patrol to arrive and help rescue the captured monarch from the hands of fascist villainy. It was shortly after this that American victories in Africa drew

off much of the Storm Korps' resources and many credit Sutton's victory over Eisensturm as the turning point of the war for Great Britain and the Dawn Patrol.

On the Asian front, the fire wielding Captain Volcano led America's heroes in their drive across the Pacific. Japan had unleashed its own super powered strike force, the Imperial Wind shortly after Pearl Harbor. The Wind sat atop the Japanese military as the best and brightest the empire had to offer. In the otherwise regimented army culture, the members of the Wind each maintained his own individual flair and personality, many of them ruling over occupied territories in the Philippines and China like medieval lords. Much like the western heroes, they operated according to their own plans and desires and were universally formidable foes. The deadliest of all was of course the Wind's leader: The Lord of Frosts, who commanded the Imperial Wind in the south pacific and had his sights set firmly on the American West Coast.

The island hopping battles in the Pacific theater had a very different character from the massive land engagements tearing across Europe. This was nowhere more true than in the battle between opposing super powered soldiers. The bitter war between the Imperial Wind and America's heroes quickly became very personal. Captain Volcano and The Lord of Frosts clashed again and again and each became utterly obsessed with defeating the other. The maelstrom of their enmity drew in the rest of the heroes from both sides, effectively creating a separate war from the main conflict that raged around them. While Navy fighter planes and carriers fought at Midway and US marines stormed Iwo Jima, the super powered rivals fought epic but strategically pointless battles over desert islands and empty expanses of ocean.

Back in Europe, the Allies were massing in Britain for D-Day. When invasion came, the Freedom Phalanx and Dawn Patrol were part of the first wave to enter France. Many dropped in the night before with the airborne troops, providing protection against Storm Korps jet pack troops. Both sides took horrendous casualties in those first bloody hours, with the super powered soldiers on both sides fighting in the vanguard. Late on the first day the Storm Korps launched a massive counteroffensive in an effort to drive the Allies back into the English Channel. Fought largely in the air above Normandy's beaches, this was one of the most spectacular hero battles of the war. The Statesman himself was in the forefront, powering through hundreds of enemy super soldiers. The Allies repulsed the counterattack and the armies pushed on into France. Victory did not come without a terrible cost. Scores of heroes lost their lives and The Statesman suffered critical wounds that left him crippled for the rest of the war.

During the following year of savage and costly battles across Europe, heroes served much as they had in North Africa: as aides and adjuncts to the main job being done by the soldiers. The Storm Korps took too long to recover from the blow they'd been dealt on D-Day. By the time the dread Nazi hero legion had reformed the war was all but over. The Storm Korps retreated to its secret Black Forest fastness, hoping to negotiate their freedom and escape to South America. The surviving members of the First Hero Brigade would have none of that. Although too injured to fight, The Statesman planned the final assault against the Storm Korps stronghold. Hitler had shot himself the night before, but for the First Hero Brigade, there was one last battle.

The Battle of the Black Forest was a dirty, nasty, brutal conflict, fought over five days and almost entirely within the sprawling underground labyrinth the Storm Korps called home. The remaining super powered Nazis had holed up behind reinforced steel doors, maniacal deathtraps, and cunningly designed fortifications. Each fought to the last breath as the Allied heroes dug them out of the ground with pure force and tenacity. In the final showdown the last few Storm Korps members suffered their final humiliating defeat by being captured alive. They later stood trial at Nuremberg and all five were found guilty of war crimes. Their trial was a legal landmark of sorts, in which the world court agreed that super powered individuals must be held to a higher standard of behavior than normal soldiers.

The last act of the war should have been the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan, and for most of the world this was the end. Not however, for the Lord of Frosts and Captain Volcano. The surviving members of the Imperial Wind refused to accept Japan's surrender and continued to fight on for several more months. Captain Volcano and company kept after the rogue Japanese super men and fought a

series of battles across the South Pacific. The years of dueling between the two finally came to a tragic end in the far off island of New Ireland. There the Lord of Frosts finally overcame Captain Volcano, killing the American hero and snatching some small personal victory out of the jaws of his nation and empire's defeat. The US mourned their hero's passing and a worldwide manhunt for the missing Lord of Frosts was launched. Unfortunately the villain escaped when the United States suddenly had much more serious matters to worry about: Washington DC was under attack.

4.1.4 Rise of the Super Villains

Just as victory over the Axis powers seemed assured, disaster struck at home. While heroes on the home front bravely fought against the nearly defeated Fifth Column, another, more terrifying threat was sinking its tendrils into the American Dream. The super villain known as Nemesis, not seen since the last days of World War I, had been hiding in the United States for decades, planning his next move. Thanks to years of patient plotting, Nemesis now secretly controlled much of America's arms and war material manufacturing capability. Through his agents and minions he had access to not only the latest military equipment, but also to vast sums of money that he used to build his own secret army. While America slept off its hangover after celebrating VE Day, Nemesis played his hand.

In the predawn hours, the Prussian Prince of Automatons assembled his silent horde of fanatic robotic followers within striking distance of Washington DC. As the sun rose over the Capitol Dome it brought flights of jet powered strike bots, the arcs of rocket-rifle fire, and devastating atom ray blasts. Nemesis and his clockwork troops quickly overran military and super powered protectors alike, and President Truman only escaped thanks to a well-placed hero with teleportation powers. Nemesis now held most of Congress and the entire Supreme Court hostage. He staged an elaborate ceremony on the Capitol steps, and forced the Chief Justice to swear him in as Emperor of the Americas.

Heroes came flooding back from across the Atlantic to face this unanticipated threat. By the time the first heroes arrived, led by Statesman and the Freedom Phalanx, they found the situation even more dire than they could have imagined. Nemesis had hidden nerve gas bombs throughout the twenty largest cities in America. With the touch of a button he released the deadly toxin, ensuring a painful death to tens of millions if they did not receive the antidote within 24 hours.

What followed was the most desperate hour America's heroes had ever known. World famous champions of freedom fought deadly robots and atomic armored shock troops in the streets of our nation's capital. Finally, the heroes faced down the evil genius himself on the steps of the Capital building. Nemesis was ready for them, unleashing his atom-ray upon the assemblage, instantly killing dozens of heroes. However, in the chaos, Sister Psyche managed to use her telepathic powers to pick the location of the antidote from Nemesis' mind. The rest of the heroes fell back before the metal clad monster's onslaught.

Wounded but still mobile, Sister Psyche escaped the scene of the carnage and got word out to the Army. Within hours Dr. Mnemonic had synthesized an airborne version, and the air force and flying heroes were spreading it across the infected cities. Nemesis' poison was neutralized and Washington surrounded. Hundreds of heroes converged on the capitol and joined together for a second march on Washington. They fought through the remainder of Nemesis' forces and thought they had defeated the evil genius himself, only to find that all they had captured was a robot duplicate. Nemesis had escaped again.

Although Nemesis lost, he had done great damage and, more significantly, ushered in a new era for super powered heroes the world over and in Paragon City particularly. With the defeat of the Axis powers, the disappearance of the Fifth Column, and the crippling blows organized crime had received before the war, Paragon City had suddenly become a remarkably safe place to live. But villainy abhors a vacuum, and Nemesis had shown the way. A single individual with extraordinary powers, evil ambitions, and enough loyal minions could challenge a whole nation. Yes, Nemesis had failed, but there were more than

a few willing to step up to the plate and show him where he'd gone wrong. The age of the super villain had begun.

Many of the super villains that arose during the late forties and early fifties were actually veteran heroes who had fallen on hard times. While lauded across the land as heroes, for some the pride of patriotism was not reward enough. They had come to see themselves not as protectors of the common man, but as superior beings. And as superior beings these greedy souls felt the world owed them more than anyone else. In fact, they felt it owed them whatever they could take for themselves, by whatever means they chose.

Although these new super villains made their presence felt across the country, Paragon City became the center of their activities. As the richest, largest city in the nation and home to so many super powered veterans, Paragon proved the perfect breeding ground for evil. With no mafia to compete against them, the super powered criminals found plenty of room for success in their nefarious agendas. Among the many villains who reared their ugly heads in this era were: the gun toting Calamity Jane, the deadly Mesoamerican villain The Feathered Serpent, the wily Huckster, the mysterious Jade Maiden, the deadly Rakhasha, and the mercenary team known only as The Horde. Their activities ranged from simple armed robbery and theft to murder, mayhem, and the occasional attempt at world domination.

In the end, none of these villains or evil groups came close to posing the threat Nemesis did. For many it was simply a lack of deadly and evil intellect, but for most the biggest hurdle was the increasingly active hero community in Paragon City. The police could do little against these high-powered crooks, but the city's heroes were more than happy to step up to the plate. In 1952 the city decided to expand upon the groundbreaking Citizen Crime Fighting Act, expanding it to include officially licensed hero organizations that could in turn deputize their members. In 1953 the Freedom Phalanx became the first group to take advantage of this new law, and the Dawn Patrol and the mysterious Midnight Squad quickly followed suit.

Thus, despite the rising tide of super powered villainy in the city, the brave and selfless efforts of Paragon City's heroes managed to stay the flood and keep the city a relatively safe place to live (and certainly always an interesting place to live). However, even as things at home began to settle into a predictable if super powered routine, trouble abroad was growing. Since almost immediately after the war, the United States and the Soviet Union had been waging an ever more vicious Cold War. Now it seemed that this arms race was to include not only nuclear weapons, but a world power's other most deadly weapon: super powered heroes.

4.1.5 The Cold War

In the 1950's NATO and the Warsaw Pact began a deadly game of international cat-and-mouse that would last for decades to come. Both sides believed fervently that the other was hell-bent on destroying their way of life, and to a certain extent they were both right. Along with nuclear posturing, third world manipulating, and rampant spying, both sides also sought to bring their super-powered assets to bear as best they could against the enemy.

It only took a few years for the U.S. government to turn from lauding its heroes as saviors of the free world to fearing them as possible villains or, even worse, communists. The Second Citizen Crime Fighting Act lent legitimacy and a certain security from persecution to those who were properly registered in Paragon City. For those heroes who refused to register, who preferred to keep their secret identities a secret, or who lived in other communities, the U.S. became a tough place to be a hero; Paragon City was no exception.

In 1956, Congress passed the Might for Right act. This law proclaimed super-powered individuals and vigilante heroes a valuable national resource subject to draft without notice into the service of the United States government. For the next decade the CIA, FBI, and Department of Defense routinely pressed heroes into service, both at home and abroad. Most were only too happy to help, but there were

undoubtedly many, many abuses of the law. Heroes with unpopular politics found themselves sent on suicide missions into Eastern Europe. Minority heroes suffered particular discrimination during this period, often being forced into secret duty for months or years at a time, with no contact with family and loved ones.

From 1956 to 1966, the vast majority of those heroes pressed into service were used to fight a covert war against the Soviet Union. While public hero organizations like the Freedom Phalanx and the Dawn Patrol carried on their seemingly never ending war against costume-clad villains, many of America's "lesser known" heroes found themselves fighting and dying behind the Iron Curtain or in the jungles of South America and Southeast Asia. These battles, waged with ferocity by each side, did little more than maintain the status quo, often at the expense of local populations and governments.

As constitutionally dubious as these policies were, the U.S. did not base its actions solely on paranoia. The Soviet Union had engaged in its own, even more abusive program for amassing super-powered spies and operatives. Through a series of often deadly and deforming medical experiments, the Soviets managed to assemble its own elite cadre of heroes. They fought on the front line of this cold war, going toe-to-toe with U.S. heroes in a hidden war that the public scarcely knew was being fought. Occasionally, a super-powered melee would boil over into the public eye, but for the most part the victories and deaths went unnoticed.

The Might for Right Act finally met its demise in 1967 when a case brought to trial by three African-American superheroes went before the Supreme Court. The high court ruled the law entirely unconstitutional and ordered the immediate cessation of all Might For Right draftee operations. In reality, it took close to three years for the last draftee to be freed from duty, as many were deeply entrenched in covert operations that the government was reluctant to close in a timely manner.

By the 1970's, the cold war had reached a fevered pitch. Both sides had long considered skirmishes between their secret super soldiers to be outside the normal channels and not necessarily cause for an international incident. Public hero organizations like the Freedom Phalanx or the Soviet Defenders of the Motherland were a different story. These groups operated in the world spotlight, and anything they did was bound to draw media attention and political fallout.

This was proven disastrously true in 1976 when the world nearly stepped over the brink into total nuclear annihilation. A U.S. spy plane flying over the Soviet Union was brought down by one of the Defenders of the Motherland's flying heroes. The crew survived and managed to send a distress signal. The plane had been carrying one of the Air Force's few active super-powered soldiers, a code breaker and psionicist named Captain Gerald Mynor. Captain Mynor had used his psionic blasts to disable the Soviet hero, but that only bought him and his crew a few hours of safety before the rest of the Russian heroes arrived on the scene.

With only moments to act, the U.S. Air Force asked for and received the help of The Statesman, the leader of the Freedom Phalanx. The Statesman used Freedom Phalanx technology to teleport into the USSR and find the crew before the Soviet heroes could. He ended up in a skirmish with a squad of Russian super-soldiers, wounding several of them before escaping through the air with the Air Force personnel and Mynor in tow. The general in command, enraged that the normally untouchable Statesman was escaping his grasp after embarrassing the Defenders of the Motherland, took drastic action. He launched a tactical nuclear missile at the Statesman as he fled across the border.

The weapon detonated on target, which was unfortunately somewhere over Finland. Mynor and the rest of the crew died instantly and Statesman himself scarcely survived. NATO responded to the attack by putting their nuclear forces on full alert and preparing a counter strike. The Soviets in turn put their nukes on standby. The United States then "upped the ante" by preparing to launch a space based anti-missile system designed and manned by super-human scientists and soldiers. Soviet clairvoyants uncovered the

proposed launch and the Russians realized they would soon have no chance – they launched a limited nuclear strike aimed at taking out the satellite before it launched and became operational.

Seeing more clearly than either government what was about to happen, the Earth's premiere heroes took it upon themselves to stop the madness. Organized by members of the Dawn Patrol and Freedom Phalanx, a group of two-dozen international heroes sprang into action. They neutralized both the American space launch and the soviet missiles before either could fully deploy, and sent the world a message: they would not tolerate such behavior. Hero One (Great Britain's foremost hero and predecessor to the Vanguard's Hero1) stepped into the limelight to negotiate a peaceful solution to the crisis.

While the governments involved were quite resentful towards the heroes, the world at large came to adore them – as far as the public was concerned, they truly were the saviors of the world. This marked the beginning of the break in close cooperation between governments and hero organizations that had characterized much of the post-war period. The many events of the cold war had shown heroes that they often worked better outside of government policies and politics. They began to see themselves as a kind of fifth estate, standing as guardians not only of the world's safety and physical well being, but also of the rights of humanity as a whole.

4.1.6 Other Worlds Discovered

At the end of the 1970's, much of the US - Paragon City included - found itself mired in a deep economic recession. Crime rates began to rise as poverty and lack of opportunity gripped the less fortunate strata of American society. The use and abuse of illicit drugs had long been a problem for all levels of society, but as the new decade dawned, the growing levels of addiction and drug-related crime in poverty-stricken regions became a focus of national attention.

As they had before with any number of other crime waves, Paragon City's heroes set about trying to make a difference in the War on Drugs. Unlike on so many other occasions, they had much less than total success. The Paragon City hero organization, The Regulators, led the initial charge. Led by the flamboyant and ever-popular Michael White (AKA the Back Alley Brawler), the Regulators had been doing their best to fight street crime in Paragon City since the early seventies. With the new drug epidemic and rising poverty rates, the Regulators went into heavy recruiting mode and tried to swarm Paragon City's streets with costume-clad heroes.

The city saw a number of epic clashes between the Regulators and various street gangs and drug cartels. A former police officer, White worked closely with Paragon City law enforcement to make sure that every criminal he and the Regulators brought to justice would see conviction in a court of law. Of course it didn't always work out that way, but more often than not, Regulator captives (and there were a lot of them) did their time in prison. Unfortunately, it didn't seem to be making much of a difference. Certainly crime rates went down, but the drugs continued to make their way onto the streets and into the hands of anyone who wanted them.

Unable or unwilling to try and stem the demand for drugs, the Regulators teamed up with the Dawn Patrol to go after the drugs at their sources. They launched a series of controversial attacks in South America and Central Asia, burning coca and poppy fields to the ground. These assaults, while popular in the US, were not very well received abroad, with over a dozen nations forbidding members of both hero organizations from ever setting foot or flying over their sovereign territory again.

Unfortunately, there was little lasting effect from these bold assaults. The dramatic, albeit temporary, decline in imported narcotics merely left a void that a cartel of chemical engineers rushed to fill. With cocaine and heroin in short supply, the streets soon found themselves awash in a new, laboratory made drug: Superadine, or Supes as it became known on the street. Supes was eventually shown to be a modified version of soldier enhancement formulas developed by the US Army during World War II. When

injected, it gives a sense of profound confidence and euphoria along with increased endurance and strength. Beyond these seeming benefits, it is also a mild hallucinogen and powerfully addictive. It was no great surprise that Supes made its first appearance in Paragon City.

Throughout the mid-eighties, Supes became a more and more popular drug, and despite the Regulators' best efforts, it continued to proliferate in the streets of Paragon City. There seemed to be no obvious, organized force behind the drug's distribution. Dealers were simply waking up and finding stashes of the serum in their homes. With no distribution and money trail to follow, it was impossible to get to the source of the problem. Paragon City became a very dark, gritty place to live. Despite the growing strength of the national economy, crime (both street and super villain) continued to rise.

Instead of rising above it, many heroes sunk into a kind of depression, resorting to many of the same techniques and attitudes as the criminals they hunted. The city's heroes became parodies of themselves: men and women in bright costumes who did very dark things indeed. Brutal beatings, the threatening of innocents, and even torture and murder became all too common. While the city's luminaries managed to, for the most part, stay above such base temptations, for much of the city's vigilante population, these were sad times. The attitude that "the ends justify the means," became all too common.

It took a totally unexpected and even bizarre threat to reunite the city's heroes with their morals, a threat that, oddly enough, grew out of the Regulators' continued quest to find the mysterious force responsible for distributing Supes. Thanks to the mystical masters of the Midnight Squad, The Back Alley Brawler was finally able to track the drug back to its source, a secret laboratory beneath a skyscraper in downtown Paragon City. The Brawler burst in upon them, his famous fists flying about him like a whirlwind. When the dust cleared, he had a moment to catch his breath and figure out just what it was he'd captured.

The facility turned out to be much more than a mere drug lab. It was a modern, high-tech, research facility. Not only were they manufacturing and distributing the drug, but they were also monitoring its effects on addicts. As this was a little out of his area of expertise, the Brawler placed a call to the Freedom Phalanx for some technical support. The scientists took the facility apart, freed the captive addicts and made some truly startling discoveries. The mysterious scientists, who resisted all attempts at interrogation, were not concerned so much with addicting America's youth as they were interested in seeing what effect their mind and body altering concoctions had upon the subjects.

The nefarious researchers had learned that, in less than 1% of those addicted to Supes, the human brain undergoes a radical alteration. The result is the creation of a new kind of sense - the ability to see, and even travel to other dimensions. This amazing psychic feat had long been theorized, as had the existence of alternate realities. The researchers had proven the theories true. Although the process drove the addicts quite mad, it also showed them whole other worlds; worlds similar, but yet different than our own. The Freedom Phalanx was unsure what to do with this research. The findings promised extraordinary new discoveries for the scientific world, but the data had been accrued in the foulest, most amoral manner imaginable.

The Statesman decided that humanity should not - could not - profit from suffering of this sort. Should word of the radical research -- and the horrific means through which it was achieved become public knowledge, it would only encourage other madmen to follow suit. The Statesman and the Back Alley Brawler agreed to take the secret to their graves and all the Freedom Phalanx technicians were likewise sworn to secrecy as well. But the funny thing about science is that, just because you want to unlearn something, doesn't mean you can. The metaphorical cat was out of the bag. Other dimensions existed and it was possible to see, maybe even travel, into them. Human curiosity could not be contained.

One of the technicians involved in the Freedom Phalanx's investigation was Dr. Brian Webb. A young, brilliant physicist who had helped perfect the Cosmic Crown that gives The Comet Queen her powers, Webb strongly disagreed with the Statesman's decision and soon thereafter resigned his post at the Freedom Phalanx and went into business for himself. He sold his teleportation device patents in

exchange for the venture capital needed to start his new research and development company: Portal Corp.

Blessed with an eidetic memory, Dr. Webb knew everything the Supes researchers had learned about peering into other dimensions. As much as he abhorred their methods for moral reasons, he also eschewed their research methodology as being impractical and unscientific. Dr. Webb correctly reasoned that the ability to pierce the dimension barrier was not unique to the chemically modified brains of Supes addicts. Rather, the addicts just happened to be tapping into some greater cosmic law. Dr. Webb set out to discover the science behind that law.

Four years later, in 1988, he did just that. Webb created an inter-dimensional portal that allowed him - or anyone for that matter - to simply walk from one world to another. He announced his discovery to the world at large the very next day, calling a press conference that resulted in global media frenzy. Webb actually took a group of reporters and cameramen from every major media outlet through a portal and into a dimension where Paragon City had never existed and the Europeans had yet to discover the Americas. They returned to Paragon City, stunned and amazed. Webb then presented them with a videotape collection containing proof of his visits to over fifty different parallel dimensions in the past day alone. He described worlds that were nearly identical but for small details (stop signs were green) to places where history had changed dramatically (the Axis had won World War II.)

World Reaction to the announcement was something just short of panic. The implications for such a discovery shook many people to their very core. What did this mean for various religious doctrines? Where were these dimensions and what harm could they do to us? If we could go to these dimensions, what was to stop some of their residents from coming to our world? As it turned out, it was this last question that would have serious worldwide repercussions for many years to come.

The Statesman expressed profound regret that Dr. Webb had used the Supes research despite his desires. Nevertheless, Paragon City's greatest hero and his comrades could not help but be intrigued by the Portal Corp's new technology. Knowing how important first contact with other worlds can be, the Freedom Phalanx began sending its members along with Dr. Webb and his explorations. They wanted to make sure nothing dangerous followed the good doctor back. Unfortunately, they failed in this duty. While exploring a world where America had lost to Nazi Germany, the team ran afoul of that parallel Earth's greatest hero: The Reichsman.

The Reichsman, an alternate version of our world's Statesman, led the Amerika Korps, an elite super-powered hero organization that helped preserve Nazi rule over the former United States. Intrigued by these other-worldly interlopers, The Reichsman captured Dr. Webb and his explorers, tortured them to death, and ended up extracting a great deal of data about Webb's home dimension. Data is all well and good, but the Reichsman decided he wanted to see for himself, and so he led Amerika Korps through the portal and back to Paragon City.

It didn't take long for the super-powered fascists to earn the attention of the Freedom Phalanx. Queen Comet, a prominent member of the Phalanx and friend of Dr. Webb, saw the alternate Statesman come through and, having been briefed by Portal Corp about the world Webb and his escorts were exploring, she quickly called for back-up and bravely fought off the invaders until help arrived. Although seriously wounded, she managed to hold on until the Statesman and the rest of the Phalanx arrived.

The ensuing battle raged through the Portal Corp laboratories and spilled out into the city streets. The Reichsman was every bit the equal of his all-American counterpart, and the two nearly beat each other into the ground. Fortunately, the rest of the Amerika Korps did not measure up to the Freedom Phalanx (apparently in his world the Reichsman did not take kindly to potential rivals, and thus their training had been somewhat lax.) With his henchmen defeated, it was only a matter of time before the evil Statesman fell. To this day he remains frozen in suspended animation within the Freedom Phalanx's main headquarters.

Portal Corp was destroyed in the battle, but investors retained the rights to its technologies and had plans to continue the research. However, Dr. Webb's wife sued the shareholders and tied the entire estate up in court until 1998, when the company opened up under new management and with new funding. Although no contact has been made with the Axis America alternate reality since then, the Rikti Invasion certainly proved that the world had not seen the last extra-dimensional visitors.

4.1.7 Globalism and the 90's

The fall of the Warsaw Pact profoundly changed the global balance of power; changes to which the world's super-powered heroes were by no means immune. For all the time spent fighting super villains, battling invaders from other dimensions, and foiling mad schemes, a super-powered arms race had raged on throughout the Cold War. As the Soviet Union and its satellite allies in Eastern Europe split apart into sovereign, independent political entities, the allegiances of their heroes split apart as well. The Soviet Bloc utilized a highly regimented and controlled system of finding, registering, and controlling super-powered heroes. Now, as the 1990's dawned, thousands of such heroes found themselves free to pretty much do as they pleased.

Many heroes remained patriots and worked to fight the corruption and organized crime that quickly took root in the stripling democracies of Eastern Europe. It took less than a year for a band of discontent former Soviet heroes to become a powerful mafia force with significant influence over much of the region's oil supply. Fortunately, most former State-Sponsored Heroes lived up to their title and continued on as freelance heroes, fighting for justice and helping preserve the safety of Russia's people as best they could. In 1993, the first independent Russian Hero Organization, Valiant Defenders of the Motherland, set up operations in Moscow. The Statesman himself had given his advice and aid to the new group and was on hand at the ribbon-cutting ceremony (which was only slightly marred by an attempted attack by an equally fledgling villainous cabal that didn't manage to survive the afternoon when faced with the combined might of Russia's greatest heroes.)

The immediate and public success of the Valiant Defenders showed that the Paragon City-born model for organizing heroes could work well in other parts of the world. Interestingly, it was not the heroes themselves who first made the leap of logic, but rather an enterprising woman named Rebecca Foss. The London born executive had made her fortune and earned her fame buying and selling commercial real estate. By 1992 she was one of the forty richest women in Great Britain. Stellar success aside, this was still a relatively humble beginning for the woman who is today recognized as the manager and chief business advocate for several thousand of the world's most powerful super beings.

Foss happened to be in Moscow on business when the Valiant Defenders had their public grand opening. She immediately saw not only the potential for good the group could accomplish in a chaotic country like Russia, but also the tremendous profits that could be made along the way. Already street vendors were selling Valiant Defenders T-shirts. Valiant Defenders memorabilia (as well as home videos of their first public battle) ended up selling to news organizations around the world for hundreds of thousands of dollars each. Foss saw huge potential for franchising such hero organizations around the world, especially in developing markets where the local government did not have the resources or know-how to establish effective super-powered organizations on their own.

Foss returned home and immediately began putting together the business plan for what became Hero Corps. She and her sales force shopped the plan around to heroes first, looking for a notable spokesperson around whom they could forge a corporate identity and media campaign. While literally thousands applied for the job, Foss knew she had found the right man for the job as soon as he walked through the door: Kit Rafter, AKA, Luminary. Possessing the ability to project, bend, and control light, Luminary had served for a time with both the Dawn Patrol and the Freedom Phalanx and had garnered international attention when he saved a cruise ship from certain doom at the hands of the evil Torrent and his watery minions. Luminary had recently resigned from the Freedom Phalanx in order to move from Paragon City to Paris with his wife Jeanette Vesey, a world famous actress/model (indeed, it was their

honeymoon that Torrent had so maliciously interrupted.) Already a little bored with the low risk life of a married man, he jumped at the opportunity to become Hero Corps' new worldwide spokesperson.

In 1995, Foss and Luminary joined hands and cut the ribbon on the world's very first Hero Corps (HC) franchise, located in Mexico City. This first Corps team consisted entirely of home grown, Mexican heroes, although they received most of their training at the Hero Corps Training Campus in Provence under Luminary's watchful eye. The HC Mexico City proved a resounding success, and later that year three more franchises opened up in Rio, Jakarta, and Johannesburg. In each case, the HC always employed local heroes who operated under the guidance of corporate executives.

In every area where Hero Corps set up shop, crime decreased dramatically. Most city's paid for this wonderful service through bond measures and special taxes -- a fact the drew the ire of many who took a dim view of public money paying what they considered outrageous fees to a private multinational corporation. One puzzling side effect that Hero Corps public relations has tried to downplay is that, while crime rates drop in most cases, each city has actually seen an increase in super-powered crime. It's almost as if opening a Hero Corps franchise attracts costumed villains. Conspiracy theorists claim that the Hero Corps itself creates these super powered crises in order to justify their high fees. While there is no proof for such accusations, many cannot help but wonder if there might be some truth to them.

With over thirty franchises spanning the globe by 1998, Hero Corps tried to open its first U.S. based franchise in Paragon City. This seemed a strange choice, and many stockholders and financial analysts questioned the wisdom of the move. Luminary made a three-week publicity tour through the city, touting all the benefits Hero Corps had to offer. His efforts were politely but firmly rebuffed by the existing Hero Organizations, particularly the Freedom Phalanx and the Dawn Patrol. They both assured the city that all of its needs would be seen to, and that they need not pay high costs. Hero Corps rejoined that, should the city sign up with their services, they might pay a premium price, but in return, rather than relying on the whims of independent vigilantes, the city would have a super-powered organization that was answerable directly to the city government.

The debate grew quite acrimonious, and much was made of The Freedom Phalanx's decision to declare itself outside the politics and laws of any one nation. Many wondered just how committed to the local problems such groups could be. Advocates for the city's existing heroes countered with accusations that Hero Corps seemed to cause more trouble than it solved and that the city's safety should not be sold to the lowest bidder. Luminary replied that Hero Corps was actually the highest bidder and that surely the existing heroes wouldn't mind if they had a little more help around the city while they were off saving the entire world.

In 1999, Hero Corps bought property and began building a facility in Paragon City, despite public resistance. The construction process suffered delay after delay due to protests, sabotage, and periodic attacks by previously unknown super-powered criminals. When the building was mere days from completion, a mysterious gang of power armor-clad soldiers descended on the construction site, overwhelmed the security and literally leveled the structure to the ground. This disastrous attack polarized the city, with many seeing Hero Corps as a magnet for danger and controversy and others saying that the city's existing heroes were afraid of competition. Hero Corps was prepared to pull out of the city after this, having spent five times their budget already.

Then Crey Industries made an offer to subsidize the new Hero Corps facility. The Countess Crey made several public appearances lauding the corporation's work over seas and stating that she had high expectations for HC Paragon City. Everything seemed set for another attempt at building the facility when the city zoning board revoked Hero Corps construction permits. A series of legal maneuverings proved costly but ineffective for Hero Corps, as every political door suddenly seemed closed. The Countess Crey told anyone who would listen that the Freedom Phalanx, and Statesman in particular, were using their influence to block Hero Corps' efforts. Ultimately, Hero Corps had to withdraw from the city after all, but the whole process left a bad taste in the mouths of many Paragon City residents.

Hero Corps did not have the worldwide monopoly on organizing and hiring out the abilities of super-powered beings. Unfortunately, not everyone felt the need to make profit from doing good. Several other hero groups had no qualms about making money any way they could. After all, one super-powered soldier can be as effective as a hundred regular men, but usually costs much less to maintain. That doesn't mean he should charge any less than a hundred mercenaries would demand for their services, it just means that his profit margins are higher. It doesn't take a financial genius to figure this equation out, and by the mid 90's, super-powered mercenary companies were active all over the world.

These super mercs, as they became known, operated in places and ways that no self-respecting hero would ever dream of. The Britain-based Directed Outcomes super mercs worked guarding diamond mines in East Africa, making the mines safe for near slave labor practices to go on uninterrupted while civil war raged all around. The Cayman Islands-based Mega Corps spent much of its time tracking down and terrorizing anti-globalization activists and other thorns in the side of multi-national corporations. The American-based Free Company fights mostly to protect oil wells and pipelines from any threat, whether terrorist attacks or attempts at unionization.

Most of these groups flirted with breaking or surreptitiously broke laws, but they did so under the cover of corporate PR firms and the tacit consent of world governments. Certainly the premiere Hero Organizations seldom came to blows with them unless they perpetrated some particularly egregious sin. In all fairness, groups like the Freedom Phalanx had more pressing concerns, whether it was delivering food and halting genocide in West Africa or preventing war crimes and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans. The 1990's were a busy time for even the most socially conscious defenders of freedom. Some super merc groups did cross the line. Several signed on to serve not just shady corporations, but admittedly illegal paymasters like drug cartels and terrorist groups.

In 2000, in response to these blatantly illegal and dangerous super merc outfits, the United Nations decided to form the Special Council on Super Human Activities to monitor and police situations around the world involving super-human threats and non-governmental super-villains and organizations. The Special Council had no enforcement arm, but rather acted as a mediator for disseminating information and investigating complaints. The council would then pass this information on to local authorities or the UN Security Council, as they saw fit. Ironically, the biggest beneficiary of the Special Council's efforts has been Hero Corps, who lobbied hard for the council's creation. With over 100 franchises world wide in 2001, Hero Corps is the group most often called upon to act on the Special Council's recommendations. While many of the older, established, pro-bono hero organizations resent this fact, there is little they can do until they come up with a plan to offer the same depth and breadth of service that Ms. Foss' multi-national corporation has to offer.

4.1.8 Alien Invasion

It had been more than a decade since the Portal Corp was destroyed and much of the world had all but forgotten about possible threats from other dimensions. On May 23rd, 2002, they had a rather rude reminder. On that date, at approximately 4:30 PM Eastern Standard Time (U.S.), thousands upon thousands of red lights began to appear in Paragon City. The lights took the form of perfect, flat circles, ranging in diameter from 9 feet to 100 yards. One reporter in a traffic helicopter likened them to "windows into the flaming heart of hell" before he and his vehicle disappeared forever, presumably swallowed up when another "window" opened on top of them. No one was yet quite sure what they were looking at, but it was obvious that they were dangerous - anything the red lights touched they seemed to devour.

Of course the city's heroes came out in force to investigate. The Freedom Phalanx, the Dawn Patrol, and Hero Corps all sent teams out into the city to prepare for whatever came next. The Midnight Squad's most powerful magicians and knowledgeable mystics tried to determine whether or not the lights had a magical origin. The discs of light kept appearing and were soon all over the city, from huge discs high above the skyline to smaller ones at street level and even inside buildings. The population quickly panicked and clogged the exit routes, trying to flee whatever disaster was about to beset them. Soon

reports came in from other cities and countries. The lights had popped up in 27 other places around the world, all of them major population centers.

The Freedom Phalanx made the determination, with the help of a former Portal Corp researcher, that the lights represented some kind of dimensional portal. Where they led no one could be sure. Long standing Freedom Phalanx member and renowned interstellar explorer, Star Strider, volunteered to pass through one of the portals and see what was there. Veiling himself in his invulnerable force field, he entered one of the larger portals and was never seen or heard from again. Similar experiments in other parts of the world had the same tragic results.

As night fell, at approximately 7:30 Eastern Standard Time, the true purpose of these disks became clear. Simultaneously across the entire globe alien invaders began pouring out of the portals - tens of thousands of them. Most were infantry, wearing some sort of powered armor and wielding energy weapons. Others wore flight packs and dove down from the skies beside hordes of small, spherical attack drones. The largest portals produced huge assault craft, bristling with energy cannons and missile launchers. Even in places like Paragon City, where hundreds of heroes were prepared for an horrific event, the size and power of the invading force proved quickly overwhelming.

The first barrage of attacks was very precisely executed. The invaders had obviously had time to study their foes in great detail. They took out power plants, substations, phone lines, cell phone towers, radio transmitters and water lines within the first 15 minutes of the invasion. They filled the air with electronic counter measures so powerful that they jammed all radio communication, radar, and GPS signals. They also struck concentrations of military and police power, taking out armories, air force bases, and naval shipyards. In a matter of minutes they had all but disarmed the cities they chose to attack. Fortunately for Earth, they had failed miserably in one aspect of their calculations: they hadn't counted on the tremendous power Earth's heroes could bring to bear.

From the moment the first invader stepped through a portal, the heroes in Paragon City sprang into action. Statesman led the charge, quite literally, hurling his body into one of the largest attack craft. A minute later the massive flying fortress exploded from within and fell crashing to the ground. The seemingly unharmed Statesman flashed across the sky and into another ship, with similarly devastating results. It was only after the third such assault that he became aware of the tremendous collateral damage these falling behemoths were causing when they crashed to the streets below. Aware of this problem, he changed tactics, using his incredible strength to actually push the giant ships out over the river before demolishing them.

The city's other heroes fought fiercely as well, although few were as spectacular as the Statesman in their methods. The city streets swarmed with armor-clad invaders fighting toe to toe with costume clad heroes. The aliens had also brought in heavily armored hover tanks that were proving to be particularly deadly until a consortium of mages from the Midnight Squad cast a spell that turned them all inside out, leaving smoking piles of junk. Unfortunately, the aliens gave as good as they got. Even as they were congratulating themselves on their success, the magicians were engulfed in a wave of burning plasma that stripped their flesh to the bone in a fraction of a second.

And so it went across the city. The aliens outnumbered the heroes at least one hundred to one, maybe more. It was impossible to get accurate numbers as the portals had allowed them access to the entire city at once. The fighting raged on through the rest of the night. After six hours, the heroes had managed to clear the skies of the large attack craft, some of which had retreated either up into space or out over the ocean (none of the aliens ever went back through the portals). By the dawn of the 24th, Paragon City had been effectively divided into a patchwork of human and alien controlled neighborhoods, with constant combat raging at every border. Both sides began to erect walls and other static defenses to secure their territory. Many of these border defenses eventually became the walls that currently divide Paragon City into its many neighborhoods.

No more invaders ever came through the portals. It seems they had launched their entire attack force in one instant. Exactly 24 hours after the invasion began, all of the portals winked out of existence, adding one more layer of mystery to the already bizarre and terrifying war. Meanwhile, even as they fought on, the heroes were trying desperately to figure out just who these beings were and why they were attacking. They seemed to use no electronic signals for communication. Several powerful telepaths had noticed a disturbing psychic noise since the invasion started, but any attempt to read the alien minds or communicate with them failed. Whatever they were, their motives and identities remained unknown.

The world's governments reacted as best they could to the terrifyingly unexpected invasion. The aliens destroyed a good third of the world's military might in those first few hours, but, with the help of super powered heroes from every nation, the armed forces rallied and began to put up a stalwart, if seemingly doomed defense. Even the most advanced army in the world, that of the United States, was seriously outgunned by the aliens. The casualty ratios were typically 5 to 1 in favor of the invaders. Only when those with super powers fought alongside front line troops did the humans ever score any victories. The United Nations Security Council, led by Great Britain and France, formed an emergency umbrella organization to help coordinate hero resources in the worldwide war against the invaders. Called the Vanguard, this group was comprised of some of the world's best and brightest heroes. It sprang into action immediately, and began to effect stalemates similar to the one that had been reached in Paragon City. The aliens' advances were halted, but it seemed impossible to take back the territory they had already seized.

Back in Paragon City, the effort to discover just who these aliens were was finally achieving some results. Going through the old Portal Corp files (which had been tied up in countless court battles, unseen, for decades), investigators found a record for an alternate Earth home to a race of beings known as The Rikti. Only one Portal Corps team had been sent there and the records were incomplete, although it seemed that contact with the aliens had been established. Apparently they could talk to us, they just didn't want to. The file had no indications that they were particularly war like or hostile and even suggested that a trade agreement could possibly be reached with them at some point in the future. Now the enemy had a name at least, although why they had attacked remained unclear.

The war waged on for the next six months, during which time hundreds of thousands of soldiers, civilians, and heroes died in battle. The Rikti proved a decidedly intractable foe. They had apparently been coming to Earth well before the actual invasion began in earnest, setting up hidden bases and weapons caches beneath the ground. They used short range teleportation portals to strike at unexpected times and locations. The humans were forced to fight an entirely defensive war, as the Rikti kept them scrambling to deal with one crisis after another.

It did not take long for the Rikti to figure out just how important the heroes were to humanity's defense. More and more they began to concentrate their efforts on the costume clad warriors. Any large scale meeting place or base of operations became an immediate target. In Paragon City the Rikti launched a series of all-out, simultaneous assaults on hero organization headquarters buildings. In one afternoon they destroyed buildings belonging to the Freedom Phalanx, the Midnight Squad, and the Dawn Patrol, killing scores of heroes in the process. The Rikti took their heaviest casualties during this engagement, but they must have thought it was worth it because they did the same thing again the next day. And the day after that. In one week they lost over 10,000 soldiers, killed close to 200 heroes and utterly decimated all of Paragon City's major hero organizations.

The Freedom Phalanx was down to just Statesman and a handful of the toughest, most powerful heroes in the city. The Dawn Patrol, Midnight Squad, Regulators, and Hero Corps were in similar straits. With its decentralized command structure and international recruiting base, only the Vanguard (which included Statesman as well), remained a viable, organized fighting force. Even when the Rikti destroyed the United Nations buildings in New York and Geneva, the Vanguard kept up the fight, quickly training and organizing super powered defense teams to hold the aliens in check.

Using the files and records from Portal Corp, an exceedingly intelligent hero named Dr. Science (also the star of a famous kids science program) figured out a way to trace the energy signatures of the Rikti portals. It was clear that the aliens were continually receiving reinforcements from their home dimension, probably through additional portals that opened up in their secret underground staging areas. Dr. Science managed to isolate the largest and most active of these portals, which happened to be located deep beneath Paragon City. This was probably the least accessible location on Earth right now, lying as it did deep within Rikti territory and surrounded by thousands of the toughest alien troops.

Dr. Science devised a plan, but it was one that risked a great deal for an uncertain outcome. He had deduced that the portals required tremendous energy to operate and that the source of this energy must lie somewhere on the Rikti home world. The portals on this side were merely conduits for the main energy source. From there, reinforcements were then transmitted through local intra-dimensional portals. If a team of heroes could travel through the main conduit and destroy the energy source, the Rikti on Earth would be totally cut off from future reinforcements. This might just be enough to turn the tide of the war.

Matters were growing more desperate with each passing month, so the Vanguard, led by Hero 1 in November 2002, decided to try Dr. Science's daring plan. They assembled the best and brightest heroes in the world, leaving only skeleton crews to man the defenses. They then split into two teams, one led by the Statesman, named Alpha Team, and one led by Hero 1, named Omega Team. Alpha Team was much larger, consisting of over 1000 heroes from across the globe. They launched a full frontal assault on the Rikti main troop concentrations, drawing as many alien troops into the fray as possible. This was a dangerous ploy, and it proved costly. In the ensuing titanic battle, 800 of 1000 heroes died, along with some 50,000 Rikti soldiers.

Omega team consisted of 50 of the world's best and brightest. The humans had found that the Rikti were particularly ineffective when it came to dealing with magic based powers, so there were quite a few magicians and artifact wielding heroes on Omega Team. Using an ancient Charm of Invisibility, the team managed to slip into the Rikti main portal base unseen. They were only discovered at the last moment, in the portal chamber itself. Omega Team watched as thousands of Rikti reinforcements passed through the dimensional gateway, on the way to help in the battle against Alpha Team. They were discovered, but now it was too late. They fought their way through to the gateway - five of them fell captive to the Rikti in the process. It was one of these captives who later escaped and provided the only witness to what happened next.

Omega Team disappeared into the portal and the Rikti were thrown into a panicked frenzy. They swarmed in after the brave heroes. All was silent for about 15 minutes. Then a tremendous explosion rippled out from the open portal, tearing through the Rikti base and instantly annihilating everything within a square mile. Only one hero, the utterly invulnerable Ajax, managed to survive the blast. He had been taken captive by a Rikti stasis ray and rendered unable to follow his teammates into the portal. Now he was the sole surviving witness to their apparent victory.

News of the disaster traveled almost instantly through the Rikti ranks, and they immediately began to disengage from their massive battle with Alpha Team. The heroes, having lost 80% of their number, were only too happy to let the Rikti slink off in defeat. It took them a little longer to get word of what had happened, but it sounded like good news. All over the world the Rikti were retreating, although certainly not in a panic. Obviously everything had just changed for them. They were no longer fighting with secure supply lines and constant reinforcements from home. In an instant they seemed to make the transition from field army to guerilla fighters. They withdrew into their secret lairs over the next few days, fighting a scorched-earth rear guard action that claimed thousands of more lives.

The war was over, or at least the first phase of it was. Both sides had been nearly shattered in the process. The Vanguard and the other great hero organizations of the world scarcely existed anymore. With the exception of Statesman and a few others, all the world's greatest heroes had died in the war. Trillions upon trillions of dollars of damage had been done to the majority of the world's most populated cities. Paragon City was the worst hit of all. Once a shining beacon of light and prosperity, now much of it

lay in ruins. It didn't take long for criminals to start reasserting themselves, and new heroes were needed. It was the beginning of a desperate time that would last for decades.

Today, thanks to scavenged Rikti technology and the help of brilliant men and women like Dr. Science, rebuilding proceeds at an amazing pace. Paragon City is still a shadow of its former self, beset by criminals and the lingering Rikti threat, but it has begun to prosper once more. It is a place where new protectors are desperately needed: brave men and women willing to put their lives on the line to protect the innocent and punish the wicked. The invasion might be over, but the war persists. Now, more than ever, it is a time for heroes.

4.2 Geography

Before the Rikti War, Paragon City was one of the largest and most prosperous cities in the world. The Rikti, however, used the City as their center of operations and devastated it in the process. Paragon City has since resurrected itself from the ashes, but has not yet reached the heights of prosperity it knew before war. Many parts of the city remain uninhabitable and dangerous; Paragon City needs a new generation of heroes to take the place of the many champions who perished fighting the Rikti.

To prepare for any further Rikti attacks, humanity adopted one of the alien invaders' key technologies: War Walls. The Rikti utilized force fields to protect their installations and bases from assault. After the war, human scientists managed to master this technology and make Paragon City the first to use Rikti technology for civil defense. Each zone of the city is surrounded by gigantic walls that house and protect the forcefield generators. As long as the War Walls are intact, they generate a powerful blue wall of energy that prevents anything from getting in or out. These War Walls have been successful in both guarding the city from outside attack and quarantining unsafe zones.

The City is divided into three basic types of zones. The first, and most common, is the City Zone. The authorities have determined that these locations are relatively safe for human habitation. City zones were mostly spared from the harsh depredations of the Rikti and the devastating effects of street to street combat. The current City Zones required relatively little work to get them up and running again. Today, they are the 'real' Paragon City; the living, breathing parts that keep the great metropolis going. Citizens and heroes alike can get from zone to zone either by foot or monorail and the hospitals are always open for any hero who needs treatment. Despite all these signs of normalcy, crime remains a big problem even here. Without protectors, Paragon City remains easy prey to various villainous predators.

The second type of zone is the Hazard Zone. These territories are so dangerous that few people dare to live in them. Villains have infested Hazard Zones to the point that they are now uninhabitable. The authorities lack the strength to clean them out and require superhuman assistance to make the areas safe again. Even a single hero is capable of doing some good in a Hazard Zone. Authorities, however, have created a system to prevent fledgling heroes from getting into situations beyond their capabilities. Each hero must prove himself and achieve a certain minimum Security Level before he can enter a Hazard Zone.

The third type of area that exists is the Trial Zone. Much like Hazard Zones, these territories are so dangerous that no sane person inhabits them. However, unlike Hazard Zones, heroes should not venture far into the Trial Zones alone. In order to survive, heroes must work together to fight the evil forces that dwell within these areas. These zones have been dubbed 'trials' because each has challenges that require constant effort and endurance. One Trial Zone, nicknamed Faultline, is home to the water reservoir for the city. Because of the reservoir's far-reaching impact on the residents of Paragon City, villains naturally attempt to attack it time and time again. Periodically, hero groups are called upon to protect the city's water supply from destruction. Since each zone presents a unique challenge in a hero's development, the heroes and citizens have dubbed these areas "trials." In essence, they are points that define a hero's progress from fledgling hero into a true champion of the city. Like Hazard Zones, Trial Zones require heroes to reach a certain Security Level before they may enter - and the Trials themselves have further requirements to prevent the unprepared hero from being overwhelmed.

4.2.1 Atlas Park

Atlas Park is the City Zone at the heart of Paragon City. No landmark exemplifies the heroic nature of the City of Heroes more than the statue of the fallen hero, Atlas, that stands in front of City Hall. Atlas was one of the first heroes to respond to the Nazi sneak attack against Paragon City on December 7th, 1941. Almost single-handedly, Atlas kept the German attackers from gaining a foothold past Independence Port. It cost him his life, but he held his ground until the Freedom Phalanx arrived.

The statue of Atlas was dedicated by the Statesman himself in a ceremony christening the heart of Atlas Park. Many heroes were inspired enough by Atlas' sacrifice to volunteer for the Freedom Phalanx's trek across the Atlantic to help reinforce the Dawn Patrol in England. To this day, Atlas Park is the safest area in Paragon City and many new heroes dedicate themselves to making sure it stays that way.

Throughout Atlas Park and the rest of Paragon City are even more statues of heroes that fell in battle while defending their beliefs. Newcomers to the City are always encouraged to look for the information plaques by these monuments to learn more about those who sacrificed themselves for the greater good.

From Atlas Park, heroes can travel South to Skyway City or North to Steel Canyon. The hazards of Perez Park are a short journey to the west, while closer at hand within Atlas Park itself; is an entrance to the trials of The Sewers. But be warned; both Perez Park and The Sewers are dangerous places for an unprepared hero.

One of Paragon City's most well-known "Contacts," Ms. Liberty, is seen frequently in Atlas Park providing information on her new venture, the Freedom Corps. Freedom Corps facilitates communication and coordination between Paragon City's new heroes.

Recently, the streets of Atlas Park have been menaced by members of a new street gang calling themselves the Hellions. No one is certain why the gang numbers have swelled so quickly in such a short time or how they have taken over so much territory, but it is rumored that they have some kind of alliance with one of the more powerful gangs in Paragon City. Unfortunately, no one knows who yet. One thing is for certain: the gang is just one factor dramatically increasing the workload of new heroes in Atlas Park.

Government officials in Paragon City are responding quickly to this new threat by hiring a number of new liaisons to aid heroes in identifying troubled locations within Atlas Park. These liaisons can be found in Paragon City Hall and are a vital addition to the heroic system that protects the City of Heroes.

4.2.2 Galaxy City

Galaxy City is a densely populated region with a business sector to the north, a warehouse district to the south, and a park with a small lake to the southeast. The Freedom Corp building is in the Northwest sector.

The area is named after Galaxy Girl, who died during the Rikti War. Otherwise known as Kelly Graham, Galaxy Girl wasn't the flashiest hero, but she was one of Paragon City's favorites.

4.2.3 Kings Row

In the early days of Paragon City, the area known as Kings Row was a shiny, bustling place filled with hope and promise. Factories manufacturing goods and generating power created a feeling of strong, blue-collar values. At that time, the area was called Kings Row because of one of the most productive factories to set up shop there: King Garment Works.

Unfortunately, the prosperity didn't last long. When the Depression hit Paragon City, no area was affected more. Factories shut down, many workers were laid off, and a great deal of the crime sweeping through the city was centered in the row of closed-down factories. The crime bosses who set themselves up there took on the name of the zone. They became known throughout the city as The Kings.

For a time, Kings Row became a place to avoid. It was dark, dirty, and struck fear into the hearts of upright Paragon citizens. When the Statesman began his “war on crime” and formed the Freedom Phalanx, he focused a great deal of his efforts on bringing down the Kings. Eventually, the Freedom Phalanx triumphed over the Kings, but the cost was high. There was some damage to the physical area, but of greater effect was the long-term damage done to the reputation of Kings Row.

Even after the economy recovered, the stigma of Kings Row remained. The Kings are long gone but the name has remained and to this day, the area is regarded as a grimy place with a reputation for seediness.

Present day Kings Row connects North to Perez Park, East to Skyway City, and West to Independence Port. Paragon City's extensive sewers also sprawl beneath Kings Row.

Although the area is still generally run-down, it has seen much more activity lately -- and not all of it good. Part of that comes from the fact that the area has become a popular location for raves, drawing in more of Paragon City's white-collar crowd.

Yet the primary reason for the surge of activity in Kings Row is due to the arrival of a gang called the Skulls. The Skulls have been in Paragon City for some time, but they have only recently set up shop for good in the Row, going so far as to clean up the streets a bit by attacking Vahzilok Cadavers whenever they see them. The Skulls first order of business seems to be waging a war on the Hellions, a gang from Atlas Park. Nearby Perez Park has become the battleground for this gang war where both sides seem to have backing from more powerful organizations. By using it as a home base of sorts, the Skulls appear to be taking Kings Row back in time and threaten to turn it into crime central once again.

It has become a priority for the heroes of Paragon City to find out who is backing the Skulls and stop the war they are waging against the Hellions. It will take many dedicated crime fighters to make certain Kings Row is a City Zone that people can feel safe in.

4.2.4 The Hollows

Several years ago the Trolls wanted to carve out more territory for themselves but were having trouble doing that above ground. They decided to try and expand downward. The location they chose for their excavation was called Eastgate. It was a lovely residential area that had a nice view of the ocean. Armed with high explosives the Trolls headed into the sewers with the intent of blasting open a large area. What they didn't know was that there was already an extensive cave warren beneath this area of Paragon City. Their initial blasts destabilized a large area and collapsed a section of the zone in on itself. When the dust settled the surviving Trolls realized that they had found an excellent area for expansion. This event became known as the Hollowing. The Trolls moved in quickly and took over a large section of the tunnels, but they didn't have enough numbers to completely cover the area. The Outcasts moved one of their splinters in, delighting in any opportunity to balk their brutish enemies. The Circle of Thorns almost immediately began sending in search teams looking for a powerful mystic portal that was rumored to exist in the area. Finally the Trolls encountered creatures never before seen, which they promptly dubbed “Igneous”. It is believed that these cave guardians are connected to the devouring earth, but no one is certain.

4.2.5 The Tunnels of the Trolls

Directly beneath the Hollows, this area is infested with Trolls and the mysterious Igneous creatures. It is rumored that somewhere within lies the Cavern of Transcendence, which contains a mystical gateway of almost limitless power.

4.2.6 Perez Park

Not all of the zones in Paragon City are equal and safely regulated. Because of the large number of villains and marked lack of heroes, certain areas are filled with hazards. Unfortunately, the beautiful Perez Park is one such place.

Nestled near the center of the city, the park borders Atlas Park to the East, and King's Row to the West. Also connected to this paradise lost is Skyway City to the South and Steel Canyon to the North.

Perez Park was once an idyllic retreat from hectic city life and home to many areas where families would picnic or simply relax in the sun. Tree-lined walkways meandered through the park and were often populated by couples taking romantic evening strolls. The Gaiman Amphitheatre showcased outdoor performances (including those by the acclaimed 'Paragon City Players'). Turner Lake provided a lovely splash of cool blue water, while the nearby Bendis Lake House was popular among the crowds for their famous burgers.

Recently, the previous tranquility of the area has been shattered. Perez Park is now infested with many different villains-all with varying agendas. Not only has the area become a favored spot for the dark rituals performed by The Circle of Thorns, but Vahzilok, the Clockworks and others are often spotted there. The biggest problem the park has, however, is that it's become a hotbed of the gang wars in Paragon City.

Two groups of thugs, the Hellions and the Skulls, have focused their conflicts here. Both of these gangs are connected to more powerful organizations, but no one has been able to conclusively determine their benefactors. One thing's for certain, though; anyone caught in Perez Park at the wrong time is likely to get caught between these two vicious groups during one of their many skirmishes.

If the activities taking place in this and other Hazard Zones are allowed to continue, it won't be long before the chaos overflows into other areas of the city. Perez Park is a clear indicator that new heroes are needed now more than ever in the City of Heroes.

4.2.7 Skyway City

Back in the 1970s, with traffic congestion in Paragon City reaching major headache levels, the solution seemed obvious: build upwards! Create graceful sweeping highways! Take the pressure off surface streets by moving traffic above the city on high-spanning bridges. As a result, Skyway City - the big highway in the sky - was born.

The epitome of modern efficiency, Skyway City was destined to be a model for the future. Instead, it became a model of cold concrete and steel - a soulless passageway on the way to more interesting destinations. Soon, the original plans for extending the Skyway bridges throughout the city fell by the wayside. Today, Skyway City is the only remnant of this grand but misguided idea in Paragon City.

A major hub for cross-city travel, Skyway City connects with Atlas Park to the North, Perez Park to the Northwest, King's Row to the West, Faultline to the South and Talos Island to the East. You can also take the monorail from King's Row to Skyway City, with connections as well to Atlas Park. For the more adventurous (or foolhardy), an entrance to the sewers is located in Skyway City.

With an abundance of salvageable materials on hand, Skyway City is a haven for the deadly Clockwork. Visitors should keep a sharp eye out for these mechanical, scavenging menaces.

More recently, Skyway City has become home to a street gang known as the Trolls. Found camped out under the many bridges in the area, the Trolls have made the unstable and dangerous street drug Superadine an integral part of gang membership. This widely popular drug has become a mainstay in their initiation rites, their tests of strength and will, and an increasingly important factor in a member's rise through the ranks. With the ingestion of massive doses, many of the senior Trolls have experienced

physical and mental mutations of a monstrous nature, including inhuman strength and resistance. To make matters even worse, Paragon City's law enforcement community suspects a link between the Trolls and the Family - the well-organized gang that runs Independence Port - but little proof has been found to date.

With Superadine pumping through their bodies and occasionally short-circuiting their brains, the Trolls have become one of the most dangerous and frightening threats to Paragon City. Drug-induced rampages have become the norm; unprovoked, senseless, and violent, these acts spare no one in the vicinity.

Skyway City once stood as the bright, soaring promise of a new age. Sadly, it's become the spawning ground of drug-crazed monsters. Something must be done to curb this advancing tide of blood and madness. Without the timely intervention of a new generation of heroes, the future of this section of Paragon City looks grim indeed.

4.2.8 Steel Canyon

Once the prosperous jewelers' district in 19th century Paragon City, many of Steel Canyon's neighborhoods still possess names dating back to that era. The twentieth century, however, brought with it an explosion of finance and investment industry. The once prolific mercantile district transformed overnight as brokerage houses, insurance companies, and law firms began taking over real estate. By the 1920's, most companies had erected towering skyscrapers to flaunt their success to the rest of the city. Because these huge buildings loomed over city streets like manmade mountains, the newspapers dubbed the area "Steel Canyon."

This bright era of prosperity, however, possessed a dark side. It was during this period that the Southern United Manufacturing Company relocated its headquarters to Steel Canyon. This huge monopoly stretched its offices over dozens of buildings and quickly dominated the business landscape of Paragon City. Behind closed doors, Southern United exerted considerable pressure on local politicians. Though bribery was the usual form of coercion, the company was not above using blackmail and even physical threats. Southern United was also the main support for the notoriously corrupt, yet strangely popular, mayor James "Spanky" Rabinowitz. Southern United profited mightily during Prohibition by using their transportation resources to smuggle alcohol from Canada.

When Statesman arrived on the scene, his first battles were mostly against the low-level thugs who peddled bootleg liquor in the speakeasies and bars. Soon, however, Statesman realized that a far more powerful organization was behind this illegal liquor industry. Through daring and no small amount of luck, Statesman uncovered the corrupt nature of Southern United.

In the course of Statesman's campaign against Southern United, a far more pervasive threat was uncovered. Southern United was but a front for a far more insidious evil that stretched back more than a century: Nemesis, the Prussian Prince of Automatons. In this first great confrontation between Statesman and Nemesis-many more would follow over the years-Statesman brought down the company that Nemesis was using to gather resources for his personal war against humanity. A bloodied but unbowed Nemesis unleashed his legions in the hopes that a sudden attack would give him possession of the city. This tragic day, dubbed by the press as "Brass Monday," witnessed the Prussian Prince's metal-clad troops flooding the streets of Steel Canyon in a show of force not seen since the waning years of the Civil War.

Rallying the authorities, Statesman battled back Nemesis' forces. Eventually, the hero confronted Nemesis himself and forced the villain to retreat. As the first super-powered human to receive massive national exposure, Statesman became the leading symbol of the potential good that super-humans could contribute to society. Police forces became more cooperative towards masked crime-fighters, which in

turn led many super beings to use their powers more openly. This growing public support eventually culminated in the passage of the 1936 Citizen Crime Fighting Act.

Today, Steel Canyon remains primarily a financial district, though many jewelers still have their stores in the area. No single villain group has re-gained pre-eminence in Steel Canyon, though many compete for control of this wealthy district. The elemental-based Outcasts, the misshapen Trolls and the Asian Tsos, all wage fierce battles amongst each other for dominance of Steel Canyon. So far, the conflict has resulted in bloody stalemate, though the businesses and residents of the area hope that the influx of new heroes will destroy this threat forever.

4.2.9 Boomtown

Baumton was the city's first marketplace, where tradesman and farmers went to sell their wares. After the Rikti Invasion, people started calling it Boomtown, because the devastation reminded them of a bomb crater. It's pretty dangerous. The place is infested with Clockwork robots. They look like toys, but they cause plenty of havoc by stealing bits of machinery and metal from all over. Even worse, a giant clockwork monster called Babbage prevents any pacification of the zone.

4.2.10 Independence Port

This is where the Germans attacked the U.S. fleet way back in 1941, on the very day that Japan besieged Pearl Harbor. President Roosevelt renamed the place 'Independence Port', in memory of all those who had fallen in defense of the fleet. You'll see the big statue of Cassiopaea by the bridge; she was one of the famous heroes who died in that battle. It's a shame that organized crime runs the docks nowadays. The Family pulls all the strings here, despite the best efforts of law enforcement.

4.2.11 Talos Island

There were giants in those days...

He called himself Talos, though the newspapers preferred the more descriptive, "Terrific Titan." Standing well over 300 feet tall, Talos was the epitome of titanic heroism as he battled to defend Paragon City. Throughout the 50's and 60's, he steadfastly rose to the challenge of combating giant monstrosities. He became the city's newest marvel and champion. Yet deep mystery surrounded his true identity. Even more astonishing was his ability to vanish after battle. A profoundly enigmatic hero, journalists, historians and scholars had only his cryptic utterances for clues to his origin: "For thousands of years, I have been a protector of humanity." The only certainty about Talos was his almost mystical connection to a young boy named Michael McVey. Whenever the youngster was imperiled, Talos would appear to save the day.

In the last climatic battle against his arch foe, the Chimera, Talos and the serpentine beast clashed beneath the waters of the bay. A mighty battle ensued, shaking Paragon City to its foundations, tearing a giant rift in the ocean floor from which earth and lava rose to form an island. Known today as Talos Island, it is said that both Talos and the Chimera are still locked in mortal combat within its stony embrace.

Decades later, Talos' heroism had faded out of memory and into urban legend. Despite countless articles, photographs, and movie clips featuring the heroic exploits of the "Terrific Titan," most citizens have now relegated Talos to the dusty bins of folklore.

During the 1980's, with dollar signs in their eyes, developers seized the financial opportunity of an island so close to Paragon City. Thus began the Talos Island land boom. Within a matter of months, the once barren island was abuzz with construction sites. As a publicity stunt, the real estate moguls even agreed to name the island after the city's mythic giant. An anonymous benefactor donated the huge statue, which now stands several hundred yards from the island.

Today, Talos Island is home to many hi-tech and venture capital firms and is still considered prime real estate. Oddly enough, during the Rikti War, the aliens avoided attacking that area. Consequently, many superstitions have sprung up about the island, including the belief that Talos' statue gives the place good luck. This has only driven the real estate prices higher.

For entertainment, the island features a quaint boardwalk named for Michael "Spanky" Rabinowitz, an early twentieth century mayor of Paragon City. "Spanky," as he was known, held the entire city's political machine in a tight fist for nearly thirty years. His backroom dealings controlled and decided the fates of political candidates and businessmen alike for a generation. Despite his administration's sometimes heavy-handed tactics and obvious corruption, Paragon City actually thrived under his leadership. Today, while the memory of Talos has become obscured by myth, "Spanky" Rabinowitz has been elevated to "lovable" rogue in the eyes of the public.

Currently, the once peaceful Talos Island is a battleground between two rival gangs. The Warriors, who claim the island as their own private playground, have found themselves embroiled in a bloody turf war with a recently arrived gang known as the Tsoo. What's at stake is more than real estate, as the Warriors have been the controlling force behind the Import of a large number of minor mystical relics and the Tsoo, a gang with arcane leanings, would very much like a major piece of the action. Out of this dangerously escalating conflict comes a major threat to not only Talos Island but Paragon City as a whole. Heroes are needed desperately to stem this rising tide of blood and destruction.... Talos is watching. Can you measure up?

4.2.12 Dark Astoria

Dark Astoria is a place where crumbling magics hold a horrible dark god from the ancient world barely in check. The undead, the chaos, all are symptoms of the dread power of Mot bound deep beneath this section of the city. As Mot's bonds loosen, the his influence spreads it's fell shadow, raising the dead and causing havoc and horror. To understand the dark and horrible truth behind what's happened in Dark Astoria, you must first look to the origins of it in the early cultures of the Mesopotamian.

The Canaanites were one of the many early cultures of the fertile crescent. They arose in the area of modern day Lebanon and Syria, they were renown throughout the ancient world as traders and merchants, and were particularly well known for their magnificent purple dyes. They were sea travelers and traders, and colonized many places around the Mediterranean. Their gods were tyrannous and powerful, and demanded regular sacrifice to keep their followers in line and fearful of divine power. When the peoples of Canaan took to the sea, they took their gods with them, and worshiped them in their new city-states.

In time, the sea-trading Canaanites became known as the Phoenicians through the Greeks, who were so impressed by the purple dye that they called the people who made it the Phoinix, for their word for purple, a name that the Romans would later transcribe as Poenus, or Punics.

While the former Phoenician city states struggled with each other for dominance in Mediterranean trade, to the north a new power was gaining strength. These people, the Romans, soon found themselves clashing with the peoples of Carthage, and fought two great wars with them. At the end of the last war, the Carthaginians sued for peace, and gave up much of their holdings to achieve it. This peace would not last long.

It was in this time after the 2nd punic war that the Roman statesman Cato the Elder was inducted into strange mysterious rites as his power rose. In hidden chambers he learned of the secret spirits who had given advice and power to many of Rome's leaders for generations, and who asked only that their gifts be put to strengthening the power of Rome. These ancient beings were called the Orbis Spinae. These ancient spirits were actually Oranbegans.

Note: The Orbis Spinae

Note: Orbis is a pretty vague word, definitions include: any thing of a circular shape, *a ring, round surface, disk, hoop, orbit, orb, a circle*. Spinae means thorns, but it can also mean "difficulties", so we could have all kinds of fun with mistranslations. Call them the Troubled World, the Orbit of Difficulty, etc, and only after a while does anyone figure out just how long the Circle of Thorns has actually been operating.

The Cult of the Orbis Spinae thought themselves to be servants of powerful but secret gods, and in this they were not far wrong. These Ancient Spirits were ghostly wizards from Oranbega, who were part of an expedition sent to observe the old world. During their observations they had found the nascent Romans, and had decided to help them conquer and maintain control over as much of the world as possible. With the people of the world under Roman control and the Romans in turn secretly under the control of Oranbega, the lost city would never be reached or harmed by mortal men.

This plan had been working for several hundred years when the continuing magical researches of the Oranbegans hit upon a new technique for protecting their city. While they had long kept Oranbega hidden with their magic, they found that with a spiritual power source of sufficient strength, they could create new barriers that would be impenetrable to any assault they could imagine. The only problem was that it would take a power source as strong as a god in order to make the barriers work. Undaunted, the Oranbegans began to search the world for a divine being strong enough to power these defensive wards, but weak enough to capture and bind safely. They found the perfect candidate through their Roman contacts. The Gods of Carthage were long lived and ancient, but currently weak enough to capture. They would be just the right source of power for Oranbega's new defenses.

They chose the initiate Cato the Elder as their tool, and instructed him to start a third and final war that would put an end to Carthage for all time. Through a minor breach in the treaty between Carthage and Rome, Cato drove a wedge and used it to justify the war. In 146 BC the war ended with the conquest of Carthage by Scipio Africanus Minor. Carthage was sacked house by house, its people sold into slavery, its ruins razed, and its land sown with salt.

Aside: What did the Roman Gods think of all this?

While the Roman gods had been aware of the Orbis Spinae, they had just seen the strange spirit wizards as a tool to be used. The concept of capturing a god got them nervous, but once the Orbis Spinae clarified that they wanted a weak god, the Roman Pantheon was more understanding, since no Roman god was weak in any way. And when they specifically offered to take rival gods from rival city-states out of the picture, that was enough to change the Roman god's opinions completely. They gave their permission, and their assistance to the Orbis Spinae's efforts. Few of the Roman Gods were old enough to remember who the Oranbegans were, and as the Orbis Spinae they kept themselves hidden enough that even the more ancient gods who might recognize them never knew of their presence.

The only exception was Mercury, who had begun to get suspicious. Mercury had a tenuous connection to Ermeeth, the ancient god of the Oranbegans, through his association with the older Greek god Hermes in the aspect of Hermes Trismegistus, a god of magic and descendant/revived shadow of the Oranbegan's own Ermeeth. Mercury did not investigate too deeply to avoid crossing the more powerful gods in the pantheon, but rumors persist that he may have had a secret society created to investigate the actions of the Orbis Spinae.

There is a good chance that similar Oranbegan organizations may have existed in other ancient cultures as well. Perhaps Ancient China or India also harbored similar cults.

Many of the Old Canaanite Gods had fallen in the war, but some few remained. The Oranbegans sought out the strongest of the survivors, and prepared to capture it. They chose Mot, the Canaanite god of death and sterility, as they believed that even if the other surviving Canaanite gods were strong enough to interfere, they wouldn't waste their energy trying to save him. They gave secret instructions to their Roman allies, and used mighty spells of entrapment to bind the full power of Mot within the last of his idols. This Idol was given to a select group of Roman soldiers, who were instructed to take it and sail west to a land across the sea, and there to bury the idol at a hidden place. Though they balked at the thought, the soldiers so charged knew that to refuse such an order meant death, so they made their prayers to Poseidon and took the idol across the sea.

Though their prayers went to Poseidon, it was the Oranbegans who gave the Roman soldiers calm seas and smooth sailing. The spectral wizards guided the small craft across the vast Atlantic to the shores of the North American continent, and there drew them across the land and down deep into caves already prepared by the Oranbegans. The Centurions did as they had been told and placed the Idol of Mot and the dread spirit of the devouring deity within in the Oranbegan's trap, binding the ancient god of Death in the Oranbegan's cage. Few of the Centurions escaped the release of horrible energy to scramble to the surface and tell the rest that the job was done.

Aside: What happened to the Romans?

Those Roman soldiers who survived the sea crossing, hostile natives, and the activation of the Oranbegan defenses split into two groups. One group tried to found a new Rome in this strange land. In the end they failed, and bred in with the native population.

The second group tried to cross the sea again and return home. Of this second group, it is said that a lone centurion actually made it back to Rome after a twenty year journey across much of the world, and there told his story. The tale itself appears to have been lost to history, and most historians discount the odd rumor or reference to it in other works as mere myth. Finding a copy of it could reveal a great deal about what is truly causing the nightmare within Dark Astoria

With Mot to tap into, the defenses of Oranbega were increased a thousand fold and Oranbega was sure to be safe for eternity. The influence of the Oranbegans waned further in the world of living men, because they thought that they had no need to worry about ever being disturbed again. Secret societies like the Orbis Spinae and it's ilk slowly disappeared from the world, and the Oranbegans retreated to the safety of their hidden city.

The Oranbegan's plan worked more or less perfectly for the next two thousand years. The area where Mot was imprisoned gained a reputation as a haunted spot in local legends due to spiritual leakage from the energies drawn from the slumbering and chained god. Few people settled in the area, though it did have a draw of sorts for more macabre and morbid individuals through the years. Every school student has read Poe's short story "By Twilight Astoria", and H.P. Lovecraft set several stories there.

When the Rikti attacked, things quickly went horribly awry. Not only did the extra-dimensional invaders accidentally break many of the seals that hid Oranbega from the world, they broke the bindings that had kept Mot sleeping and docile since his imprisonment. Now, with their defenses in shambles and their spells weakening, the Oranbegans had little choice but to hope that nothing would disturb and awaken Mot before they could rebuild the complex spells necessary to re-bind him and find a way to keep the aliens from breaking them again.

Few things ever go to plan. Shamans of the Banished Pantheon noticed the rise in seeping spiritual energy, and though they didn't know it's source, they sought to harvest it to feed their gods. The unsubtle power of the pantheon began to rouse Mot, whose stirrings were enough to raise the dead as the "Yellow Ones of Mot", the walking dead. At this point, the Paragon authorities declared Astoria to be a Hazard Zone, and walled it off to prevent the undead from spreading. What they didn't know was that it was only a symptom of Mot's slow awakening.

Though only partially awake, Mot could sense enough to have some idea of what had happened to him. He had his Yellow Ones capture one of the shamans who was stealing power, and sacrificed him to see what entities were driving these priests. When the Shaman's soul slipped through the cracks into the spirit world to be consumed by the Banished Pantheon, a small bit of Mot found it's way through, and there observed the Pantheon.

Though Mot had not been around when the Pantheon had been in power, he had learned much of all that was dark and horrid known to man and God, and had heard of these ancient Evils. Now, finding himself trapped by sorcery in a strange time and beset by the minions of these depraved ancient, Mot decided not to fight, but to offer an alliance.

Mot made his case for an alliance before the Banished Pantheon. Though he was weak and trapped, he could become a powerful ally instead of a poor meal. If they taught him to consume gods, he would help them by providing power to their Shamans and help the gods of the Pantheon find a way back to the physical world. The Pantheon thought on this for a while, and made tentative agreement.

Aside: The Tsoo

The ancestor magic of the Tsoo gives them a strong tie to the spirit world. From there, their ancestors watch and grant power to them, and warn them of changes coming both in the world of man and the world of the spirits. These ancestors have seen the nightmare realm of the Banished Pantheon gaining in power. Recently, Tub Ci has been receiving dire dreams and portents of a great and ancient evil gaining strength. Signs have pointed towards Dark Astoria, and he has begun to send men to investigate. So far they have brought back reports of a dark city shrouded with chilling evil, overrun with the walking dead and strange tribalistic wizards who sacrifice men's souls to feed Dark Gods.

It is perhaps unfortunate that Tub Ci's pride, criminal history, and the culture of silence amongst the Hmong keep him from delivering warnings to Paragon City's heroes. Though Tub Ci believes that he was given this to investigate, it is unlikely that the Tsoo alone will be able to stop Mot's return.

The Banished Pantheon and Mot are cautiously helping each other for now, but it is at best an alliance between hungry wolves. Both sides know that the other would gladly tear out their throats, but neither has the opportunity or strength to do so. For now.

As for the Oranbegans, Mot's growing strength is but one of a number of worries. For now, they are doing all that they can to contain Mot and investigate the activities of the Banished Pantheon. As always, the ancient spectral sorcerers attempt to weave intricate plans, but whether they will have time to weave these plans into a cage that could hold Mot once more is unknown.

4.2.13 Terra Volta

When Oswald Price built the first electrical power plant in Paragon City, he placed it on a verdant, underdeveloped island in the middle of the city's port. Local legends marked the small rocky outcrop as the initial landing point of the doomed Novus Cartago expedition of 1602, and there had long been rumors that it was a cursed place. However, the excellent geological stability of the site and it's low price was more than enough to put aside any superstitious worries. Drawing on his classical education, Oswald named the island 'Terra Volta'.

As the nuclear plant was built, several other industrial firms took the opportunity to set up operations in the surrounding area, taking advantage of the plentiful power and the high guard maintained around the complex to ward off villain attacks.

Construction began in 1955 and was completed in 1959. 14 hours after the reactor went online, it had to be shut down in the wake of a super villain attack. The entire project had been plagued by interference from super villains, setting the project back and setting a precedent for villainous interference which would be continued throughout Terra Volta's entire history of operation.

Even without the odd super villain strike, the Terra Volta power complex has been plagued by problems since it went online. Several of the city's heroes and villains have been created by it, numerous villain groups have tried to seize or destroy it, and environmental groups and several para-environmental researchers blame it for the creation of mutants and monsters throughout the 1960s and 70s. After a meltdown was nearly averted in the 1983 "Atomic Enchantress" incident, the city's government began to look into shutting down the reactor and transferring the city's power generation to other sources. The reactor still ran throughout the 80's, but due to its uncertain future pending the city's decision, ownership of the plant itself changed hands numerous times as different power companies bought, sold, and acquired each other during the corporate raiding of the 80's.

The Terra Volta complex was finally due to be decommissioned in 1993 following a federal ruling that the reactor needed a safety overhaul. Its owners at the time were able to keep the plant running for 8 more years by holding up the final decommissioning through a series of legal actions, suits, and countersuits.

In 2001 the Terra Volta facility was shut down, pending a thorough inspection and evaluation by the AEC to determine if the aging reactor at the core of the facility could be retrofitted to meet current safety standards.

Ironically, being shut down was the only thing that saved the reactor during the Rikti invasion. While the aliens deliberately destroyed most power plants, they didn't attack Terra Volta, ignoring the aged reactor entirely during the course of the war. Due to their own technical uplifting, the Rikti had never used fission power, and thus had no idea what the reactor was.

After the invaders had been repulsed, the city re-commissioned Terra Volta on an emergency basis, rapidly ramping up its power generation to meet the vast needs of the city reconstruction, and the vast power drain of the War-Walls that keep controlled sections of the city safe and the teleport grid that protected the city's heroes.

This has not gone unnoticed by the villain groups that seek to throw the city into chaos. The Devouring Earth have long targeted the facility as an abomination against Mother Earth, and with the city's defenders weakened, they see it as a vital priority. If they can destroy Terra Volta, not only would they rid the world of the foul nuclear contamination, but they could also cripple the city's defenses in one fell swoop.

There have also recently been sightings of the mysterious "Lost" roaming the facility. No one knows why they're on Terra Volta, but they seem to be either studying the power plant or out to destroy it. Regardless of their motivations, several heroes have reported hostile contact with them in the Terra Volta facility. In fact, the Lost are there working for their Rikti masters to sabotage the reactor to lower the city's defenses, and also to collect information on the workings of the reactor itself.

The Sky Raiders have staged small raids against the area before, but in the city's weakened state, they have been able to step up operations from small raids to outright plunder. There are numerous would-be villains, despots, and tyrants who seek to rise to power in the wake of the Rikti war, and a few kilos of fissile material can fetch a high price from them. A price the Sky Raiders are more than willing to collect.

Each of these groups had stepped up their efforts against the beleaguered defenders of Terra Volta, but it was the Freakshow who turned the situation into an all-out war. When they realized that Terra Volta could be the only thing between them and sinking the entire city into chaos, they made it a priority. When the other villain groups showed up to take advantage of the turmoil caused by their presence, it just meant more people to fight. And when the city's heroes come in to try and bring some order and keep the city's power source working for one more day, that only means the fights went from fun to epic.

In another irony, the anarchic belligerence of the Freakshow may be helping to prevent other groups from gaining stronger footholds and posing a greater threat to the facility.

Beset from all sides, the city's heroes and the selfless efforts of its municipal workers are the only force that can keep the Terra Volta complex from falling completely under the near-constant attack from multiple villain groups. Meanwhile, the aging reactor continues to pour out power to keep the city running.

4.2.14 Founders' Falls

Founders' Falls is one of the more exotic locales in Paragon City. Similar to Venice, Founders' Falls is renowned for its waterways, piers, and catwalks. On the West side, huge skyscrapers and high rises cover the area. On the East side, tall apartments and condominiums create a sufficient living environment. Surrounding the City portion is a large stretch of land broken into three neighborhoods: Louis Forest, Hutchinson Park, and Blackstone Hills.

4.2.15 Crey's Folley

In the early 1900s, Paragon City entered a period of intense industrialization. Corporations quickly accumulated land near Paragon City's profitable port and converted it into a veritable ocean of manufacturing. Warehouses, factories, and sweatshops dotted the once pleasant neighborhoods. Dark clouds billowing from myriad smoke stacks created a permanent noxious fog. Engineers quickly converted the streams and rivers into canals that swept away the constant flow of industrial waste. Paragonians nicknamed this area "Venice" for these omnipresent watercourses.

In the 1940s and 50s, increased awareness of the environment provided the impetus for change in the zone. Slowly, new technology allowed corporations to change their previous methods and cut down on the pollution in the area. While the zone would never become an area for family living, it no longer posed an imminent threat to the health of the city. Saying that one worked in "Venice" no longer carried the connotations of dismal and deadly working conditions. In fact, the area became the poster-child of the 70's environmental movement; it was used as proof that profitability could indeed go hand in hand with environmental responsibility.

This all changed with the Rikti War. The alien invaders targeted a Crey facility in the area in their initial assault. The resulting explosion not only devastated the Crey labs, but also created a strange element that poisoned the area. A greenish miasma now lies as a thick mist everywhere. The once clean waters that made the area famous are now filled with brackish muck. During the war, the area was quickly abandoned; it no longer had any strategic use.

Unfortunately, various villainous elements found appeal in the ruins, moved in, and declared it their own. The Freakshow has carved out one area and created a society in its warped image. "Carnival Town" they've dubbed it; any sane person would simply call it an asylum for maniacs. Chaos, murder and worse are normal events there. But the Freakshow is not alone. Strange creatures lurk in the shadows and attack any intruder. Some intrepid heroes have described these beasts as made of rocks or plants - but no one has yet identified precisely what they are or what their intentions are. And Crey Industries, against all recommendations, has launched several teams into the area to investigate their once great lab. No word yet on their findings.

4.2.16 Brickstown

You can sum up Brickstown in two words: Zigursky Penitentiary. Most people call it the Zig. It's the city's maximum security prison, where the worst of the worst end up incarcerated. Aside from the Zig, though, the area isn't too bad. It's called Brickstown because the whole place was rebuilt in brick after the big fire in 1918. A lot of people have strong ties to this area; maybe that's why the 5th Column does so much recruiting here. In the second World War, the 5th Column was a German organization bent on sabotaging the U.S. war effort. Now, they're back and growing.

4.2.17 Eden

Woodvale used to be a pleasant part of town, with parks, trees, and playgrounds everywhere. Kids used to play there until sundown every day. Even the Rikti seemed to understand that Woodvale was worth preserving. But after the war, the area fell prey to the Devouring Earth creatures. They erupted out of a giant mound that grew overnight, and quickly drove everyone else out of the place. Then they began to change it - to revert Woodvale back to a natural state. Now citizens call it Eden, because of its transformation into a primal world. It's no paradise for heroes, though. Don't enter it unless you've got a pretty big team together.

4.2.18 Peregrine Island

Large-scaled island with several smaller islands surrounding it. A large Portal Corporation facility sits on one end of the main island, and a large shipping/dockyard sits on the other. The dockyard is where players will spawn from other zones.

4.2.19 Rikti Crash Site

Once an urban financial and commerce center, the area was decimated by the downing of a mammoth Rikti space craft. During the protracted battle to destroy the downed ship a fort and personnel facilities were constructed at the south edge of the zone. The fort area contains a large super weapon, research buildings, and power plant. Emplacements dot the zone in the form of check points and fortifications from large skirmishes.

4.2.20 The Sewers

The sewer network is probably the most dangerous place in the city right now. The Rikti have many secret bases down there, and they use the sewers for hit and run attacks all over the city. Even worse, it's said that the aliens are using the sewers to breed some strange sort of monster. We've seen evidence of these creatures in Perez Park, but nowhere else. There are even rumors of a giant beast living in the center of sewers, just waiting for the Rikti to release it on the city. Only go in there with the help of many other heroes.

4.2.21 The Abandoned Sewers

Beneath the sewer network are the abandoned sewers. These are even more dangerous than those above. Here is where the Rikti have secreted the Hydra Head, a terrifying extra-dimensional entity that threatens to destroy the sewer system.

4.2.22 Firebase Zulu

The Shadow Shard is linked to Portal Corporation. This is where Rularuu the Ravager and all his incarnations, subjects, creations, and enemies dwell. In his weakened state, Rularuu has built himself a “home” in a spherical kingdom of sky where standard rules of geography and architecture are ignored or twisted. Heroes seeking to put an end to Rularuu’s threat of domination enter through the Portal Corp at Firebase Zulu.

The starting area, Firebase Zulu, is a set of islands connected by jump pads. Firebase Zulu is protected by a cubed force field on all sides. The main base is a courtyard of Portal Corp buildings surrounded by military structures. Hortha Vines were destroyed at the Firebase, but a transport vine exists not too far away on a nearby island, easily accessible by Heroes, which leads to the Cascade Archipelago.

4.2.23 Cascade Archipelago

The Cascade Archipelago is a series of islands containing lakes and waterfalls of reddish liquid. The islands, which vary in size and shape, may contain waterfalls and jump pads to get to the next island. A series of caves are dotted along the landscape. Bushes of Kora Fruit, guarded by Brutes, is found here. Mole Point Bravo is located here.

4.2.24 The Chantry

The Chantry a spherical kingdom and quiet haven for Faathim the Kind, a gentle version of Rularuu. Although guarded, this is the safest area in the Shadow Shard. The Chantry is constantly under assault from military bases below by the Brutes.

4.2.25 The Storm Palace

A similar spherical kingdom but with a vastly different “feel” houses The Storm Palace, home to Lanaru the Crazy. The spartan rocks are home to the Palace, as well as various Storm Elementals.

5 Heroes

5.1 Freedom Phalanx

5.1.1 Maiden Justice

Secret Identity Monica Webb

Origin Natural

Archetype Scrapper

Primary Powers Martial Arts, Super Reflexes (Monica is a skilled hand to hand fighter. Although she has no super powers to speak of, her reflexes are at the height of human ability. Long term exposure to Statesman eventually infuses Monica with some power and extends her lifespan. The Liberty Belt, presented to her by the Furies as a wedding gift also increases Monica's strength, endurance and toughness.)

Background Monica Webb was one of the first costumed adventurers to appear in Paragon City. She had no cosmic powers, she was simply a fit and well trained hand to hand fighter who had a very strong belief in doing the right thing. She played a part in Statesman's decisions to be a hero and make Paragon City his home. Monica becomes Marcus' wife and their daughter goes on to become Miss Liberty, against her father's wishes. After her adventuring career began to wane Miss Liberty formed the Freedom Corps. Her daughter is Ms. Liberty, one of the most prominent heroes currently in Paragon City and the leader of the Vindicators.

5.1.2 The Dark Watcher

Secret Identity Devon Wilcox

Origin Mutant

Archetype Controller

Primary Powers Illusion, Force Field, ESP (The Dark Watcher can blind and confuse his opponents, turn himself and his allies invisible and create phantasms that fight for him. He can also bring his enemies worst fears to their mind. Devon can also form protective fields around himself and his allies. Finally, the Dark Watcher has the ability to cast his senses throughout the world and even into other dimensions.)

Background Devon Wilcox was born with a great attunement to the universe. He always seemed to sense things around him to a greater degree than anyone else. When Devon hit his teen years these senses blossomed. He could sense things all around the world and into other dimensions. All of this input overwhelmed him at first. His parents sought help for him everywhere but conventional medicine had no solutions. They heard about a technique practiced in the Far East by a group of Monks known as the Order of the Four Winds. They took Devon there and the Monks took him in and trained him not only to focus his senses but also how to harness the mental powers he was born with to create powerful illusions and form defensive fields. The Monks of the Four Winds presented Devon with the title of Dark Watcher and sent him out to watch over and protect the human race.

5.1.3 Elementar

Secret Identity Raymond Washington

Origin Science

Archetype Defender

Primary Powers Storm Summoning, Electrical Blast (Elementar can use winds to knock his opponents to the ground and to fly. He can protect himself and his allies against the elements. He can also channel lightning into bolts, area blasts and cages of electricity.

Background Raymond Washington was always fascinated by the weather. He loved to play in the rain as a child and as an adult he dedicated himself to the study of weather patterns. Raymond was in the middle of a violent storm using a weather balloon to test some new equipment when he was struck by multiple bursts of lightning and tossed through the air by vicious winds. Somehow with the lightning being channeled through the weather monitoring equipment, Raymond was imbued with the ability to channel the power of the storm. In addition the Voice of the Storm speaks to Raymond. He believes that this is simply the ability to sense atmospheric changes but perhaps there is more to it than that.

5.1.4 Vambrace

Secret Identity Brandon Warfield

Origin Tech

Archetype Blaster

Primary Powers Energy Blast, Energy Manipulation (Vambrace uses the devices on his forearms invented by James St. John-Smythe to shoot bolts and bursts of energy. In addition Vambrace can perform punches powered by the energy of the devices.)

Background Brandon Warfield was a top notch athlete. He lettered in multiple sports and received several scholarship offers. His decision to go to Winthrop University was largely due to his desire to stay in Paragon City. At Winthrop his roommate was a man that would change his life forever. James St. John-Smythe, or Jimmy the Smith as Brandon dubbed him was a brilliant inventor who was working on a device that would generate and channel energy. Brandon and James could not have been more different. Brandon was all American and an awesome physical specimen, James was slight and very British. Despite their differences the two men became the best of friends. When the time came to test the device that Jimmy had built, Brandon offered to help out immediately. That was the day Vambrace was born. Both men's innate desire for justice prompted them to form a team to help fight against threats to Paragon City. Brandon in the field and Jimmy in the lab.

5.1.5 Back Alley Brawler

Zone King's Row

Secret Identity Michael White

Origin Natural

Archetype Tanker

Primary Powers Invulnerability, Super Strength

Background Michael was the son of a gang enforcer. He joined the Paragon City police force to try and make a difference. When he realized that was not getting the job done he adopted the name and costume of a hero, the Back Alley Brawler. Michael uses training techniques from all over the world to toughen his resistance and increase his strength. All through the late 70's and the 80's, he fought in the streets and alleys, of the city. The Brawler briefly went into retirement after that, but came back out to help with the Rikti war. Now he coordinates the efforts of heroes in King's Row.

5.1.6 Positron

Zone Steel Canyon

Secret Identity Dr. Raymond Keyes

Origin Tech

Archetype Defender

Primary Powers Radiation Emission, Radiation Blast, Flight

Background Dr. Raymond Keyes developed a high tech battle suit that allowed him to channel bolts of anti-matter into fierce attacks. He used his powers to help defeat the Rikti, but at a terrible cost. Due to injuries he sustained at that time, he lost full control of his powers. Now, to protect others from himself, he remains imprisoned within his battle suit.

He is constantly searching for a cure for his condition, but that does not stop him from contributing to the defense of Paragon City and contributing many other technological breakthroughs for the good of all.

5.1.7 Synapse

Zone Skyway City

Secret Identity Steven Berry

Origin Science

Archetype Blaster

Primary Powers Electrical Blast, Electricity Manipulation, Superspeed

Background Steven Berry was just an average man, until Crey Industries got hold of him. The Crey scientists were testing a number of radical procedures for inducing super powers. Steven was blasted with high doses of electricity for days. It amplified the electrical energy in his body, giving him the ability to harness it into super speed and electrical blasts. Synapse escaped Crey's clutches by shorting out the lab where he was kept prisoner. To this day, Crey executives deny any knowledge of the project in which Synapse was an unwilling participant.

5.1.8 Sister Psyche

Zone Independence Port

Secret Identity Shalice Tilman

Origin Mutant

Archetype Controller

Primary Powers Mind Control, Empathy

Background Shalice Tilman was born with powerful mental powers. She used her psychic abilities to help defeat the Rikti. Her efforts during the Rikti War temporarily burned out her powers, and she fell into a coma. Since then she has shared the form of a young heroine, who is the current Sister Psyche. Only time will tell if Shalice will be able to return to her body.

5.1.9 Bastion

Zone Talos Island

Secret Identity None

Origin Technological

Archetype Tanker

Primary Powers Invulnerability, Energy Melee

Background Bastion was the very first android hero. In the initial Rikti onslaught, he took heavy damage, and was almost completely destroyed. With Positrons help, scientists at DATA created a second version of Bastion using the old model's original memory core and the remnants of a power suit, once worn by the hero Horatio. Bastion does not fully understand human ways, but he is a valiant defender of Paragon City.

5.1.10 Manticore

Zone Brickstown

Secret Identity Justin Sinclair

Origin Natural

Archetype Blaster

Primary Powers Bow, Gadgets

Background Justin Sinclair was raised in a huge mansion in the outskirts of Paragon City by his English nanny, Virginia Bowman. The sole beneficiary of a huge trust fund, Manticore received training in all manner of mental and physical pursuits, but excelled in archery. When he turned 18, Miss Bowman revealed to him his true heritage. Manticore's father had once been a costumed vigilante in England, until he and his wife died at the hands of a German villain called Doppelganger. Deeply affected by the story, Manticore took up his father's mantle and vowed to bring the 5th Column down.

5.1.11 Numina

Zone Founder's Falls

Secret Identity Tammy Arcanus

Origin Magic

Archetype Controller

Primary Powers Mental Control, Empathy

Background Numina was born Tammy Arcanus, daughter of Tommy Arcanus of the Midnight Squad. Tommy delved so deeply into the metaphysical that his very being was affected, and Tammy was born with magical powers. Early in her super-powered career, Tammy joined the Midnight Squad. In the 1960s, she and her team were sent into a series of caverns surrounding the Earth's molten core. It was there that the Red Threat, a Soviet villain, intended to destroy the world.

To save the Earth, Tammy possessed the body of the Red Threat. She minimized the damage, but her body was destroyed. Her consciousness survived, trapped within the Red Threat until he was killed in prison during the Rikti Invasion. Tammy's astral form was at last free. She renamed herself Numina and threw herself into the war against the Rikti. In the war's aftermath, Numina uses her abilities to nurture the next generation of heroes

5.1.12 Statesman

Secret Identity Marcus Cole

Origin Magic

Primary Powers Strength, Invulnerability, Flight, Storm powers of Zeus

Background Marcus Cole, who would eventually become Statesman, was a rogue and a mercenary throughout the early part of the 20th century. During WWI, he stumbled across the Well of the Furies, an ancient spot that stored the blood of Zeus. Cole immersed himself in the Well in order to escape some ne'er do-wells and became endowed with all the powers of Zeus....

The spirit of Zeus remains in Marcus' mind – as an occasional counselor and confidant. But Marcus also has all the memories of the immortal god. For the most part, Marcus' old personality has been overwhelmed – and he feels quite guilty for his previous misdeeds.

5.2 The Vindicators

The Vindicators have arisen since the Rikti War and are sidekicks of the Surviving Eight members.

5.2.1 Ms. Liberty

Zone Atlas Park

Secret Identity Jessica Duncan

Origin Natural

Archetype Scrapper

Primary Powers Martial Arts, Invulnerability

Background Jessica is the daughter of the original Miss Liberty from the Golden Age. She has taken up the mantle to fight for freedom, in this specific case to free Paragon City from its infestation of villains. She has heightened strength and endurance as well as the power of the Liberty Belt, which was passed on to her by her grandmother.

Early in her career Ms. Liberty worked extensively with Statesman, but recently seems to be spending more time working on making certain that new heroes in Paragon City have the information they need, as well as working on the Freedom Corps. It is clear that she is determined to do her energetic best to make the Freedom Corps the premiere hero assistance group in Paragon City someday.

5.2.2 Valkyrie

Zone Steel Canyon

Secret Identity Valerie Kellum

Origin Technology

Archetype Scrapper

Primary Powers Spear, Regeneration

Background Valerie Kellum was an up and coming Archeologist exploring Scandinavia when she discovered what she first took for an ancient spear. A more careful examination led to the realization that the spear had a technological component. She traveled around Europe looking for ideas about its origin and ended up in a local Crey facility. When a Crey security team tried to take the weapon from her it activated and injected Valerie with advanced nanites that transformed her into Valkyrie, a extraordinary warrior with a completely different personality. She broke free and traveled to Paragon City where Positron is helping her come to terms with her new identity.

5.2.3 Minx

Zone Skyway City

Secret Identity Katherine Steffan

Origin Science

Archetype Scrapper

Primary Powers Claws, Super Reflexes

Background Katherine Stevens was a young girl in the wrong place at the wrong time. While attending Paragon City University, she volunteered for a Crey research project. When the Crey research scientists realized that she had no family and few friends, they decided to try some of their more dangerous procedures on her. A volatile serum transformed Katherine and gave her some feline features and characteristics. Crey considered the result a failure because Katherine could not be controlled. She managed to break free of her captors, scarring the face of one of Crey's top Scientists horribly with her claws.

Adopting the identity Minx, Katherine lived on the streets of Paragon City for a time. She got involved in petty crimes to keep herself alive. Synapse discovered her there and helped her develop control of her heightened reflexes and her animalistic nature. She is still undisciplined and prone to overconfidence but is fiercely loyal to Synapse and grateful for the second chance he has given her.

5.2.4 Malaise

Zone Independence Port

Secret Identity Jean-Pierre Lourdin

Origin Mutant

Archetype Controller

Primary Powers Illusion Control, Kinetics

Background Jean-Pierre Lourdin was not always a hero. He began his career as a villain in Europe, using the twisted images in his mind to commit robberies. With INTERPOL hot on his trail he landed in Paragon City, where his broken thoughts were detected by Sister Psyche. She confronted him and after an intense battle was able to subdue him.

She spent months healing the damage to his mind and has taught him more productive uses of his abilities. Sister Psyche vouched for him with the authorities and he has been allowed to help with the current crisis in Paragon City. Many are keeping a watchful eye on Malaise, however, for signs of his madness returning.

5.2.5 Luminary

Zone Talos Island

Secret Identity None

Origin Technology

Archetype Defender

Primary Powers Radiation Emission, Radiation Blast

Background The original Luminary is Kit Rafter. He retired from the Freedom Phalanx in 1995 to become the spokesperson from Hero Corps. At his wedding, Positron presented Kit and his new wife Jeanette with the Ultimate wedding present. A new android modeled after Jeanette with powers similar to Kit's. This next generation heroine was the new Luminary, carrying on Kit's fine tradition under the watchful eye of Bastion. Her systems were all more advanced than Bastion's, making her the state of the art in android technology.

The new Luminary has recently shown signs of developing a strong personality. It has caused Positron some concern that it seems similar to Jeanette's. He has performed many tests on her but has not determined the cause.

5.2.6 Swan

Zone Brickstown

Secret Identity Lena Elliot

Origin Magic

Archetype Defender

Primary Powers Force Field, Psychic Blast

Background Lena Elliot was touched by magic from the moment she was born on the Vernal Equinox. Her life seemed almost charmed; she grew up happy, did well in school and loved her parents very much. Everything she tried she seemed to succeed at. There was a reason for her good fortune. Both her parents were powerful mystics, and performed a ceremony to bless Lena's birth.

Shortly after her 21st birthday the Elliot's luck ran out. They got caught in the middle of a battle between the Circle of Thorns and the 5th Column. The groups were seeking a pair of rings that had been in the Elliot family for generations. Lena's powers manifested and she instinctively threw a protective shield up around herself and her parents. Manticore had been following the 5th Column group and came to the Elliot's aid. The battle was going poorly when Lena lashed out with her psychic abilities, stunning many of the villains. Manticore mopped up the rest, but not before the 5th Column managed to escape with Lena's parents.

Manticore offered Lena the chance to fight at his side and she jumped at the opportunity. As Swan, she aids him in his relentless war against the 5th Column, in the hopes that one day she will find her parents alive.

5.2.7 Infernal

Zone Founder's Falls

Secret Identity K'Varr D'Shall

Origin Magic

Archetype Tanker

Primary Powers Fiery Aura, Battle Axe

Background K'Varr D'Shall was the most skilled demon binder in the Order of the Crimson Lotus, on an alternate Earth. His order bound demons into their weapons and armor, in order to keep Infernal Earth from being overrun by them. They were maintaining an uneasy peace until K'Varr's best friend T'Keron grew jealous of his comrade's power and skill. T'Keron attempted to bind Valmaz, Lord of Demons but lost control of the ceremony. K'Varr arrived to help his friend, but it was too late. K'Varr, T'Keron and Valmaz were all drawn through a dimensional rip caused by the binding ceremony onto Primal Earth, our Earth. T'Keron and the Demon Lord were bound together by the potent mystic forces.

The ways of our world are strange to K'Varr but Numina is assisting him in becoming acclimated and beginning his search for the unholy fusion of T'Keron and Valmaz.

6 Contacts

6.1 Stature Level 1

6.1.1 Antonio Nash

Occupation: Mutation Hero Liaison

Location: Atlas Park, City Hall

Villain Groups: Skulls

Background: Antonio Nash has the ability to instantly solve any mathematical equation. He worked for the Department of Defense for years, but, when the danger to his home town of Paragon City continued to rise, he asked to be reassigned to GIFT, a section of the Federal Bureau of Super-powered Affairs. Now, as a member of the Genetic Investigation and Facilitation Team, he is the primary contact point for many new mutant heroes. Having grown up on the streets of Paragon City as a member of the Outcasts gang, Antonio makes a point of keeping himself informed on current gang activity.

6.1.2 Azuria

Occupation: Magic Hero Liaison

Location: Atlas Park, City Hall

Villain Groups: Hellions

Background: Azuria is a seer who works with MAGI, the Modern Arcane Guild of Investigation. This section of the Federal Bureau of Super-powered Affairs assists young magic heroes in finding the right path. Some call Azuria a charlatan, but those in the mystical know believe she has great insight and wisdom. Recently she has been troubled by many grave visions about the nefarious Vahzilok and his undead minions.

6.1.3 Caitlin Murray

Occupation: Technological Hero Liaison

Location: Galaxy City, Freedom Plaza

Villain Groups: Clockwork

Background: Caitlin Murray has been working with computers since the age of 10, and there's nothing she can't program or fix. She used to work for Exarch Industries, programming cybernetic hardware and perfecting their Man-Machine interfaces. One day she was working late in the office when it was attacked by the Freakshow. She was kidnapped and forced to integrate the Freaks' stolen cybernetics into their bodies. After a three month ordeal, she was rescued by the power-suited hero Horatio. She didn't feel safe going back to her old job, so Horatio introduced her to his friends at DATA. After the Rikti War, Horatio retired his suit to work for DATA in his civilian identity of Rick Davies. Caitlin has been trying to get Rick to notice her, but so far he seems blind to her advances.

6.1.4 City Representative

Occupation: City Representative

Location: Atlas Park, City Hall

Villain Groups: None

Background: Before the Rikti Invasion, the City Representative's tasks were largely ceremonial. Now, with many new threats on the horizon, she's charged with coordinating the efforts of the various branches of the FBSA. According to well-known mystic Azuria, the City Rep has risen to her new challenges admirably. It's often said that there is no one who knows more about the inner workings of the city than she.

6.1.5 Derek Amberson

Occupation: Natural Hero Liaison

Location: Galaxy City, Freedom Plaza

Villain Groups: The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: Derek Amberson was always a genius at the art of war. Tactics, strategy, swordplay; there was nothing in the martial arena he could not master. After taking a Olympic gold medal in fencing, Derek longed for work that would give him a different kind of reward. When he heard about the trouble in Paragon City, he immediately got on a bus, traveling all night to present himself at the ELITE offices the next morning. As liaison to new heroes with natural abilities, he is passing on his expertise to the next generation of heroes.

6.1.6 Gregor Richardson

Occupation: Magic Hero Liaison

Location: Galaxy City, Freedom Plaza

Villain Groups: Hellions

Background: Gregor Richardson is from Australia, but he's been in America so long that his accent is almost gone, save for the occasional 'mate'. He's a talented artist who spends every moment he can locked away in his studio, painting. Gregor has a knack not just for the fine arts, but for the mystical arts as well. He and Azuria have radically different approaches to magic. She sees it as something to be guided and respected; he sees it as something to be tamed and used. This attitude makes Gregor something of a rebel in mystical circles, which is probably what has kept him off the Arcane Guild's High Council the past several years. They gave him his post as magic hero liaison only grudgingly, unable to deny the power of the magic he can manifest.

6.1.7 Professor Jonathan St. John-Smythe

Occupation: Science Hero Liaison

Location: Atlas Park, City Hall

Villain Groups: Vahzilok

Background: Professor Jonathan St. John-Smythe is a brilliant research scientist whose inventions have been of great help to Paragon City and its heroes. The Professor works for SERAPH, which is a section of the Federal Bureau of Super-powered Affairs. SERAPH stands for Scientific Experimentation, Research, and Application to Paranormal Humans. His primary duty is monitoring and measuring the power levels of the city's heroes, and he is always eager to help new heroes better understand their powers. He is fascinated by the Clockwork, and he gathers information on their activities whenever possible.

6.1.8 Prince Kiros Nandelu

Occupation: Mutation Hero Liaison

Location: Galaxy City, Freedom Plaza

Villain Groups: Skulls

Background: An honest to goodness African prince, Kiros Nandelu was given an ambassadorship to America when his mutant powers were discovered. His ability to see into the ultraviolet and infrared spectrums wasn't useful enough to make him a hero in his own right, but it got the attention of the Federal Bureau of Superpowered Affairs, who needed a new GIFT liaison in Paragon City. Humbled and inspired by the chance to work alongside such heroes as the Statesman, Prince Kiros hastily accepted. He now splits his time between helping new heroes and his ambassadorial duties, which are light, to say the least.

6.1.9 Rebecca Brinell

Occupation: Science Hero Liaison

Location: Galaxy City, Freedom Plaza

Villain Groups: Vahzilok

Background: Rebecca Brinell grew up as one of Paragon City's most brilliant young minds. She graduated at the top of her class and went on to MIT, where her experiments in radio-imaging are still the stuff of legend. After college, she had her choice of top-paying positions at many research facilities, think-tanks, and corporations. But Rebecca wanted a job that let her give back to the city she called home. She became a hero liaison for SERAPH in Paragon City. There, she could have access to the most radical scientists and innovative thinkers in the world, all while helping new science heroes find their place in the city.

6.1.10 Rick Davies

Occupation: Technology Hero Liaison

Location: Atlas Park, City Hall

Villain Groups: Clockwork

Background: Rick was one of the first heroes in Paragon City to use powered armor. He fought the Rikti under the code name Horatio, but the injuries he received ended his career as a hero. Never one to rest on his laurels, Rick began working with DATA, the Department of Advanced Technological Application. DATA is a section of the Federal Bureau of Super-powered Affairs. Rick threw himself into helping new heroes with their struggles against Paragon City's many criminals. His sister, Susan, is also a hero liaison. Rick loves tinkering, therefore the Clockwork are of utmost interest to him.

6.1.11 Susan Davies

Occupation: Natural Hero Liaison

Location: Atlas Park, City Hall

Villain Groups: The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: On the surface, Susan Davies is a quiet, unassuming government liaison working in the ELITE section of the Federal Bureau of Super-powered Affairs. ELITE stands for Enhanced Logistics for Insight and Tactical Excellence. Some say that Susan has much more power than she lets on. One thing is certain: she has no shortage of well-placed contacts. Her brother, Rick, once the hero known as Horatio, is now the liaison for new technology heroes. Susan knows about everything going on in Paragon City, and she keeps an especially close watch on gang activities. She shares her knowledge with new heroes, but she believes that no amount of advice can substitute for training and determination.

6.2 Stature Level 2

6.2.1 Genevieve Sanders

Occupation: Pharmacist

Location: Kings Row

Villain Groups: Hellions, Circle of Thorns

Background: During the war, when much of the city was torn to pieces and refugees fled for the countryside, Genevieve stayed. She opened up her pharmacy to freely distribute medicine to the sick and wounded. When her supplies ran out, Genevieve worked in the streets, offering aid and comfort to those who badly needed it. As the city rebuilt she stayed with it, continuing to lend a helping hand. Genevieve has recently started reaching out to the city's heroes, providing them not only with medicine, but also with information about the evil deeds she witnesses every day. She has become a valuable resource in the fight to save Paragon City.

6.2.2 Henry Peter Wong

Occupation: Hero Corps Liaison

Location: Atlas Park

Villain Groups: Vahzilok

Background: Hero Corps has turned fighting crime into a profitable business, by employing teams of heroes and contracting work out to freelancers. Henry Peter Wong is a low-level hero liaison, whose job it is to give low-priority or low-threat cases to relatively inexperienced heroes. Henry Peter is relatively new to the business, but his brother was a famous hero called Star Strike, who died in the Rikti War. Although he doesn't have his brother's powers, Henry Peter still wants to work with heroes. He realizes that his success in the company depends on the successes of the heroes he works with, so he gives them as much information as he possibly can.

6.2.3 Detective Jose Brogan

Occupation: Police Detective

Location: Atlas Park

Villain Groups: The Lost

Background: Detective Jose Brogan is one of many policemen who volunteered to transfer to Paragon City after the Rikti War. So many officers had died during the invasion that the police department faced a serious resource crisis, one it is still recovering from. Originally from Philadelphia, Brogan has already begun to make a name for himself in Paragon City, and he's become especially adept at dealing with the city's stranger homicides. He is also part of an informal alliance of officers dedicated to taking down the Lost.

6.2.4 Juan Jimenez

Occupation: Photographer

Location: Kings Row

Villain Groups: Skulls

Background: Juan Jimenez was born and raised in Paragon City, and he loves his hometown. He's made his way as a photographer since high school, when he sold Lifetimes Magazine a picture of the Statesman saving his school. Two months after his college graduation, the Rikti invaded. Juan enlisted in the army to help fight the invaders, bringing his camera along, and he managed to snap some of the most memorable photos of the war. Today, he is a freelance photographer who sells his pictures to local and national press outlets. He's also putting together a book of photos chronicling the post-war transformation of the city and its effects on residents' daily lives. As interesting as this is, he knows that it's action shots that pay the bills, so he spends much of his time trying to get images of villains and heroes duking it out. He's currently working with reporter Maggie Greene on an expose about the Skulls.

6.2.5 Kip Cantorum

Occupation: Electrical Engineer

Location: Galaxy City

Villain Groups: Vahzilok

Background: Kip Cantorum has a reputation as one of the more inventive engineers in Paragon City. He loves to tinker, and he has recently made quite a name for himself by converting technology seized from villains into harmless children's toys. He works closely with many of the city's heroes, who often give him recovered items in exchange for tips about what's going on in the city's technical community.

6.2.6 Laurence Mansfield

Occupation: Coroner

Location: Atlas Park

Villain Groups: Hellions, Circle of Thorns

Background: The coroner's job in Paragon City is complicated by a number of factors: the exotic powers that can cause death, the alien anatomies that complicate autopsies, and the mutant abilities that sometimes make it hard to tell if a person's actually dead. Laurence Mansfield has handled all of these with aplomb for more than twenty years. Not only is he calm, dignified, and insightful, he's also immensely curious. He's a bit of an amateur detective, a hobby the police department frowns on. So Laurence goes straight to some of the city's heroes instead. He's always excited to share tips and theories with costume-clad defenders, and he considers many of them his friends. The police look the other way, in deference to the skill and speed with which he performs his assigned duties.

6.2.7 Linda Summers

Occupation: Reporter

Location: Kings Row

Villain Groups: Skulls

Background: Linda Summers is a freelance reporter looking to make a name for herself. She earned some notoriety when she landed an exclusive interview with Vahzilok himself, although she had to be saved by a group of heroes when the zombie master decided he wasn't pleased with her interviewing tactics. She doesn't scare easily, and so she perseveres. These days she's thrown herself into the local gang scene and has written a series of compelling articles about life in gangs. Like any good reporter, she always protects her sources, a fact that has earned her the trust of the people she covers. She will work with heroes, although she has been known to keep important facts from them.

6.2.8 Maurice Feldon

Occupation: Inventor's assistant

Location: Galaxy City

Villain Groups: Clockwork

Background: Maurice Feldon is one of Paragon Polytechnic Institute's most notable recent graduates. His thesis won the National Inventor's Prize in mechanical engineering, but his reputation is hardly that of a shy scientist. Instead, he's known around town as a bit of a loose cannon and a ladies' man. Maurice turned down a number of lucrative research jobs to work as an assistant to Dr. Ann-Marie Engles. He is helping her on a top-secret project, which many speculate must have something to do with his much-loved field of robotics. Despite his devotion to his research, Maurice likes to get out of the lab when he can. Among his many hobbies he includes a bit of amateur sleuthing, and he especially likes to dig into science- and technology-based villainy. He's had a few run-ins with the police, which makes him less than eager to work with the law. Luckily, he has no qualms about passing on his information to heroes, especially if they return the favor.

6.2.9 Paco Sanchez

Occupation: Emergency Medical Technician

Location: Galaxy City

Villain Groups: Hellions, Circle of Thorns

Background: Paco Sanchez is an emergency medical technician and a bit of an adrenalin junkie. Part of him yearns for the life of a costume-clad hero, fighting crime with fists and super powers, but he is utterly committed to his job, and he takes pride in saving lives every day. Still, he's eager to help those who do have super powers, and he's proven himself a valuable contact. He sees a great deal, and he's constantly asking questions of his friends on the police force and in the medical community. When he gets interesting answers, he's happy to pass along what he has learned.

6.2.10 Paula Dempsey

Occupation: Mechanic and Inventor

Location: Kings Row

Villain Groups: Clockwork

Background: Paula Dempsey moved to Paragon City as a child, when her parents were killed by an invading space armada in the late 60's. She grew up with her grandfather, a famous mechanic who did a lot more than just fix cars. Paula's grandfather maintained the fabulous weapons and equipment used by a hero named Gauge Steele, and Paula grew up hearing stories of their adventures. With a role model like that, there was never any question as to where her career path lay. Today, she not only fixes things, she invents them. She's got a wealth of contacts and has been an excellent resource for new heroes for over a decade.

6.2.11 Rachel Torres

Occupation: Gang Unit Detective

Location: Galaxy City

Villain Groups: The Lost

Background: Detective Rachel Torres has only been a cop for a few years, but police in Paragon City have plenty of opportunities to advance quickly. Torres has done just that. She's now part of the Gang Unit, a tough assignment with high turnover, since everyone either gets promoted or put in the hospital. So far the detective has avoided both, but she has managed to put some big time gang bosses behind bars. She also has more than a passing interest in the Lost. Her vendetta against that villain group dates back to her first week on the job, when they crippled her partner and almost killed her.

6.2.12 Ron Hughes

Occupation: Science Reporter

Location: Kings Row

Villain Groups: Skulls

Background: Science has had more advances in the past year than it has in the past 100, due in great part to the massive knowledge researchers continue to glean from recovered Rikti technology. It is Ron Hughes' greatest pleasure to report on these developments as a writer for The Paragon Science Journal, especially since he knows that not all those making advances have Paragon City's best interests at heart. Ron knows just the right questions to ask, and his contacts in the scientific community often tip him off to research taking place under shady circumstances. He finds such experiments morally appalling, and he's helped more than a few heroes bust illegal labs.

6.2.13 Samuel Pierce

Occupation: Event Promoter

Location: Kings Row

Villain Groups: Vahzilok

Background: Samuel Pierce earned a citywide reputation when he staged a series of benefit concerts and parties to aid those who lost their homes in the Rikti Invasion. Ever since then he has devoted his time to promoting entertainment events that are fun, stylish, and socially conscious. He's moved on from fundraisers to more pointed political and social statements, using his clout as a promoter to help fight poverty, racism and injustice. Of course, not everyone who attends his parties, raves, and concerts understands his message. Most just want to have a good time. As a result of his social and political activism, Samuel is a well-connected man who sees a lot. He's always happy to pass that information on to heroes he can trust.

6.2.14 Tony Kord

Occupation: Defense Systems Entrepreneur

Location: Atlas Park

Villain Groups: Clockwork

Background: Tony Kord moved to Paragon City after the Rikti War. A competent engineer and a brilliant businessman, he hopes to make a name for himself as a purveyor of high tech defense systems for heroes and police. His team of talented researchers is hard at work building newer, better weapons designed for use against particular criminal groups. The right tool for the job, he's fond of saying. He often works with new heroes, providing them tips in exchange for help testing his equipment. Right now he's focusing on relatively minor threats like the Clockwork King, but he hopes to expand his business tremendously in the next few years.

6.2.15 Vic Johansson

Occupation: Beat Cop

Location: Kings Row

Villain Groups: The Lost

Background: Vic Johansson grew up in one of Paragon City's poorer neighborhoods as the son of a shopkeeper and a bus driver. After a few years in boring office jobs, he joined the police force. He has since become a distinguished officer, although promotions have been few and far between. Vic knows full well that it's the heroes, not the cops, who end up fighting most of the crime in Paragon City, and his comfort with this fact may explain why he hasn't moved up the ranks quickly. Most cops have an inferiority complex about costumed crime fighters, and they like to solve cases without them. Vic, on the other hand, is famously friendly with the super-powered crowd. He's also a firm believer in neighborhood-based policing, and he keeps heroes apprised of the slightest signs of evil on his beat.

6.3 Stature Level 2.5

6.3.1 Alfonse Rubel

Occupation: Courier

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: The Lost, The Skulls

Background: Being a courier in Paragon City requires more than a little bravery. With so much chaos and adventure in the streets, any job that keeps you on the move is bound to be eventful at the very least. Alfonse Rubel relishes these adventures, and he loves his work. He knows the ins and outs of most of the city streets, and he has friends and contacts everywhere. As a result, he's always hearing important tips and tidbits that he happily passes on to the city's heroes.

6.3.2 Athena Currie

Occupation: Lawyer

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: Clockwork

Background: Athena Currie is a young, driven attorney who devotes her time to providing low-cost legal aid to the poor. She's only been out of law school for a few years, but already she's earned herself quite a reputation. Most recently, she won a major lawsuit against a housing company that provided low income housing that failed to meet even the most basic safety standards. These days she's particularly active in anti-gang youth work, helping people extricate themselves from street gangs and remain legally protected in the process. Not surprisingly, this has made her some dangerous enemies. Fortunately, the personable young lawyer has a number of super-powered friends who're happy to lend her a helping hand when she needs it.

6.3.3 Carla Brunelli

Occupation: Gun Dealer

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Clockwork

Background: A staunch defender of the second amendment, Carla Brunelli believes that force must be met with force. In a place as dangerous as Paragon City, she does good business selling weapons, but Carla is no coldhearted profiteer. She goes above and beyond the call of duty when it comes to background checks, using her police contacts to make sure she's not selling firearms to criminals. A major leader in her neighborhood watch program, Carla's greatest concern is keeping the city's streets safe.

6.3.4 Dr. Trevor Seaborn

Occupation: Abnormal Psychiatrist

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: Hellions, Circle of Thorns

Background: Dr. Trevor Seaborn is one of Paragon City's many doctors to specialize in abnormal psychiatry. With such a large population of criminals with severe pathologies, there is always work to be done. Dr. Seaborn focuses his research on trying to understand the criminal mind, and he often works with police to create profiles of wanted criminals. He also has a good working relationship with many of the city's heroes, offering them advice about how to better confront the insane villains who threaten Paragon City every day.

6.3.5 Everett Daniels

Occupation: Lawyer

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Clockwork

Background: Everett Daniels is an idealist who believes firmly in the concepts of right and wrong. He also believes in capitalism. Hoping to strike it rich, Everett became a lawyer, dedicated to fighting the good fight against corporate greed and malfeasance. He's had a lot of success over the years, and he's focused his practice on a particularly heinous set of corporate enemies: those who work with criminals. He works with a number of different heroes, who help him chase down leads that often lead to criminal charges against the companies he's suing. And that makes Everett's job all the easier in court.

6.3.6 Haley Philips

Occupation: Health Department Inspector

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Hellions, Circle of Thorns

Background: As an inspector for the Health Department, Haley investigates health hazards associated with super-powered, supernatural, and alien events. Her group is dedicated to making sure the city's residents live in safety, and that their homes protect them from Paragon City's exotic threats. For example, most cities don't require radiation shielding for private residences. Nor do most building codes call for walls strong enough to withstand the impact of a flying hero. Haley specializes in identifying new threats and liaising with heroes who can help her find more information.

6.3.7 Hugo Redding

Occupation: Physician's assistant

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: Hellions, Circle of Thorns

Background: Hugo Redding is a dedicated physician's assistant who specializes in helping heroes. With the new emergency teleportation systems and regenerative medicine advances, even the most damaged heroes seldom need a full-fledged doctor; a trained PA can handle most of their needs. One of Hugo's duties is to monitor emergency calls and prepare the teleportation systems, and this gives him valuable insight into the various criminal deeds going on in the city. Whenever he can, he likes to help heroes out, pointing them in the direction of crises and potential points of interest.

6.3.8 Jill Pastor

Occupation: FCC Investigator

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Vahzilok

Background: Like most kids, Jill Pastor grew up wanting to be a hero. But that wasn't in the cards. Jill has had to settle for the life of an FCC investigator, which, in Paragon City, is much more interesting than she could have imagined. Jill tracks down illegal radio broadcasts, and, with so many criminal organizations in the city, it's a big job. She's found that the best way to get results is to file all the proper paperwork. That is, after she's told a helpful hero about the situation. Of late she's become particularly interested in the Vahzilok, who have become a thorn in the side of the FCC.

6.3.9 Kyle Peck

Occupation: EPA Investigator

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: Vahzilok

Background: Kyle Peck is a die-hard environmentalist who realized he could do more good working from the inside than through protest. He's a huge proponent of alternate fuel sources and of any new technology that might change the world for the better. Kyle keeps a careful eye out for any kind of technology that he thinks might prove harmful to the environment. In his experience, the most dangerous technology is in the hands of criminals. The EPA is not equipped to handle those kinds of threats, so he is happy to pass on information to the city's heroes.

6.3.10 Lorenzo DiCosta

Occupation: Confidential Informant

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: As the cops say about Lorenzo DiCosta, he's got a rap sheet as long as your arm. He's been in and out of jail since he was 13, and he's decided he likes out better than in. He's a small time crook and hustler, but he knows who most of the big players are. They, on the other hand, scarcely notice him, making him the perfect confidential informant. For a few bucks he'll tell a hero anything he wants to know. Or he'll do it in exchange for a favor down the line, say, a get out of jail free card on a minor charge. Lorenzo is a pretty personable fellow, and has made friends with a number of different heroes, despite his less than savory line of work.

6.3.11 Sanjay Chandra

Occupation: Newsstand owner

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: The Lost, Skulls

Background: Sanjay Chandra was born in Paragon City, one of four sons raised by immigrant parents. Since his teens he has worked in the newspaper business, as a purveyor rather than a reporter. His commitment to civic well-being is what sets Sanjay apart from most of the city's newsstand operators. He has a profound sense of responsibility, and he goes out of his way to help heroes and law enforcement as much as possible. He even earned a bit of a reputation as a crime fighter when he single-handedly captured a small time costumed villain by hitting him over the head with a stack of Sunday edition papers.

6.3.12 Tristan Caine

Occupation: Environmental Activist

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Vahzilok

Background: Born and raised in Paragon City, Tristan is a idealistic young activist who specializes in urban environmentalism. His primary concerns are issues like recycling, clean air, and fighting urban sprawl. He's been in the news more than once, usually as part of a citizens' group dedicated to repairing Paragon City in an environmentally sound manner. He's got a nose for trouble and thinks of himself as kind of a watchdog, always on the lookout for environmental wrong-doers. He's particularly interested in Dr. Vahzilok, who has a reputation for hindering the environmental movement.

6.3.13 Wes Schnabel

Occupation: Private Detective

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: "Wes Schnabel knows better than most that being a private eye isn't much like it is in the movies. That is, unless you work in Paragon City. With so many kidnappings and hostage takings going on in the city, there's always someone looking for a missing loved one. Wes is a recently retired cop who is just getting his practice started. He deals a lot with gang-related crimes and missing persons cases. Wes works closely with heroes whenever he can. As a retired cop, he knows that's the best way to get things done in this city.

6.3.14 Willy Starbuck

Occupation: Hustler

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: Paragon City has known more than its fair share of con-men and hustlers, making Willy just one more small fish in a very big sea. He's not so much a con-man as he is someone who's always looking to broker a deal. While he skirts the boundaries of what's legal, he seldom breaks the law. He can get you tickets to a sold out concert or deliver a prized toy on Christmas Eve. He sells information, services, and maybe, just maybe, the occasional stolen good. But he's a good-hearted guy and no admirer of serious crime. So he's more than happy to help the city's heroes whenever they ask, especially when they're combating some of the city's more pernicious evils.

6.3.15 Wilson Zucco

Occupation: Former Gang Member

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: The Lost, Skulls

Background: Most old gangsters are either dead or in prison, but Wilson Zucco is one of the lucky few who survived and managed to turn his life around. Now he works as a youth outreach administrator, teaching kids about gang awareness and sometimes acting as a liaison between law enforcement and the gangs. He's liked and admired by both sides of the law, which gives him access to an unusual mix of information. Wilson is happy to work with heroes, especially since they can handle gangs in ways the police can't.

6.4 Stature Level 3

6.4.1 Dr. Ann-Marie Engles

Occupation: Scientist and Engineer

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Vahzilok, Outcasts

Background: Dr. Engles moved to Paragon City just before the Rikti Invasion. Already famous for her work with microelectronics and molecular machines, she became the toast of the scientific community when, with the help of anonymous investors, she set up Engles Electronics, a research company focused chiefly on robotics. During the Rikti Invasion, she volunteered her time and expertise to help repair electronics and other equipment damaged during the attack. She also provided similar services for a number of Paragon City's gadget-oriented heroes. She is currently involved in a new robotics project that is somehow related to recovered Rikti technology. Dr. Engles keeps a tight lid on her discoveries, but is otherwise quite open with her knowledge and expertise. Villains have raided her labs on several occasions, but the city's heroes have always come to her rescue, something she's very grateful for.

6.4.2 Cho Ge

Occupation: Reformed gangster

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Tsoo, The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: The Tsoo are a relatively new group in Paragon City, the only ethnically Hmong gang the region has ever seen. Cho Ge was a gangster years before they came on the scene, a hired gun for the Chinese Triads. When the Tsoo ousted the Triads, Cho Ge saw the writing on the wall. He left his old friends and tried to join the Tsoo, but once he understood that they were more like a cult than a gang, he decided to turn over a new leaf. He ratted them out to the police. Now, he's ostensibly a reformed gang member and an informant for those in the city who fight crime. Whether or not his conversion is complete is unclear, but he certainly seems eager and ready to help the forces of good. Then again, he's always known how to pick a winning team.

6.4.3 Colleen Saramago

Occupation: Hero Corp. Rep

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: Clockwork, Trolls

Background: Hero Corps is a corporation that brokers work for qualified heroes and helps governments around the world deal with super-powered problems. Colleen Saramago is a young, inexperienced Hero Corps liaison, but she's already established a successful client list. Her current task is combating two of the city's insidious threats: the Clockwork and the Trolls. She's well aware that every time she gives a hero an assignment she's putting a life on the line, so she goes the extra mile to give her heroes all the support she can.

6.4.4 Fareed Abdullah

Occupation: Technology Analyst

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: Clockwork, The Lost

Background: Fareed Abdullah is an independent technology analyst. Companies call him in to evaluate new technologies and help them make the right decisions. In order to do the best job possible, Fareed keeps himself constantly apprised of the latest developments in technology. In Paragon City, that means trying to keep up with what the bad guys are doing and what the heroes are doing in response. Fareed has analyzed hundreds of pieces of criminal equipment and advised nearly as many heroes on the technology that can serve them best. He's very well connected and popular in the science community, and he's always looking for new heroes to work with.

6.4.5 Guy Denson

Occupation: Courier

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: Clockwork, The Lost

Background: Guy Denson knows how to get around the city, fast. This is an important skill in a place that serves as a stage for conflicts between costumed heroes and vast criminal conspiracies. It's no wonder traffic is so bad. Guy Denson knows how to cut through the tangles and troubles and deliver a package safely and on time. One of Guy's secrets is the network of couriers and clients he has developed, all of whom keep him abreast of the latest happenings on the streets of Paragon City. He also has numerous friends and clients who are heroes. He likes to pass on whatever he knows to helpful heroes, especially when it's information about the Clockwork.

6.4.6 Jake Montoya

Occupation: Retired Hero

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: Clockwork, Trolls

Background: Jake Montoya was once a well-known hero who fought under the name Red Tiger. After a nearly fatal injury cost him his leg, he chose early retirement and a prosthetic limb over a cybernetic replacement. But retirement from active duty doesn't mean he's turned his back on the city. Now he's one of many retired heroes who acts as a clearing house for information. He uses his experience and contacts to keep tabs on various villain groups, then organizes active heroes to deal with the situation. He's particularly interested in the Clockwork King, largely because he lost his leg while fighting him.

6.4.7 Juliana Nehring

Occupation: Reporter

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Vahzilok, Outcasts

Background: Juliana Nehring is one of the city's most prolific and popular Internet reporters. She runs an independent news site that features articles about the subjects that most interest her. Her daring approach to journalism has won her national acclaim, although some criticize her for putting too much of herself in the story. She has gone undercover on numerous occasions and risked death more than once. Lately she's been focusing most of her attention on the villains that threaten the city. She's particularly interested in Vahzilok because he, like her, uses the Internet to spread his message.

6.4.8 Karen Parker

Occupation: Police Detective

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Tsoo, The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: Paragon City is not known for attracting the best police officers in the world. With so many super-powered heroes breaking cases, it's tough for a good cop to make a real impression. Detective Karen Parker is an exception. She's got a first-rate investigative mind and has broken a number of high profile cases that even the best heroes couldn't solve. She attributes her successes to her lack of special powers, since it means she must rely on her wits. She has mixed feelings about the city's heroes. As a realist, she knows they're vital to the city's welfare, but she sometimes wishes they behaved a little more responsibly. Still, once a hero earns her respect, she has no qualms about working with him or her to solve crimes. For Karen, the most important thing is getting the criminals off the streets and making the case stick in court.

6.4.9 Kong Bao

Occupation: Community Leader

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Tsoo, Circle of Thorns

Background: Kong Bao is one of the oldest and most respected members of Paragon City's Hmong community. He is considered by many to be the community's leader, a role he takes seriously. He organizes charity events, cultural festivals, and programs designed to keep the Hmong youth in school and off drugs. The recent and terrifying rise of the Tsoo is of particular concern to Mr. Kong. He has redoubled his efforts to curtail the gang's recruiting among Hmong youth, with some success. More and more of the Tsoo's new members come from other ethnic groups. Kong Bao has found that the city's heroes play a crucial role in his efforts, so he is always pleased to work with them.

6.4.10 Maggie Greene

Occupation: Freelance Journalist

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Clockwork, Trolls

Background: Maggie Greene is one of the city's best known freelance reporters. She first came to prominence with a series of investigative reports about the illegal disposal of medical waste by the Morrell Corporation, a subsidiary of Crey Industries. Her stories helped spur on a class action lawsuit that eventually shut the company down, and Maggie received a public thanks from Countess Crey for discovering the corruption. Since then she's moved on to the mystical beat. Maggie's especially interested in Vahzilok, and she's eager to be the one to break the story of whatever strange magics the doctor may be using to animate his zombies.

6.4.11 Mark Freeman

Occupation: Hacker

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Clockwork, The Lost

Background: There are a lot of hackers in the world, but very few like Mark Freeman. Mark is a mutant, with the power to communicate directly with computers, and this makes him the most talented hacker on the planet. This amazing power has proven useful in several situations, but Mark has also made the government a bit wary of his powers. Mark uses his abilities to feed his own curiosity and, occasionally, to help heroes in need. He has taken a particular interest in the Lost and, like any tech geek, he's curious about the Clockwork King and how his technology actually works.

6.4.12 Olivia Chung

Occupation: Publisher

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: Vahzilok, Outcasts

Background: Olivia Chung was born in Taiwan and moved to the United States with her family when she was ten years old. Ever since, she has lived a life carefully balanced between two cultures, embracing American ways while retaining her Chinese roots. An accomplished entrepreneur and author of several books, it was a natural step for her to start publishing a weekly paper aimed at Asian-Americans and immigrants living in Paragon City. Called the Asian Paragon, this paper is a valuable resource to tens of thousands of readers each week. Publishing the paper has put Olivia in touch with all the strata of the immigrant community in Paragon City. She is especially troubled by the growing power of the Vahzilok, and she's always eager to help police and heroes by telling them whatever she hears through her web of contacts.

6.4.13 Pavel Garnier

Occupation: FBI Agent

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Vahzilok, Outcasts

Background: The FBI has several hundred agents in Paragon City, but only an elite few work closely with the local heroes. Pavel Garnier is one of those few. The Rikti targeted all of the nation's intelligence gathering networks during their attack, so the FBI is still woefully undermanned. Agent Garnier's chief areas of concern are information and Internet related crimes, particularly the use of the Internet to coordinate organized crime and terrorism. Most recently he has come up against Vahzilok, who makes use of the Internet to spread his ideology and the plans for his zombie-like creations.

6.4.14 Sgt. Suzanne Bernhard

Occupation: Street Crimes Division

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Tsoo, The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: The street crimes division was created to deal with the wide variety of random and organized crime that happens on Paragon City's streets. Sgt. Suzanne Bernhard has served with the division since she joined the force, first as a beat cop busting alleyway craps games, and now as a sergeant, coordinating the efforts of her fellow officers. She's a tough, no nonsense cop who takes pride in her work. She's happy to leave the most dangerous villains to the costumed heroes. She just wants to make the lives of average folks a little better by keeping crime off her neighborhood streets. She'll do whatever it takes to do that, and that often means working with heroes.

6.4.15 Thao Ku

Occupation: Marital Arts Instructor

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Tsoo, Circle of Thorns

Background: Thao Ku is one of the most respected martial artists in Paragon City. Its not just for his kickboxing skills that are impressive, but also his role as a community leader and youth organizer. Ethnically Hmong, he emigrated from Laos. He has taught in the same dojo for over twenty years, mentoring thousands of dedicated students in both the physical and spiritual aspects of the martial arts. He has a reputation as a wise man, someone whose body and mind have nearly transcended the limits of human understanding. Master Thao is particularly interested in the mystical side of martial arts, and he is rumored to have some supernatural abilities of his own. He's worked with heroes and law enforcement on numerous occasions, such as during the Rikti War, when he opened his school to serve as a shelter and clinic.

6.4.16 Tom Bowden

Occupation: NSA Field Agent

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: Clockwork, The Lost

Background: Agent Tom Bowden recently joined the NSA, after serving as a cryptographer for the Air Force. He specializes in breaking codes, but his duties in Paragon City often involve chasing down radio and satellite intercepts. He's particularly concerned with any kind of propaganda being broadcast by criminals, as well as anything the might put the nation's communications network at risk. For reasons still unclear even to him, he's been given the Clockwork King as his primary assignment, although he hopes to move on to bigger and badder opponents. He's quite curious about the Lost, and he often spends his free time tracking their movements.

6.4.17 Virginia Hoffman

Occupation: Artist

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: Tsoo, Circle of Thorns

Background: Virginia Hoffman is an avant-garde artist whose abstract paintings and performances always elicit a flurry of mixed reviews. She's also one of the most sought after representational sculptors in the city, as she specializes in creating statues of retiring heroes. Her work adorns many a public park, but her real passion is experimental painting and sculpture. She's in touch with both the city's cultural underground and its heroes, which puts her in a position to hear a lot she's probably not supposed to. Luckily, she's a good-hearted soul and always passes on information about criminal activities to her hero friends.

6.4.18 Vitaly Cherenko

Occupation: Mystic Healer

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Tsoo, Circle of Thorns

Background: Vitaly Cherenko thinks of himself as a doctor, though he practices magic, not medicine. Vitaly is a powerful mystic who uses his prodigious healing powers to treat the homeless, free of charge. His standard of living is not much better than his clientele's, but he is fulfilled and happy. That is, until he runs across a problem he can't cure with his magic. Then he turns to the city's heroes. Heroes comprise a large portion of his patients as well, especially the younger ones just starting out. Vitaly is currently quite worried about the Tsoo and the amoral Circle of Thorns, both of which threaten his homeless patients.

6.4.19 Warren Trudeau

Occupation: FBI Agent

Location: Skyway City

Villain Groups: Tsoo, The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: Warren Trudeau is new to the FBI, but not to law enforcement. He served with distinction as an MP in the Marine Corps for years before moving on to the FBI Academy in Quantico. Paragon City is his first assignment as a field agent, an honor seldom bestowed on new recruits. He's a professional, driven man and takes his job very seriously. Trudeau's main duty is to work with local agencies and heroes to combat the Tsoo, and so far he's doing a fine job.

6.4.20 Wyatt Anderson

Occupation: Historian

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: Clockwork, Trolls

Background: Most citizens are deeply concerned with Paragon City's future, but Wyatt Anderson is more interested in its past. His books chronicle the history of the brave men and women who have protected the city through the decades. Lately, his research has taken on a more journalistic approach, and his most recent articles deal with current events in the context of the city's rich and complex history. His expertise has also earned him a reputation as a villain profiler. His encyclopedic knowledge of past threats often gives him a lot of insight into the current ones. He loves to work closely with heroes, and counts many among his friends.

6.5 Stature Level 4

6.5.1 Amanda Loomis

Occupation: INS Investigator

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Tsoo, Warriors

Background: Amanda Loomis works for the Immigration and Naturalization Service as a special investigator. She specializes in criminal investigations that involve immigrants in some way, either as perpetrators or as victims. In the xenophobic culture that has developed since the Rikti War, anti-immigrant feelings are running high in America, but Amanda is trying to change that. Amanda has recently begun looking to heroes to make her job easier, especially when she's investigating criminal groups that include a large number of immigrants, like the Tsoo. In this job, she needs all the help she can get.

6.5.2 Andrea Mitchell

Occupation: Private Security Consultant

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Banished Pantheon, Circle of Thorns

Background: Andrea Mitchell is a private security consultant who specializes in protecting clients from paranormal threats. After years spent in the army, Andrea is no stranger to danger, but it's only recently that she became interested in the occult. Two years ago she fell victim to a life-threatening curse while protecting a local businessman who had run afoul of a death cult. She barely survived, but, rather than run from the world of magic like most people would, she vowed to learn more about it. She's been studying hard ever since and knows quite a bit about the supernatural. She also has a wide network of contacts who she turns to for information and assistance, including a number of notable heroes.

6.5.3 Andrew Fiore

Occupation: Electronics Purveyor

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Freakshow, The Family

Background: With their experimental armor and high tech weapons, heroes are always in need of some special electronic part that's impossible to find. Andrew Fiore makes it his job to find those parts. He deals with all manner of sources, some of them a little less than honest. As a result, he hears a great many interesting things, and he's more than happy to pass on tips to his hero clients. He's proud to do his part to put criminals behind bars, and he'll occasionally give out more than just information if he thinks a greased palm may get the job done. He's especially fervent when it comes to villains that directly impact his business, such as the thieving Freakshow.

6.5.4 Barry Gosford

Occupation: Police Lieutenant

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Sky Raiders, The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: Lt. Barry Gosford works for the Paragon City Police Department, running a detail that specializes in emerging threats. These are criminal organizations or social trends that the officers feel have the potential to become highly dangerous unless checked at an early stage. Identifying and fighting such groups is a daunting task, but the detail has had one notable success: the total elimination of the Dragon Aces, a super-powered gang that was growing in strength until about a year ago, when Lt. Gosford's special unit was first founded. While Gosford and his men do take credit for bringing down the Dragon Aces, they also admit that they had a little help from another rising threat: the Tsoo. These days the Sky Raiders are a major concern for Gosford and his group, although they've recently opened a major investigation into the 5th Column as well.

6.5.5 Cain Royce

Occupation: Philanthropist

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Banished Pantheon, Circle of Thorns

Background: Cain Royce is the head of the Royce Foundation, which was started by his grandfather at the turn of the 20th Century. The foundation was originally a religious organization whose goal was to support African American churches through the financial and discriminatory challenges they suffered. However, Grandfather Royce soon faced a challenge he'd never anticipated. A foul cult of demon worshipers was preying on Paragon City's African American community. He turned all his resources to fighting this cult and, with the help of the whole community, succeeded. Ever since, the Royce Foundation has concentrated its resources on fighting malicious occult groups. Cain still works with the community, but he also coordinates the efforts of heroes in the fight against threats like the Banished Pantheon and the Circle of Thorns.

6.5.6 Claire Childress

Occupation: Medium

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Freakshow, The Family

Background: Claire Childress is known in occult circles as an unwilling medium. A natural magnet for ghosts of all kind, Claire's been hearing voices from the spirit world since childhood. She's even been possessed on more than a few occasions. Much of Claire's adolescence was spent in hospital wards for the mentally ill, and not even her parents believed she was sane until she started predicting future disasters. Young Claire found a friend in a hero named Alyssa Stone, a powerful magician. Alyssa became a mother figure to Claire and helped her master her talents and use them for the greater good. Alyssa died in the Rikti War, but Claire continues to work in honor of her memory, helping heroes when she can and warning them of disturbances in the spirit world.

6.5.7 Dennis Ewell

Occupation: Columnist

Location: Independence

Villain Groups: Tsoo, Warriors

Background: Dennis Ewell is a columnist for the Paragon City Free Press and a lifelong peace advocate. He earned quite a reputation back in the 80's when he criticized a number of prominent heroes for their deadly and often illegal methods. Dennis was under 24-hour security for over a year after one vigilante swore to take his head. At the time his columns were controversial, but today everyone regards him as an elder statesman of hero-related journalism, and his columns are used to teach budding young journalists. These days, with heroes playing such a vital role in the city's prosperity, Dennis find much less to criticize. Instead he turns his powerful pen upon the criminals that menace the city streets. He often works closely with heroes, something he wouldn't have dreamed of in the 80's. But times have changed, and so have the heroes.

6.5.8 Dr. Cheng

Occupation: Mystic

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Banished Pantheon, Circle of Thorns

Background: No one knows Dr. Cheng's first name, or even his real name. Like all wise mystics, he knows that names have power, and so he is careful to hide his. There has been a Dr. Cheng living in Paragon City since the 1840's, and, as far as anyone can tell, this is the same man. He neither confirms nor denies his reputed age. Dr. Cheng wiles away the hours of the day in local restaurants and teahouses, dispensing wisdom, advice, and aid to any who ask it of him. He is known to be a powerful magician who specializes in dealing with malevolent spirits, ghosts, and demons. Since the Rikti War, Dr. Cheng has become closely involved with the city's heroes, offering them help in their ceaseless pursuit of justice. He is particularly interested in the Banished Pantheon and the Circle of Thorns.

6.5.9 Georgia Fields

Occupation: Shadow Walker

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Sky Raiders, The Lost

Background: Georgia Fields walks in the shadows. She has power over darkness itself, which allows her to fade into shadow and move through the city unseen. Georgia is no hero, though she sometimes works with them. Her true motives remain a mystery, but the heroes who have worked with her over the years have pieced a few things together. Georgia, despite her ever youthful appearance, has been in the city for close to 70 years. She seems to know everyone who is anyone in Paragon City, although many don't seem to know her. She can, if she wishes, make you forget you ever spoke with her. It is rumored that she has stolen a variety of rare and powerful magic artifacts over the decades. Despite all the mystery surrounding her, Georgia has repeatedly proven herself to be a valuable contact. Until proven otherwise, it is assumed that she is a friend.

6.5.10 Hinckley Rasmussen

Occupation: Midnight Squad Researcher

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Tsoo, Warriors

Background: The Midnight Squad is but a shadow of its former self, having lost many of its most powerful heroes during the war. Now its members concern themselves mainly with research, the preservation of knowledge, and advising more active heroes. Hinckley Rasmussen is a primary example of this new trend. A longtime researcher for the Midnight Squad, he has only recently begun speaking to heroes outside the secretive mystic organization. Now he's come to enjoy helping others quite a bit. He's a charming, somewhat eccentric fellow who gives advice even when it's not asked for. These days his research focuses mostly on the activities of the Tsoo, although he also has an abiding interest in the Warriors.

6.5.11 Jake Kim

Occupation: Weapons Proliferation Expert

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Freakshow, The Family

Background: The rapid and rampant spread of high-powered weaponry throughout Paragon City is a cause of some concern to government and civic groups alike. Jake Kim is one of the world's foremost experts on weapons proliferation, and he recently came to Paragon City to study the phenomenon up close. With so many criminal and paramilitary groups using high-powered weaponry, it is surprisingly easy for deadly weapons to fall into the wrong hands. Jake does what he can to advise both law enforcement officials and heroes about the best ways to combat this growing menace. He provides valuable information about possible arms proliferation sites and works closely with the defense industry to improve their internal security systems. He has already been credited with keeping hundreds of powerful weapons off the street, and as his network of contacts and helpful heroes grows, he is becoming even more effective.

6.5.12 Jim Bell

Occupation: Reporter

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Tsoo, Warriors

Background: Jim Bell is a veteran journalist who found that retirement just didn't suit him. Instead of staying home, Jim struck out on his own to report on the stories that interest him most. Paragon City soon became his favorite subject, and he developed an intense interest in the various gangs that fight for control of its streets. Jim loves to look for the human angle of every story, and he often interviews the families of gang members as well as their victims. In doing so, he gathers a lot of information, some of it off the record. If there's a problem Jim can't deal with in print, he'll call in a friendly hero to help him out. That is, of course, if that hero is willing to give him exclusive rights to the story.

6.5.13 Josef Keller

Occupation: Professor of Folklore

Location: Talos

Villain Groups: Banished Pantheon, Circle of Thorns

Background: Josef Keller is one of the most radical and inventive academics in Paragon City. While his expertise and training is in traditional Irish folklore, he has recently made a name for himself in the study of modern, urban folklore. He has published several papers on the links between ancient myths and modern heroics, and he's especially interested in those groups that transcend both eras. The Banished Pantheon fascinates him, as it comes from an ancient time when gods still openly walked the Earth, and continues to operate in the modern world, where many no longer believe in any kind of divinity at all. Professor Keller works with heroes on a regular basis, providing information and direction about criminal cases that involve any kind of folklore or mythological angle.

6.5.14 John Strobel

Occupation: Citizen Defense Coalition Organizer

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Sky Raiders, The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: John Strobel is a retired police officer and army veteran who has served his city and country for over 30 years. When he retired he decided that there was still much he could do for the city, and so he formed the Citizen Defense Coalition, a group of retired or otherwise inactive individuals from law enforcement, the military, and the costumed hero business. The Coalition's main goal is to provide expertise to those actively involved in fighting crime. Although they seldom go out on the streets to battle villains anymore, they do provide valuable intelligence about what's going on in their neighborhoods. Many still retain their old snitches, informants, and contacts. John himself focuses his efforts on trying to rehabilitate good guys who have gone bad. He believes that it's possible to redeem some of the city's criminals, especially those like the Sky Raiders who have decent, military backgrounds.

6.5.15 Justin Greene

Occupation: Community Watch Coordinator

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Sky Raiders, The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: Justin Greene is a retired hero who once fought evil under the name Green Justice. He lost his powers over a decade ago, but he never lost his commitment to keeping his community safe. These days he does that by coordinating the efforts of his local community watch. Justin works with current heroes and local residents to make sure that criminals never get a chance to set roots down. It's quite obvious that Justin still wishes he could put on a costume and fight evil directly, but, without his powers, he's only a match for common thugs and lesser criminals. The kinds of super-powered threats that menace the city are more than he can handle on his own. Fortunately, he's got more than a few friends willing to help him out.

6.5.16 Justine Kelly

Occupation: Software Analyst

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Sky Raiders, The Lost

Background: Justine Kelly calls herself a software analyst, though most people simply call her a hacker. Justine knows computers like the back of her hand, and she knows they can be a valuable tool in fighting crime. In the world of computer crime, she's kind of a hero herself, and more than a few have theorized that she has some subtle super power related to computers. She handles the malicious hackers, software thieves, and other online miscreants herself, but more and more her computer problems have real world implications. That's when she calls in the big guns: any one of a number of heroes she has befriended over the years. She's always eager to pass on a tip or help out a hero. After all, in her own way, she's just like them.

6.5.17 Kevin Cordell

Occupation: Private Security Specialist

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Sky Raiders, The Lost

Background: Security is definitely a booming business in Paragon City, and numerous small and large companies have burst onto the scene to offer protection by the hour. Kevin Cordell runs one such business. Like many entrepreneurs in the security business, Kevin has a background in law enforcement, though he wasn't a cop, an FBI agent, or even a bounty hunter. Kevin Cordell was a hero. He lost his powers to Rikti experimentation during the war, but he's sprung back, and he continues to use his contacts and expertise to help those who can't protect themselves. He still maintains his relationships with his former comrades, and he cultivates new friendships with up-and-coming heroes as well.

6.5.18 Kristen Woods

Occupation: CIA Operative

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Sky Raiders, The Lost

Background: The CIA is strictly forbidden from operating on American soil, but they can and do keep an eye on things. International threats, like the Sky Raiders, arouse their greatest concerns. Kirsten Woods is an intelligence officer who has the rather complicated job of trying to figure out how to best use CIA resources to combat such threats without stepping on the FBI's toes. Luckily for her, there are heroes: powerful, freelance operatives who are free to work in the United States. Kirsten works closely with many heroes, offering them intelligence on criminal activities and sometimes even asking them to carry out operations. She walks a tightrope of legal technicalities, but she also gets the job done.

6.5.19 Lt. Col. Hugh McDougal

Occupation: Army Super-powered Relations Officer

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Freakshow, The Family

Background: The United States military has had a long relationship with heroes. Many serve as active soldiers, though most prefer to operate on their own. Lt. Colonel Hugh McDougal is one of many soldiers tasked with maintaining good relations between these freelancers and the military. McDougal likes his post a great deal, and he frequently goes above and beyond the normal call of duty. He often informs heroes about possible crimes and gives them other valuable, non-classified information. All the while, he keeps careful records, so that the government will have an accurate database of available assets should a catastrophe like the Rikti Invasion ever happen again.

6.5.20 Manuel Ruiz

Occupation: Police officer, Gang unit

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Warriors, The Family

Background: Gangs continue to be a problem in Paragon City, and it's Manuel Ruiz's job to deal with them. A highly decorated and dedicated officer, Lt. Ruiz made a name for himself when he went undercover for a year within the now defunct Brothers of Doom gang. The gang of super-powered thugs had menaced the city throughout the 1980's, but, thanks to Ruiz's bravery, they were brought down. Today, Lt. Ruiz manages other undercover officers. He also works with the city's heroes, since he realizes that costume-clad defenders are often the only thing standing between the city and utter chaos. While heroes seldom go undercover themselves, they can give his officers valuable support.

6.5.21 Melanie Peebles

Occupation: Dream Analyst

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Sky Raiders, The Lost

Background: Melanie Peebles is an ultra-lucid dreamer. She not only controls her dreams, she can actually enter the dream world at will to seek out information. For years she lived in a dream state and had very little interaction with other people. Then, during the Rikti War, she was disturbed by recurring dreams of the alien invaders. This gave her the impetus to start using her abilities to help the city fight back. Ever since, she has helped heroes by providing them information from her dreams. She has become quite adept at using her abilities and has even begun to get some recognition in the press, something she's less than pleased about.

6.5.22 Olivia Haak

Occupation: Occultist

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Banished Pantheon, Circle of Thorns

Background: Oliver Haak styles himself an occultist, and he's a bit of a mystery to the heroes he works with. Some say he possesses magical abilities, while others believe his only power is a vast knowledge of magical lore. He seems to have some intuitive grasp of mystical matters, yet he never seems to spend any time studying ancient books or delving through forgotten libraries. There are those who speculate that Oliver is actually a helpful spirit in human guise. Others maintain that he's channeling the spirits of the world's greatest wise men. The one thing that everyone agrees upon is that he's very happy to share his knowledge with heroes he deems worthy of his attention.

6.5.23 Oswald Cuthbert

Occupation: Probation Officer

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Sky Raiders, The Council (5th Column)

Background: Being a probation officer in Paragon City has its own unique challenges. Criminals with super powers, gangs with dreams of world domination, and magical devices can give any law enforcement officer nightmares. Still, Oswald Cuthbert does his best to deal with it calmly and professionally. He's a 20-year veteran of the job, and in his time he's seen everything. He's particularly interested in some of the unique military groups that plague Paragon City, like the Sky Raiders and the 5th Column. He makes it his business to know everything he can about them so that he can do his job better. Oswald likes to work with heroes, and he often gives them a chance to find parole violators before he goes out in the field himself.

6.5.24 Piper Irving

Occupation: Anthropologist

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Banished Pantheon, Circle of Thorns

Background: Piper Irving recently graduated from Paragon University with a PhD in Anthropology. Unlike many of her classmates, she decided to stay in the city to continue her research. Her particular area of focus is the city's religion-based criminal organizations. After a few near-death experiences, she has learned that it's much better to work with heroes than on her own. She is often consulted because of her expertise on the belief systems and practices of groups like the Banished Pantheon and the Circle of Thorns. She's very enthusiastic about her work and is always looking for new help with her research.

6.5.25 Polly Cooper

Occupation: Civil Air Patrol Coordinator

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Sky Raiders, The Lost

Background: Once the Civil Air Patrol helped defend America's skies by watching the clouds for enemy aircraft. Modern radar and high flying jets ended that role, but the rise of the flying super-powered criminal has brought it back with a vengeance. The Paragon City Civil Air Patrol consists of a few full time employees like Polly Cooper and a host of volunteers throughout the metropolitan area. They take turns watching the skies for flying robots, villains, strange aircraft, alien attack pods, demonic winged creatures, and all other threats. Polly Cooper's job is to coordinate those reports and pass them on to the appropriate authorities. As often as not, that means freelance heroes who have the time and expertise to handle such threats. Polly's network of watchers and volunteers makes her an invaluable resource for any hero who wants to keep the skies safe for birds and heroes alike.

6.5.26 Rondel Jackson

Occupation: Detective

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Sky Raiders, The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: While every cop faces extraordinary challenges in a place like Paragon City, Detective Rondel Jackson has an especially dangerous job. He's part of the Organized Crimes Task Force, a group of police dedicated to stopping crimes committed by highly-organized groups with military roots, like the Sky Raiders and the 5th Column. Unlike many members of the unit, Rondel has no formal training in military practices or theories. He's just a cop, doing what he does best: enforcing the law. To get the job done, he's learned to rely on a number of helpful heroes.

6.5.27 Tyler French

Occupation: Youth Director

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Tsoo, Warriors

Background: Tyler French works for the rather beleaguered Paragon City Parks and Recreation Department. With so much of the city still in need of repair, there is little money for things like after school programs and youth sports leagues. Tyler French has made it his mission to ensure that none of these things disappear. A low-paid Parks Department employee, he uses fundraisers to augment his non-existent budget and counts numerous prominent heroes among his donors. He uses the money to develop programs that keep kids involved in productive, healthy pursuits. Tyler often heads out into the rougher neighborhoods to recruit teens he thinks might benefit from his programs. His activities put him in touch with many different criminal elements, and the kids he works with know that they can always tell him when they're in trouble. Tyler passes that information on to the heroes he works with, happy to make a difference when and where he can.

6.5.28 Vic Garland

Occupation: Civil Rights Activist

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Freakshow, The Family

Background: Civil rights can be a touchy subject for super-powered heroes. Equal opportunity is a cause they can all get behind, but when it comes to subjects like wrongful imprisonment and unfair prosecution, heroes tend to get nervous. It's Vic Garland's job to make them nervous. Vic has devoted his life to protecting the civil rights of every man, woman, and child in America. Sometimes that means suing a hero for wrongfully beating the snot out of a suspected criminal. But much more often it means helping a hero catch some criminal who's flagrantly violating the rights of ordinary citizens. Recently, Vic has developed another, more personal crusade. More and more villains have taken to hiding their hateful ideology and criminal activities behind a veneer of protest for civil rights. No group is guiltier of this than the Freakshow. Vic has a heated vendetta against such villains and, with the support of many heroes behind him, he's out to expose their nefarious activities.

6.5.29 Wilma Peterson

Occupation: Hazardous Waste Disposal Expert

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Freakshow, The Family

Background: With aliens, super-powered villains, and magical monsters roaming Paragon City's streets and burrowing beneath its ground, it's no wonder that all manner of unusual detritus ends up cast about the city. It's the job of people like Wilma Peterson to make sure it's all disposed of safely. She coordinates waste disposal teams in their efforts to recover materials the might prove dangerous in the wrong hands. These include everything from leftover Rikti technology to the mutagenic fluids left behind when a Devouring Earth creature is destroyed. Wilma often works hand in hand with heroes to help her clean up more dangerous locales, and she likes to pass on any information she discovers in the course of a day's work. Wilma's proud of her work, which is important to the city's environment, and she doesn't take kindly to being teased about being a garbage woman.

6.5.30 Wilson Eziquerra

Occupation: Reporter

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Sky Raiders, The Council (5th Column)

Background: Most reporters with a beat like Wilson Eziquerra's would be eagerly angling for a transfer to the society page, but Wil actually enjoys reporting on Paragon City's many militant groups. He loves roaming the city's most dangerous neighborhoods looking for a scoop, and when he finds something to print, he never worries about retaliation. This cavalier attitude has gotten him into hot water again and again, and Wil's publisher's have had to call on heroes to rescue him from certain death no fewer than seven times. Still, Wil wouldn't trade his job for any other. He counts himself lucky to have a hand in exposing the nefarious activities of the Sky Raiders and the 5th Column, and if he learns of a problem an article won't fix, he knows several heroes he can count on.

6.6 Stature Level 5

6.6.1 Ashwin Lannister

Occupation: Hero Corps Representative

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: The Council (The 5th Column), Warriors

Background: Ashwin Lannister is rising quickly through the ranks of Hero Corps, largely due to his experience during the Rikti War. As a military intelligence analyst, Ashwin helped coordinate the defense of Washington, D.C. He was also one of the handful of analysts allowed direct access to Rikti prisoners. Since joining Hero Corps, however, he's been assigned some of the lesser but still dangerous villain groups, like the 5th Column. He finds them rather fascinating, and he's working hard to compile a fuller understanding of the group's beliefs and goals. With the help of the heroes he works with, he's having a fair degree of success.

6.6.2 Laurie Pennington

Occupation: Freedom Corps Contact

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: The Council (The 5th Column), Warriors

Background: Ask Laurie Pennington to name the greatest hero who ever lived, and she'll tell you it was her father, the Golden Conqueror. When he was killed in the Rikti War, Laurie felt that the best way to honor his memory was to volunteer for the Freedom Corps. She loves her work with the Corps, and she's come to admire some of the heroes she works with almost as much as her father. Many in the police department and the hero community remember Laurie's dad with great fondness, so she frequently has access to a great deal of information that wouldn't be made available to any other Freedom Corp representative.

6.6.3 Miriam Bloechl

Occupation: Psychometrist

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Banished Pantheon, Circle of Thorns

Background: Miriam Bloechl is a psychic whom some people consider a hero in her own right. Her powers don't allow her to put on a costume and fight crime with her fists, but she can be a valuable resource to those who do. She has the power to bring forth psychic visions from any object she touches. Sometimes she can even establish a psychic link with the object's owner, divining his or her whereabouts and current activities. Miriam loves doing her part for the city's welfare, though she also sees paying clients: mostly civilians looking for lost loved ones or checking up on cheating husbands. After all, she's got to pay the bills somehow.

6.6.4 Laura Brunetti

Occupation: Historian

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Banished Pantheon, Circle of Thorns

Background: Laura Brunetti is a historian who specializes in rare books and ancient tomes. She's fluent in over a dozen languages and has been the curator of the Brunetti Archives since she took them over from her father twenty years ago. The archives contain the world's largest collection of books related to the supernatural world. Laura herself is a practicing magician, and most of her spells are used to preserve her books and unearth the lost secrets within them. When she discovers something useful in her studies, she passes it along to one of the many heroes she knows. Laura's the first to admit that she wouldn't want to find herself face to face with the villain groups she studies. But she enjoys fighting evil in her own way, especially since the Rikti War, when her archives narrowly escaped destruction.

6.6.5 Christine Lansdale

Occupation: Military Analyst

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Sky Raiders, The Family

Background: Christine Lansdale is a retired Air Force officer who now works as a military analyst for the armed forces as well as several private groups. She has recently begun doing some consulting for the Freedom Corps, whose non-profit ideology she prefers to the corporate culture of Hero Corps, one of her long-standing clients. Christine specializes in demystifying the military process for civilian companies and heroes who are trying to work with the armed forces. She has many friends and contacts on both sides of the fence, so she serves as a valuable intermediary between the secretive and suspicious military and the prideful and sometimes reckless heroes.

6.6.6 Marvin Weintraub

Occupation: Technology Expert

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Freakshow, The Family

Background: Marvin Weintraub is an expert physicist who earned himself a modest fortune in the early nineties, when he designed an experimental energy weapon that became the precursor to today's most powerful laser weapons. Marvin's always been fascinated by military technology, so, once his fortune was secured, he dedicated himself to supporting those heroes who wanted to test out new crime-fighting technologies. Now an advisor to the Paragon City Council, Marvin was part of the large brain trust responsible for designing the city's emergency teleportation network. Still, he considers working with heroes to be his most rewarding job.

6.6.7 Collin Larson

Occupation: Cybernetics Expert

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Freakshow, The Family

Background: Colin Larson is one of those people who seems to be always near greatness but never in the spotlight. A talented, driven engineer, Colin was one of the workhorses of the cybernetics revolution. He helped develop the first fully robotic artificial limbs and was a key member of the team that perfected nerve machine integration. Yet, for all his hard work, Colin remains an unsung hero of the scientific community. This may be due to his habit of getting his hands dirty with matters not scientific in nature. For several years now, Colin has been fascinated by the city's heroes, and he spends almost all his free time working with them to catch criminals, especially cybernetics thieves like the Freakshow. When he's honest with himself, Colin has to admit that he is beginning to find this work much more rewarding than his research.

6.6.8 Eliza Thorpe

Occupation: Missing Persons Investigator

Location: Talos Island

Villain Groups: Devouring Earth, The Lost

Background: Eliza Thorpe works for the city's Missing Persons Bureau, an agency that specializes in finding the lost and preventing the kidnappings that occur all too frequently in Paragon City. A former FBI agent, Eliza moved to Paragon City to search for her parents, who went missing just after the Rikti War. She never found them, but her life was changed forever when she learned how many disappearances occur in Paragon City every day. She and her colleagues work hand in hand with the city's heroes to try and stem the tide of kidnappings, but it is definitely an uphill battle. Eliza remains hopeful that the situation will improve if she keeps fighting the good fight, but she realizes she'll need plenty of help.

6.6.9 Lorenzo Tate

Occupation: Arms Dealer

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Devouring Earth, The Lost

Background: Lorenzo Tate is not your typical arms dealer. He's not flashy, dangerous, or mysterious. In fact, he's most often described as a nerd, albeit a nerd with an encyclopedic knowledge of firearms and experimental weapons technology. Lorenzo admits he's in it for the money, but he also loves the technology, and he's always hard at work crafting improvements to his merchandise, as well as his own specialized line of weapons. His clients are mostly heroes and private security personnel. Since Paragon City instituted its Security Level system to regulate private ownership of military grade weaponry, business has been booming.

6.7 Stature Level 6

6.7.1 Phillipa Meraux

Occupation: Counter Terrorism Specialist

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Crey, Rikti

Background: Phillipa Meraux used to be a hero herself. Known as Clandestine, she specialized in infiltrating terrorist cells and other covert groups. But during the Rikti War, all that changed. Phillipa was caught in some crossfire between the alien invaders and the Circle of Thorns; though she survived the blasts, her powers never returned. She retains many of her contacts from her days as a hero, along with all the expertise and knowledge she acquired on the streets of Paragon City. Today she uses that expertise to help other heroes continue her crusade.

6.7.2 Peter Stemitz

Occupation: Shaman

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Circle of Thorns, The Council (The 5th Column)

Background: Peter Stemitz's body is the most recent home of an ancient shaman who has been reborn for thousands of years. In his head is an encyclopedic knowledge of spiritual matters and a phenomenal amount of magical ability. Beneath that head is the body of a 23-year-old guitarist who plays in a punk rock band on the weekends and has been known to use his magic for impressing women, rather than saving the world. Fortunately, you can't have an ancient spirit in your body without having a conscience to go with it. Peter genuinely cares for people of the world, and he's happy to use his wisdom to help the heroes who defend them. If he also happens to get free drinks by magically curing the bartender's acne, so much the better.

6.7.3 Allison King

Occupation: Psychic

Location: Brickstown

Villain Groups: The Council (The 5th Column), Circle of Thorns

Background: Allison King is a memory archeologist. Instead of excavating ancient burials, she digs through the collective unconsciousness, using hypnotism and her limited psychic abilities. For years, she's been using this ability to help her clients recover from traumatic events or recapture their suppressed memories. Recently, though, she's started using her skills to fight crime. Her memory excavations turn up important details that eyewitnesses don't consciously remember. She's also an excellent interrogator, since she always knows when someone is lying. None of her assertions are admissible in court, of course, but she can at least set heroes on the right path.

6.7.4 Tina Chung

Occupation: Aberrant Science Investigator

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Nemesis, Freakshow

Background: Tina Chung is the founder of Chung Investigations, a research facility that doubles as a private detective agency. She investigates all manner of unusual technology, though her primary interest is in technology used for criminal purposes. She employs a team of several dozen investigators, each an expert in a different field. Tina has recently been helping heroes investigate and prevent crimes that involve what she calls aberrant technology. She has opened up large investigations into the Freakshow and Nemesis, both of whom use technology in startlingly dangerous ways. She can be a little standoffish and arrogant, but once she comes to trust a person, she becomes a very helpful and resourceful ally.

6.7.5 Neal Kendrick

Occupation: Media Watchdog

Location: Brickstown

Villain Groups: Nemesis, Freakshow

Background: Neal Kendrick began his career as an investigator for the FCC. He was determined to take down big media corporations who were circumventing laws against media consolidation, but he wasn't prepared for the clout such corporations could wield. He discovered that some powerful CEOs were using blackmail to force local television stations to sell, but when he took his findings to his bosses, they refused to back up his efforts to arrest the criminals. So Neal quit and became a freelance media watchdog. He first started working with heroes about four years ago, when the Dawn Patrol asked him to look into some false allegations made against them by a tabloid television show. Since then he's worked closely with heroes, many of whom are happy to help him keep the big media outlets honest.

6.7.6 Jenny Firkins

Occupation: Hazardous Technologies Specialist

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Devouring Earth, Crey

Background: During the Rikti War, Jenny Firkins was one of thousands of researchers who analyzed captured Rikti technology. As a lab assistant in the research wing of the Freedom Phalanx, she specialized in identifying the hazardous waste products the aliens left behind. After the war, with the Freedom Phalanx's ranks devastated and much of the city in turmoil, Jenny stepped forward to help clean up the city as a whole. Today she helps the next generation of heroes deal with potentially hazardous waste and technology. Lately, she has become much more interested in man-made hazards. The mega-corporation Crey Industries is of particular interest to her, not only because of their shady reputation, but also because of and their vast holdings across many different industries.

6.7.7 Lou Pasterelli

Occupation: Super-powered Revolutionary

Location: Brickstown

Villain Groups: Devouring Earth, Crey

Background: Lou Pasterelli is a man who's less than satisfied with the world. That's not so unusual, but what sets Lou apart is his willingness to do something about it. In fact, Lou's willing and able to go to extreme lengths to change the world, for Lou has mutant powers. He can become intangible or invisible, and he has mastery over darkness itself. In his youth he occasionally used these powers to fight evil, though he was more often to be found crusading against corruption and inequity in the world of politics. He publicly declared that he wanted to overthrow the system and rebuild it from scratch. After the war this became a very unpopular stance, and Lou ran afoul of the law. Now he's under house arrest, restricted from using his powers for five years. But he hasn't given up. He devotes nearly all his time to fighting the false revolutionaries who give his cause a bad name and the same corporate and government forces that have always bedeviled him. The only difference is that now he works through a network of helpful heroes.

6.7.8 Jose Escalante

Occupation: Defender of Commerce

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: The Council (The 5th Column), Devouring Earth

Background: Jose Escalante is a man with a mission. It's his goal to make sure Paragon City remains a place where business gets done. A self-described 'rabid capitalist,' Jose uses his many connections to put together mergers and assist businesses large and small. He's learned the hard way that the biggest roadblock to profits in Paragon City isn't regulation or zoning ordinances; it's the darned super villains. And so Jose found himself an interesting and profitable niche to fill: he helps connect businesses with heroes who can protect their interests. He's no simple security broker, however. Jose concentrates on solving specific, acute problems: emergency situations that need taking care of right away. To do that he relies on a cadre of friendly heroes who are eager to help out, sometimes for profit, but usually because it's the right thing to do. As Jose says, it's the perfect business arrangement: everyone wins, except the villain.

6.7.9 Merisel Valenzuela

Occupation: Investigator

Location: Brickstown

Villain Groups: The Council (The 5th Column), Devouring Earth

Background: Merisel describes herself as freelance investigator. In reality, she's part hacker, part reporter, and part private eye. She made her fortune in the dot-com craze before the Rikti War and continues to do security consulting for a number of high profile Internet companies. But lately she finds herself fighting against big business more often than protecting it. She's famous for her outspoken advocacy of small businesses, open source software, and other causes that she thinks of as 'societal equalizers.' Her online persona is a closely guarded secret, but more than a few people suspect that she's the renowned hacker, Cipher, who's been responsible for several acts of anti-corporate cyber-espionage.

6.8 Stature Level 7

6.8.1 Captain Gordon Stacy

Occupation: Police Captain

Location: Brickstown

Villain Groups: Crey

Background: Captain Gordon Stacy is one of the best and brightest that the Paragon City police force has ever fielded. In his younger days he worked a beat in Crey's Folley, helping to protect the Crey factories from vandalism and theft. But after busting up a few too many shady deals on Crey property, he became suspicious. Recently he has been very vocal in his condemnation of the corporate giant, an unpopular attitude that nearly cost him his promotion to captain.

6.8.2 Cadao Kestrel

Occupation: Voodoo Master

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Circle of Thorns, The Council (5th Column)

Background: There's no doubt that Cadao Kestrel is the foremost expert on voodoo in Paragon City. There's also no doubt that everybody knows it. People tend to steer clear of Cadao when he's walking down the streets, and restaurants often close up shop when they see him coming. Several newspaper articles have alleged that he is a broker of dark magics, selling revenge rituals and potions of power for the right price. In fact, Cadao's much more interested in using his knowledge to take on the Circle of Thorns than to make a few dollars. He knows many ways of forecasting the future, and whenever he learns something interesting, he passes it on to a helpful hero.

6.8.3 Anton Sampson

Occupation: Research Technician

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Nemesis

Background: Anton Sampson used to be one of the leading researchers in the field of nanotechnology, but he's fallen on hard times. Just as he was nearing a breakthrough in his latest project, his laboratory was ransacked by Nemesis agents. The attack left his equipment in a shambles and Anton in a full body cast for several months. Since then, he's dedicated himself to collecting information about their activities and feeding it to the heroes of Paragon City. No one is certain what became of the project Anton was working on, and he hasn't spoken about it since the day of the Nemesis attack.

6.8.4 Ginger Yates

Occupation: Ecologist

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Devouring Earth

Background: Ginger Yates is a brilliant ecologist who came to Paragon City full of enthusiasm for studying the Devouring Earth. She began collecting test subjects and logging data, but it wasn't long before tragedy wiped the eager gleam from her eyes. A young hero named Torque had decided that Ginger's activities were a little too dangerous for his town, and he invaded her lab, determined to destroy her test subjects. But he wasn't prepared for the strength and desperation of the cornered creatures, and the battle raged out of control. When the dust settled, Torque was dead, along with Ginger's husband and daughter. She is now grimly determined to use her knowledge to help heroes destroy what she came here to research.

6.8.5 Colleen Nelson

Occupation: Assistant District Attorney

Location: Brickstown

Villain Groups: The Council (5th Column)

Background: Up until very recently, Colleen Nelson was an extremely high paid attorney. She worked for Pinckney & Sons, a notorious law firm that occasionally defends the 5th Column against charges of vandalism and sabotage. Colleen was right in the middle of one such case when she quit, accepting a job at the district attorney's office along with a severe salary cut. No one can get her to talk about the reasons behind her resignation, but in the months since, she's been whole-heartedly dedicated to taking on the 5th Column. No single person has done more to damage the fascist group, with the possible exception of Manticore, one of Colleen's closest associates.

6.8.6 Steven Sheridan

Occupation: Scientist

Location: Brickstown

Villain Groups: Rikti

Background: When Dr Steven 'Science' Sheridan was young, his parents thought him a brilliant child prodigy. As it turned out, they had greatly underestimated their son. Some people think he's a mutant; others suspect he's the product of genetic engineering. Either way, he's without a doubt the most knowledgeable human being who ever lived. 'Doc Science' never forgets a single fact; once he learns something, it is locked in his memory forever. His great intellect allows him to easily recall these facts and draw inferences from them; as one might imagine, this makes him one heck of a scientist.

6.9 Stature Level 8

6.9.1 Madeleine Casey

Occupation: Soap Star

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Carnival

Background: Madeleine Casey isn't a super-powered hero, but she plays one on TV. Madeleine is the face of Live Wire, the feisty electrical blaster on the popular soap opera, The Super Days. Her viewers have a lot of faith in her, and every once in a while she receives a fan letter that requires a truly heroic response. If there's one thing Madeline hates, it's letting a fan down. She can't hit the streets as Live Wire, but she can call upon one of her many hero friends to save the day. Madeline spends a lot of time networking, and she's become quite adept at pumping her contacts for information about the nefarious goings-on in Paragon City. She's come to think of the primed and polished media darling as her secret identity; the real Madeleine, she feels, is a wily snoop who truly has the heart of a hero.

6.9.2 Indigo

Occupation: Stealth Operative

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Malta

Background: Indigo may look like an innocent young woman, but if you peer closely into her eyes, you'll see that she's no ingenue. A master of stealth and intrigue, Indigo made a name for herself in the intelligence community by being the first to discover the villainous organization known as SPIDER. Currently she and her partner, Crimson, are assigned to look into the workings of the mysterious Malta Group. Indigo can't always play it straight with her hero contacts, but she tries to tell them anything that will give them an advantage in battle.

6.9.3 Tina Macintyre

Occupation: Portal Corporation Research Scientist

Location: Peregrine Island

Villain Groups: Portal missions (Special mission pool)

Background: Tina Macintyre is one of the leading researchers in the growing field of dimensional portal technology. After losing most of her team into the first wild portal ever created, she has focused her energy on assisting heroes to deal with the negative side effects of the portals. Tina is equally motivated by her love of science and the guilt she carries for her part in the loss of her team.

6.9.4 Janet Kellum

Occupation: FBSA AGENT

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Crey

Background: Janet Kellum had one of the highest scores in the history of the Federal Bureau for Super-powered Affairs entrance exam. Her partner, Maxwell Christopher, thinks that she has her head too far in the clouds sometimes, but there is no denying that the progress she's made into the Crey investigation is astounding. Janet is fond of her gruff partner, but envies the fact that his seniority allowed him to select Nemesis duty for himself.

6.9.5 Maxwell Christopher

Occupation: FBSA AGENT

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Nemesis

Background: Maxwell Christopher is from Missouri, as the joke around the Federal Bureau for Super-powered Affairs headquarters goes. His 'show me' attitude helps keep his feet, and those of his partner, Janet Kellum, on the ground. He took the Nemesis end of the investigation and made certain that Janet focused on the Crey. The legendary aspect of Nemesis and his fantastical devices don't impress Maxwell in the least.

6.9.6 Angus McQueen

Occupation: FBI Agent

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Rikti

Background: Angus McQueen was the best and brightest FBI agent in years. He was given the task of infiltrating the group of homeless known as the Lost to determine what was affecting their minds. After almost a year under, Angus was almost completely converted, but his iron will allowed him to wrench himself free and report back. It took many months of debriefing and reconditioning, but Angus can now share his intimate knowledge of this terrifying Rikti process with the heroes of Paragon City.

6.10 Stature level 9

6.10.1 Harvey Maylor

Occupation: Tabloid Editor

Location: Peregrine Island

Villain Groups: Carnival of Shadows

Background: As the editor of The Paragon Tattler, Harvey Maylor is a man always looking for a story. After all, when the Paragon Times is reporting on the giant demon roaming the old Astoria cemetery, what's left for a tabloid to print? Harvey fulfills his journalistic responsibilities by leaning heavily of the broad shoulders of his hero friends. Hero-authored columns sell papers, and photos of super-powered shenanigans make a great front page. He's willing to accommodate his hero sources, either putting them in the spotlight or carefully protecting their identities. As a result, he usually has a claim on the strangest scoop in town.

6.10.2 Crimson

Occupation: Wetwork agent

Location: Peregrine Island

Villain Groups: Malta

Background: If Indigo is the velvet glove then the agent code named Crimson is the steel fist. His heightened senses help him follow the trails that his partner scouts and then his skill with weapons covers the rest. He is totally committed to ending the threat presented by the Malta group.

6.10.3 Unai Kemen

Occupation: Portal Corp Security Chief

Location: Peregrine Island

Villain Groups: Portal missions (Special mission pool)

Background: Unai Kemen was given his name by a set of young Basque twin girls that he was hired to bodyguard. In their language it means 'Strong Sheperd'. Tragically, the girls were killed by a super powered villain and Unai retired. It was years before he was contacted by Portal Corporation to coordinate their security. He refused at first, but relented when the Freedom Phalanx sent Statesman to encourage him. Unai still has no idea why he was asked to assume so much responsibility, but he is determined not to fail again.

6.10.4 Maria Jenkins

Occupation: Former Heroine

Location: Peregrine Island

Villain Groups: Praetorians

Background: In the early days of the Statesman's costumed career, he worked with a woman called Maiden Justice. Maria Jenkins, as she called in her other identity, was his closest friend and confidant for many years. Slowly her powers began to fade with time but she was aging quite slowly. When she met Statesman in the early 1930's she appeared to be in her mid twenties. Although she is retired, Maria certainly does not look over a hundred years of age. Maria has been out of the limelight for some time, but was one of the first to realize that Statesman was missing. This frightening conclusion has caused her to become more actively involved in things.

6.11 Trial Contacts

6.11.1 Maren MacGregor

Occupation: Containment Specialist

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Sewer Trial (Hydra/Rikti)

Background: Maren MacGregor is a containment specialist working for Freedom Corp. Slight in stature but not in bravery, tenacity, or attitude, Maren is charged with managing threats to Paragon citizens' safety. The sewers, in particular, have become an increasing headache for Maren. She has discovered that while the Hydra can be contained, it cannot be destroyed. Her current assignment is to organize and dispatch small groups of heroes to deal with this ongoing threat.

6.11.2 Jane Hallaway

Occupation: Investigative Reporter

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Terra Volta Trial (Sky Raiders)

Background: A soft-spoken woman with an inquisitive gleam in her eyes, Jane has worked for the Paragon Times for years, uncovering corruption and hidden plots that grow like weeds in the seedy underground of Paragon City. Lately she's been following several disturbing leads about the Sky Raiders.

6.11.3 Constance Browsers

Occupation: Investigative Reporter

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Terra Volta Trial (Sky Raiders)

Background: A soft-spoken woman with an inquisitive gleam in her eyes, Constance has worked for the Paragon Times for years, uncovering corruption and hidden plots that grow like weeds in the seedy underground of Paragon City. Lately she's been following several disturbing leads about the Sky Raiders.

6.11.4 Ellie Thessan

Occupation: Investigative Reporter

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Terra Volta Trial (Sky Raiders)

Background: A soft-spoken woman with an inquisitive gleam in her eyes, Ellie has worked for the Paragon Times for years, uncovering corruption and hidden plots that grow like weeds in the seedy underground of Paragon City. Lately she's been following several disturbing leads about the Sky Raiders.

6.11.5 Captain James Harlan

Occupation: US Army Captain

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Freakshow

Background: A stern and rugged man in his late thirties, Captain Harlan has spent his life working to protect the citizens of Paragon City. A veteran of the Rikti War, he now works to bring law and order back to the shattered streets of this once gleaming city. The official title of his current post is 'Military Law Enforcement Liaison,' and he commands a squad of hand-picked soldiers who work closely with Paragon City's police. Unofficially, Harlan's been known to step beyond his authority when the situation calls for it, by bringing in a little super-powered help. He hates to see a mystery go unsolved or a wrong go unrighted, which may be why the officers he works with speak of him so highly.

6.11.6 Captain Roger Smith

Occupation: US Army Captain

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Freakshow

Background: A stern and rugged man in his late thirties, Captain Smith has spent his life working to protect the citizens of Paragon City. A veteran of the Rikti War, he now works to bring law and order back to the shattered streets of this once gleaming city. The official title of his current post is 'Military Law Enforcement Liaison,' and he commands a squad of hand-picked soldiers who work closely with Paragon City's police. Unofficially, Harlan's been known to step beyond his authority when the situation calls for it, by bringing in a little super-powered help. He hates to see a mystery go unsolved or a wrong go unrighted, which may be why the officers he works with speak of him so highly.

6.11.7 Captain Arnold Silvers

Occupation: US Army Captain

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Freakshow

Background: A stern and rugged man in his late thirties, Captain Silvers has spent his life working to protect the citizens of Paragon City. A veteran of the Rikti War, he now works to bring law and order back to the shattered streets of this once gleaming city. The official title of his current post is 'Military Law Enforcement Liaison,' and he commands a squad of hand-picked soldiers who work closely with Paragon City's police. Unofficially, Harlan's been known to step beyond his authority when the situation calls for it, by bringing in a little super-powered help. He hates to see a mystery go unsolved or a wrong go unrighted, which may be why the officers he works with speak of him so highly.

6.11.8 Major Richard Flagg

Occupation: US Army Major

Location: Rikti Crash Site

Villain Groups: Rikti

Background: One of the few military survivors of the Rikti Invasion, Major Flagg leads the troops massing to contain the aliens near the crash site. The major believes in that actions speak louder than words, and he expects those who work with him to perform to the best of their abilities, even when times get tough. He realizes that the future safety of the city, and perhaps the world, depends on the containment of the alien Rikti. He puts his whole heart into his post, earning him the unqualified admiration of his men.

6.11.9 Major Mike Kendry

Occupation: US Army Major

Location: Rikti Crash Site

Villain Groups: Rikti

Background: One of the few military survivors of the Rikti Invasion, Major Kendry leads the troops massing to contain the aliens near the crash site. The major believes in that actions speak louder than words, and he expects those who work with him to perform to the best of their abilities, even when times get tough. He realizes that the future safety of the city, and perhaps the world, depends on the containment of the alien Rikti. He puts his whole heart into his post, earning him the unqualified admiration of his men.

6.11.10 Woodsman

Occupation: Soul of the Wood

Location: Eden

Villain Groups: Eden Trial (Devouring Earth)

Background: The Woodsman was once a renowned hero who helped keep the world of mankind in balance with the forces of nature, fighting against those who would destroy or corrupt nature for their own ends. He came to a tragic end when he was captured by the Devouring Earth, who used his link with the earth to destroy Woodvale and carve out their own territories. Though the Woodsman's physical body perished at the hands of the Devouring Earth, his spirit was freed through the actions of the city's heroes. Now he lives on as a spirit of nature, at one with the wild places of the Earth, helping heroes carry on the fight for the safety of the world.

6.12 The Hollows

6.12.1 David Wincott

Occupation: Policeman

Location: The Hollows

Villain Groups: Trolls, Outcasts

Background: Lieutenant David Wincott was just a beat cop with a nine to five shift until his son, Sam, was kidnapped by the Trolls four years ago. Now, he's a man with a mission. After the kidnapping, Wincott asked to be reassigned to the Paragon City Trolls Task Force. It's a dangerous job that's cost many of his comrades their lives, but to Wincott, the risk is worth it. Although his friends keep telling him to make his peace with the past, Wincott's never stopped hoping that one day he'll be reunited with his son.

6.12.2 FluX

Occupation: Undercover Agent

Location: The Hollows

Villain Groups: Outcasts, Trolls

Background: When the Paragon City police needed an officer to go undercover among the Outcasts, Freddy Tindle's low level electrical powers made him the perfect man for the job. Perhaps because of the dual life he's leading, Freddy's trust isn't won easily. But once he decides that a hero is worth believing in, he'll do anything to help that hero out. Freddy's superiors have recently criticized him for giving his hero contacts too much information, thereby putting his own status in jeopardy. But the way Freddy sees it, the heroes he works with are his comrades and closest friends. If he didn't give them all the information that might help them, he couldn't look himself in the mirror.

6.12.3 Julius the Troll

Occupation: Disgruntled Troll

Location: The Hollows

Villain Groups: Trolls, Igneous

Background: Julius is the smallest and most disgruntled Troll in Paragon City. Referred to as 'Runt' by many of his fellow gang members, Julius has had to find a purpose for himself that's not tied up in the drug culture of the Trolls. He's found that purpose in the reclamation of the Hollows. Julius wants to see the area restored to its natural state, and he's willing to sell out his comrades to make it happen. Heroes have occasionally reported seeing a faint glimmer of intelligence buried within Julius' Superadine-addled mind. If a cure for the Trolls' mutations could be found, it's possible that Julius would have a lot of potential to live up to.

6.12.4 Talshak the Mystic

Occupation: Mystic

Location: The Hollows

Villain Groups: Trolls, Igneous

Background: Very little is known about Talshak the Mystic. The only thing that is certain is that he is bent on protecting the mystical gateway that is rumored to exist deep within the Hollows. Does Talshak want to prevent the gateway from being used, or simply reserve it for himself? No one knows for sure. Talshak has been quite adept at weaving distracting spells to keep the Circle from its goal. However, the thickheaded Trolls have proved more difficult to dissuade. Talshak is happy to provide heroes with details of the Trolls' activities, in exchange for help in driving the gangsters away.

6.13 The Shadow Shard

6.13.1 General Hammond

Occupation: Brigadier General

Location: Shadow Shard, Firebase Zulu

Villain Groups: Rularuu

Background: Brigadier General Marlon Hammond is the man in charge of the allied expeditionary force exploring the dimension dubbed 'The Shadow Shard'. From his early years in the SAS when he battled subterranean reptile men to his coordination of British defenses against an invasion of alien mutant cyborgs, General Hammond has displayed an uncanny ability to handle the strange and unknown on numerous occasions. This made him a natural choice to command this expedition.

6.13.2 Dr. Boyd

Occupation: Field Researcher

Location: Shadow Shard, Firebase Zulu

Villain Groups: Rularuu

Background: Dr. Bruce Boyd is a master of applying different disciplines of science to new problems in unusual ways. Already famous in scientific circles for his papers on faster than light travel based off of musical theory, information theory, and genetics; he was one of the first researchers to volunteer for the expedition to the Shadow Shard. He's made several breakthroughs in understanding the strange nature of this alien place.

6.13.3 Lt. Volkov

Occupation: Expedition Commando

Location: Shadow Shard, Firebase Zulu

Villain Groups: Crey, Nemesis, Rularuu

Background: Though much of Lieutenant Quinn Volkov's military history remains classified for national security reasons, what little is known is quite impressive with over a dozen commendations for valor above and beyond the call of duty. It's also known that Lt. Volkov has often worked against superhuman and supernatural threats to world peace, and that he has worked with Brigadier General Hammond on several occasions. When General Hammond requested him for the UN Expeditionary Force, it's rumored that he threatened to resign if he wasn't allowed to take the assignment. Whether this is due to his belief in the potential threat of the Shadow Shard or his friendship with General Hammond is also unknown.

6.13.4 Dr. Quaterfield

Occupation: Head Scientist

Location: Shadow Shard, Firebase Zulu

Villain Groups: Task Force Contact (Crey, Nemesis, Rularuu)

Background: A brilliant researcher who often works at the far extremes of science, Dr. Thomas Quaterfield was selected by the United Nations to lead the science team studying the bizarre dimension called the 'Shadow Shard'. Quaterfield's researchers have already made several startling discoveries, many of which have been classified as potential matters of global security.

6.13.5 Lt. Col. Flynn

Occupation: Expedition Explorer

Location: Shadow Shard, Cascade Archipelago

Villain Groups: Nemesis, Rularuu, Circle of Thorns

Background: Lieutenant Colonel Richard Flynn has spent the last decade as a military consultant for Portal Corporation, assisting them with security, defense, and first contact situations. He'd travelled to dozens of alternate Earths even before he volunteered for the Shadow Shard Expeditionary force. With his experience in alternate realities, he's been assigned to help coordinate the exploration of the Shadow Shard.

6.13.6 Dr. Huxley

Occupation: Field Biologist

Location: Shadow Shard, Cascade Archipelago

Villain Groups: Rularuu, Kora Fruit

Background: Dr. Ada Huxley has spent most of her career studying at the frontiers of biology in the quiet of her California lab. She requested assignment to the Expeditionary force after seeing the first samples of Kora Fruit brought back to Earth, and has been studying the life-sustaining fruit fervently ever since her arrival.

6.13.7 Sara Moore

Occupation: Resistance Fighter

Location: Shadow Shard, Cascade Archipelago

Villain Groups: Task Force Contact (Rularuu, Nemesis, Circle of Thorns)

Background: Sara Moore was one of the first native humans living in the Shadow Shard to seek out contact with the Expeditionary force. Ever since that first meeting, she has been extremely helpful to the explorers by showing them how to survive in the Shadow Shard and how to fight the Rularuu. She seems to serve as a kind of tribal war-leader for the human natives and refugees in this part of the Shadow Shard. Like many of the refugees found in the shard, she claims to be a descendant of people from Paragon City. Unlike many, she hasn't shown much interest in escaping to Paragon City, at least not until all of her people are safe.

6.13.8 Justine Augustine

Occupation: Supernatural Investigator

Location: Shadow Shard, The Chantry

Villain Groups: Task Force Contact (Rularuu, Circle of Thorns)

Background: Justin Augustine is a renowned modern mystic and explorer into the supernatural. He's assisted heroes and governments all over the world in supernatural matters over the course of the last decade, and volunteered to join the Shadow Shard Expeditionary force early on. He is also a wizard of no small power. Most of his power centers on ritual magic, and his own unerring ability to find the right place to be at the perfect time.

6.13.9 Faathim the Kind

Occupation: Master of the Chantry

Location: Shadow Shard, The Chantry

Villain Groups: Task Force Contact (Rularuu, Circle of Thorns)

Background: This mysterious entity is the master of the Chantry, the floating spherical castle under constant assault by the forces of the Rularuu. In the few whispered tales of Faathim the natives repeat, they speak of his compassion and call him Faathim the Kind. However, his origins and his purpose are unknown.

6.14 Store Contacts

6.14.1 Serafina

Occupation: Magic Store (Ex-Genie)

Location: Brickstown

Villain Groups: Circle of Thorns

Background: Serafina is a former Genie, who was once owned by the Hero Scirocco. Scirocco and her had a very amicable relationship, where Serafina would help out his crime fighting career from behind the scenes, using her magical powers. Scirocco was one of the first heroes slain in the Rikti War, and with his dying breath made one last wish of Serafina, to help the Heroes of Paragon City. Serafina did not know that by granting this wish she would lose most of her genie powers, leaving her with only her communication lines to the Entities. She uses these lines to embolden Magic based heroes of Paragon City, fulfilling Scirocco's final wish.

6.14.2 Agent Six

Occupation: Natural Store (Super Spy)

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Nemesis

Background: Agent Six works for a secret branch of the US CIA codenamed Omega Watch. Her past is a complete mystery, but rumors of her involvement in world-shaking events like the assassination of dictators always persist. She is exceptionally trained in all forms of Martial Arts and military fighting techniques. She even has a smattering of back street brawling under her belt to complete her skill set. Agent Six will help train natural-based heroes for the right price.

6.14.3 Penny Preston

Occupation: Mutant Store (Child Mutant Evolver)

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Devouring Earth

Background: Penny Preston is a lot of things: straight A student, child prodigy, mutant. Penny wants to be like a normal teenager, but that is simply impossible based on how gifted she is. Her mutant power is a rare gift indeed, she has the power to unlock the potential found in other mutants. She can improve upon their natural powers by simply willing them to evolve. Doctors are astounded by this ability, and villain groups would love to get their hands on her, but so far she has stayed one step ahead of them, mostly through the help of mutant heroes she has evolved.

6.14.4 Holsten Armitage

Occupation: Science Store (Time Traveller?)

Location: Brickstown

Villain Groups: Rikti

Background: Holsten Armitage is one of two things: brilliant or insane. He claims he is from Paragon City, 20 years in the future. A future he says where the Rikti have invaded Earth and destroyed all of mankind. He was working on a time-travel device when the final attack happened, and gathered what he could and sent himself back to present day Paragon City, where he could warn the Heroes of the impending doom, and use his scientific knowledge from the future to better outfit them against the threat. Whether he is telling the truth or delusional, one thing is certain, his experiments have enabled science-based heroes to greatly improve upon their powers and abilities.

6.14.5 Mark IV

Occupation: Tech Store (Free-willed Robot)

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Crey

Background: Mark IV is one of Crey's creations, a cybernetic organism that they gave a little too much independent thinking to. Mark IV realized the true nature of Crey Industries, and engineered his escape from one of their high-security labs. Mark IV realized that he can not fight Crey alone, so he has enlisted the help of technological heroes to help him. He uses his vast knowledge of cybernetics to make sure that his allies in the fight against Crey are outfitted with the latest and best cyberware available. He fears the day when Crey finally tracks him down and dismantles him, and hopes it never comes to pass.

6.14.6 Serge

Occupation: Icon Tailor

Location: Steel Canyon

Villain Groups: The Family

Background: Serge has been doing costume designs for Heroes in the Los Angeles area for almost a decade. When Icon opened up their doors in Paragon City, Serge made sure he was at the top of the list for transfers.

6.14.7 Lauren

Occupation: Icon Tailor

Location: Independence Port

Villain Groups: Crey

Background: Lauren has worked her way from simple seamstress to head tailor for the Independence Port branch of Icon. Lauren has always wanted to be a Hero, but in her opinion this is the 'next best thing'.

6.14.8 Carson

Occupation: Icon Tailor

Location: Founders' Falls

Villain Groups: Nemesis

Background: Carson handles only the biggest celebrity Heroes. He makes sure that they are always outfitted in the latest of fashions and that they remember to treat the general public with the respect they deserve.

6.14.9 Ghost Falcon

Occupation: Dimensional Refugee

Location: Peregrine Island

Villain Groups: Crey

Background: Ghost Falcon hails from an alternate dimension, one where people and things are dramatically different than they are in this world. At one point in his past he attacked the Crey facilities of that world, and was captured. Crey scientists there severed the mental link he had to the rest of his team and deprogrammed him as part of their 'Project: Redemption'. Ghost Falcon has come to this world after a portal was recently opened between the two universes. His motives here are still unknown.

6.15 Delivery Targets

6.15.1 Charlie

Occupation: Wanderer of the Streets

Location: Atlas Park

Background: Charlie is a fixture on the streets of his neighborhood. He makes his way in the world as a panhandler, relying on the kindness of the community. It's a bad situation, but Charlie makes the best of it. There are times when he even enjoys his nights beneath the stars, though he wouldn't turn down a nice house and a normal life. A concerned citizen, Charlie always keeps his eyes open for potential sources of trouble in Paragon City. His fellow homeless are particularly vulnerable to a number of different villains, and he works to protect them by keeping the city's protectors informed about everything he sees.

6.15.2 Charlie Sparks

Occupation: Celebrity Handler

Location: Galaxy City

Background: Charlie Sparks calls himself a celebrity handler, and he's made a career out of catering to his clients' every whim. He arranges meetings and parties, gains access to exclusive events, and acts as publicist, concierge, and confidant. In Paragon City, the heroes are the celebrities, and they make up the majority of Charlie's clients. He works for an odd mix of up-and-coming heroes and established film stars, and both groups are anxious to be associated with each other. His job puts him in contact with a wide range of influential people and gives him access to a great deal of interesting information. He's always eager to help new and aspiring heroes catch a break, especially if it helps him in some way too.

6.15.3 Clarence Jackson

Occupation: Garbage Man

Location: Galaxy City

Background: Clarence Jackson was born in Paragon City, and he thinks it's easily the greatest place on Earth. He saw much of the world during his tour of duty in the navy, but he came back home as soon as he was discharged. He's held a number of different jobs in his day, but his current duties as a garbageman seem to suit him well enough. He takes a few moments to talk with people wherever he goes, and he's always keeping an eye out for strange activities. His gregarious nature has led him to make friends with a number of heroes, and he's always happy to pass on what he sees to the city's best and brightest.

6.15.4 Iris Parker

Occupation: Neighborhood Watch Coordinator

Location: Atlas Park

Background: Iris Parker is just an ordinary person trying to make Paragon City a better place. She's lived her whole life in the very apartment where she was born, and she loves her city and her neighborhood passionately. At the age of 70, she is still surprisingly lively and active, and she devotes most of her energy to running her neighborhood watch program. She seems to know everything that goes on in her part of town, and she is a valuable resource for heroes and police.

6.15.5 Sarah Juarez

Occupation: Street Performer

Location: Atlas Park

Background: Sarah Juarez recently moved to Paragon City from San Francisco, and she divides her time between volunteer social work and her unique brand of guerilla street theater. She wants to raise awareness of social injustice, but she realizes that the biggest threats to the poor in Paragon City are the criminal cabals and insane cults that threaten its citizens every day. She has dozens of contacts throughout the city, mostly within the counter-culture and urban hipster segments of society. She's always happy to pass on what she knows to helpful heroes.

6.15.6 Sarah Peters

Occupation: Environmental Enforcement Officer

Location: Atlas Park

Background: Sarah Peters has the unenviable but rewarding job of trying to keep Paragon City's environment clean. Although she spent much of her career investigating corporate and industrial waste disposal, today she is a leading member of a special task force on crime-related environmental dangers. It is her job to coordinate the efforts of police, heroes, and the environmental agency to deal with any environmental threats resulting from criminal activity. Sarah's particular area of expertise is Vahzilok, whose medical and biological waste has caused several environmental disasters. She is also just beginning to understand the possible environmental impact of the magic rituals conducted by the Circle of Thorns.

6.15.7 Andre Jimenez

Occupation: Fundraiser

Location: Skyway City

Background: Andre Jimenez has dedicated his life to raising money for those in need. For Andre, raising funds means not just calling potential donors and sending out mass mailings, but also leading by example. He is active in the community, and he never tires of trying to call attention to the city's problems. Some have accused him of occasionally crossing the line, by pulling stunts just to get media coverage. But there's no denying his bravery or commitment. He'll go wherever he needs to, even right into the heart of the most dangerous parts of the city. He likes to work closely with heroes whenever he can, and most find it a fruitful relationship; he needs their help with his charities, and they get plenty of positive press for working at his side.

6.15.8 Corey McCann

Occupation: Partygoer

Location: Skyway City

Background: Corey McCann has no job or visible means of support, but he never seems wanting for money. He has few commitments, but there's always somewhere he needs to be. He is, in short, a professional partygoer. He loves to have a good time, and he wants everyone else to have a good time as well. As far as Corey's concerned, anyone who might stand in the way of other people's good times needs to be taught a lesson. Charming, intelligent, and handsome, Corey has many, many friends in Paragon City, from all walks of life. He includes among them a number of heroes. They come to his parties and clubs to add a little costume-clad pizzazz, and he gives them tips he picks up from his vast network of contacts. It works out well for everyone, which is just the way Corey likes it.

6.15.9 Hiro Takashi

Occupation: Centers for Disease Control Investigator

Location: Skyway City

Background: Hiro Takashi works as an investigator and emergency response coordinator for the Center for Disease Control. As a doctor, he specializes in rare and artificial diseases, particularly those associated with aliens and super-powered threats. He was posted to Paragon City during the Rikti invasion when it was feared the aliens would use biological weapons. He stayed on to help the city rebuild, and his efforts were crucial in averting two deadly disease outbreaks. Hiro likes to take a very proactive approach to fighting potential plagues, and he works with numerous heroes to help investigate any hints of impending biological disasters. These days he's focusing his efforts on Vahzilok, who plays fast and loose with deadly biological contaminants.

6.15.10 Jerry Kazatsky

Occupation: Bail Bondsman

Location: Skyway City

Background: Being a bail bondsman in Paragon City is a tough line of work. The jails are overcrowded, so judges like to give bail whenever it's reasonable. That's good for business. Many of those arrested have super powers, are members of gangs, or are psychopaths. That's bad for business. Jerry Kazatsky somehow manages to make it all work. He's a smart, tough businessman who knows what he can handle and when he needs to bring in the big guns. He has a network of heroes he works with, giving them tips gleaned from his clients and asking for their help when a particularly dangerous customer jumps bail. He's also been known to help other bondsmen who get in over their heads. After all, he doesn't want criminals on the streets. He's just making a living.

6.15.11 Kira Lange

Occupation: Radical Activist

Location: Skyway City

Background: Kira Lange has been an outspoken critic of the city's environmental policies for years. She's spent much of her life as a radical writer, journalist, and protestor. Since the Rikti War she's become only slightly less provocative, but she has decided to work within the system in an effort to unite the community and rebuild the city she loves. She spends most of her time dealing with officials, coordinating grass roots housing projects, and doing her best to raise awareness of the environment. She meets with a lot of different people and keeps her ear to the ground. She often passes on important information to heroes she knows, especially when she wants something done quickly.

6.15.12 Shelly Knowles

Occupation: Novelist/Author

Location: Steel Canyon

Background: While still in college, Shelly Knowles wrote her first novel, a thinly veiled account of a real hero's exploits in and out of costume. She went on to write a number of fiction and non-fiction works centered around the heroes and villains of Paragon City. Today she's known mostly for her true crime writing and her hard-hitting profiles of alleged villains. She's made more than a few enemies in her time, but she's also found a lot of support, especially from the city's heroes. She's particularly interested in the Clockwork King, who strikes her as a particularly mysterious brand of criminal.

6.15.13 The Can Man

Occupation: Crazy Homeless Psychic

Location: Skyway City

Background: The Can Man's past remains a mystery. Some suspect that he was once a hero himself, which may explain why he takes such pleasure in helping today's heroes fight crime. He wanders the streets with no visible means of support other than the cans he collects for recycling, yet he never asks for money, or even takes it when offered. He often speaks in rhyme. Normally such a confused person would have little to offer heroes in need of a tip, but the Can Man has a special ability. He's psychic. The visions come to him like paranoid dreams, but they're invariably true. Since the Clockwork King's appearance he has been obsessed with the mechanical villain, although he also expresses concerns about the mysterious Circle of Thorns.

6.15.14 Yancy Rhymes

Occupation: Salesman

Location: Skyway City

Background: Yancy Rhymes will sell anything, as long as it's legal. He works mostly on commission as a door-to-door salesman, although he's also been known to set up a kiosk on the street. He has the gift of gab and loves talking to people, even when they don't seem interested in whatever kitchen gadget or diet plan he's trying to sell. As a result, he's proven a remarkably useful resource for some heroes, throwing them tips on villainous activities, as well as offering them discounts on his wares. He also has close ties with law enforcement and counts a number of policemen amongst his closest friends. In return, the police not only look out for him, but sometimes even buy what he's selling.

6.15.15Yolanda Baker

Occupation: Investigator

Location: Skyway City

Background: Yolanda Baker calls herself an investigator, but she's no ordinary private eye. She's more like a freelance discoverer of things. She's written books, found missing people, traveled to lost cities, and even helped save the world. Yolanda often describes herself as 'pathologically curious,' and the primary objects of her curiosity are the villains that threaten Paragon City. Her two most intriguing subjects are Vahzilok, whose true identity she longs to learn, and the Circle of Thorns, which both frightens and captivates her.

6.15.16Annie Coultz

Occupation: Anti-Drug Activist

Location: Talos Island

Background: Annie Coultz lost her son to drugs several years ago, and since then she has waged a personal crusade against harmful narcotics of all kinds. Her PhD in chemistry has served her well in this endeavor, and she's developed several chemical compounds that neutralize the effects of various drugs. She even developed an aerosol spray that can severely reduce the efficacy of Tsoo manufactured drugs. She almost lost her life when she walked through a Tsoo-controlled neighborhood spraying the concoction on everyone she passed, and since then she's left the more dangerous work for the heroes. She has connections all over the city and takes great pride in directing heroes to trouble spots of all sorts.

6.15.17Betty Abbot

Occupation: Case Worker for the Veterans Administration

Location: Talos Island

Background: The Veteran's Administration has its hands full of late, with so many soldiers leaving the service in the wake of the Rikti Invasion. Having never fought such an overwhelming enemy, the veterans of the war have numerous physical and mental difficulties that they need help with. Betty Abbot is just the woman to help them. A dedicated case worker, Betty helps veterans collect their benefits, get medical attention, and find work; she also acts as their confidant and friend. She hears a great deal, and most of it isn't pretty. For the most part she keeps such confidences secret, but not when they deal with an impending crime. Many veterans have fallen in with criminal groups, something that saddens Betty. She usually tries to pass her information to a hero rather than the police, to secure a chance of leniency for her clients. She's sweet like that.

6.15.18Evan DiTomaso

Occupation: Preservationist

Location: Talos Island

Background: Evan DiTomasso is a rough-and-tumble preservationist. His mission is to preserve the history of war-ravaged Paragon City, and you'll often find him in court, arguing with builders eager to pave over the city's past. Still, Evan realizes that over-development isn't the biggest threat to Paragon City's oldest buildings. His greatest concern is the various criminal cabals that take over every empty building they can find and turn it into a base of operations. Evan does what he can to evict these deadly and illegal tenants, and that usually means providing information for helpful heroes who can get the job done when the courts can't.

6.15.19 Janelle Irving

Occupation: Crisis Counselor

Location: Talos Island

Background: When someone goes through a traumatic, life-changing event it can cause lingering psychological scars. In Paragon City, those traumatic events can be particularly bizarre and terrifying. Luckily, there are people like Janelle Irving, who specialize in super-powered and paranormal crisis counseling. Janelle's particular talent is helping people come to terms with their fear and inspiring them to fight back. That usually means testifying in court, or asking for help from a friendly hero. Janelle keeps in touch with numerous heroes and often calls on them for help with particularly tricky or dangerous situations.

6.15.20 Jesse Hobart

Occupation: Insurance Investigator

Location: Talos Island

Background: The insurance business has gone through hard times in Paragon City, since even before the Rikti War. Damages relating to super-powered threats made insurance premiums entirely unaffordable for all but the richest property owners. Even health and life insurance premiums were sky high. The only answer was a metropolitan insurance board to monitor claims and subsidize insurance for the city's residents. But any system is open to abuse, and it's Jesse Hobart's job to make sure fraud never happens. She investigates suspicious claims and activities, especially those perpetrated by criminal groups trying to take advantage of the system. In the course of her investigations she often comes across leads that have nothing to do with insurance. She usually passes these on to heroes that she knows, and in return they assist her when she comes across a particularly dangerous case.

6.15.21 Joshua Stutz

Occupation: Street Talker

Location: Talos Island

Background: Joshua Stutz is one of the many eccentric people one finds wandering the streets of Paragon City. He's not homeless, although he certainly isn't rich. He calls himself a street talker, which he says is like a street preacher without the religion. Joshua just wants to provoke people's minds and make them think about their lives and the world they live in. Joshua is particularly concerned about the growing power of gangs, cults, and other mind-controlling organizations in Paragon City. He does whatever he can to bring awareness to the dangers these groups pose. Because he talks to so many people and keeps tabs on so many different groups, he's proven a valuable asset to more than a few heroes. He'll only help those he thinks understand him and his message, but, once he agrees to work with someone, his help is often invaluable.

6.15.22Karl Bolger

Occupation: Bodyguard

Location: Independence Port

Background: Karl Bolger is one of those guys you're never quite sure about. Whose side is he on, anyway? The short answer is, Karl is on Karl's side. He charges nervous citizens a fortune to protect them; since he's super strong and nearly invulnerable, he's pretty good at his job. There have been plenty of rumors about Karl working for criminals and even committing crimes himself, but nothing's ever been proven. And no one can claim that he's not perfectly willing to work with heroes as well. He often gives them tips about things he hears, especially about certain criminal groups. He has a particular hatred for the Freakshow, for reasons he refuses to go into. He's always happy to help anyone interested in doing them harm. So far, everyone who's worked with Karl has gotten good results, but there's something about him people still don't quite trust.

6.15.23Robert Koslowski

Occupation: Veterans Affairs Liaison

Location: Talos Island

Background: As a Veterans Affairs administrator, Robert Koslowski focuses most of his attention on super-powered individuals who once had formal military ties. Robert served in the Army for two decades and fought alongside several prominent military super soldiers. During that time he came to respect heroes for all they give to the country, and he feels honored to work with such selfless individuals. Although he does help them receive their benefits and answer their questions, Robert's primary duty is to convince former military heroes to continue the fight against evil. He provides heroes with information about villains and problems that the military can't handle. He's a kind of unofficial recruiter, urging experienced heroes to keep fighting the good fight.

6.15.24Wanda Travis

Occupation: Children's Welfare Advocate

Location: Independence Port

Background: The casualties from the Rikti Invasion left many children orphaned, and it's Wanda Travis' mission in life to find a loving home for each of them. Wanda is ideally suited to this job, partly because of her big heart, but also because of her super powers. Instead of fighting crime, Wanda uses her powers of telepathy and emotion control to locate and protect needy kids. She not only works with adoption agencies and foster parents, she also hits the streets herself, using her powers to find those in need. Wanda's work has attracted a lot of positive press, and she's used her fame to create a network of heroes interested in her work. These days she's particularly concerned about cults and other criminal groups that kidnap and brainwash kids. She considers both the Tsoo and the Lost particularly dangerous.

6.15.25 Wendy Klein

Occupation: Deputy Civil Defense Administrator

Location: Talos Island

Background: Wendy Klein is part of the Paragon City Civil Defense Administration, a government agency that's responsible for taking care of all the city's defense needs. Her job is to maintain the great walls and force fields that divide the metropolis into secure neighborhoods. These massive walls require constant care and maintenance, as they are the frequent target of attacks by various criminal elements. Wendy is new to her job, and is just beginning to realize that it entails more than simply managing engineers. She also has to work closely with the city's heroes, both to help undo damage to the city and to prevent it from happening in the first place.

6.15.26 Alexander Pavlidis

Occupation: Disenfranchised Warrior Boss

Location: Talos Island

Background: "Honor doesn't come cheap in this town."

7 Villain Groups

6.1 Banished Pantheon

7.1.1 Overview

The Banished Pantheon is meant to be a mystic oriented villain group. Their main troops are zombies (called Husk) and flying spherical spirits. They should definitely be a mid to high-level villain group. They can be found pretty much anywhere in the city, which gives you a fair amount of flexibility as to when and where to place them. While they can certainly set up camp in a particular region, they are, by nature, an itinerant group that strikes suddenly in a burst of pain and sorrow and then fades away again. They don't build their own bases or structures, but have no qualms about occupying locations others have constructed.

7.1.2 History

The world was once full of gods. In its infancy, humanity had not yet lost touch with the spirit realm. Indeed, we lived in concert with it, propitiating the paranormal at every significant event in our lives. These spirits were manifestations of the world's natural life force. They were reflections of the greater Gaia that encompasses all of earthly existence. Long before our predecessors used their first rock as a tool, these spirits knew sentience, intelligence, song and poetry. They in turn taught these wonders to humankind, guiding them up the long ladder of evolution. In return the spirits fed and thrived upon the emotional and psychic devotion of their human protégés.

For some spirits, to feed and thrive was not enough. They wanted to feast. And so they made the leap from helpful spirits to benevolent gods. They demanded not just thanks and gifts from humanity, but worship and devotion. The savage humans began to build shrines and say prayers, and these eventually grew into temples and involved ceremonies. Some men began to devote their entire lives to the new gods, becoming shamans and later priests. In turn, the gods grew in power as they feasted upon the worshipers' devotion. Where once they could make a plant grow strong and healthy, now they could cause whole forests to spring to life. They controlled the rains, the beasts, the winds, and the sun. The former custodians of nature had evolved into its masters.

Still, each spirit could not escape its original nature. Weather spirits could not control animals. Emotional spirits could not impact the physical world. Each god's true nature defined its divinity. So they banded together into groups so that they might work together and hold sway over all creation. These pantheons would then lay claim to a specific area or tribe of humans, fighting off any interlopers who came to poach upon their worshipers. The pantheons were quite devoted to their individual tribes, for as the tribe prospered and grew, so did their power and influence.

Inevitably, as tribes became civilizations, and villages became cities, clashes between pantheons grew more and more common. Over the centuries many pantheons were lost with their worshipers, while others grew and prospered to dizzying heights. A battle between gods was always a terrible thing, invariably spilling over into the mortal world in the form of plagues, natural disasters, and even outright war with other nations. Often the gods would fight alongside their human followers, shrugging off mortal spears and arrows as they sought to kill as many of the opponents' worshipers as possible.

One pantheon, which originated in what we know today as Sub-Saharan Africa, earned a particularly ferocious reputation amongst the divine. Led by a trickster god called Lughebu, the Pantheon decided that the constant tending to the needs of worshipers was a slow and painful way to gather the spiritual energy upon which they thrived. Lughebu had discovered that fear and sorrow could feed a god just as well as love and devotion. There had long been gods who traded in such dread emotions, but even they gathered worshipers unto them – usually people wanting to stave off the god's wrath. Lughebu and his Pantheon decided to follow a different path, and harvest the negative spiritual energy directly.

By cutting themselves off from the shackles of worshipers, Lughebu's Pantheon was free to wander the world as they pleased, taking their prizes as they pleased. For many centuries they did just that, preying on the weaker pantheon, often going to war with the gods, destroying their people to the last wailing infant and then dispatching the fallen pantheon to oblivion. It was in a particularly hard fought example of these inter-deity wars that one of Lughebu's compatriots, a God of the Hunt called M'teru, made a terrible discovery. While the fear and sorrow of human was sweet and wondrous, the last gasp of a fallen god was pure ambrosia. Once he had shared his discovery with his fellow dark gods, the entire Pantheon became addicted to consuming the life force of other deities.

Now mere mortals were as gruel: enough to sustain their hunger, but never enough to satisfy it. The Pantheon began to roam across Africa, hunting down more and more powerful gods for their fire. With each brutal success the Pantheon itself grew more potent, absorbing the energy and abilities of those they defeated. The rest of the continent's gods could no longer ignore the threat the Pantheon posed. They overcame their local rivalries and past feuds to unite against the ravaging, cannibalistic gods that sought to devour them all.

The Pantheon and the alliance of gods met in battle in the verdant plains of north Africa. They fought a cataclysmic war that lasted for entire generations, fighting back and forth across the continent. With 100 gods for each of the thirteen members of Lughebu's Pantheon, the two sides were evenly matched. The war took a terrible toll on the surrounding countryside, killing tens of thousands of worshipers and stripping the earth bare of all life. By the time the war was finished, the lush forests and plains had been transformed into the desert we know of today as the Sahara.

During the war, all but the five strongest members of Lughebu's Pantheon fell to the divine host. These last five had in fact consumed the essences of their fallen comrades, leaving them all the stronger for their losses. The alliance of gods knew that they needed another approach, and so turned to a single, relatively obscure god who had long fought at their side. She was Teilekku, and she had been a spirit of knowledge. Now she was the first god of True Magic. She had discovered magic through her own worshipers: the ability to bend, shape and tear reality through sheer force of will. This magic differed from divine and spirit powers because it transcended its origins. A master of magic could affect anything in this world and beyond it, not just her own realm of spirit influence.

Teilekku taught her fellow gods a powerful magical ritual that she had devised, one that would defeat the evil Pantheon, although not in a way they expected. Instead of striking the enemy down on the field of battle, the goddess' powerful magics created an illusory army of gods for the Pantheon to devour. The five ravening deities fell upon the false prey, who fell easily before their might. As Lughebu and his comrades consumed their prizes, the second part of Teilekku's spell began to take effect. The magical energies surged through the evil gods' bodies, driving their own spirits out of their physical forms and into the Spirit Realm. The sudden release of such massive energies all at once tore the Pantheon's divine bodies to shreds, leaving them no anchors on the physical world. The spell had effectively banished the Pantheon to the spirit realm, where they could no longer meddle directly with the affairs of gods and men.

The banished Pantheon raged impotently against the barrier between our world and the spirit realm. Without any anchor or calling in our world, they had no way to pierce the wall. Since they had long ago eschewed any pretense of gathering worshipers to themselves, there was no one on the mortal plane who could create such a link. Moreover, the remaining gods who had defeated them were doing a very good job of erasing any trace that the Pantheon ever existed, so that within a generation they would be completely forgotten by humanity.

Lughebu and the rest of the Pantheon spent much of their remaining energy trying to find some breach in the barrier, but this proved a waste. Finally, resigned to their fate, they decided to make the best of their situation. The spirit world is a vast, bizarre realm populated by pale afterimages and memories of the real world. It is a land of ghosts, forgotten gods, and nascent spirits waiting to be born into the world. The Pantheon spent countless lifetimes learning its ways and carving out their own kind of territory within the spirit world. They learned how to look through the barrier into the physical world, and even how to manipulate the dream spirits and send formless nightmares into the minds of sleeping children. They ruled over a horde of lesser spirits and demons, twisting them into malicious beings of pure negative energy and emotion. All the while they bided their time, waiting for a chance to once again feast upon the souls of gods and men.

One of their favorite ways to pass the time was watching scenes of great suffering and despair in the mortal world. Even through the spirit barrier they still gained some miniscule nourishment from such events, like dehydrated men licking condensation from a stone wall. Thousands of years had passed, and they were now enjoying a period of particular depravity and evil, with human tribes selling each other into slavery to white men from the north. While certainly the world had seen such savagery before, this was a new height for evil since the Pantheon had learned to gather fragments of energy from the other side. The five gods flocked eagerly to any point of depravity and despair, especially amongst those who worshipped any of the gods that had banished them so long ago.

On one instance when the suffering was particularly great, in the hold of slave ship bound for the West Indies, Lughebu The Trickster felt the fabric separating the two worlds had grown particularly thin. He had long ago mastered the art of sending formless nightmares across the gulf between worlds, but now, for the first time he was able to send more coherent dreams; dreams that included his name. He had finally discovered the secret of breaking through the barrier at least in some small manner. It was a start, something to build on. At first he and his kin sent nightmares and visions to make a bad situation worse, hoping to eke out more sustenance through the barrier. Only later, after a few years of this largely futile exercise, did the sorrow starved Lughebu think clearly enough to see this breach's full potential.

Lughebu's mind thought back to a time so far gone that he scarcely remembered it. A time when he had been a lowly trickster god and Neanderthal man had left him berries to leave them be. To a time when he had worshipers. It was obvious that there were no gods looking after these poor slaves. They would be hopeless and desperate, willing even to devote themselves to the perverse desires of the Pantheon. And through their worship, he and his fellow banished gods would find a way back into the world. Then they would feast once more.

The Pantheon began to send dreams to the most desperate and yet strong willed of the slaves, both in the American Colonies and in the West Indies. Unfortunately for them, very few were willing to relinquish their old gods from Africa. The voodoo practitioners held sway over many, and their gods were still jealous and powerful. Worse yet were those who had succumbed to the white man's god. They proved entirely intractable. All that was left for the Pantheon were those few dark souls who had already turned away from any path that might lead to salvation. This ended up working well for the dark gods though, for such evil men and women proved the perfect conduits for their malicious plans.

These evil men and women became the first Shamans, worshipers and devotees of the Pantheon who could serve as conduits for their power and desires. The Shamans established small coterie devoted to carrying out the banished gods' will. The first trick they learned was how to send the negative energies from human sorrow and pain across the spirit barrier to feed the gods. In return the Lughebu and company would aid their worshipers as best they could, chiefly by providing information they had glimpsed through the barrier about the enemies of the Shamans. At first they could not interact directly with our world or their worshipers.

However, as their power grew, the Pantheon discovered more and more cracks appearing in the barriers. A crack is actually a poor metaphor, since the “cracks” were actually temporary and mobile: they were the Shamans themselves, and their victims. The Pantheon discovered that when the Shamans sent souls across the barrier, they opened a two-way passage, through which they could in turn send their own evil spirits and negative energy back. Although not nearly big enough for the gods themselves to slip through, they could send their spirit minions to possess the discarded bodies of the Shamans’ sacrifices. They could even lend a part of their power to the Shamans themselves.

Throughout the 18th Century, the Pantheon’s cult of followers grew slowly, reaching its height at the turn of the century in the United States. It never numbered more than a few hundred individuals spread out across West Africa, the Caribbean, and the Southern American colonies. It was in America that the cult really took root. With no established indigenous religions to compete with aside from Christianity, the predatory gods found fertile soil for their machinations. Their power continued to grow throughout the 19th Century, with the gods keeping a careful balance between culling worshipers from both the black slaves and the white masters. It needed the misery and desperation of the slaves and thus found many willing worshipers amongst them. At the same time the Pantheon did not want to give the slaves enough power to destroy the institution that was causing them so much delicious sorrow.

With the coming of the Civil War, the Pantheon had a few golden years where pain, suffering and death were in such abundance that the barrier with the spirit world weakened even further. In the chaos of war, the Shamans of the Banished Pantheon went wild in some regions, and with the help of their dread gods discovered that they weren’t the only ones that could receive divine energy from the other side. This was the first appearance of the zombie-like Husk, which would come to exemplify the Pantheon in future years. The Husks were bodies whose souls had been sent on to feed the evil gods. The gods then sent back one of their enslaved spirits to possess the body and give it a new and terrible life as a zombie.

The end of the war also brought the end of slavery, but not the end of misery in America. The Shamans and their gods took up with the many new hate groups that had begun to appear amongst the white population. Although they never supported any particular group’s agenda, they did recruit from their ranks for their own purposes. The chaos of the Civil War had given the Pantheon a taste of added freedom and power, and it was something they longed to return to. When, decades later, the Great Depression struck, they thought they had found their chance.

With so many millions unemployed and desperate, The Pantheon and its Shamans launched their biggest initiative ever. For the first time since their banishment, they were going to try and manipulate human history on a grand scale. They placed their operatives throughout the nation and were preparing to bring about a violent class war between the poor and the rich in America. Their plan encompassed both temporal and spiritual elements, with the Shamans using their powers to influence leaders on both sides of the coming war. They didn’t care who won they simply wanted the conflict.

Fortunately for America, the 1930’s brought more than the Great Depression alone. It also brought a new breed of heroes, men and women willing and prepared to deal with threats like the Banished Pantheon. The shadowy Mister E was one of these heroes. A founding member of the Midnight Squad, he and his compatriots dedicated themselves to fighting any evil with supernatural origins. Mister E had contacts throughout the occult world and had heard rumors of the Shamans and the devotion to some long forgotten pantheon of evil gods. While pursuing another case, he happened upon a meeting where one of these evil priests was using his powers to sway a large group of unemployed men. He listened closely as their small role in the coming class war unfolded.

With his brilliant analytical mind and mystic insight, he immediately recognized that this group was only part of a much larger conspiracy. He single handedly broke up the meeting and managed to capture the Shaman leading it. The foul high priest refused to talk, but Mister E found evidence on him that led him to another Pantheon cult. This time it was a group of bankers and financiers secretly worshipping the Banished Pantheon on the rooftops of their luxury apartment buildings. They too had instructions that would ultimately lead to a violent class struggle. After he'd brought these sinister silver spoon sybarites to justice, he gathered the rest of the Midnight Squad together.

Their then ensued a secret war in the shadows that lasted for almost an entire year. The Midnight Squad struck first, crippling the Banished Pantheon's conspiracy and preventing the imminent class war. The war in the shadows had just begun. The Pantheon struck back focusing their assaults not on the members of the Midnight Squad, but on their families, friends, and loved ones. As always, the evil gods went for pain and anguish over direct action. Mister E alone remained immune to such assaults, because his life and identity were a secret even the gods in the spirit realm could not plumb. He stood strong and fast against the Pantheon and his fellow heroes, nearly crippled with grief and doubt, rallied around him. Eventually the heroes proved victorious, capturing or eliminating almost all of the Pantheon's Shamans and smashing their witless cult conspiracy to smithereens.

The defeat was so resounding that Lughebu and company could scarcely act on earth for another decade, a particularly harsh blow since it meant they missed out on any chance to capitalize upon the horrors of World War II, which happened just a few years later. Slowly they rebuilt their power base in America, still feeding off hate and sadness and grief. With each race riot, government brutality, and national tragedy their strength grew. By the end of the century they had recovered a fair amount of their former influence, but still not enough to attempt anything as audacious as what they had tried in the 30's.

Then the Rikti invaded. The pain, the horror, the anguish, the fear. It was almost overwhelming after so many decades of deprivation for the Banished Pantheon. They released their Shamans upon the war torn world, creating hordes of Husks to add fuel to the fire. With so many other, more pressing threats, The Pantheon was able to act largely without any serious interference from the world's heroes. Back in the spirit realm, the gods were salivating with hunger. They poured forth all their energy into empowering their Shamans. It was then that Lughebu discovered an entirely new opportunity. The massive amounts of death and destruction had so weakened the spirit barrier and inflamed the Shamans that the trickster god was able to actually possess his devotee for several hours, transforming their human forms into a physical manifestation of the god himself.

Creating avatars of themselves in our world was akin to flinging wide the jailhouse doors as far as the gods were concerned. Although at only a fraction of their true power, it allowed them to once again walk the earth and carry out their every depraved desire. Lughebu believes that transforming Shamans into Avatars is only the first step on the path to freeing themselves entirely from the spirit realm. Now the Banished Pantheon is determined more than ever to set itself free and to wreak bloody havoc upon the entire world.

7.1.3 Goals

More than anything, the Banished Pantheon yearns to return to Earth as free creatures. Such an event would be a disaster on par with the Rikti Invasion, as these five beings by themselves could level whole continents with their powers. Fortunately, at present there seems no way for them to break the cures laid upon them, but even so their power and influence on earth continues to grow now that they can project their avatars into the bodies of their worshipers. What they need is a source of power equal to that of the gods they used to devour with such abandon, but gods are few and far between in the modern world.

However, there is a new kind of god emerging, a very different type of being whose energy The Pantheon is just now developing a taste for: super powered heroes. Heroes are, in many ways, modern gods. They have powers and abilities beyond mortal men. They receive the praise, adulation, and even worship of those whom they serve and protect. The more fame they accrue, the more esteemed they are and seemingly the more powerful they become. Whether they realize it or not, when a hero receives the cheers and support of a grateful city, the experience leaves a residual energy on their spirit. The more people praise their name, the more spiritual residue builds up. This is the stuff of confidence and the aura of mystique that surrounds so many celebrities and heroes. The more a hero revels in his or her fame, the stronger the energy becomes as they tap into it subconsciously.

As a result of this phenomenon, the gods of the Pantheon have taken a special interest in conquering famous heroes and stripping away these auras of worship that have built up around them. The process comes naturally to any of the gods' avatars, which can consume the delectable aura as they defeat a hero in battle. They do not have to kill the hero. Indeed, they prefer not to. Instead they like to humiliate and temporarily or permanently cripple their foes. This not only produces the added bonus of sorrow and pain for the gods to feed on, it also makes it easier to strip away the fame aura since the hero himself comes to believe he is not worthy of the accolades he has earned.

Ideally there would actually be some sort of in game effect associated with fighting the Banished Pantheon. For instance, when their minions defeat heroes they lose extra Fame. Another interesting option would be to allow them to strip away unspent influence points or even to destroy unused favors. On the flip side they shouldn't be quite as tough as their difficulty level would suggest because of the added penalty. You could also balance the Pantheon by giving higher Fame rewards for defeating them, or giving them higher XP rewards than normal.

Overall, the Pantheon seeks to sow sorrow at every turn. Pain and suffering are their bread and butter, and without a constant stream of agony and stolen souls, their power will begin to wither and die. Thus, the more of the city they can bring under their baleful influence, the better. Ultimately it would be grand if the entire metropolis felt their presence on a daily basis, becoming a necropolis of the spirit. But then again, they have a lot of competition.

7.1.4 Behavior Patterns

The Husks and Chambers make up the vast majority of the Pantheon's earthly army, and the evil gods are pretty free with their least powerful minions, setting them loose anywhere and everywhere they can. Because of their slow speed, Husks and Chambers work best in large groups, so it is very rare to see just one or two of these zombie-like creatures wandering the streets alone. The Pantheon likes to release Husks and Chambers in large herds all at one time rather than maintaining a constant flow of them into the city's populated areas. Thus there will be days when suddenly an area is flooded with Husks and Chambers, while weeks will go by without a single walking cadaver showing its face on the streets. These mass releases are designed to cause maximum terror and fear amongst the local population. There is invariably at least one Shaman in the vicinity, to help reap the dark harvest the gods of the Banished Pantheon demand.

It is however much more common to find solitary corrupt spirits roaming about the city and leaving chaos in their wake. The corrupt spirits love to cause their own brand of mischief wherever they go, and their flight power gives them a great deal of mobility. They are liable to pop up literally anywhere, although the Midnight Squad has taken precautions to ward some parts of the city against them.

Recruiting new Shamans is always a priority for the evil gods, since without them they can neither feast on stolen souls nor manifest themselves in our world as avatars. While anyone would be convinced that the Banished Pantheon has great power, it takes a certain type of person to be not only convinced, but seduced by such creatures. A fair amount of time and energy goes into cajoling a potential Shaman into the Pantheon's ranks. Thus a significant portion of the group's energies goes into taking care of worldly matters relating to their new initiates. Invariable evil to the core, a new Shaman wants revenge upon everyone in the world who ever did him or her wrong or even pissed him or her off. The gods encourage their priests to carry out these vendettas, and are more than happy to send corrupt spirits to terrorize ex-lovers or soul sucking Husk to demolish an old work place.

Lughebu has recently developed quite an interest in the lost city of Oranbega. Although they do not truly understand magic, the gods know that it is the key to their imprisonment and they want to learn more. Thus they have begun to send exploratory parties down into the underground city to recover whatever magical artifacts and items of power they can. This has led them into conflict with the Circle of Thorns on more than one occasion, but they generally try to avoid the evil magician and explore areas that the sorcerers have not yet claimed for themselves.

In the chaotic days following the Rikti War, Lughebu's increased powers sensed a sleeping god underneath the cemetery in Dark Astoria. It was the dead god Mot, whose evil power outstripped even the Banished Pantheon. The greedy Lughebu wanted to drink from Mot's divine essence and so commanded his followers to launch an assault on that city zone. The overwrought authorities fled before the zombie hordes and abandoned Dark Astoria altogether. No one yet knows why the Banished Pantheon has claimed Dark Astoria as its own; Lughebu is still trying to figure out how to tap into Mot's power without waking him up.

7.1.5 Allies and Enemies

The Pantheon will happily ally with anyone and everyone who asks for their assistance, as long as the end result is more pain and suffering in the world for them to feed upon. Since they have very few temporal goals, their agenda seldom conflicts with those of other villain groups. The flip side is that they very rarely actually care if their erstwhile ally's agenda gets fulfilled. Indeed, as often as not, when things turn bad for their ally, they will change sides, since they can feed of an ally's fear and loathing just as easily as an enemy's.

The one exception to the above assertions is the Circle of Thorns. As mentioned earlier, Lughebu and the rest of the Pantheon have a great fear for and interest in all things magical. They do not understand magic and cannot work it themselves, but they want to learn. They believe that there is a magical key to their prison and they think that the Circle of Thorns might be able to help them find it. Thus they try to work with the magicians whenever possible. Unfortunately for them The Circle is only slightly cooperative. Each group tries to exploit the other without really helping them. This leads to more than a few scuffles between the groups, particularly down in the caverns of lost Oranbega.

Several villain groups find the Pantheon to be as great a threat to them as the city's heroes do. Crey Industries has no use for the group, considering them pests and a threat to call of their plans. Likewise the Fifth Column feels much the same way, being disdainful of their African roots and their chaotic nature. Nemesis, as always, feels free to manipulate them to his own ends, and often succeeds in doing just that. The Freakshow basically appreciate the group's nihilism and chaos causing tendencies, and frankly to really understand what they're dealing with.

The Rikti present another interesting case. Their world long ago abandoned gods and religion of any sort. They know nothing of magic or the spirit world, and frankly are more than a little skeptical about the whole thing. There's no denying the Banished Gods' power though, and they think it can be used to their advantage. After all, they care little for what happens to humanity, they just want to win the war. They believe that the Pantheon is, like themselves, an invading army from another dimension. As the saying goes, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. The Banished Gods are equally wary of the Rikti, since the aliens are emotional blanks to the evil deities. The Rikti can't be Husk, their souls can't be harvested, and they produce no delicious negative emotions to feed upon. Lughebu has made some overtures of cooperation with the Rikti, but thus far the two have not worked out any kind of formal alliance.

The Dawn Patrol stands as the greatest opponent of the Banished Pantheon. They have been fighting and defeating the villain group since the 30's, and until the Rikti Invasion, they were viewed as a nuisance group. Now that the evil gods can manifest their avatars on earth, fighting them has become a much higher priority for the hero group. They are now quite proactive in seeking out Shamans and concentrations of Husk before they can attack the city. Their magicians have also begun to develop special charms and enchanted items designed to negate the powers of the Corrupt Spirits. They give these out as favors to their trusted allies and members.

7.1.6 Future Developments

The Banished Pantheon has big plans for the future. While destroying souls to create Husk is certainly useful, it is not the ideal fate for every man woman and child. No, they are much better used as a renewable resource of anguish, at least until the gods can escape their prison entirely and roam the world at will. With this in mind, Lughebu has begun to develop a semi-complete stage of possession, wherein a spirit is implanted into a human being whose soul is still there. The human spirit will remain dominant, and the poor victim unaware of what has transpired. Nevertheless he or she will become a walking beacon of some negative emotion, infecting themselves and everyone around them. The Midnight Squad will need to come up with some way to exorcise these spirits or eventually the whole city will fall under their gloomy sway.

There are also plenty of other malevolent creatures from the spirit world that the Pantheon would like to slip through into our world. At this point only the Corrupt Spirits can traverse the barrier, but soon the gods might find away to send larger, more fearsome spirits to our world to wreak havoc. Beings like the monstrosly huge Juggernauts of War or the sprawling Spirits of Chaos.

All is not necessarily dark in the future. Should the situation ever become incredibly dire (such as the gods themselves being free), the world could well see the return of Teilekku, the goddess of magic who first banished the evil deities many millennia ago. She would offer new powers, abilities, and items to who would follow her in her crusade against the banished gods.

7.1.7 Villains

The Banished Pantheon has a very flat hierarchy, at least when it comes to rank. The gods of course sit at the top, and below them are the Shamans, then the Corrupt Spirits, and finally the Husk. In terms of difficulty level for the game, each of these monsters can have several different sizes and power levels. I imagine that players fighting the Pantheon will always face a mix of the different monsters, but that as they get harder, the monsters will get larger and tougher to beat.

Look and Feel: Overall the group should have a rather African feel to it. While Shamans and Husk come from every racial group and both genders, their clothing and ornamentation should have an African, tribal theme to it.

7.1.7.1 Husk

- **Rank:** Minion

- **Levels:** 20-22 (Dessicated Husk), 23-25 (Dry Husk), 26-29 (Rotting Husk)
- **Powers**
 - *Lee-Enfield_Rifle:* The Lee-Enfield Rifle is an old relic of WW1, but still very deadly. Fires a single slug at a targeted foe at good range. Has a small chance to knock down foes.
 - *Musket:* Old style flint lock fire arm.
 - *Wooden_Club:* Smash 'em in the head with this Wooden Club
 - *Tomahawk:* The Tomahawk deals medium damage and can deace a targets defense when it hits.
 - *Zombie_Brawl:* Relentless but slow.
 - *Resistance:* Husks are resistant to Sleep, Fear, and Disorient. They are also resistant to Cold, Negative Energy and Psionic damage, but vulnerable to energy, fire and lethal damage.
- **AI:** Slight preferring of melee. Not as long as a memory of who attacked them.

Description: The most common manifestation of the Pantheon's powers are the Husk. These are men and women whose souls have been ripped from their bodies and fed to the gods of the Pantheon in the spirit realm. Securing these souls is one of the primary functions of the Shamans, since the gods need a constant supply of souls to pursue their dread goals in our world. The poor individuals subjected to this treatment are left as useless husks of flesh, but the travesty does not end there. The Pantheon holds sway over thousands upon thousands of spirits and ghosts in their spirit realm, each capable of possessing such a soulless body. Every time a soul goes into the spirit realm to feed the gods, a malevolent spirit comes back across to take its place.

Possession by an evil spirit results in a zombie like creature called the Husk. The spirit now gives new life to the body, making it tougher and stronger than it was before. The power of the spirit is the soul driving force within the body: blood and breath and muscle no longer matter. The only body part that remains useful to the possessing spirit is the nervous system. The spirit uses the brain, spine, and nerves to transmit its will to the different body parts. If the spine is broken, the spirit cannot control any body parts cut off from contact with the brain. Should the brain becomes severely damaged, the spirit loses control of the body entirely and usually flees back to the spirit realm.

The Husk behave much like zombies from a classic horror film. The spirits that control them cannot move with great speed, but they are very hard to kill. They also tend to gather in large groups, usually under the direction of one ore more Shamans. The Shamans strip away the souls of anyone the Husk manage to overcome. The body is then immediately Husk by another malevolent spirit and the fallen rises up as a member of the unholy menace that took his or her life. Shamans often lead mass raids on the poorer, more dangerous parts of the city, culling as many defenseless bodies as they can and swelling the ranks of the Husk for some larger offensive.

These walking dead appear different depending on how long they have been Husk. When first taken over, they appear much like normal humans, except that they have a sallow complexion, dead eyes, and are usually slack jawed. They move with jerky, irregular movements, like marionettes under the control of drunken puppeteers. The spirits that control them take little care for their seized bodies, so the longer a Husk persists, the more damaged the body becomes. Torn clothes; open, festering sores; caked on dirt, blood, and muck; even insect and parasite infestations are all common sights on Husk that have been around for a few months.

In combat, the Husk are most effective at close range. Their immense strength and toughness make them hard to take down, and allow them to beat down their opponents with their club-like arms.

Symbols of the Gods: Each Husk and Chamber has a glowing icon around the neck that shows which god favors an individual or creature. The gods like to brand their Husk with these symbols, to show who was lucky enough to devour the poor person's soul.

7.1.7.2 Chamber

- **Rank:** Lieutenant
- **Levels:** 20-22 (Dessicated Chamber), 23-25 (Dry Chamber), 26-29 (Rotting Chamber)
- **Powers:**
 - *Lee-Enfield_Rifle:* The Lee-Enfield Rifle is an old relic of WW1, but still very deadly. Fires a single slug at a targeted foe at good range. Has a small chance to knock down foes.
 - *Musket:* Old style flint lock fire arm.
 - *Wooden_Club:* Smash 'em in the head with this Wooden Club
 - *Tomahawk:* The Tomahawk deals medium damage and can decrease a targets defense when it hits.
 - *Zombie_Brawl:* Relentless but slow.
 - *Resistance:* Husks are resistant to Sleep, Fear, and Disorient. They are also resistant to Cold, Negative Energy and Psionic damage, but vulnerable to energy, fire and lethal damage.
- **AI:** Slight preferring of melee. Not as long as a memory of who attacked them.

Description: Chambers are larger, more powerful versions of the Husks. A Chamber's shrunken corpses swells with the power of a powerful spirit. It is, however, relatively mindless and often needs the direction of a Spirit or Shaman.

7.1.7.3 Shamans

- **Rank:** Lieutenant
- **Levels:** 20 - 29
- **Powers:**
 - Storm Shaman
 - *Lightning_Storm:* The Witch Doctor can summon a massive Lightning Storm overhead that will strike any foe that approaches the Witch Doctor. Lightning Bolts from this storm can knock down and damage all foes near the strike, and can cause panic. Lightning Bolts will continue to strike for the lifetime of the storm.
 - *Thunder_Clap:* The Witch Doctor can call a tremendous Thunder Clap that will Disorient most foes in a large area around the Witch Doctor for quite a while.
 - *Knife:* Basic stabbing and cutting blade.
 - *Hurricane:* The Witch Doctor summons a Hurricane. The wind and rain from this massive storm reduces the range and accuracy of nearby foes. Also, the massive winds of this storm can periodically send foes tumbling.
 - Death Shaman
 - *Knife:* Basic stabbing and cutting blade.
 - *Life_Drain:* The Witch Doctor taps the powers of the netherworld to steal some life from a target foe and reduce his chance to hit. Some of that life is then transferred to the Witch Doctor.
 - *Summon_Husk:* The Witch Doctor can summon a Husk to fight at his side.
 - Avalanche Shaman
 - *Earthquake:* The Witch Doctor can generate a powerful, yet localized Earthquake at a targeted location. Most foes that pass through the location will eventually fall down. Additionally, the violent shaking will reduce their accuracy and defense.
 - *Stone_Prison:* Immobilize a single target within an earthy formation. Deals some crushing damage over time as it Immobilizes the target. Some more resilient foes may require multiple attacks to immobilize. Stone Prison can also reduce a targets defense.
 - *Knife:* Basic stabbing and cutting blade.

- *Snow Storm*: While active, the chill from this Snow Storm can dramatically Slow the attack and movement speed of the target and all foes near the target.
- *Tremor*: A tremendous attack. Tremor shakes the very Earth itself, damaging and knocking back everything in a nearby area.
- **AI**: Shamans use the Default AI, but the Death Shaman summons more Husks when three or less minions are left.

Description: There are always going to be foolhardy men and women without moral compunctions who will sell their souls for a little taste of power. The Shamans are humans who have agreed to work with the Pantheon in exchange for magical powers and extended life spans. The Pantheon recruits Shamans through their dreams, touching the minds of the most depraved and violent killers they can find. They come to potential recruits at a time when they are in great need, usually when they're in jail or in some other form of dire straits, even dying. It is often a simple matter for a member of the Pantheon to "give" a human enough power to deal with their troubles in some miraculous manner. Once they've had a taste of such dark power, few can resist whatever else the banished gods have to offer.

In fact, the Shamans receive now true power of their own. Instead they are being partially Husk by one of the Pantheon, who then acts through the Shaman. The human vessel has no idea that a god has taken control of him, but over time their will erodes more and more until their spirit completely dissolves away and the god controls them completely. This can take anywhere from a few weeks to many months, depending upon how often the human "uses" the powers he has supposedly been given. Once a Shaman has totally submitted to the god's will, then he is ripe for transformation into an Avatar (see below).

Shamans always appear in their ceremonial garb, which is a mixture of various tribal motifs. They men are bare-chested and covered with ceremonial tattoos while the women wear tight fitting sarongs or leather warps. Shamans always wear some sort of bone necklace, often with bone piercings through the nipples, nose and ears. Worked into the necklace's design is the symbol of whichever god of the Pantheon they have devoted themselves to. Shamans let their hair and beard grow wild and tangled, giving them a definite wild man look. Their clothing is often little more than scraps of leather sewn together and then dyed the color of their god.

There are three types of Shamans: Storm, Death and Avalanche. Each one owes his power to a different deity within the Banished Pantheon. Storm Shamans owe their magical prowess to the fierce Rambetu. Death Shamans owe their allegiance to the monstrous Tomadala. Avalanche Shamans follow the hunter god M'Teru.

7.1.7.4 Corrupt Spirits

Over the thousands of years of the Pantheon's imprisonment, they became masters of their part of the spirit realm. Masters need servants, and play things, and Lughebu and company found both amongst the spirits native to the realm. These beings existed to help empower and protect various parts of the spirit world, much as the gods had originally existed as various kinds of nature spirits. Since the spirit world is so closely connected with dreams and the subconscious, many of these spirits exist to help shepherd the dreams of living beings. It was the cruelest of the Pantheon, Ullutay, The Child, who first discovered how easy it was to warp these spirits, corrupting them to suit the Pantheon's needs.

Now these Corrupt Spirits are the shock troops of The Pantheon. They travel to our world through the horrifying dreams of the Shamans and manifest a physical form here on Earth. They are generally quite intelligent and capable of creating a number of different supernatural effects. All of them have the same basic spherical shape, although their outline and appendages vary considerably based on their type. Their bodies are usually about four to five feet in diameter, with whatever appendages they have making their total length as long as ten feet in some cases. They constantly float a few feet above the ground when at rest, but are capable of flight up to the highest altitudes. Each spirit is a sentient being with its own memories and even personality. They communicate with one another and with their prey telepathically.

7.1.7.5 Spirits of Pain

- **Rank:** Boss
- **Levels:** 20 - 22
- **Powers:**
 - *Fly:* Banished Pantheon Spirits can Fly!
 - *Power_Blast:* Power Blast sends a focused beam of energy at a foe that knocks him back.
 - *Resistance:* Banished Pantheon Pain and death Masks cannot be Taunted
 - *Resistance:* Banished Masks are hard to hit, but are vulnerable to Psionics
- **AI:** Spirits of Pain continue to attack their first target until the target, or they, are defeated. This initial choice is determined by the Default AI.

Description: These spirits look like a great blood red spined sea urchin grown large. They are a mass of thick spines jutting in every single direction. The spines are not circular however, but rather have a diamond cross-section, with each jagged edge razor sharp. In close combat they spin wildly, becoming like a buzz saw that cuts and tears at anything that comes near them. As they move through the air they let out a low wail, as of someone in pain. As they become more excited the sound grows louder and more terrifying, as of dozens of individuals crying out in agony. The Spirits of Pain can also fire their spines with the velocity of a bullet. They penetrate their target's flesh and then dissolve, flooding their bloodstream with a powerful toxin that causes extreme pain, making it all but impossible for the victim to concentrate on what they're trying to do.

7.1.7.6 Spirits of Sorrow

- **Rank:** Boss
- **Levels:** 20 - 22
- **Powers:**
 - *Fly:* Banished Pantheon Spirits can Fly!
 - *Neutron_Bomb:* This devastating attack lobbs an explosive sphere of deadly radiation damaging the target and all nearby foes. Neutron Bomb can bypass some of a target's defenses and reduce the target's defense.
 - *Resistance:* Banished Masks are hard to hit, but are vulnerable to Psionics
- **AI:** Circle around opponents at roughly 80% of the range of their power. They change targets as per Default behavior.

Description: Spirits of sorrow are fleshy spheres covered with hundreds of different kinds of eyes. Unlike a beholder, these are not on stalks, but rather are flush with the flesh itself. They emit a constant sound of weeping, and many of the eyes shed corrosive tears that burn anything they come in contact with and leave a trail of toxic slime beneath them. Sorrow Spirits attack through purely psychic means, although anyone coming near them will probably hurt themselves if the corrosive tears splash them. The spirit can emit a powerful psychic blast that actually causes significant damage. However, it prefers to act as a spoiler, emitting waves and waves of sorrowful emotions that overcome anyone in the vicinity. The overwhelming despair sucks the will to fight out of foes, making them lethargic and distracted. Spirits of Sorrow tend to wander around by themselves, often setting up in the basement of an apartment building or on the roof and just emitting an aura of depression over everyone in the building.

7.1.7.7 Spirits of Desire

- **Rank:** Boss
- **Levels:** 23 - 25
- **Powers:**
 - *Fly:* Banished Pantheon Spirits can Fly!
 - *Mental_Blast:* This basic psionic attack does moderate damage, and can greatly reduce a targets attack speed.
 - *Resistance:* Banished Masks are hard to hit, but are vulnerable to Psionics
- **AI:** Default

The gluttonous spirits of desire want nothing more than to devour all that is good in anything they come into contact with. Moreover, they inspire this same feeling in anyone around them. Visually they are a floating sphere of pulsing flesh, not unlike a giant stomach. They have tentacles sprouting from them in all directions, each of which ends in a ravenous, circular mouth that gobbles anything it comes into contact with. The bites of these creatures have a toxin in them that promotes a kind of madness, making their victims go wild with desire and hunger. They can also project a psychic aura of desire that infects anyone nearby. Victims become headless of any threats or dangers to themselves in the pursuit of their cravings. As a result their defenses in combat are lowered and they are much easier to strike.

7.1.7.8 Spirits of Death

- **Rank:** Boss
- **Levels:** 23 - 25
- **Powers**
 - *Fly:* Banished Pantheon Spirits can Fly!
 - *Dark_Blast:* A long range blast of dark energy. Deals moderate damage and reduces the targets chance to hit.
 - *Resistance:* Banished Pantheon Pain and death Masks cannot be Taunted
 - *Suicide:* Some Banished Pantheon Masks will self destruct when they defeat their foe.
 - *Resistance:* Banished Masks are hard to hit, but are vulnerable to Psionics
- **AI:** Spirits of Death continue to attack their first target until the target is defeated. When this occurs, the Spirit destroys itself. This initial choice is determined by the Default AI.

Description: A spirit of death is an amorphous, amoeba like cloud of swirling blackness. From it lash out jet-black tendrils of pure, poisonous darkness. The tendrils are actually quite strong tentacles that can grip a foe and literally suck the life out of them in a few moments. Spirits of Death don't exist just to kill people however. Instead they work to spread the fear of death to others. This means only killing a few individuals in any given group of people. Thus, when in groups, the spirits tend to concentrate all of their attacks on one person at a time. Even on their own, they pick a target and stick with it, no matter what happens. Unlike their victims, they do not fear death at all.

7.1.7.9 Totems

- **Rank:** Boss
- **Levels:** 26 - 29
- **Powers:**
 - *Pummel:* Banished Totem brawling attacks
 - *Resistance:* Totems are resistant to Knockback, Immobilization, Sleep, Fear, Disorient and Smashing damage. They are vulnerable to Psionic damage.
- **AI:** Attacks players with Melee powers only.

Description: Totems are living statues brought to life by the capricious beings of the Spirit Realm. These creatures serve Lughebu in the hopes that they might one day become gods – or at least dwell permanently in the material realm. Either way, their main goal is death and destruction.

7.1.7.10 Adamastor

- **Rank:** Boss
- **Level:** 29
- **Powers:**
 - *Dry_Heave:* Adamastor spews a dust, mold and netherworld dust concoction that deal damage over time and reduces the targets damage. The dust covers a small area and can hit more than one target.
 - *Foot_Stomp:* Adamastor shakes the very Earth itself with a super Foot Stomp, attacking everything in a nearby area.
 - *Resistance:* Adamastor is resistant to Knockback, Disorient, Sleep, Fear, Hold, Teleport and Psionic, Cold and Negative Energy Damage, but is vulnerable to lethal, fire, and energy damage.
- **AI:** Default

Description: Adamastor is the resurrected corpse of a giant that perished several centuries ago in Africa. The Banished Pantheon uses him to guard Dark Astoria.

7.1.8 Future Additions

7.1.8.1 The Avatars

The Banished Pantheon itself cannot yet cross the barrier from the spirit realm into our world. However, it can do the next best thing through the help of its acolytes, the Shamans. When a Shaman's will has been totally subsumed to that of one of the gods, he or she becomes a permanent conduit for the god's energy. At any time, the god can fully possess the Shaman. This involves sending over a small portion of the god's power into our world. Unfortunately for us, even a small portion of these gods' power is quite a deadly force to be reckoned with. The Shaman's body transforms into a physical manifestation of the god's true form. These Avatars can only exist in our world for a few hours at a time, after which the body they Husk reasserts itself and cannot be transformed again for several days. Each god can have hundreds, even thousands of these avatars active at one time (limited mostly by the number of available Shamans), so it is not uncommon to face more than one such divine manifestation at a time.

The more powerful the Shaman Husk, the larger and more powerful the Avatar that manifests itself. Thus there should be several different sizes of each Avatar. They should have other defining characteristics as well, most notably color. The weaker the avatar, the paler its colors and the less powerful its effects. The most powerful avatars have bright, vibrant colors and the most spectacular powers and effects. Along this same line of thinking, the more powerful the Avatar, the more super powers and weapons it has at its disposal. So lesser Avatars might not have the full range of elemental powers associated with the god in all its glory.

7.1.8.2 Lughebu The Trickster

Lughebu is the founder of the Pantheon and its most powerful member. He maintains his rule over the other gods through fear and trickery. He is so much smarter and more forward thinking than any of his brethren that they have long ago given up trying to challenge his authority. As his name suggests, he is a trickster god, and has power over the realms of thought, imagination, strategy, and intelligence as well as the element of fire. His symbol is a dancing stick figure of a man surrounded in a nimbus of flame and his colors are red and orange.

Avatars of Lughebu stand tall, well over eight feet in height. Their skin is hard as stone or wood and indeed it resembles carved mahogany and has a deep red color, almost brown in shade. The avatar has no muscular definition, but rather appears like a moving wooden statue, with straight, smooth limbs and torso. The arms and legs are both out of proportion – longer than normal human limbs would be. The avatar's hands are even more out of proportion, long, thin, grasping fingers that end in sharp points. Lughebu's head is flat and elongated, like a large wooden mask and has features with a slightly fox-like cast to them. The mouth and eyes are simply holes in the wooden mask of a face, but both glow with an eerie orange light. The avatars wear a simple leather satchel slung across their torso, from which they pull their various tricks and terrors. Overall, it resembles a nightmare version of an African sculpture.

In combat, Lughebu is the least direct of the Avatars. He prefers to hang back whenever possible and use his abilities to aid his allies and hinder his enemies. He is especially good at the latter. He has powders that Blind opponents and can summon rings of fire to entrap them. Likewise he can use his bag of tricks to heal his allies and increase their strength and toughness. Lughebu's bag allows him to summon forth corrupt spirits of any sort and direct them against his enemies. When finally forced into combat, Lughebu remains quite deadly. He can hurl bolts of fire and his claws tear flesh and bone with ease. But he seldom remains in close combat long, using his trickster's bag to turn himself invisible for a short period of time and slip away. Fighting with Lughebu's avatars should always be a frustrating game of cat and mouse for the heroes.

7.1.8.3 Rambetu, The Storm Queen

Rambetu was once the ruler of the Pantheon, before Lughebu came up with his scheme for turning to pure evil for sustenance. She at first resisted the change and, never a friend to the fiery trickster god, almost went to war with Lughebu. But it was her son, Ullutay who convinced her to join the Pantheon, and she has never regretted the move. Formerly a goddess who brought rains to end droughts and controlled the flow of babbling brooks, she felt a malevolent joy at exercising her powers to their fullest: causing floods, lightning strikes, and other natural disasters. Although she has never come to like or trust Lughebu, the two tolerate each other. Rambetu remains the most independent member of the Pantheon, often striking out on her own path. Her symbol is a white lightning bolt against a field of blue waves. Her colors are white and gray and she rules over the elements of water and electricity.

The Storm Queen appears as a tall, statuesque woman with storm gray skin. She is quite beautiful to behold, and wears a somewhat revealing shift of diaphanous material over her torso, leaving her arms and legs bare. Her hands have long nails made of glittering diamonds. Likewise, her teeth and eyes are diamonds as well. Her hair is a dazzling white, like a cloud on a bright day. Electricity crackles within her flowing hair and behind her bright eyes.

In combat the avatars of Rambetu strike from afar, using lightning bolts shot from her hands or, when faced with large foes, by calling down lightning and other elements from the air. Like many of her brethren, she is somewhat elusive in combat, surrounding herself with obscuring and choking fogs to keep her foes at bay. She can also assume the form of lightning for brief moments, flashing across space in an instant, mimicking the teleportation power. In close combat, which she tries to avoid, she can charge her entire body with electricity and tear apart her foes with her diamond sharp claws.

7.1.8.4 M'teru The Hunter

M'teru is the most physically powerful member of the Pantheon. He began life as a god of the hunt and prosperity, but long ago transcended that to become a deity of war and combat. He is fanatically loyal to Lughebu, and likes to think of himself as a weapon to be directed at the enemies of the Pantheon. Which is not to say that he is not clever. He is a brilliant hunter and tactician, and not easily deceived by anyone (save Lughebu, who can fool anyone). He is associated with blood, battle, combat, and of course, the hunt as well as the element of air. His symbol is a black spiked spear with a blood red tip against a blue background and his colors are black and blue.

Avatars of M'teru are the largest of the Pantheon, standing over ten feet in height. They are broadly built, like a normal, muscular hero (not the gargantuan body type) writ large. M'teru's body resembles a cross between several different deadly hunters from the animal kingdom. His flesh is tough and scaled like an alligator on the torso and over the major muscles of the arms and legs. Below that, in the joints and on the hands, face, and feet, he has fur like a lion's. It almost appears as if he's wearing a suit of alligator armor but it is in fact his skin. His head is very leonine, including a mane of flowing hair and a powerful jaw full of sharp teeth. His hands are the most human things about him, looking like a human's except for the fur. His feet on the other hand resemble the claws of a lion. He always carries a thick, black spear that is as tall as he is. It has a two foot long, ornate, flat bladed tip that is red with the blood of his prey at all times.

M'teru is of course super strong and super tough, with high levels of invulnerability to kinetic attacks. More significantly, and surprisingly for one of his size, he is also incredibly fast and has the Super Speed power. He likes to dart in and strike quickly with his spear and then dash back again. The spear is his primary weapon and it delivers a deadly blow and has a poison tip that slows down and eventually paralyzes his opponents. M'teru can also use his spear as a ranged weapon, not by throwing it, but rather by pointing it at his enemies and firing swarms of small darts at distant opponents. His role as a god of the air not only gives him great speed, but also lets him use various air control powers, a favorite being oxygen deprivation to help weaken his foes.

7.1.8.5 Ullutay The Child

The Child was originally associated with rebirth, renewal, and growth. Ullutay long ago left behind such wholesome roots to become a deity of endless hunger and insatiable greed. He represents all the worst aspects of a child and all our worst fears about them. He is the most jealous of Lughebu's rule and constantly seeks to undermine the trickster god in subtle, if futile ways. He is still a god of growth and birth, but of such things run amok. He also has influence over emotions like jealousy, greed, and sorrow. His symbol is a jagged flower, wringed with thorns. His colors are green and yellow and he rules over the element of earth.

Ullutay's avatars have two alternate appearances. The first is a small, African child, apparently around twelve years old. The child appears as innocent and beautiful as can be, using its appearance to lull victims closer. More than one hero has mistaken Ullutay's child-form for a hostage in need of rescuing, much to their detriment. Then, when the time to strike comes, the avatar's true form coalesces around the child. A nimbus of yellow and green energy lifts the child into the air and forms a new body around the child form. The child body seems to wear this new body like a suit of armor, almost like a pilot sitting inside a small mech. The body is transparent enough to see the child within, but too opaque to see through entirely. The energy form is that of a ravening demon, standing about eight feet in height. It has thin, stilt like legs and gangly arms ending in snapping mouths. The head is oversized, with a huge mouth and lolling tongue. Overall it resembles a terrifying, nightmare version of a child's drawing. Inside, the child body grins malevolently.

In combat the Ullutay knows no fear and cares little for tactics. It storms into the middle of the melee, swinging its snapping jaws at anything within reach. The ground trembles slightly with its steps, and when the child within shrieks in anger, it causes earthquakes to shake the area violently. It also has access to the full range of Earth Control powers, and particularly enjoys imprisoning targets in the earth's grasp so that it can play with them a little.

7.1.8.6 Tomdala The Tormentor

Tomdala the Tormentor is, without a doubt, the most monstrous member of the Pantheon. He originated as a spirit of healing, but Lughebu soon twisted his more helpful impulses into harmful ones. Tomdala revels in causing pain and sorrow, and would do so even if these negative emotions didn't provide the sustenance the Pantheon craves so intensely. In many ways he is like a farmer for the rest of the gods, sowing the seeds of sorrow and pain and then overseeing their harvest. He has no jealousies or ambitions beyond his station. Tomdala's symbol is a purple triangle in which is red human figure torn in half. His colors are black and purple and he has mastery over darkness and the void.

The Tormentor is a grossly obese creature of indeterminate gender. It squats on powerful toad like legs that actually allow it to leap about with surprising speed. Its corpulent torso consists of rolls of fat that are covered with tiny red-rimmed mouths, full of tiny sharp teeth. Instead of arms the avatar has two long, squid like tentacles that are also covered with larger, circular mouths. A mass of wicked, barbed spikes covers the creatures back, each emitting smoky tendrils of pure darkness. Tomdala wears no clothing of any sort to hide his monstrous form and does not use tools or weapons.

In combat Tomdala is a most fearsome foe, because he is effective in many different situations. He relishes close contact with the enemy, where his tentacles and spines can lash at foes with wild abandon. Anyone struck by a tentacle suffers a burst of pure pain, which can have a crippling effect much like being frozen or shocked. But Tomdala knows full well that the most horrible tortures are in the victim's own thoughts. At a range he can project pure fear and terror and pain into a person's mind, which has an effect identical to a Psychic Blast. Finally, he has control over darkness and all the powers associated with it.

7.1.9 Technology

The minions of the Banished Pantheon do not use much in the way of technology, nor indeed do they have much in the way of traditional magic. All of their power is from the divine beings themselves and is restricted to their respective elements and domains.

Shamans and even some Husk often carry items that the gods have blessed, infusing them with a bit of their own power. For example, most Shamans devoted to M'teru carry spears that can pierce metal and often have other powers as well. Followers of Lughebu sometimes have small bags that contain invisibility powder. Ullutay's Shamans sometimes wear grass necklaces that allow them to emit a powerful sonic screech. Rambetu grants her loyal followers diamonds that can summon lightning bolts. Tomdala's Shamans wear gloves made from human flesh that allow them to drain the life from their opponents. These are but a few of the most common examples of "blessed" items that the minions of the Banished Pantheon use.

In fact, anyone can pick up one of these items and use it. Merely holding it in one's hand imparts a basic knowledge of how it functions, although it still requires the right skills at magical item use. There is a down side however. The items are meant to be conduits between the gods and their followers, allowing the gods to tap into the internal energies of their Shamans. When a hero uses one of these items, they unknowingly establish a link with the god, who proceeds to suck greedily at the hero's aura of fame. Thus, while using any Pantheon made item, heroes receive less fame for their activities and could even have their fame slowly drained away from them.

Destroying the corporeal form of a Corrupt Spirit leaves a filmy residue that can be collected and used in various mystic and dark rituals. Thus magicians and alchemists will pay a pretty price for it. The scientific community is equally impressed with the residue, as its origin defies all logical explanation and chemical analysis. The residues are always somewhat toxic, each in a manner particular to the spirit from which it came. Still active Corrupt Spirits jealously guard this residue and will go to great lengths to recover it from anyone who holds it in their possession. Once they recover the residue they devour it, adding their fallen comrade's essence to their own. Thus it is not uncommon for someone carrying the remains of a dead spirit to find himself constantly assaulted by other corrupt spirits. Magic researchers who collect the stuff take care to ward their storage facilities quite carefully.

The Avatars also carry many of the same items as the Shamans, although in more powerful manifestations. They often use these items to enhance their own abilities when they cannot infuse a newer Shaman with a full dose of their power. Interestingly, there is a bit of territorialism amongst the gods and they never use items blessed by another of their own kind.

7.1.10 Missions and Story Arcs

Stature Level 4 Missions

SL4_BanishedPantheon_Mission1	Save a reporter who was investigating the Pantheon REVEALED: Pantheon introduced. You learn that they consume souls
SL4_BanishedPantheon_Mission2	Stop a battle between BP and CoT. They were battling over "spirit traps" that contained souls the CoT wished to keep for their knowledge, and which the BP wanted to consume
SL4_BanishedPantheon_Mission3	Recover idols of Aztec gods stolen from museum. The BP wanted to feed on the souls of these gods.

Stature Level 4 Story Arc: The Wheel of Destruction

The BP is tracking down the Wheel of Destruction, an artifact of great power. You recover each piece, but the BP steal them from MAGI! Disrupt their efforts to empower the wheel, and recover the pieces once more.

Stature Level 5 Story Arc: The Scroll of Tielekku

The BP is after the a mystical scroll that can be used to trap and summon the goddess, Tielekku. Stop their plan, and learn a lot about their history.

REVEALED: Tielekku first banished the pantheon of evil gods who continues to work their will in the world.

7.2 Carnival of Shadows

7.2.1 History

Venice in the 17th Century was a city-state in the early stages of a long and swirling decline. It's role as the preeminent trading center in Europe was soon to be overshadowed by the Dutch and the eventually the English. Yet there still remained a great deal of wealth and power in the island city, and with it came a commensurate level of hidden and not so hidden debauchery and sin. While the nobles and merchants of Venice put on a show of piety and moral uprightness, in private many of them were hedonists to the core. Wild orgiastic parties and illicit love affairs with beautiful courtesans were the rule of the day, as were experimentations with darker practices, including black magic. Magicians, fortune tellers, alchemists, and sorcerers all worked the Venice scene, scamming nobles, priests, and captains of industry alike, sometimes with real magic, sometimes with simple chicanery. It was a time of great opportunity for those willing to seize it by any means necessary.

At the center of this whirling cavalcade of flesh, greed, and magic, was a mysterious woman named Giovanna Scaldi. A native of nearby Padua, Giovanna had grown up in a relatively poor farming family and under normal circumstances would never have had much hope of achieving much beyond the status of milk maid or farmer's wife. But Giovanna was different than all the other girls. Giovanna turned out to be a powerful mutant with impressive psychic abilities. It took Giovanna until the age of 15 to realize just how powerful she actually was. Up until that time she had simply thought the world revolved around her, as most children do. Whatever she asked of people, they did for her. Her parents doted on her and never made her do chores. Her friends always agreed to play whatever games she chose and were very generous to her. The local baker always gave her free sweets whenever she stopped by for a treat. She became a spoiled, bratty young woman that no one had ever been able to say no to – mostly because she was subconsciously using her psychic powers to control their minds.

It was only when her demands grew more costly and her parents lost their land due to unpaid taxes that the true extent of abilities became revealed. When soldiers came to drive them off her land, Giovanna told them to go away. They did. But then they came back, so she told them to just forget about the whole thing and never come back. They did. When new soldiers came, they had orders to not ask politely – they bore torches and immediately set fire to the farmhouse, with Giovanna and her family still inside. The young psychic rushed outside in a panic, and in her fear and anger shouted that the men should be burning each other, not her house. They did. Giovanna's parents were astonished, and more than a little frightened. They couldn't understand what was happening, but they knew that Giovanna was the cause. But Giovanna knew exactly what was happening. In that moment of crisis everything became clear to her. She could make people do whatever she wanted. She was, basically, a god.

Suddenly she was very tired, so she made her father carry her to the nearby home of a wealthy merchant while their family farmstead continued to burn. She told the owner that she needed to sleep in his no doubt very comfortable bed and that when she awoke she'd need some food and wine and the undivided attention of the best dressmaker in Padua. The owner was more than happy to comply. Giovanna had already practically forgotten about her family. A girl of tremendous insight and a voracious appetite for personal satisfaction, she had no doubt about what she wanted next from life, and there was only one place she knew of that she could get it: Venice.

Giovanna several months more in Padua, during which time she experimented with the true limits of her powers, all the while amassing the money, clothes, and knowledge she would need to take on Venice on her own terms. She learned that there was a significant difference between merely suggesting simple things that a target might be inclined to do anyway, and forcing people to behave against their nature. She could force anyone to do anything, but she found that exercising her power for extreme purposes tired her out very quickly. The subtle path would always be the path of least resistance for her. Although she could not read minds, Giovanna could read people, and had become a pretty astute judge of character. And since everyone secretly longs to reveal their heart's desire, forcing people to reveal their hopes and dreams usually required very little of her power. Once she knew a person's motivations, manipulating them became very easy – simply a matter of guiding their path towards a mutually agreeable conclusion. In this manner she acquired the money and support she needed, not by simply forcing people to hand it over, but by convincing them that they wanted to help her.

Upon arrival in Venice, Giovanna through herself into the whirl of social life in La Serinissima. Posing as a Duchess, she had no problem finding lodgings in a wondrous palazzo and inserting herself directly into the highest levels of Venetian society. She attended all the best parties, was surrounded by suitors and potential lovers, and generally lived a kind of fairytale life made up of beautiful people and beautiful places. However, despite her powers and worldly airs, she remained very much a naïve young girl in many respects. She remained largely unaware of some of the darker “secrets” of life in Venice, and for several years was content to turn a blind eye to tales of hedonism and devil worship. Giovanna was living the life of a storybook princess, and would hear of nothing that might disturb her fantasy existence.

It was only as she matured and began to grow bored with her life that she truly began to discover the forbidden pleasures that Venice truly had to offer. For Giovanna, it was like an alcoholic discovering wine for the first time – she knew at once that she had finally found her place. She dove into this mysterious and sensual world head first, opening herself up to all manner of experience. She took the scene by storm, and soon became famous for hosting the most decadent and imaginative parties in the city. But the pleasures of flesh and food were not what interested her most (although she certainly enjoyed them). For her, the most intriguing aspect of this secret world, was the occult. Although she had not spent much time thinking about where her miraculous powers came from, part of her had of course always wondered what made her different. The teachings of the Church certainly offered no explanations. She had discussed the matter with several priests and then been forced to wipe their memories (a very tiring undertaking) when they accused her of being in league with Satan. As far as she was concerned, the priests were as corrupt and venal as any man or woman she knew and could not possibly offer her true insight. She thought that perhaps these various occultists and men of mystery and magic could offer a fresh perspective.

Giovanna's powers allowed her to quickly separate the frauds from those few who had real mystic insight. She confided in one of them about the true nature of her abilities, a man who called himself Uriel di Inferno, an obvious pseudonym. The two became very close and Uriel became a regular sight at Giovanna's parties. Soon the two began hosting occult ceremonies and gatherings as well. Uriel himself had some talent with black magic and had on occasion consorted with demons, but he abandoned those disciplines once he saw what Giovanna could do. Whatever the source of her mysterious powers, she was no demon. Uriel decided it would be much better to bargain with a young woman rather than an ancient demon. He helped Giovanna to explore the full extent of her powers. Using their parties and mystic rituals as a cover for their experiments, the two discovered just how talented she truly was. She could effectively influence any number of people within the sound of her voice, urging them to perform acts that didn't go against their basic nature. She could force her will upon at least a dozen individuals at a time, although this left her drained and weary. She could also take over a person's mind and body completely, possessing them and controlling their body from within. This last power left her unconscious during the possession and bed ridden for hours afterwards, but opened a whole new range of possible mischief and entertainment.

One thing that Both Giovanna and Uriel noticed was that her powers didn't drain her energy nearly as much when she used them during one of their parties. It was as if she fed upon the energy of the partygoers around her, especially during the times of highest debauchery. Uriel, with his background in demonology, hypothesized that Giovanna gained some sort of sustenance when she touched the mind of someone engaged in sin of some sort. The individuals own sense of excitement at breaking the rules lit up their souls, like throwing fuel on a flame. The brightly burning souls of these sinners warmed Giovanna, giving her strength to continue for far longer than would normally be the case. Some more experimentation revealed that, if Giovanna attended her parties and scarcely used her powers at all, then she came out of the experience with tremendous energy – in fact the first time she tried it she couldn't get to sleep for a week, and only found slumber after using her powers to directly control several noblemen in a rather embarrassing fashion.

It was obvious that somehow Giovanna took energy from the souls of sinners, a revelation that not only delighted her, but also caused her to sink further into depravity and immoral acts. Her rapacious hunger for new and more exciting extravagances of the flesh and mind became legendary throughout the city. She became more and more adept at siphoning off energy from the souls of those around her, so that with each passing week her power grew stronger and stronger. She could now control the minds of almost anyone in the city, as long as she had touched their mind in person at least once before. Her sinful soirees spilled out into public plazas and even the Doge's palace played host to some truly astonishing events. Giovanna had the entire city in her grasp – or at least the part of the city she cared about; the nobles, the merchants, and the beautiful people were all under her sway.

Although many of the higher-ranking clergy were eager participants in Giovanna's fetes, there were plenty of pious priests, monks, and nuns who were outraged at what was going on. For her part, Giovanna paid them no mind. When one would occasionally make a public show of protesting the Sodom and Gomorrah lifestyle of the city's rich and famous, she would simply summon them to her and melt away any thoughts of challenging her or her friends. But not all challenges were public. Letters and messengers were sent to Rome. While the official dignitaries from the Papal Court immediately fell into Giovanna's web upon arrival, the secret investigators from the Inquisition did not. The Pope learned the truth about what was going on in Venice – that the so-called Duchess Giovanna Scaldi had turned the entire city into a godless brothel thanks to her pact with the Devil himself. Reports of Giovanna's powers made it clear that she could control any normal man or woman who came into her presence. Fortunately for him, the Pope had in his arsenal a man who was far from normal.

7.2.2 Come the Inquisitor

Brother Abelard Vernoux was, much like Giovanna, a Mutant, although one with a very different kind of mutation. He had a kind of special empathic ability that allowed him to not only absorb the emotions and thoughts of people around him, but also the qualities of animals, plants, and even inanimate objects. For example, when his teachers told him to show iron like discipline, he drew upon the strength of iron to not only toughen his resolve, but his skin as well. He was the perfect student of course, because he always knew just what his teachers wanted to hear. For many years he hid his special gift from them, knowing empathically that they would not understand it, even though he knew in his own heart that it was a gift from God.

Predictably, given that he was a walking miracle, Abelard entered service in the Church and became a monk. A fervent Catholic, he chose the battlefield as his venue of choice, and throughout the religion-oriented 30 Years War, he acted as a confessor, advisor, and officiant for the armies of Catholicism in their war against what he perceived of as heresy. During his time on the battlefield, Abelard slowly began to reveal his powers, using them to help soldiers in need, sniff out enemy spies, and sometimes even to sway the course of battles. Always he couched these occurrences in terms of miracles from God – answers to his prayers. In the religious minded zeitgeist of the day, these explanations were not only accepted, they were welcomed. Brother Abelard developed a reputation as one of the most zealous and spiritual men in Christendom.

After the Peace of Westphalia ended the war, Brother Abelard was not ready to give up the fight against heresy. If he couldn't fight the Protestants abroad, then he would be sure to do his best to stamp out any signs of heresy within those lands still loyal to Rome. He joined the Inquisition. There his powers proved most useful, as he was able to sniff out the merest whiff of heresy or impiety in a person's mind. On more than one occasion he became the target of assassins, since everyone knew that once Abelard was on the case, he would always get his man. But in those dire times his more physical manifestations of power protected him, allowing him to transform himself into steel to deflect blades or fire to scourge his attackers of their sins (and lives).

And so it was that the Pope turned to Brother Abelard, now in his 60's but still looking like a man of no more than 40, to deal with the massive outbreak of heresy in Venice. The Inquisitor was more than happy to serve the Bishop of Rome. The mutant monk set forth immediately, and unlike many of his fellow Inquisitors, he traveled alone. He found that having a retinue not only slowed him down, it sometimes led to difficult questions. Not everyone – especially members of the suspicious Inquisition, was willing to believe that his powers came from God and not witchcraft.

The Inquisitor arrived in Venice unheralded and largely unnoticed. His arrival happened to coincide with one of Giovanna's grand parties, a lustful affair that spread out across all of the Piazza San Marco, the Doge's Palace, and even into the Cathedral itself. Needless to say, the Inquisitor needed little proof of the heretic horrors that had gripped Venice in their clutches. He reached out into the minds of those around him and quickly figured out just who was responsible for all this mayhem. Giovanna was at the height of her power, and every beautiful or wealthy person in Rome was under her sway. Her image blazed like a beacon in the minds of everyone Brother Abelard touched.

Abelard found Giovanna inside the Doge's palace, holding court over a shameful display of noblemen disporting themselves in a most embarrassing and irreligious manner. He ordered that this sinful behavior be ceased at once and that Giovanna Scaldi be seized as a heretic and a witch. Giovanna just laughed, and as she chuckled the rest of the room followed suit. Deciding to play with her newfound opponent for a while, she let Brother Abelard rave on for several more minutes. The monk became more and more enraged as he tried to reach out into the minds of these sinners and their witch-queen. But he could not overthrow her power. Finally, as Brother Abelard approached Giovanna on her throne, she grew weary of his presence. She reached into his mind to turn it off.

And nothing happened. Brother Abelard's own mental mutations protected him from Giovanna's power, although he did sense her mind probing at his. However, her concentration failed when he slapped her harshly across the face, sending her sprawling across the floor. No one had ever struck Giovanna before. No one had even raised their voice to her. She reached out into the minds of the assembled nobles and ordered them to tear this troublesome monk to pieces with their bare hands. As the mob descended upon him, Abelard absorbed the strength of the marble floor into his skin, protecting him from their fists and bites. Although he didn't want to hurt them, he had no choice. He lashed out, sending them flying across the room in heaps of shattered bones and ruptured organs.

Giovanna had already fled the room, frightened of what was happening. She had never known failure or setback in all her life. She sought out Uriel, all the while sending more of her thralls after Brother Abelard. He rampaged through the city, beating down everyone that Giovanna threw in his path. Although Giovanna had been absorbing soul energy for years now, her powers were not inexhaustible. After a twelve hour chase through the city, she finally collapsed, and only with Uriel's help did she manage to find a safe hiding place from the monk's wrath.

Abelard quickly reestablished Church control over Venice, breaking down Giovanna's conditioning and igniting an Inquisitorial furor within the population. The lower classes had long been left out of Giovanna's excesses and had come to resent the flagrant and disturbing immorality of their community leaders. Those leaders, now free from Giovanna's influence, were contrite and repentant, eager to save themselves from being tortured by the Inquisitor or burned at the stake. The whole city thronged itself at Abelard's feet, who promptly ordered them to tear the city apart if that's what it took to find Giovanna Scaldi.

Frightened and desperate, Giovanna knew that she couldn't hide for long, but she had no idea how she could escape either. It was her friend and confidant Uriel who came up with a rather radical solution. He had long been investigating the nature of Giovanna's power, and had determined that Giovanna could project her entire soul and mind out of her body and into someone or something else. It was clear that Brother Abelard could read minds, so he might detect Giovanna if she put her mind into another body to escape the city. But what if she put her mind into a specially prepared object? Uriel knew several spells that he thought might enable an item to carry a soul, at least for a time.

Not knowing what else to do, Giovanna agreed. She chose an enamel mask that she thought looked a bit like her and Uriel performed the necessary rites and rituals. Giovanna projected her entire soul into the mask, something she had never done before, even with a person. Her body died immediately, and all the world went dark for her. She knew nothing of the outside world. The plan was for Uriel to spirit her out of the city and find a suitable body for her to possess for her own.

Unfortunately for both of them, their scheme did not go according to plan. Abelard himself caught Uriel as he was trying to slip out of the city on a hired boat. He now knew all about Uriel's close alliance with the wanted Giovanna Scaldi, and he seized the wanton wizard and brought him to the Cathedral for questioning. Years of being Giovanna's consort had taught Uriel how to shield his mind from mutant psychics, and Abelard was unable to break him. He even resisted torture, finally dying of a heart attack while on the rack. Meanwhile, like the possessions of every other sinner in the city that Brother Abelard had found less than fully repentant, Uriel's personal belongings were sold to raise money for the church, including a lovely but otherwise pedestrian porcelain mask.

7.2.3 Vanessa DeVore

In July of 2000, a pretty young Art History named Vanessa DeVore arrived in Venice during a weekend trip from Florence, where she was studying. Vanessa was overwhelmed by the beauty of the floating city and wondered about its dark streets in a kind of Stendahl Syndrome induced daze. She had long waited for this moment – and was making the most of her time in the city where her grandmother claimed she had distant ancestors. Vanessa was herself a low-level empath, capable of intuiting and even absorbing other people's emotions and sometimes even their thoughts. She also happened to be a distant blood relation of Giovanna Scaldi.

Vanessa found herself wandering into a dusty, decrepit curio shop in one of Venice's less traveled corners. As she poked around, looking for a souvenir, she came across a once beautiful wooden box containing what must have been at one time a lovely porcelain mask. The wooden case had warped slightly and was covered with scratches and scuffmarks, while the mask itself had become discolored and chipped in several places. She felt strangely drawn to the piece, and made the shopkeeper an offer he gladly accepted.

All the way to her hotel room, Vanessa grew more and more obsessed with trying the mask on. She had planned simply to drop it off and then head out for more sightseeing, but by the time she arrived, all she could think about was finding the right materials to clean the mask properly. A trained art restorer, Vanessa could work wonders with a little soap, water, and a toothbrush. She settled down with the mask and over the next few hours carefully restored at least some of its former glory. Then, her work complete, the next step was obvious. She put it on.

The mask had passed through many owners in the hundreds of years it had been passed about Venice, but never before had someone been so perfect a match for the dormant psyche of Giovanna Scaldi. She had felt her distant cousin's arrival almost as soon as Vanessa set foot off the train in Venice. In fact, it was the first thing Giovanna had felt in a very, very long time. Up until that point, she had existed in a void, alone with her thoughts for the intervening centuries. She had long ago given up straining against the confines of her porcelain prison, and had in many ways gone quite insane. But Vanessa's presence snapped her out of her madness – at least to a degree – and now the time was at hand. She would be free once more!

When Vanessa put on the mask, Giovanna's mind flooded into hers, nearly overwhelming her. The sudden melding of two sets of memories drove Vanessa's body into shock. She collapsed to the floor unconscious. As she lay there, her mind and Giovanna's fought for control over the body, even as they exchanged information about their respective worlds. Their thoughts, emotions, memories, and morals combined in a kind of psychic soup, until many of the boundaries between the two were eroded completely. Neither could win the titanic battle of spirits for total control. It was only the next morning, when the maid found Vanessa sprawled on the floor and removed the mask, that the conflict ended.

Frightened and badly shaken, Vanessa packed the mask away and eventually returned home to Paragon City, ostensibly to finish her graduate work. Instead, she spent her time learning everything she could about Giovanna Scaldi and the mysterious mask. She consulted with some of the city's foremost experts on occult matters, including several prominent members of the Midnight Squad. They ascertained that while the mask itself did have magical properties, Giovanna's power was entirely psychic based, rather than mystic in origin. She was, in all probability, a mutant.

Sorting through the memories that Giovanna passed onto her during their mind meld, Vanessa knew that Giovanna had been a powerful psychic, capable of influencing and even controlling other peoples minds. She also knew that Giovanna somehow fed on the souls of those who "sinned." The access to such power was quite tempting, but Vanessa was too frightened to put the mask on again, even though it called to her constantly.

Then events forced her hand. When the Rikti invaded, Vanessa felt as powerless as anyone. These aliens were overrunning the city from every direction. There was nowhere to run and it seemed that the heroes were dying as quickly as the attackers. Vanessa knew she had to do whatever she could to fight back against these strange monsters. She took a chance and put the mask on. The two psyches fused once more, but this time Vanessa was ready for the shock and had prepared her own mental defenses. She prevented Giovanna from totally taking over her mind and even came to an accord with the woman in the mask – they needed to work together or the aliens would destroy both of them.

Unfortunately, it was not as easy as that. As it turned out, Giovanna's power could not be used to control the alien Rikti minds. But the two women would not give up that easily. In desperation they began to lock onto several of the nearby soldiers, taking them over and then coordinating their fight against the aliens. Because there was instant telepathic communication between them and because they now behaved orders without any fear for their own safety, they became a much more effective fighting unit. As Giovanna used her power more and more, Vanessa's personality receded into the background. Giovanna used her puppet soldiers without mercy, sacrificing them without a second thought if it meant killing or harming just one more Rikti.

Vanessa/Giovanna fought on like this for twenty hours before their body finally collapsed from the strain. Luckily they were unharmed during their blackout period, and after a quick meal they launched themselves back into the action. The next day, as her power began to drain, Giovanna tried in desperation to latch on to any source of energy she could find. But pain and suffering were not the kinds of "sins" that had once fed her. As unconsciousness welled up within her, she sunk her mental claws into one of the heroes she had been controlling, trying to hang on. The result was a sudden flush of energy that came on in a flood. It took her a moment to realize what had happened – she had ripped the hero's soul completely from his body and then devoured it.

This new twist on an old power was enough to even horrify Giovanna. She recoiled at what she had done, although it exhilarated her at the same time. Ironically, it was Vanessa who saw the true potential of this terrible gift. It meant that they could keep on fighting, indefinitely if need be. As long as there were souls to scavenge then they could do their part to fight off the Rikti menace. And so they kept on fighting. They quickly discovered that they couldn't rip out just anyone's soul. In fact, it had to be someone that they had been dominating for at least a few hours. Only after they had stripped away a person's natural mental defenses could they tear a soul free.

This restriction served them well enough – and kept them fighting throughout the war. They assembled around them a cadre of heroes and soldiers that fought exclusively under their telepathic command. They even volunteered their puppets for the final assault on the Rikti stronghold beneath Paragon City. Their entire force served on the Alpha Strike team and, like most of the heroes involved in that operation, they died when the Rikti portal was destroyed. With the last of their minions lost and no ready souls to devour, Vanessa/Giovanna collapsed, and slept for the first time in seven months.

When she awoke nearly a week later, Vanessa was in a hospital bed, and wasn't wearing her mask. She missed Giovanna immediately, and longed desperately for a return of the power she had once share. Although still sick and weak from her long exertions, Vanessa checked herself out of the hospital and returned home to find the mask sitting on the floor where the paramedics who found her had left it. She couldn't wait to put it on, and soon her thoughts flowed warmly into those of Giovanna. Like two old friends or long lost lovers, they merged together once more and extended their telepathic tendrils out into the world around them.

They had done their part to save humanity, and now they deserved a reward. Vanessa's body was still sick and in need of medical attention, but a public hospital was such an unpleasant place. Instead they used their mental powers to summon doctors, nurses, and attendants to their side. These enthralled professionals tended to her every need, including emptying their bank accounts and helping Vanessa DeVore buy a much larger, more luxurious penthouse apartment. Vanessa told herself that she had earned this kind of treatment, while Giovanna simply reveled in the return to a level of luxury with which she was once intimately accustomed.

Vanessa found herself quickly enmeshed in a bit of a moral quandary. She felt bad about using her/Giovanna's powers merely for self-gratification. It took only a few weeks for her body to fully recover, but by that time she had grown very accustomed to being waited on hand and foot – due in large part to Giovanna's own proclivities. Neither of them wanted to see their newly comfortable lifestyle come to an end. She also wanted to continue fighting the Rikti – to “earn” her comforts, but she didn't quite feel justified in dominating heroes and devouring their souls anymore. After all, the most dangerous time had passed, and the authorities and remaining heroes didn't really need her help coordinating against the few remaining aliens.

It was at this point the Giovanna began to assert herself more strongly, seducing Vanessa with a flood of memories of the good old days when she had ruled the Venetian upper classes as a queen of leisure and debauchery. Through the prism of Giovanna's memories, Vanessa saw those days as idyllic and a happy time. She didn't see the harm Giovanna had done, nor the inherent horror of controlling other people's minds just for your own pleasure. Giovanna convinced Vanessa that they needed to recreate her old version of Venice here in Paragon City. There would be no need to scavenge souls away from people – they could feed off the sins of their new “friends,” and create their own little version of paradise.

And so Vanessa DeVore went from art student to freedom fighter to the party queen of Paragon City. She followed in Giovanna's footsteps, introducing herself into and then quickly coming to rule Paragon City's upper-class social scene. She gathered around her a number of young, wealthy, and beautiful men and women and proceeded to try and control them all while she lived off their sinful souls. But a curious thing had happened since Giovanna's 17th century exploits. The modern day concept of sin held very little weight with the twenty-something party set. No matter what they did, the partygoers never felt the secret shame that they were sinning. Vanessa/Giovanna had no regret and sin to scavenge. While trying to influence nearly a hundred guests, she nearly collapsed at her first major event. At the last moment she reached out and sucked away the soul of one unlucky man. He died instantly, but Vanessa was rejuvenated. So much so in fact, that she was able to wipe all memory of the man's death from the minds of her fellow revelers. He was forgotten and the party continued.

And so Vanessa and Giovanna learned that, if they wanted to exercise their power without limits, then they would have to sacrifice others to their cause. The question was, could it possibly be worth it? How would they justify such behavior, even to themselves? By now Vanessa had become addicted to the power that Giovanna gave her, and she was unwilling to step back away from it now. It was then that once again fate took a hand in Vanessa DeVore's decision making process.

One of Vanessa's favorite partygoers was a young woman named Rachel Morris. Rachel was on her way home from Vanessa's latest party when she was attacked and waylaid by members of a street gang called the 8th Street Muertos. Vanessa was in contact with the young woman during the entire attack and felt every minute of her pain – unfortunately she was caught at a weak moment and didn't have the energy to dominate the attackers. At the last moment she decided to take Rachel's soul and then used that energy to wreak her terrible vengeance upon the gang members. She controlled each of them, forcing them to torture and then kill one another in ways best left to the imagination.

Vanessa had found her excuse – she would create a place in the world that was safe for her and her friends to enjoy life to the fullest. And the only way to create such a safe zone was to make sure that anyone who tried to stop her or hurt her friends, would die a most excruciating death. The first step was to destroy any last vestige of the 8th Street Muertos, and for that she needed a little bit of help. She gathered together ten of her dearest friends – all young and beautiful women – and telepathically showed them how Rachel had died. They were both horrified and incensed, ready to take blood vengeance on whoever was responsible.

Vanessa needed her volunteers to act as eyes and ears in the assault on the Muertos. She would look through them and then possess the gang members, and if she had to, she would sacrifice one or more of them to finish the job. As it turned out, she discovered that she could do more than just look through the eyes of her volunteers. She could actually imbue them with some of her power. Empowered by Giovanna's telepathic insight and their own outrage, the women were transformed into true psychic street fighters. They pulled knowledge of fighting directly from their foes' minds and used it against them, all the while anticipating their every counter attack. There was no need for Vanessa/Giovanna to control the minds of the gang members – their newfound squad of femme fatales was more than equal to the task.

This revelation gave Vanessa/Giovanna a new twist for her future plans. Not only could she provide a safe place for those she cared about, she could actually empower them. They could, with her help, become super powered heroes, and thus a true force to be reckoned with. She soon began to recruit in earnest, picking and choosing those she liked best to be admitted into her inner circle. She soon had several hundred close followers, all of who willingly submitted to Vanessa's psychic presence in their minds. Their consent allowed her to ride along in their minds with minimal effort and empower them when necessary, but it was still a drain on her resources. Ultimately, if the group were going to succeed against all their many possible enemies, they were going to need a regular source of souls. Thus the Carnival of Shadows were finally born.

7.2.4 Goals and Behavior

The Carnival of Shadows exist principally to cater to the needs and desires of Vanessa DeVore and the Giovanna personality that lurks within her body. In return, Vanessa has created for them a luxurious and safe environment in which to enjoy themselves with whatever pleasures they desire. All she asks in return is service in the ongoing battle against her many and varied enemies. Of course, since Vanessa operates within the minds of each and every one of her followers, they're always happy to do whatever it is she asks of them.

The most important thing for Vanessa is that she have a constant supply of souls to keep her power level at its peak. If her power begins to fail, then the whole enterprise will fail, since everyone's allegiance and powers stems from her own psychic abilities. As Vanessa continues to expand the size and scope of her coterie, she needs more and more souls. Fortunately for her – but unfortunately for everyone else – she has learned how to devour souls through her servants. She no longer needs to have a direct connection to the victim. Still, the process is not instantaneous. It takes between two and five hours to successfully break down a person's willpower and resistance. Only then can Vanessa feast upon the soul stripped bare for her consumption.

On average, Vanessa requires two souls per night to keep herself at full strength. This allows her to not only be in touch with all of her loyal subjects but to directly dominate her less willing servants and still have the energy to have a little fun each evening. Thus there are usually several dozen teams of Carnival of Shadows sent out onto the streets each night looking for potential victims. Vanessa prefers a certain type of soul – one that is willful and possibly violent, and usually (but not always) a man. Her few remaining wisps of conscience force her to choose "bad" people over "good" people, but her definitions of bad have become increasingly harsh. Someone who fails to curb his dog or speaks harshly to a cab driver often gets tagged as bad, especially if he or she meets the other criteria.

Vanessa prefers to devour the souls of less attractive people, both physically and socially. She feels that in doing so she is “culling the herd” and somehow making the world a better place. She’s loathe to destroy anyone or anything that she considers beautiful, and would much rather recruit an attractive man or woman into her cult than devour their soul. Likewise, she has a special fondness for artists, writers, musicians, and actors. She will almost never kill someone with talent, unless her survival depends upon it. Of course, only Vanessa’s definition of talent is what’s important in this consideration, and her tastes are decidedly retro. She loves classical music, opera, and Renaissance and Baroque painting and poetry. More than one aspiring punk rock star and modern artist have been devoured without Vanessa even pausing to consider that they had any talent.

Few people are aware of just what Vanessa and her Carnival of Shadows are doing. When someone has their soul ripped out of them, the usual result is a very mysterious death – one that appears to be of natural causes just because an examining doctor cannot find any definite cause. It’s usually dismissed as a stroke or heart attack, and rarely does anyone suspect foul play. The Ring Mistress’ themselves are quite adept at covering their tracks. Their mental abilities allow them to alter the minds of key witnesses and cover up the lost time in a person’s life that occurs while they’re being systematically tortured and psychically abused in preparation for being served to Vanessa. Some mystic heroes have gotten an inkling that something weird is going on, but the truth has yet to be revealed to anyone outside the Carnival of Shadows.

When The Carnival of Shadows find themselves in a “wartime” situation, as Vanessa calls it, then the number of souls required each day rises dramatically. Vanessa has had to fight off incursions into her affairs from several other villain groups, including both the 5th Column and Nemesis. In both cases she engaged in tough, nasty fights with her foes, resulting in scores of dead on each side. In the course of these battles (both of which she won) she ended up consuming as many as one soul an hour for much of the conflict. Of course, many of these were captured enemy soldiers, but a fair portion were also people taken from the streets when matters grew desperate. Likewise, whenever she has any conflict with the Rikti, she must also find more victims, since Rikti souls remain unreachable for her. Thus whenever the Carnival of Shadows find themselves in a crisis, mysterious deaths suddenly spike throughout the city.

With her energy supply intact, Vanessa’s next highest priority is recruiting new members into her every growing cult. She is very particular about the kind of people she allows into her inner circle. Only the most attractive, charming, and talented women get to be actual full fledged members, privy to her most intimate thoughts and powers. But Vanessa knows that there is value to be found in many other humans as well, and she has places in her organization for everyone who strikes her fancy. Men and women who do not qualify for higher rank still serve within the Carnival of Shadows community and can benefit greatly from Vanessa’s largesse – as long as they don’t mind having their minds controlled by their superiors.

The kinds of people Vanessa wants in the Carnival of Shadows are exactly the same kinds of people whose souls she usually avoids devouring: beautiful people with talent and charm. Since the end of the war, more and more of Paragon City’s wealthy young men and women have fallen under the Carnival of Shadows’ sway. Many of the best and brightest of them have become members, giving themselves over to Vanessa’s control and in return receiving a life filled with luxury, excitement, entertainment, and power. Most of them maintain their day jobs (if indeed they have jobs beyond their trust funds and investments) and funnel most or all of their earnings into Vanessa’s coffers.

As a result of its very wealthy and influential membership, the Carnival of Shadows do not need to spend much of their time or energy on fund-raising. Carnival of Shadows don't knock over banks or rob jewelry stores. As often as not, their members own the banks and stores. Where the group does come into conflict with the law is when other wealthy family members, financial advisors, and legal representatives begin to grow suspicious of the way their friends and clients suddenly start pouring all their funds into foreign bank accounts under Vanessa DeVore's control. They start asking uncomfortable questions and generally making life unpleasant and controversial for Vanessa's followers, not knowing that in doing so they are running a terrible risk.

The Carnival of Shadows continue to spend a fair amount of time resolving these little conflicts. Often times the problem can be made to disappear through the careful application of memory wipes and telepathic domination. Other threats are more intractable, in which case more extreme measures are called for. The Carnival of Shadows are not afraid to kill anyone who stands in their way – feeding their soul to Vanessa and then covering up the disappearance as best they can. Several heads of large corporations and scions of notable Paragon City families have died in such conflicts, a fact that is beginning to draw more unwanted attention to Vanessa and her activities.

7.2.5 Let's Get This Party Started

It is not hard for Vanessa to convince the young, wealthy society set to join her little group. After all, she throws the absolutely best parties in the city. Although no reporter has ever managed to infiltrate one of these fabulous and decadent soirees, everyone who's anyone has heard of them. Admittance is strictly by invitation only, and anyone lucky enough to receive an invite immediately becomes the envy of all his or her friends. Vanessa does not automatically dominate and absorb every guest into her cult. Indeed, probably only 1 in 20 partygoers end up being offered a place in the Carnival of Shadows. Most just help provide the company, conversations, and new blood that any party needs. However, Vanessa does surreptitiously touch the mind of each and every guest, not only tweaking their emotions and thoughts to improve the party atmosphere, but also digging for any valuable or interesting secrets they might have. As a result of these psychic probings, Vanessa is one of the most well informed individuals in the city.

Not all of the parties are elegant penthouse dinner fetes or ballroom fundraisers. These are but the public face of Vanessa's diversions. The real fun is for members only. When just the Carnival of Shadows gather, all inhibitions are let loose and their mistress organizes some truly wild and inventive diversions. Vanessa and her followers take great pride in exercising their powers over lesser people – and lesser people pretty much describes everyone in the city who's not them. Thus they have no compunctions about embarrassing, inconveniencing, maiming, or even killing others, as long as it's done in the furtherance of a good time.

One of the most common and enjoyable activities are the infinitely cruel and aptly named Ring Mistress Hunts. These range across some of the more wealthy and interesting parts of the city and are a source of endless amusement for the Carnival of Shadows who participate in them. Surprisingly, the object of the hunt is not to collect souls precisely, although if the hunters happen to find any particularly appropriate victims, Vanessa certainly won't turn them down. Instead the participants scavenge for emotions and experiences. For example, a common goal is to frighten as many men over 50 as possible, with extra points being awarded for inducing heart or panic attacks. Other goals include: causing pain, seducing and then maiming individuals, tormenting city officials or right-wing ideologues, and actually slicing off specific body parts. Participants usually manage to work up quite a frenzy as the night progresses, and violence and the spilling of much blood are inevitable results.

Another popular variation is the so-called “out of house” party, wherein the Carnival of Shadows seize a building or home for a night and make it the center of one of their wild and crazed Bacchanals. Office buildings, laboratories, warehouses, and apartment buildings are all fair game for such events. The partygoers torment and mind control any occupants unlucky enough to be caught inside and often do significant damage to the structure itself. Vanessa has been known to target specific buildings belonging to those that displease her for some reason, be it because of their political beliefs or because they have interfered in her affairs or those of her followers.

By far the most ostentatious and deadly of all the Carnival of Shadows’ entertainments is the so-called Dread Carnivale. This event was meant to be an annual tradition, but Vanessa had so much fun with it that she has them on a monthly or sometimes bi-weekly basis. In these events her costume-clad cultists pull out all the stops. Vanessa usually stores up a supply of souls for the occasion, devouring enough essences to make her drunk with power. She then releases her people upon the city, using her mind control abilities to their fullest potential. The Ring Mistress’ use their powers to make the world around them perform as entertainers. Innocent bystanders are made to sing, dance, cavort, and debase themselves for the amusement of the mask wearing Carnivale goers. The Ring Mistress’ themselves get into the act, abusing, maiming, and often killing the “performers” for their own amusement.

The Dread Carnivale often serves as an initiation rite for new members. The Euphoria Vanessa feels when gorging upon so many souls is passed down to all her intimate followers, causing them to become inebriated with power and the lust for perverse entertainments. New members find this heady mix of emotions almost too much to bear – but they also become instantly addicted to the feeling, falling all the more under Vanessa’s sway in the process.

Recently Vanessa has been sending out a watered down version of the Dread Carnivale into the streets of Paragon City and beyond in an effort to recruit new members and draw more energy.

7.2.6 Loftier Goals

Ultimately though, once the partying is done, Vanessa (inspired by the Giovanna portion of her personality) does not want history to repeat itself – she doesn’t want to be driven from power and have to end up spending another 200 years trapped inside a mask. Thus she is being much more careful about securing her self and her followers from outside attack. But she knows that the only way to be 100% safe is to control her environment, including everyone else around her. And that means taking over the minds of everyone in the city, or at least influencing them to the point where they can’t possibly hurt or hinder her. After she secures Paragon City, then she’ll see about the rest of the planet.

Although Vanessa is still very picky about what kind of people she lets into her inner circle (after all, in many ways these people are actually inside her mind much of the time, a very intimate experience), she does want to have some degree of influence over everyone else as well. The poor, the ugly, the unpleasant, and the morally righteous might not appeal aesthetically, but they have a power of their own that cannot be safely ignored. Thus Vanessa is currently seeking a number of different avenues for reaching out to a much wider audience and tweaking their sensibilities and thought patterns to more closely match her own.

One of the key aspects of Vanessa’s plans for world domination is an ever-increasing influence over media and pop culture. Paragon City long ago surpassed New York as the cultural and fashion center of the United States. Super powered heroes have long been big-time stars and popularity attracts more popularity. The worlds of fashion, music, theater, and even movies all look to Paragon City’s societal elite to show them the way. As it happens, close to three-quarters of those elites are now firmly under Vanessa’s sway, an accomplishment she’s quite proud of. In other words, to a very large extent, Vanessa DeVore decides what is and isn’t cool in the world.

Although her personal tastes may run to classical music and 17th century costumes, she knows that such antiquated styles would have a hard time reaching today's teens and hipsters. Instead she bites the bullet and promotes various vacuous pop starlets and cardboard cutout teen heartthrobs as a succession of next big things. Each one moves popular tastes a little more in Vanessa's direction, making anyone who has listened to and enjoyed their music or seen their movies just that much more susceptible to her mental control. This is a long term plan to be sure, but once a generation of the world's youth has grown up enjoying Vanessa's entertainment products, their minds will be so weakened and ready for her that she hopes to be able to control millions of people at once.

In the present day she rules the entertainment industry – or at least her part of it – with an iron fist. She mentally dominates agents, actors, directors, producers, and anyone else with any say in what gets on the air. Although she uses mind control for much of this work, occasionally brute force intimidation and blackmail are also necessary tactics. More than one recalcitrant director or actor with his or her own “vision” has ended up dead, insane, or in jail.

Recently Vanessa has begun to use the media as a tool against those who stand in her way, particularly heroes who harass her operations. The normally fawning media seldom criticizes heroes, especially in the wake of the Rikti War, but that's not the case when Vanessa is crossed. She has been known to unleash the full fury of her media connection on a troublesome hero, from slander pieces, to jokes on late night television, to investigative reports on their personal lives. These can become a huge distraction for a hero, sometimes even leading to legal difficulties, paternity suits, and emotional collapses.

Of course, rather than slander heroes, in many cases Vanessa would like to simply control them outright. This is often quite a challenge, as most heroes have, almost by definition, very strong wills that are not easily broken. They also usually have many friends who are also heroes and who might have the power to detect when one of their associates is having his or her mind controlled. Thus Vanessa is very careful about which heroes she attempts to seduce into her ever-growing cult. She tends to choose loners with big egos, heroes who think so highly of themselves that it's easy to play to their pride. After all, heroes are the superstars of the modern world, and many of them love a good party as much as anyone and Vanessa DeVore gives the best parties.

She periodically holds events to honor various heroes, although never for their good works. They're always designed to laud a hero's more egocentric attributes, like the annual Best Dressed Hero event or the Most Eligible Single soiree. These affairs have quickly become a mainstay of the young, hip hero set and give Vanessa plenty of opportunity to quietly scope out possible recruits and, at the very least, get incriminating videos she can use for blackmail at a later date.

As a result of these efforts, Vanessa has already brought several dozen high profile heroes under her sway. While they continue to do their good deeds in public, privately they've become totally enthralled to Vanessa. Many of them serve within the Carnival of Shadows as Harlequins, wearing costumes designed by Vanessa instead of their usual garments. In these guises they serve The Carnival of Shadows' needs, participating in their wild events and finding victims for Vanessa to consume.

7.2.7 Villains

7.2.7.1 Inherent Carnival of Shadows Powers

- Powers
 - Resistance - All CoS are resistant to Psionics but Vulnerable to Lethal. They have improved Regeneration and Recovery rates
 - Psychic Visage - When a CoS is defeated, they drain the Endurance of all nearby foes

7.2.7.2 Attendants

- Rank: Minion
- Levels: 41 – 50
- Costumes: Carnival_Kibitzer_01, Carnival_Kibitzer_02, Carnival_Kibitzer_03, Carnival_Kibitzer_04, Carnival_Kibitzer_05, Carnival_Kibitzer_06
- Powers:
 - Energy Rings (Melee)
 - Energy Rings Toss
- AI:

Description: The Attendants are the basic soldiers of the Carnival of Shadows. They are modeled, after a fashion, upon the classic Attendants of several centuries ago – young, strong, servants who'll handle any task their mistress gives them. These Attendants are universally young, athletic, good looking and female, although they seldom have the financial background or social skills to make them truly acceptable to Vanessa as dinner companions. Instead they are relegated to the status of servants – to be seen but not heard and to work tirelessly.

While Attendants might wear more traditional servant attire when performing their duties at one of Vanessa's more public parties, heroes are only likely to knowingly encounter them when they're dressed for battle. Like all members of the Carnival of Shadows, Attendants wear masks. These masks are stern, handsome male faces with ruby colored eyes.

The Attendants are indeed formidable since she views them as front line, easily replaceable soldiers, she has no qualms about overloading their bodies with power and stimulants. Her fine control over their minds reaches deep into the subconscious, autonomic brain functions. She can actually control the flow of endorphins, adrenaline, and hormones into their bodies. Thus the Attendants have had all of their physical abilities increased far beyond the normal maximums for a human. As a result, few Attendants would be expected to live more than a few years before their hearts burst, but at least they will leave a beautiful corpse.

7.2.7.3 Seneschal

- Rank: Lieutenant
- Levels: 41 – 50
- Costumes: Carnival_Kibitzer_Boss_01, Carnival__Boss_Kibitzer_02, Carnival_Kibitzer_Boss_03
- Powers:
 - Tourn (melee)
 - Firebreathing (cone)
 - Spit Fire (long ranged and drops a Burning patch of fire on the Ground)
- AI:

Description: Seneschal's are the leaders of the Attendants. Their rank is indicated by the two banner staffs on their backs.

7.2.7.4 Bronze & Iron Strongmen

- Rank: Minion
- Levels: 41 – 45 (Bronze), 46 – 50 (Iron)
- Costumes: Carnival_Strongman_01, Carnival_Strongman_02, Carnival_Strongman_03, Carnival_Strongman_04, Carnival_Strongman_06
- Powers (All Strongmen):
 - Resistance (Smashing, Immobilization, Knockback, Slow Movement)
 - Hurl
- Powers:
 - Bronze

- Jab
 - Punch (SS)
 - Haymaker
- Iron
 - Giant Mallet
 - Giant Mallet Smash (AoE)
 - Temp Invulnerability
- AI:

Description: Most of the time, when the Carnival of Shadows suck a soul from one of their victims, the person dies immediately. But sometimes, in certain rare instances, they're left merely in a coma. Everything seems to work right, biologically speaking, but there's simply no spark of consciousness in the body. At first Vanessa would have her soldiers leave these victims for the hospitals to care for. Then she discovered that she could actually possess and dominate them, just like any other person. These soulless bodies were not great conduits for power, like her Ring Mistress' or even the Attendants, but they could serve as useful guards and soldiers. Since they feel no pain and have no will of their own to resist her domination, Vanessa now keeps all of these Soulless ones as a kind of special guard and strike force, using them on missions she would not normally risk her dear Ring Mistress' on.

The Soulless have a monstrous appearance, their faces usually twisted by the strokes that left them comatose. Preferring not to witness such unsightly visages, Vanessa has them wear ominous iron masks, giving them the appearance of prisoners. The Soulless have very large, hulking, muscle-bound bodies, the product of manipulation and psychic surgery that has turned them into truly freakish creatures. The prisoner theme of the iron mask extends down the body, as the Soulless are wrapped in chains and wear iron bands around their wrists and ankles. Scars and burns cover their exposed flesh, often carved into intricate patterns by bored Ring Mistress' looking to have some fun.

The difference in name is just that – a name difference. Their appearance & powers are otherwise identical.

7.2.7.5 Steel Strongmen

- Rank: Lieutenant
- Levels: 41 - 50
- Costumes: Carnival_Strongman_Boss_01, Carnival_Strongman_Boss_02, Carnival_Strongman_Boss_03
- Powers:
 - Resistance (Smashing, Immobilization, Knockback, Slow Movement)
 - Punch (SS)
 - Haymaker
 - Hand Clap
 - Foot Stomp
 - Hurl
 - Mask of Weakness– Debuff Damage and ACC
- AI:

Description: The mark of a Steel Strongman is his fearsome cross engraved helmet. These masks can project horrifying images in targets and sap their strength.

7.2.7.6 Knife and Ring Harlequins

- Rank: Minion

- Levels: 41 – 50
- Costumes: Carnival_Harlequin_01, Carnival_Harlequin_02, Carnival_Harlequin_03, Carnival_Harlequin_04, Carnival_Harlequin_05, Carnival_Harlequin_06, Carnival_Harlequin_Boss_01, Carnival_Harlequin_Boss_02, Carnival_Harlequin_Boss_03
- Powers
 - Knife Harlequin
 - Rapier Stab
 - Rapier Parry
 - Throwing Knives
 - Ring Harlequin
 - Electrical Rings Toss
 - Exploding Electric Rings
 - Electric Ring (Melee)
- AI:

Description: The Harlequins' minds have nearly completely joined with Vanessa's, and although they retain much of their original personality, they have given up a great deal of free will. The Harlequins are second only to the Ring mistresses themselves when it comes to power and privilege within the group. They participate in all of the group's wild events and public parties. Indeed, behind their masks lurk some of the most famous and wealthy socialites in Paragon City.

The Harlequin costumes are similar to the classic clown-like Harlequin costume. Like all members of the Carnival of Shadows, they wear masks. The masks also incorporate dark red leather hats with four floppy arms, like a traditional harlequin's headgear. Stripes and checker patterns accent the legs, arms, and torso of the costume, and come in three color varieties: yellow, white, and black.

7.2.7.7 Ring Mistresses and Dark Ring Mistress.

- Rank: Boss
- Levels: 41 – 50
- Costumes: Carnival_Mistress_01, Carnival_Mistress_02, Carnival_Mistress_03, Carnival_Mistress_04, Carnival_Mistress_05, Carnival_Mistress_06, Carnival_Mistress_Boss_01, Carnival_Mistress_Boss_02, Carnival_Mistress_Boss_03
- Powers:
 - All Ring Mistresses
 - Mental Blast
 - Telekinetic Blast
 - Subdue
 - Will Domination
 - Mask of Vitiation – Debuff Regeneration Rate, Recovery Rate Defense, and Endurance
 - Dark Ring Mistress
 - Petrify
 - Twilight Grasp
 - Darkest Night
- AI:

Description: The Ring Mistress' are the crème de le crème of Shadow Carnival society – the women who have been personally recruited, trained, and mind molded by Vanessa DeVore herself. Each of them is an extraordinarily powerful psychic in her own right, made so by Vanessa's unlocking the full potential of their mental powers that lies dormant in every human being's mind. They wear skimpy, bright colored costumes and masks, a look that has even become popular with certain fashion designers.

The Ring Mistress' each view themselves as a kind of princess, or at the very least duchess. They universally have little regard for anyone but themselves and of course their mistress. Many of them are fashion models, actresses, and socialites whose beauty has already made them rich and famous. Even without their mental powers they would have little trouble twisting men around their fingertips, but now they can pretty much make any normal person do whatever they want. They are utterly without inhibition or empathy for the rest of the world. As far as they're concerned, this world is theirs and we're just around to act as servants, window dressing, or playthings.

The Ring Mistress' do not really need weapons, but they like to carry them anyway, almost as accessories to their outfits. The Ring Mistress Whip is an integral part of the torture process that Ring Mistress' use to break down a person's defenses before feeding their soul to Vanessa. The Whip not only slices flesh, but it tears at the mind as well, dragging up traumatic memories and creating hallucinations and panic attacks in anyone it cuts. This is both a fear inducing effect and a huge distraction for anyone that takes damage, making it hard for them to concentrate on the matter at hand – whatever it may be. The Ring Mistress Claws are a set of three blades that a Ring Mistress straps to her wrist. They crackle with a psi-electric charge when used in battle and can even project bolts of energy at opponents. The Ring Mistress's Staff is a long, thin golden rod with an ornate red design running in a spiral down its length. The staff is a powerful telekinetic focus that allows the Ring Mistress to create force fields both to protect herself and to damage and ensnare opponents.

In addition to whatever weaponry they wield, all Ring Mistress' have a common set of powers. Their Telekinesis protects them from physical attacks and, more obviously, allows them to fly at great speeds and with impressive maneuverability. They are also shielded from all kinds of psychic attack. On the other hand, they each have the psi-blast power as well, making them very dangerous foes to anyone without a properly shielded mind. Finally, they can use their psychic powers to manipulate their own bodies, which not only keeps them in top physical form, it also allows them to heal themselves when damaged.

7.2.7.8 Illusionists

- Rank: Lieutenant
- Levels: 41 – 50
- Costumes: Carnival_Illusionist_01, Carnival_Illusionist_02, Carnival_Illusionist_03, Carnival_Illusionist_04, Carnival_Illusionist_05, Carnival_Illusionist_06
- Powers
 - Spectral Wounds
 - Flash
 - Blind
 - Fly
 - Phase Shift – in and out. Auto power.
- AI:

Description: These twisted versions of stage magicians use Illusions to assault their opponent's minds and bodies.

They dress in costumes that would be appropriate for a court noble in Italy, in the 17th Century, with metallic colors, as well as other rich colors such as burgundy. They hover mysteriously with their long, ornate dresses trailing ever so slightly.

7.2.7.9 Master Illusionists

- Rank: Boss
- Levels: 41 – 50

- Costumes: : Carnival_Illusionist_Boss_01, Carnival_Illusionist_Boss_02, Carnival_Illusionist_Boss_03
- Powers
 - Spectral Wounds
 - Flash
 - Blind
 - Phantom Army (summons Decoy Illusionist with Spectral Wounds, Phase Shift and Fly)
 - Phantasm
 - Dark Servant
 - Fly
 - Phase Shift – in and out. Auto power
- AI:

Description: Master Illusionists are identical in appearance to Illusionists, except that their hair is drawn back and they tend to wear darker colors.

7.2.7.10 Vanessa

- Rank: ArchVillain
- Levels: 48 – 50
- Costumes: : Carnival_Vanessa
- Powers
 - Resistance (High Resistance to all, typical to that of all Arch Villains)
 - Vanessa's Psyche – Vanessa casts a more powerful version of the CoS Psychic Visage when she is defeated
 - Psychic Scream
 - Telekinetic Blast
 - Subdue
 - Psionic Tornado
 - Dominate
 - Total Domination
 - Twilight Grasp
 - Darkest Night
 - Dark Servant
 - Mask of Feeblement – Debuff Damage, ACC, Regeneration Rate, Recovery Rate Defense, and Endurance.
- AI:

Description: Vanessa DeVore is many things to many people: sly trickster, peppy party girl, cold-hearted killer. For years she's been wearing the delicate porcelain mask that contains the soul of the powerful psychic, Giovanna Scaldi. Even with Giovanna vastly weakened by her defeat on the psychic plane, Vanessa is as strong, and as evil, as ever. She has made Giovanna's power her own, and in doing so, she has destroyed the innocent woman she once was.

7.2.7.11 Giovanna Scaldi

- Rank: ArchVillain
- Levels: 45 – 50
- Costumes: Carnival_Mistress_Special_01
- Powers

- Resistance (High Resistance to all, typical to that of all Arch Villains)
- Psychic Scream
- Telekinetic Blast
- Subdue
- Psionic Tornado
- Dominate
- Total Domination
- (Unlike all other CoS villains, Giovanna does not cast a Psychic Visage when defeated)
- AI:

Description: Though records say Giovanna Scaldi dies in 17th century Venice, it appears she is alive and well - in Vanessa DeVore's mind. Her soul has survived the centuries locked away in a porcelain mask, and it is her great psychic power that truly drives the Carnival of Shadows.

7.2.7.12 Madame of Mystery

- Rank: Boss
- Levels: 40 – 47
- Costumes: Carnival_Mistress_05
- Powers
 - Mental Blast
 - Telekinetic Blast
 - Subdue
 - Will Domination
 - Petrify
 - Twilight Grasp
 - Darkest Night
 - Mask of Vitiation – Debuff Regeneration Rate, Recovery Rate Defense, and Endurance
- AI:

Description: Madame of Mystery is the same as a typical Dark Ring Mistress. She is part of a story arch where the players must defeat her 3 times before finally encountering her full psychic projection as Madeleine Casey (below).

7.2.7.13 Madeleine Casey

- Rank: ArchVillain
- Levels: 40 – 47
- Costumes: Carnival_Mistress_05
- Powers
 - Resistance (High Resistance to all, typical to that of all Arch Villains. Additionally, Madeleine Casey is highly resistant to all damage types, but extremely vulnerable to the Psychic Cleaver – a Temp Power the players must acquire to defeat her)
 - Mental Blast
 - Telekinetic Blast
 - Subdue
 - Will Domination
 - Petrify
 - Twilight Grasp
 - Darkest Night

- Mask of Vitiation – Debuff Regeneration Rate, Recovery Rate Defense, and Endurance
- AI:

Description: After facing her three times, you have learned that the Madame of Mystery is actually the psychic projection of Madeleine Casey's soul. Unless you can destroy the Madame completely, Madeleine's soul will continue to serve the Carnival forever.

7.2.8 Relations With Others

Vanessa DeVore is not prone to accepting alliances with others. She sees herself as the center of the universe and anyone that doesn't fall under her control or influence is either not worthy of her attention or a potential threat. Thus she is very unlikely to work with other villain groups for any extended period of time, if indeed she would ever work with them at all. Many of these groups she hates just as much as your average citizen or hero would. After all, despite her own horrors and depravities, she is still very much a part of the human world and has a great love for the finer things in life that come with civilization. She doesn't want to destroy the world or even necessarily harm humanity. She just wants everyone to do what she says.

At the top of her hate list are the Rikti, who she fought in the war and whom she still views as a very deadly threat. Periodically, Vanessa will be moved by momentary feelings of guilt and send out her soldiers to find and destroy some Rikti outpost. To say that she carries on a crusade against the invaders is going too far, but she'll always lash out at them if the opportunity presents itself. The same goes true for other, monstrous villain groups like the Banished Pantheon, and the Devouring Earth. Although she has little contact with them, she finds them abominable and would happily see them banished from the Earth forever.

The 5th Column's fascist and segregationist ideologies offend her sensibilities and the two groups continually clash. If there's one thing Vanessa hates, it's other people telling her what to do – ironic given how much control she has over those around her. The Freakshow are quite simply too rude, crude, and disgusting to be given much thought at all. Likewise Vahzilok. She has gotten more than an inkling of the great psychic force that lies behind the Clockwork King and has decided to steer clear of it for the time being. After all, he and his robots are pretty small time villains and the two groups never cross paths.

The Tsoo and the other street gangs occasionally fall under Vanessa's influence, although none of them are ever really aware of it. She occasionally needs drugs and other services that the gangs can supply, but she always works through intermediaries. As long as they don't crash her parties (and they don't) she has no problem with leaving them be.

The Circle of Thorns is a great source of the unknown for Vanessa. She doesn't know much about them and they for their part tend to avoid her. She once has one of her inner circle abducted by the Circle and in the ensuing skirmish she discovered that the magicians are actually substituting their souls for those of the people they're "inducting" into their group. At the same time, the Circle discovered that it was really quite simple for Vanessa and the Carnival of Shadows to tear their souls out and eat them. Ever since their has been an uneasy detente between the two groups.

Nemesis is the only villain that knows just how far Vanessa's power reaches into the media and popular culture worlds. He's also the only one who has bothered to do the research and figure out exactly where Vanessa's powers came from. He knows all about Giovanna Scaldi and has a few surprises planned for the Carnival of Shadows. For now, the two groups periodically skirmish, but seldom compete outright unless Nemesis is trying to absorb a building where Vanessa owns apartments or where her "friends" live.

Vanessa does not consider Crey Industries to be an enemy and she holds the Countess Crey in the highest regard. The two have met often on social occasions, although neither suspects the full extent of the other's power. The Countess long ago learned how to shield her mind from psychic intrusions, while Vanessa has little interest in the high tech field. And so, strangely enough, they remain friendly in a strange way, although that could change if the truth ever comes out about either of them. Or it could cement the friendship even more.

7.2.9 The Future

The Carnival of Shadows occupies a very firm position and dislodging Vanessa from power will not be easy. Since the group is organized and controlled entirely by Vanessa/Giovanna's psychic powers, it's nearly impossible for anyone to infiltrate the group. Likewise, she keeps no computer records, nor indeed written records of any kind. It's all in her head. Since she and her followers all wear masks and have powerful mind shields, it's usually impossible to tell who is and isn't a member. With so many famous and influential people under her spell and her control of the media, Vanessa can move great forces to cover up any hint of scandal or villainy. As time grows, her power will only grow unless someone can take her on directly and defeat her.

There are two wild cards in the offing that could seriously impair Vanessa's inexorable rise to power. The first is the ghost of Uriel, Giovanna's old mage friend from her days in Venice. Currently the Circle of Thorns are searching into Vanessa's past and soon they will find out all about Giovanna and her story. They will then send their agents to find and bring back Uriel's ghost in the hopes that he can help them counteract her soul devouring ability that they fear so much. Exactly what Uriel's goal will be remains to be seen, but he has spent the last few hundred years in hell and has made the acquaintances of many demons and fallen angels who long for a way to get back into our world. He might well lead them in an attack of vengeance against Giovanna, who he feels betrayed him. Alternately, he might ally with his old friend and lover, bringing his demons into work with Vanessa in a gambit to rule the world all the faster. And then he'll betray her of course...

The other skeleton from Giovanna's closet is known to Nemesis, who already knows all about Vanessa DeVore and Giovanna Scaldi. His researches have turned up a particularly interesting old friend – the mutant Inquisitor, Brother Abelard. As it turns out, Abelard's mutation has kept him alive all these years. For two centuries he faithfully served the church, but in the beginning of the twentieth century he retired from active duty and he spent his days in a monastery in France ever since. Although he does live, he has grown into an old man. Nevertheless, his powers remain as strong as ever. Nemesis plans to reveal Vanessa's true identity to him if she ever gets too out of control.

In the future, Brother Abelard might return to active duty at the head of a modern day Inquisition, sent to Paragon City to cleanse it of all evil, starting with the Carnival of Shadows. This New Inquisition might make a good Hero Group for the City of Villains supplement.

7.2.10 Future Ideas

7.2.11 Technology

The Carnival of Shadows are not one of the technological powerhouses within the greater community of villainy that exists in Paragon City. Since all of their powers stem from Vanessa/Giovanna's own prodigious psychic talent, Vanessa didn't see much need in special gadgets or magic gewgaws. But she discovered that she was expending a lot of her power supplying her followers with the power they needed, especially in combat situations. Most of the time this wasn't a problem, but sometimes she would find herself spread too thin and then there would be trouble. She needed a way to make sure that all her troops had the power when they needed it in a fight.

Then the Giovanna part of her personality remembered the mask into which she had placed her personality. More importantly, she remembered how to make more items in a similar vein. Instead of putting her whole mind and power into some object, she could put a tiny fraction of it and then give it to one of her followers. The item could store the power indefinitely, allowing the follower to use it at his or her leisure. A few tests proved the plan workable, and so Vanessa took over the minds of several dozen skilled artisans and metal workers and set them on the job of creating a psychic arsenal. The results are the following weapons:

Attendant's Sword: This is a silver, finely etched military saber. It has a curved blade and a guard for the Footman's hand. It crackles with electricity when used.

Attendant's Musket: This resembles an old time flintlock made from silver and wood, except that instead of firing musket balls it fires bolts of energy.

Attendant's Hand Cannon: This resembles a swivel cannon from an age of sail war ship. It requires two hands to use and is often fired from the hip. It can either fire explosive shells or serve as a flamethrower.

Ring Mistresses' Whip: This whip causes a fear effect when it strikes someone.

Ring Mistresses' Claws: These claws are worn on the wrist and consist of three blades crackling with electrical energy.

Ring Mistresses' Staff: This is a thin, golden staff with a spiraling read motif engraved down its length. It can project force fields.

Stature Level 8 Pools	
SL8_Carnival_Compound1	<p>The Carnival's introduction. You realize that the Carnival is turning Paragon Citizens into puppets for its own amusement</p> <p>REVEALED: The Carnival has some sort of manipulative psychic power.</p>
SL8_Carnival_Compound2	<p>Save an attorney who inquired too deeply into the strange pending habits of his client, a new Carnival recruit.</p> <p>REVEALED: The Carnival likes to focus its recruiting efforts on the rich and powerful.</p>

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SL8_Carnival_Compound3	<p>Save a man who planned to have his wife killed. The Carnival read his intentions, tried to kill him and recruit the wife.</p> <p>REVEALED: It's likely that the Carnival can read minds</p>
SL8_Carnival_Compound4	<p>Stop the Carnival from finding some files on undercover agents in a councilman's office. You're left wondering whether the Councilman aided the Carnival intentionally, or whether he was a victim of their strange mental manipulation</p>
SL8_Carnival_Compound5	<p>Break up some Carnival/Rikti battles. Learn that the Carnival was trying to stop a Rikti plot to infect pregnant women with a mutagenic gel that would cause them to give birth to Rikti babies.</p> <p>REVEALED: The Carnival hates the Rikti and has fought them ever since the war</p>
SL8_Carnival_Mission6	<p>Stop an office bombing that the Carnival considers "performance art."</p>
SL8_Carnival_Mission7	<p>Rescue some slaves from the Carnival's mental dominance</p> <p>REVEALED: The Carnival mistress dominates all her minions, to one degree or another</p>
SL8_Carnival_Mission8	<p>Someone winds up dead at a Carnival performance. Your contact surmises that the Carnival is drawing some sort of energy from its audience members.</p> <p>REVEALED: In some way, the Carnival is feeding on its audience. This can result in death.</p>
SL8_Carnival_Mission9	<p>An athlete is kidnapped, then turned into a Soulless Strongman</p> <p>REVEALED: The Soulless are animated corpses</p>
SL8_Carnival_Mission10	<p>The Carnival forces some Nemesis soldiers who got too rough with a female civilian to kill one another. You break up the ensuing violence.</p> <p>REVEALED: In her own way, Vanessa does have a sense of right and wrong.</p>
SL8_Carnival_Errand1	<p>Killtask to keep carnies from manipulating people for their amusement</p>
SL8_Carnival_Errand2	<p>Killtask to find out which politicians are working with the Carnival</p>
SL8_Carnival_Errand3	<p>Killtask to stop Carnival thefts</p>

Stature level 8 Story Arc: To Save a Soul

After having her pendant briefly stolen by the Carnival, your contact begins to exhibit strange behavior. You realize that her soul is being sucked into the pendant and bound into the Carnival's service. With a little help from Cadao Kestral, Voodoo Master, defeat your contact's psychic self and sever the link between her and the Carnival.

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REVEALED: The Carnival can suck out people's souls and feed on them.

REVEALED: There's a portion of Vanessa's soul in each and every mask. This is how she distributes her power to her minions.

Stature Level 8 Pools

SL9_Carnival_Mission1	<p>Stop a battle between the Carnival and the Malta Group. Vanessa poses as a innocent victim and slips away in the chaos.</p> <p>REVEALED: The Carnival's mistress is Vanessa DeVore</p>
SL9_Carnival_Mission2	<p>Stop the Carnival from drugging the whole city to create a serious party town</p>
SL9_Carnival_Mission3	<p>Break up a Carnival attack on an art gallery. Learn that it was all just a publicity stunt to generate a buzz about an artist Vanessa was secretly backing.</p> <p>REVEALED: Vanessa is highly interested in art</p>
SL9_Carnival_Mission4	<p>Save a philanthropist, only to have him go home, write a new will leaving everything to Vanessa, and expire. Turns out he had been animated just like the Soulless Strongmen</p>
SL9_Carnival_Mission5	<p>Stop the Carnival from consuming the souls of Midnight Squad researchers in order to get her hands on their knowledge</p> <p>REVEALED: When Vanessa consumes a soul, she gets all its knowledge</p>
SL9_Carnival_Mission6	<p>Rescue some souls that were being stored for a huge feeding.</p>
SL9_Carnival_Mission7	<p>Vanessa sends you an amulet and asks you to meet her. Battle a series of villains until you defeat Mistress Josephine. It turns out she was a Carnival traitor. Vanessa was using you to unmask her.</p>
SL9_Carnival_Mission8	<p>Rescue a da Vinci codex that described a way to restore a soul to its original body.</p> <p>REVEALED: Giovanna's continued bodiless existence is hinted at</p>
SL9_Carnival_Mission9	<p>Break up a battle between Marauder's Praetorians and the Carnival, who have been mistaken for the do-gooder Carnival of Light from Praetorian Earth</p> <p>REVEALED: On Praetorian Earth, the Carnival are the good guys</p>
SL9_Carnival_Mission10	<p>Investigate a new, hot record company. Learn that Vanessa is mentally influencing people to like their music.</p> <p>REVEALED: Vanessa is trying to arbitrate people's tastes to gain control of the entertainment industry.</p>
SL9_Carnival_Mission11	<p>Stop a twisted scavenger hunt for people's emotions.</p>

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SL9 Carnival Mission12	Stop the Carnival from trying to dominate ghosts
SL9 Carnival Errand1	Killtask to show people that the Carnival's bad news
SL9 Carnival Errand2	Killtask to stop Carnival thefts
SL9 Carnival Errand3	Killtask to do a guest article for the Paragon Tattler

Stature level 9 Story Arc: Upon the Psychic Plane

Find a missing reporter, who clues you into the Bands of Shu, artifacts that can transport you to the psychic plane, Vanessa's true domain. Battle her mental defenses to find out all about the Carnival's history. Defeat the soul of Giovanna Scaldi upon the psychic plane, then return to our universe to battle Vanessa herself.

REVEALED: Vanessa's mask contains an ancient Venetian criminal. Vanessa herself was corrupted by Giovanna.

7.3 Circle of Thorns

7.3.1 Overview

Here they are, the Circle of Thorns, the largest, most powerful mystic group in City of Heroes. They run the gamut from levels 1 to 50, with minions and monsters operating at every level of society. The true nature of the Circle should remain a secret as long as possible, as should their ultimate goals, which are as apocalyptic as any villain groups and more insidious than most.

7.3.2 History

The history of the Circle of Thorns really begins tens of thousands of years ago, well before the group's current "founder," Baron Zoria, ever read his first forbidden tome. Indeed, the original Circle of Thorns ruled over a vast ancient empire that spanned much of the Eastern United States. Called Oranbega, the empire existed as a center for magic, enlightenment, peace, and prosperity for close to a thousand years. It's lofty towers and massive temples stood as testaments to the magical and philosophical prowess of a nation unparalleled in human history. A nation that ultimately, succumbed to the same forces of fear, bitterness, and hate that have laid low so many other great peoples in the millennia since.

The Era of Magic is a time lost to our modern history. There are no records and precious few artifacts from this era, and until recently there was no proof that such wonders ever existed at all. The rediscovery of lost Oranbega beneath Paragon City now offers proof that civilization and magic once went hand in hand, and that humans from 20,000 years ago were well advanced beyond savage cavemen. Oranbega and its fell due to a series of terrible disasters and wars, but their memory lingered on, giving rise to many a myth about lost cities, sunken beneath the waves or hidden under the earth. The true story is much more complicated.

The founders of Oranbega began life as normal, primitive men. They did not reach their heights through a long process of cultural evolution. They had gods who lifted them straight from the mud and mire to a world of marble and crystal. Twenty thousand years ago, man and god lived much closer to one another. As described in the Banished Pantheon, gods are simply powerful nature spirits that have attracted workers and banded together to found pantheons and shepherd tribes or nations of humans through life. In return they receive energy and power from their worshipers. The last days of the great war with the Banished Pantheon saw the rise of a new kind of power: magic. The African goddess Teilekku first discovered magic and its reality bending abilities. She used it to defeat Lughebu's evil pantheon and save the world from a quick and miserable end.

Impressed by her newfound abilities, more than a few deities from throughout the world sought to learn magic's mysteries from Teilekku. She agreed to try and teach whoever would learn, but it turned out that only a handful had enough discipline and ability to even begin to master magic's secrets. Those who did however came away with the key to a vast new source of untapped power. One of these was the god Ermeeth, a Middle Eastern god of language and communication. He made the next big leap in the field of magic: he decided to try and teach magic to his human worshipers. It turned out that mortals made better students than gods, and soon he was teaching not only his high priests, but also anyone else who wanted to learn. An entire nation of humans began to master the ability to control reality itself through sheer force of will.

Ermeeth's discovery raised much more alarm than appreciation amongst the other gods. Even within his own pantheon, the other deities turned against them. They quickly realized that, with magic at their command, the humans would no longer have any need of gods, especially gods that couldn't help them with their sorcery. Ermeeth's former comrades in godliness demanded that he either strip away the magical power or be destroyed. He chose a third option, and led a quick and bloody coup. The other gods had been right of course: the humans with magic no longer needed gods, and with Ermeeth's power and direction they had already gained enough power to destroy their old gods. The revolution had begun, and Ermeeth meant to raise all mankind up and rid the world of meddling, manipulative gods forever.

But faith is a powerful thing, and few humans were willing to abandon their gods so easily. While Ermeeth and his nation of wizards prospered, their neighbors came to view them as a kingdom of demons, bent on destroying the world. The old gods used all their influence to inoculate their worshipers against Ermeeth's very dangerous ideas about human freedom and magical empowerment. Thus ensued a brief stalemate. Ermeeth found himself hemmed in on every side, but no one was strong or brave enough to attack his Magi nation directly. However, forces began to mass against Ermeeth, including another of Teilekku's star pupils, the goddess Hequat. Hequat was every bit the master of magic Ermeeth was and she had even taught some of her worshippers a few tricks. But she was firmly against revealing all of magic's power to the mortals, for she saw that they could never handle such power responsibly. Disaster would certainly ensue.

Hequat's priests and magicians specialized in counter magic, making them the perfect foil for Ermeeth's followers. The goddess allied with the other local deities and marched on Ermeeth's lands, her armies protected from the sorcerers' spells that rained down upon them from Ermeeth's followers. The war proved devastating for both factions, but ultimately Hequat carried the day. Ermeeth and a few thousand survivors were driven into the sea, and thought defeated for all time. The other gods rejoiced in their victory and returned to their old lives. Only Hequat remained worried. Ermeeth had escaped and she knew he would not rest until he had rebuilt his magic nation.

The Founding of Oranbega

Ermeeth's followers did not die when the invaders drove them into the Eastern Mediterranean. Their god and their own magics protected them, allowing them to make a long march along the bottom of the sea floor, breathing water as if it were air and living off the flora and fauna of the sea. Afraid to show their heads anywhere in the region, the refugees walked for months, making their watery way through the straits of Gibraltar and on up into Europe. Even here there were gods who had heard of Ermeeth and his demonic ways and the refugees found no welcome. And so they built great wooden ships and set sail across the great ocean, eventually finding a new home in the unclaimed lands of what would one day be known as North America.

They found the land still in the grip of a glacial ice age, and otherwise uninhabited by humans of any kind. It was there's to do with as they pleased. Free from worries or constraints, the refugee magi set about molding the new world to their own unique vision. Ermeeth set them free upon the land, encouraging them to indulge their every whim and fancy. They set about building a great city unlike anything the world had ever seen. They carved their first metropolis from the very ice that covered much of the land, shaping it into dazzling crystalline towers and dotted with magical green houses and warmth giving enchanted stones. They called their magical city Oranbega, and the meant to live their for all eternity.

With some encouragement from Ermeeth, they created a new form of government, based not on bloodlines or strength, but upon the concepts of equality and freedom. Their magic allowed them freedom from many of life's most basic concerns such as food and shelter, giving them the luxury to concentrate on the finer aspects of art, music, literature, and sport. Yet despite their great power they were still human and needed laws and governance to live peacefully with one another. They created a ruling council whose membership rotated each year. An annual lottery was held to determine who would serve so that no one man or woman could develop too much of a taste for power. Citizens who served on the council did so out of a sense of duty and responsibility. It was of course a great honor, but only a few people sought out. One Oranbegan poet likened service on the council to the thorn on a rose – a necessary discomfort for an otherwise beautiful existence. The simile stuck, and the council became known as the Circle of Thorns.

As the centuries passed and the ice began to recede, Oranbega grew and grew. Towers of stone and crystal replaced the melting ice. The population exploded as more and more fertile land became available. Their magics grew as well, with great strides being made in many of the more esoteric fields of magical inquiry. Oranbega was not a perfect place of course. Men will be men and there was crime, jealousy, and even murder. But the Circle of Thorns and those they deputized to their cause maintained the peace. They knew no war and needed no army. They even eventually came to have little need for their god. Ermeeth's plan had always been to raise his human followers up so that they no longer needed divine help. He had achieved his goal. Two thousand years after the foundation of Oranbega he slipped away, returning to the old world. He was scarcely missed, having become little more than a myth amongst the Oranbegans by that point.

Ermeeth crossed the ocean once more, returning to his native land in the Middle East. There he sought to recreate the same experiment, and raise up another nation of men to be free from divine chains. Unfortunately for him, Hequat was waiting for him. She sniffed out his plan just as he began, and descended upon him in great fury. Almost crippled by the lack of worship for hundreds of years, Ermeeth could do nothing but flee. Hequat gave chase, sending her sorcerers after the troublesome god. Ermeeth managed to make it back to Oranbega, but he did not arrive alone. Hequat's minions had found the hitherto undreamed of glory that was Oranbega. Suddenly frightened and overawed, the sorcerers retreated back to their homeland to report their findings to the goddess.

Hequat knew no fear, but she did see the vast and horrible potential in what Ermeeth had helped create in Oranbega. This miraculous city of magicians had the power to overcome the entire world and all its gods. It was a sleeping dragon that could awaken at any moment. For now their peace-loving, insular world-view was all that was keeping the rest of the world safe from their tyranny. She knew that she had to find a way to protect herself and the rest of the world's gods from this menace. She wracked her brain for an answer until she suddenly realized: Ermeeth had already shown her the way. She would create her own city of magicians, but one founded on love for the gods, not disdain, and one with a desire for war and conquest, not peace and philosophy.

The Founding of Mu

Hequat gathered about her the most promising pupils in the land and picked the very best of these. Once she had 500 men and 500 women of sufficient quality and devotion, she led them on a trek that mirrored the one Ermeeth and his refugees had made thousands of years before. This time, instead of creeping along the dim-lit sea floor, the pilgrims traveled in luxury ships, attended by slaves who waited on them hand and foot. They sailed out beyond the Pillars of Hercules and into the Atlantic ocean, finally landing upon a tremendous island that lay at the center of the Atlantic. Today this island is long vanished beneath the waves (more on that later), but at the time it was just over a thousand miles in diameter. It was a lush, semi-tropical land where dinosaur-like creatures still roamed free and food, water, and building materials were abundant. Hequat named it Mu.

The settlers quickly made a new home for themselves. Under Hequat's direction they built up a great city of bronze and stone, at the heart of which sat a tremendous temple to Hequat herself. There she sat enthroned, receiving only the highest priests and most powerful wizards into her presence. She gave them a code of law based on piety and devotion to her and the safety of Mu. Children were trained from birth in both the ways of magic and the arts of war. The people of Mu enslaved a race of Neanderthal-like hominids who still lived on the island, breeding them to be the perfect workers. Mu grew over the centuries to become a place of stern laws and harsh lives. Even the most powerful citizens lived a spare, relatively luxury free existence. Their piety and studies took up all of each waking day.

Hequat reveled in her great success. Over the centuries Mu expanded to encompass the entire island, with a population of several hundred thousand. As the sole god of this magical nation, she alone reaped the benefits of their devotion. She became extraordinarily powerful, as was her plan, for she had no intention of letting her own followers ever have the ability or the frame of mind to cast her aside as the Oranbegans has discarded Ermeeth. Nor had she forgotten about her old rival. She sent a constant stream of spies to monitor Oranbega's status. There was still no word of Ermeeth, but the people continued to prosper and grow in a peaceful, idyllic manner.

The people of Mu had long learned from their dread goddess that there was a kingdom of demons to the west. She had taught them to fear and hate Oranbega, turning it into a kind of hellish prison in the minds of her people. Although none of them had ever set foot on the western shore, nor seen an Oranbegan, they hated the people with a passion. The Oranbegans were The Other, the Enemy, Evil Incarnate who would someday come to devour their children and destroy their home. They learned to credit Hequat alone with protecting them from these foul marauders. And so, when the goddess judged that the time was right, they were ready. It was time to invade Oranbega.

The War

In Oranbega they had no idea that doom was sailing through the air in sky ships, ready to reign down magical terror on their fair cities. It had now been three thousand years since the city's foundation, and still it remained a safe, secure, and mostly happy place. They had no true army or even police force. The Circle of Thorns each year called for a draft of peacekeepers that would help enforce the laws. Like the Circle itself, being a Peacekeeper was a year long job that almost everyone eventually held. Only those convicted of serious crimes were exempt from the Peacekeeper lottery. Thus most of the citizenry had a small amount of experience in police work, but there were no professionals, nor were there any trained soldiers. There simply had never been a need. The only thing resembling a war had been an ill-conceived rebellion that some disaffected youths had led a thousand years before, and the Peacekeepers had put that down with minimal bloodshed.

The Mu sneak attack came at dawn. The invading army traveled in magical sky ships, made from an enchanted wood that floated in the air and driven forward by sails that harnessed supernatural winds. As the first Oranbegans saw the sky ship from miles away, they were stirred with wonder, not fear. They called to their friends to come and see, and soon thousand had gathered to behold the approaching ships. All were eager to meet these new visitors from another land. Then the fire started pouring down from the sky, and those thousands died in a deadly inferno. Panic ensued as the peace loving Oranbegans fled in terror. This first battle was almost entirely one-sided, with an entire city of some 50,000 innocents falling prey to the Mu invaders. The enemy had seized a beach head for the continuing war and they offered up human sacrifices in thanks to their goddess for her guidance and protection.

Ever an intelligent and resourceful people, the Oranbegans quickly understood what was happening and rallied to defend their homeland. The Circle of Thorns called up everyone who had ever served as Peacekeeper and ordered them to seal off the area taken by the invaders. The Mu warriors found themselves soon surrounded by magical wards and protections – force fields, walls of fire, swirling whirlwinds, and gaping chasms suddenly appeared to halt their advance. Their own magicians worked hard to counter the magic, tearing apart the conjurations almost as quickly as the Oranbegans could summon them. As more and more Mu troops arrived to reinforce the vanguard, it seemed only a matter of time before they broke out and started attacking more cities. Still, the delaying tactic bought the defenders more time to organize their counter attack.

The Circle of Thorns took personal command of Oranbega's ad hoc army. They formulated a basic strategy for using their magical abilities offensively and tried their best to pass on the knowledge to their new soldiers. When the Mu finally broke through the barriers, the Circle thought it was ready. The two armies met in a battle which the Circle quickly lost all control over. Each Oranbegan "soldier" ended up reverting to pure instinct, fighting with their magic as best they could. The Oranbegans outnumbered the Mu and matched their sorcerers in magical ability, but without discipline the Oranbegans were doomed. After a hard fought, week-long battle they were forced to retreat, having lost well over half their number.

The war continued in this manner for the next year, with the Oranbegans quickly learning the basics of warfare, but the Mu always staying one step ahead of them. The invaders slowly marched up the coast, destroying the Oranbegan cities in their wake. When only the northernmost quarter of Oranbega remained, the defenders realized that the time had come for desperate action. One member of the Circle, a woman named Tya, was Oranbega's foremost authority on Earth magic. Her abilities alone had saved the armies from utter destruction on more than one occasion. She suggested that instead of just retreating the army this time, they retreat the entire city. She had conceived of a plan to sink the remaining cities beneath the Earth's surface, protecting them from the invaders' sky ships and offering them fortified positions from which to counterattack. The Circle agreed with the plan, since a number of them had secretly begun to work on their own scheme for finally winning the war.

Sinking Oranbega proved a success. It was certainly the last thing Hequat and her soldiers expected from the Oranbegans, and they weren't sure how to deal with it at first. Attempts to magically induce earthquakes or flood the underground city proved ineffective against Tya's powerful enchantments. The only positive aspect for the Mu was that they now seemed to have the Oranbegan's trapped. With no entrances or exits from the subterranean halls, it seemed that they only had to lay siege and starve the enemy out.

The Circle of Thorns had other plans. Three of its members had, before the war, been deeply involved in a new field of magical study – other worlds. Their research had led them to discover both the spirit world (where, among other things, the Banished Pantheon was trapped) and the demonic planes. These latter were dimensions parallel to our own that were home to powerful, war-like beings. These demons seemed to have been somehow imprisoned there long ago, and desperately sought release. The Circle reckoned that it might be possible to make a deal with some of these demons, drawing upon their warlike nature and experience to help turn the tide of war against the Mu.

The most experienced members of the Circle met deep within the depths of Oranbega, locked in a chamber warded against any attempts by the demons to break free. They summoned forth a demon prince – a truly terrifying being unlike anything they had ever dreamed of in their worst nightmares. The Circle held fast though, and bravely began to bargain with the Demon. They agreed upon a deadly bargain. The demons would provide the Oranbegans with infernal weaponry to use against the Mu. In return, the demons would receive the immortal souls of everyone that died by one of these weapons. The Circle readily agreed, seeing no down side for themselves in the arrangement.

The Demon Prince presented them with 5000 Infernal Swords. The Circle emerged from their sealed chamber and began to distribute the weapons to their best fighters. The soldiers of Oranbega chosen to wield these weird weapons named them after their leaders, calling them the Thorns of Oranbega, or simply Thorns. Indeed, the weapons had a certain thorn-like appearance and were made from an unknown semi-organic substance. These Thorn blades heightened the user's magic powers and had powerful anti-magic built into them. When the first company of Thorn Wielders sallied forth against the besieging Mu, they took their foes totally by surprise. The Thorns sliced through the magical shields and protective spells of the Mu, and soon enough the Oranbegans were reaping a deadly harvest for their demonic allies.

Just after this great success, with the war finally turning in the Oranbegans' favor, the year-long term of the Circle of Thorns time in office ended. It was time for a new lottery and new leadership. The sitting Circle thought this a bad idea indeed. Only they had experience with the Demon Prince, and putting someone else in charge could lead to disastrous results. Besides, they had acquired valuable experience in war and leadership. Surely no one else was as qualified as them for the job of leading the nation in this troubled time. The Circle proposed a new law granting them another year in office. The public, deeply shocked by the past year's horrors and enthused by this first victory, gave the Circle what it wanted. Three millennia of tradition were overruled and the Circle stayed in power.

Political matters taken care of, the Circle launched an all out offensive against the invading Mu warriors. All 5000 Thorn Wielders attacked the main body of the Mu force, with tens of thousands of magic using auxiliaries in reserve. The Mu were still trying to figure out what had happened the first time, and the Wielders threw them into utter disarray. The siege broke as the Mu fled to their sky ships and retreated back south. The Oranbegans followed as best they could, but few had the power to fly and they were not enough to bring down the retreating ships. The Mu reinforced the fortress they had built at their original beachhead and awaited support from the home island. A few days later the Oranbegans arrived at the walls of the Mu fortress, but they found that even their demonic blades could not cut through the enchanted steel walls. Once again the war settled down into a siege, but this time with the tables turned.

Pandemonium

The Circle of Thorns now had a taste for victory and it wanted more. The Mu fortress could easily hold out for a year or more and the enemy could flee anytime it wanted thanks to its sky ships. Although Oranbegan builders had already begun work on their own flying vessels, the Circle did not want to wait and risk letting the enemy escape. Since their first experience with the helpful demon prince had turned out so well, they decided to return to him for more aid.

The demon prince was indeed happy to see them once more. He lauded their great victories on the battlefield and thanked them heartily for all the souls they had sent plummeting into his infernal homeland. The Circle told him of their newest troubles and the prince pretended to think about it for a bit. Then he seized upon an answer. While he had no weapons that could pierce the walls, he did have some demonic followers who could no doubt do the job. The Circle was welcome to summon them forth and use their abilities to help end the war. In return they would have to do nothing more than make a sacrifice to him of all the victims they took once they breached the walls, and of course promise him that no one inside would be allowed to survive the siege.

The Circle at first balked at this idea, wary of letting powerful beings from another world into their own. But the prince assured them that the demon warriors would be summoned back home once the battle was won. The Circle finally agreed, and began the process of summoning forth 999 demon warriors. The demons were fearsome, clawed beasts that were only part corporeal. Their devilish torso's rose out of noxious mist and they had the ability to pass through solid objects. When the Circle appeared on the battlefield with these creatures, even the most stalwart soldiers recoiled in fear. The demons didn't even wait for a command to attack. They simply glided on up to the fortress wall, cackling evilly and conversing in their native tongue.

The demons passed straight through the previously impenetrable wall. The Oranbegans could hear screams of terror and the dying coming from inside. Less than half an hour later the doors swung wide. For a long moment the gateway stood empty. The Thorn Wielders, poised to charge, stood unsure. Then a mass of Mu soldiers came running into the doorway. The Thorn troops charge to meet them, cutting them down as they tried to leave the fortress. It soon became obvious that the Mu men and women weren't rallying forth to break the charge. They were trying to get away from the demons that had overrun their fortress.

A great and bloody massacre followed, as the Thorn Wielders were overcome with a vile bloodlust equal to that of their demonic allies. When the Circle entered the fortress they were appalled at the carnage. Only a handful of Mu soldiers remained, along with one of their smaller sky ships. The Council ordered the fighting stopped and called forth the shocked survivors of Mu. They told the Mu to go home and tell their leaders that the war was over and never to return. The terrified soldiers thanked the Circle and gladly beat feet back to their home island. The war finished, The Circle gathered up all 999 demons and brought them back to the capital. They summoned forth the demon prince and thanked him for his help, asking him also to retrieve his demon warriors.

The prince refused, saying that the Circle had broken the bargain. They had failed to sacrifice every single person in the fortress. The demons would stay until the last defender was sent into the inferno. The Circle protested and entreated the demon prince to make an exception. He refused. Over the course of the discussion he turned the tables on the Circle, raising doubts about the wisdom of their decision. Certainly the Mu would not give up so easily? They were an evil, war loving people and would return again in force. Surely the best course of action was to pursue them back to their homeland and destroy them before they destroyed Oranbega. The demon prince even went so far as to generously offer more aid in this endeavor – a fleet of demonic ships to transport the Oranbegans to Mu and destroy their enemies forever.

Beguiled by the prince, the Circle agreed, and three nights later the Oranbegan army set sail in the demon's black iron ships. They made the journey in record speed, arriving at Mu just four days later, and landing their army of demons and Thorn Wielders under the cover of night. The Mu had no idea they were under attack until the invaders were among them, running rampant through the streets of their capital city. It was mass terror and chaos, not a battle. Thousands fled to the Temple of Hequat that dominated the city center. The Oranbegan invaders and demons drove the fleeing citizens forward, until they were all concentrated in the temple precinct. For some reason the demons could not cross into the sanctified ground, and the Thorn Wielders felt their swords grow uncomfortably hot whenever they tried to cross the temple threshold.

Inside the temple, the survivors prayed for help from their goddess. And she answered. Hequat appeared upon her throne in all her glory and power, enraged the Ermeeth's descendants had brought this upon her beautiful iron city. She unleashed her fury upon the invading army, casting bolts of pure magical energy that exploded in their midst. Their own spells offered some protection, but the onslaught was so severe that even the demons were forced to retreat. Watching from afar, the Circle of Thorns panicked at the sudden appearance of a real live goddess. With their own god long forgotten, they turned to the only higher power they knew: the demon prince.

He offered them the same deal once more, only with stronger penalties for failure. He would give them the power to conquer Mu if they would promise to destroy every one of the inhabitants in sacrifice to him. If they failed, they must agree to sacrifice their own people instead. Apparently panicked and jumpy, the Circle agreed immediately to these terms. Pleased, the demon prince instructed them on how to summon forth a number of great Leviathans, water dwelling demons each a mile long. They would be more than a match for the Mu and their goddess. Meanwhile, a group within the Circle, led by the sorceress Tya, devised a failsafe in case the demon prince turned on them once more. They returned to Oranbega while the rest of the Circle raised up the Leviathans.

Hequat had never imagined such creatures could exist in the world. Indeed, the Leviathans came from the infernal seas, and were not of Earth. Mile long, whale like creatures, they had gaping maws a hundred yards wide and were covered with lashing tentacles. There were seven of them in all, great, world shaking beasts that caused tidal waves as they leapt from the sea and came crashing down in the waves. They began to physically tear the island to pieces and drag it into the sea, even though most of the Oranbegans were still on the island as well. Hequat saw that the day was lost and she prepared to flee, taking as many of her followers with her as she could. The Oranbegans were too frightened to try and stop the fleeing sky ships. They were already running back to the demon ships, fearing what the Leviathans would do to them.

It took the massive sea creatures less than a day to drag the entire island down into the sea. They disappeared with it, perhaps returning to their infernal home. Perhaps remaining in our ocean depths. Hequat and the people of Mu fled in every direction on the compass, seeking safe land, well away from water, wherever they could find it. This was the great Mu Diaspora that spread the ten thousand surviving warrior-magicians out over the entire world. They would settle and breed with local populations, forgetting much of their bygone glories, but retaining the magical ability that ran in their blood. Today their descendants still walk the earth, although most don't know it. These are the men and women with the greatest potential for learning magic, including all of the great wizards and witches in history. Her base of power fractured and defeated, Hequat's own power waned and she returned to her native land to find new devotees.

The deeply shaken Oranbegans returned home, not knowing about the deal the Circle had struck with the demon prince. While Tya and her followers gathered all the Oranbegans in the giant Plaza of Wisdom, the rest of the Council summoned up the demon prince. He no longer hid his glee. Their lives were now forfeit to him! He told them to prepare themselves for his demonic hordes, who would rip the flesh from them and grind their bones between their teeth. This was, of course, what he had planned and hoped for all along. The Circle agreed, saying their lives and bodies were the prince's to do with as he pleased. This was Tya's signal. She and the entire assembled population of Oranbega wove a powerful, soul-wrenching spell. They severed their spirits from their physical forms even as the demonic horde fell upon them. Their lives were given to the demons, as agreed, but their souls remained free, cheating the prince of his greatest prize.

The terms of their contract fulfilled, the demon prince had no choice but to recall his legions and leave the ghostly Oranbegans in peace. Although they had lost their bodies, they retained their spirits, their city, and their magic. It was not a perfect existence by any means, but it was one they could live with. And so, after the most disastrous year in their long, long history, the city of Oranbega began to find a new path for itself in the world. They continued to study the mysteries of magic and philosophy, although they now added demonology and spirit lore to the mix. Since time no longer truly had any meaning for them, they quickly forgot about it, just as most of the world soon forgot about them. For millennia they drifted silently through their stone halls, undisturbed by the sprawling human civilization that was growing above their heads.

The Modern Era

Thousands of years later, rumors and myths about lost Oranbega still persisted in mystic circles, just as the memory of Mu gave rise to tales of Atlantis and other lost cities. Finding Oranbega, a city of wizards, became a kind of Holy Grail for some magicians. But it was not until a strange confluence of events led to the formation of a new Circle of Thorns in 1898 that the city's true location came to light. The Baron Zoria believed himself a mystical master, but was really just a charlatan like so many other late 19th century spiritualists. As fate would have it though, he was also a descendant of Mu, as were the individuals he gathered about him. They were not the first group to try and contact the spirits of Oranbega. The ghosts had heard many such entreaties over the years and had ignored them all. But Zoria and his group were the first who, as a whole, stank of the corruption of Mu.

This time the Circle of Thorns answered the pleadings of Zoria, intrigued and a little alarmed that men of Mu still sought them after all these eons. Zoria's mind was an open book to them and they saw he did not even know his own mystic heritage, nor that of his comrades. Still, this was an worrisome turn of events. The spirits did not want to have another conflict with Mu or its descendants. And so they decided to co-opt the séance circle. They offered Zoria and his group true magical power in return for their devotion. They sent across the spirit thorns that Zoria and company impaled themselves with. These magical implants allowed the true Circle of Thorns to work through Zoria's group and interact with the world directly.

15,000 years or so had passed since the Circle had last looked in on the surface world for any serious amount of time. What they saw interested them, especially at first when they mistook technology for magic. For several years they simply watched through their human counterparts, taking in this new information. They allowed Zoria and his friends to use their power as they pleased, thinking it would provide a good insight into how modern day man would behave when given a true dose of power. The Circle was unimpressed, although to be honest it was not easy to impress a ghost who's been studying the deepest mysteries of magic for longer than recorded history. Still, they wanted to know more and so guided Zoria back to Oranbega. He and the others with imbedded thorns became the first living beings to enter the underground city since the end of the war with Mu. Its subterranean splendor was the last thing they ever saw.

The ghostly Circle of Thorns, like all the other Oranbegans, had grown detached from any moral compass they might have had when they still wore flesh. In 15,000 years of bodiless magical research, their entire worldview had become a dangerous combination of egocentric and coldly clinical. They certainly no longer thought of themselves as human and viewed human beings as just another subject for research and experimentation. Thus they didn't think twice about obliterating the souls of Zoria and company and assuming control of their bodies. For the ghosts these bodies were vehicles, something to be put on when necessary and parked in storage when not in use. They allowed the ghosts to walk the surface world and interact with it once more, something they could not do otherwise since their ghostly forms were restricted to within Oranbega.

For the next few decades the Oranbegans experimented with their new vehicles. They discovered one very important trait: there were certain magical rituals that required a body to perform, including anything to do with summoning and controlling demons. The Circle of Thorns had always had an interest in demonology, ever since they first contacted that sole demon prince. Now that they'd had thousands of years to study the subject, they had learned where they made mistakes with the demon prince the first time and how they might better harness demonic energies in the future. One important lesson they'd learned is to always offer up a sacrifice sufficient to deflect the demon's interest away from you personally.

The Circle began using its bodies to perform demonic rituals upon the unsuspecting population of Paragon City – which now lay directly above their own sunken city. They also began recruiting new members into their ghostly cult. The process of stealing a body is in many ways voluntary and if they wanted more flesh, they'd need more recruits. Throughout the 20's and into the 30's they prospered as a cult and learned a tremendous amount through their bloody rituals. It wasn't until 1933 that their plans hit their first roadblock. A hero named the Dream Doctor discovered the cult and waged a personal war against the Circle of Thorns. Naturally, the powerful magician also happened to be descended from the Mu, making his interference all the more galling.

Unprepared for a fight with super powered heroes, the Circle withdrew to their hidden city. They decided that they had learned so much in the few decades they'd been active on the surface world, that it would behoove them to take a few centuries and really examine all of the data they had acquired. They thought themselves done with humanity for the most part. They still occasionally took their bodies out for a spin to collect some supporting information or perform a few small rituals, but they steered clear of the attention grabbing rituals that had got them in trouble in the first place.

Then came the Rikti. It turned out that the invading aliens came from a dimension where matter and energy themselves are just ever so slightly different than they are in our home dimension. The difference is so slight as to be undetectable by most scientific equipment, but it makes a big difference when it comes to magic, which requires ultra-specific details. The result: The Rikti could blast right through the thousands of cloaks, shields, wards, and charms that protected Oranbega from discovery. They did just that not too long after the invasion began, when they were looking for hidden caves to set up their staging areas. This proved a turning point in the war for the Rikti, as the Circle of Thorns panicked and rallied all its energies to drive the aliens from their sacred home.

But the damage was done. The 15,000-year-old spells that had warded the city were not easily replaced. The Oranbegans could create temporary illusions and protective barriers but not enough to cover every possible entrance to the city. Their doors lay open to anyone who dared pass through them. The children of Mu would come again and finish the job that their forefathers had started. The Circle went into emergency overdrive, once again recruiting heavily and summoning a variety of demon allies to bolster their forces. They uncovered the long forgotten Thorn Blades and started to find new bodies for the original Thorn Wielders. After 18,000 years of uninterrupted civilization, they refused to go down without a fight. Of course no war or invasion came crashing down upon them. The humans still knew little of their existence and nothing of their true nature. Since they killed everyone who ventured into their realm during and after the war, there is both interest and fear associated with Oranbega. The Circle has a short time to rebuild and plan before the humans start making more concerted efforts to discover their secrets. They know that this grace period won't last long. The Children of Mu cannot be trusted to live in peace with others. The time has come to finish the war once and for all.

7.3.3 Goals

First and foremost, the Circle of Thorns wants to secure Oranbega and their immortal ghosts from all outside harm. They've grown accustomed to immortality and have no intention of giving it up anytime in the foreseeable future. Since their walls have been breached, safety means temporal power that can protect them from the many and varied dangers that threaten them in this world of ours.

The Circle has identified three major threats to their security, two of which are immediate and one that could be a problem in the long run. The most immediate problem is the Rikti and their super powered foes. Both groups have access to Rikti technology and other dimensional travel. It was the Rikti who inadvertently destroyed Oranbega's defenses, and thus far the circle has discovered no way to replace them with something the Rikti couldn't feasibly break a second time. Since humanity's heroes have co-opted so much of the Rikti's technology, they are now both equally threatening. Indeed, the human heroes are more dangerous, since they seem actively bent on harming the Circle, while the Rikti have learned to simply steer clear of the ghostly wizards. Ultimately the Circle needs to either destroy or firmly enslave both of these threats.

The second major class of threat is magic that they don't understand. While they have spent more time studying magic than all the rest of humanity put together, their researching has been necessarily limited by their ghostly forms. Living magicians have made great strides in other areas, and the Circle wishes to learn as much about these discoveries as possible. Thus they want to exert total control over all magical activities in Paragon City and eventually the world. They've begun placing agents and Followers in any group or community that has even the slightest interest in magic. They also keep a close watch on all stores that sell mystic items of any kind.

Finally there is the lingering issue of the Mu. The Oranbegans have an almost irrational fear of the Mu and are thus quite concerned about the formation of a new Mu nation. They've spent a great deal of time and energy developing spells and enchantments to help them track down every body on the planet that comes from Mu lineage. Those already in Paragon City are under constant watch (including some of the city's most powerful magical heroes). They will not be taken by surprise a second time.

In order to accomplish any of these goals, the Circle needs more willing victims that they can steal bodies from. Thus recruiting new "members" is a large part of The Circle's current activities. They present the world with a number of different front groups and cults, each designed to appeal to a different kind of person. From dangerous, satanic style cults to new-age book clubs, the Circle extends its tendrils out into the community. The more they do so, the more attention they get, both positive and negative. Since the people's souls are utterly destroyed when the ghosts of Oranbega seize their bodies, there has been no one who "recanted" their conversion or expressed any ill will towards the Circle. Of course, their families and friends tell different stories.

With the constant incursions from heroes, sewer monsters, extra dimensional warriors, and treasure hunters, Oranbega is not the safe sanctuary it once was. The Circle is considering taking rather radical steps to distract trespassers and give them a firmer foothold on the surface world. They plan to raise a portion of their buried city back above ground, creating an Oranbegan enclave right in the middle of Paragon City. They then plan to declare themselves a sovereign nation and sue the US government for the right to live in peace. They can definitely raise the city anytime they want, although it will mean destroying a number of city blocks that are currently inhabited. As for the rest of their plan, only time will tell. Certainly it will draw much of the focus away from the underground city and turn it on the newly raised portion.

Finally, the Circle has recently discovered a rather interesting fact. Their pact with the demon prince stipulated that they must kill every last person from the nation of Mu. Tya's clever shortcut around the deal gave up their bodies but not their souls. Recent studies by Circle demonologists have concluded that, were the Circle to finally fulfill the terms of their pact, then they could in fact get their original bodies back. All they have to do is kill every single living descendent of Mu (of which there are about 250 million in the world). The Circle currently needs Mu bodies to work their magic through, but a day will come when they have taken all they need. Then, quite possible, the time for genocide will have come.

7.3.4 Behavior Patterns

The Circle of Thorns exhibits a wide variety of different behavior patterns. It is a huge organization, potentially as large as the population of Paragon City itself. The Circle has a number of different initiatives in place to help achieve its goals. Most Oranbegans still prefer to keep to their caverns and subterranean halls and only venture onto the surface world for very specific reasons.

The most common types of Circle of Thorns minions found on the surface world are Followers and Demon Brood. The Followers are usually moving about on some specific mission, either leading some satellite cult or running errands for their superiors. Except or Guides, they always travel in groups for mutual support. They don't go looking for trouble and will not attack unless approached directly by a hero. This doesn't mean that they'll wait for the hero to strike the first blow. If he seems threatening, they'll strike first. The Demon Brood on the other hand will strike first under any circumstances. The lesser brood are often let out onto the surface world to hunt for victims. They enjoy preying on civilians and heroes alike, since each victory makes them more powerful.

The Circle has begun searching out likely locations into which they will raise a portion of the city. As such it is not impossible to find higher ranking Thorn Casters and even the high wandering about (with a guard of Demon Brood attendants) scouting locations and making magical measurements. These higher-ranking individuals never linger long and are always part of some important mission to retrieve a magical artifact, help convert a new member, or destroy some particularly loathsome enemy.

Down in Oranbega itself, you're liable to find all manner of Circle minions, often quite involved in the group's various schemes and research projects. Oranbega is not one contiguous city, but rather a vast network of cave systems, each connected to the larger web via teleportation circles. It is literally impossible to walk across the city (unless you're a ghost). When intruders do find a breach, the mages seal off any exit teleport gates, limiting the damage to one area. The deeper one gets into the city, the more dangerous the guards become. While the outer areas are half abandoned, the inner chambers have hosts of demons and powerful mages protecting them.

7.3.5 Allies and Enemies

The Circle of Thorns is playing its cards close to the vest. Although most of the world recognizes them as a potential threat, few realize just how dangerous and homicidal the group really is. After all, the group helped fight off the Rikti during the war and seems to still attack the aliens whenever they can. It's not unheard of to see the two groups openly fighting in the sewers or even on the streets. The Circle cultivates this positive public opinion as best it can, trying to keep its most nefarious activities in the shadows. The fact that recruits seem to join the group willingly and come from all parts of society also helps. While the public still distrusts the group, they don't see it for what it truly is.

Other villain groups have expressed a keen interest in working with the Circle. The Devouring Earth, The Banished Pantheon, and even the Tsoo all are interested in further plumbing the secrets of Oranbegan magic. The Circle works with these groups and other mystic minded villains in order to further cement their control over magical enterprises and possibly find new recruits. The Circle knows it has the upper hand, and has become quite adept at keeping their own secrets while at the same time pulling out every bit of knowledge they can from their "allies."

As far as non-mystic groups go, the Circle has little use for them. They are all viewed as threats, particularly the Rikti and the Lost, as well as the Fifth Column, whose underground bunkers threaten Oranbega. The Fifth Column and the Circle of Thorns often come into direct conflict, although for now they try and give each other enough space that conflict isn't always necessary. Crey Industries has sent out some feelers to the Circle but all of them were rejected. The two groups now largely ignore one another. Nemesis has not dealt with the Circle directly, but he has sent several of his agents to infiltrate their cult. While all of them were lost to the Oranbegan ghosts, Nemesis now has a much better idea of what the Circle is up to and its true nature. He does not like what he sees.

The main hero organization opposed to the Circle of Thorns is of course The Midnight Squad. Their enmity goes back to the 1930's, and is now stronger than ever. The Circle makes constant probing attacks against the Squad and its members, hoping to find a weakness. They would desperately love to convert one of its heroes to their cause, but thus far they have had no luck. For their part, the Midnight Squad wants to learn all it can about Oranbega and is constantly sending patrols down into the city to try and map its ever shifting dimensions.

7.3.6 Future Developments

One of the most likely future developments is the return of Hequat. The goddess had many interesting adventures after the fall of Mu, and she has definitely managed to survive down to the modern day. She has only recently learned about the reappearance of Oranbega, an event that interests her keenly. She is currently investigating Paragon City and doing her best to divine what their intentions are. Once she discovers them, she'll formulate a plan of her own: the rejoining of the lost tribes of Mu. She will begin to gather powerful Mu descendants from around the world and teach them the true extent of their natural born power. Then she will once again renew the war with her ancient enemy, this time posing as a force for good.

Also inevitable is the time when the Circle raises a portion of Oranbega above ground. This should be an entire new zone unto itself, located on the outskirts of the city. Or, for more drama, you can completely level an existing zone to make room for it (which would be pretty cool I think). This new zone will have much higher level Circle Members wandering freely in the streets, since they will view the area as their home. It would be particularly interesting if the zone weren't actually a hazard zone, but was instead open to humans freely. The Circle would do this in order to gain the trust of the city and the world community. Of course dark deeds would still transpire in the shadows, but the zone itself would be ostensibly habitable.

Another possible publicity move is the Circle declaring an all out campaign to rid the world of the Rikti for good. They could launch a series of offenses and ask for recruits in their struggle, promising magical powers in return. This would swell their ranks and do wonders for their public image. It would also mean thousands of hapless volunteers would lose their souls forever. Even the heroes might start working for the Circle, thinking them a force for good, at least in this instance. Succumbing to evil's seductions should carry a price, once the truth comes out. The culmination of these events should be the reveal of the Oranbegans' true history and the real fate of all those who join the cult willingly. It will mark a change in tactics for the Circle, as they must find new ways of expanding their power, perhaps by expanding into other dimensions.

7.3.7 Villains

7.3.7.1 Followers

The followers comprise the vast majority of the Circle of Thorns' current host. They serve as the workhorses and line troops for the group and are the most commonly seen minions outside of Oranbega itself. They wear hooded robes that hide their faces entirely, save for the green glow of their ghostly eyes. The Circle of Thorns seldom feels the need to travel unseen amongst human society, and when they do they use illusory magic to disguise themselves. They much prefer to dress their stolen bodies in traditional Oranbegan garb as a reminder of times gone by.

The bodies used for Followers all come from non-Mu stock. These are normal people seduced into following the mystic teachings of a bygone magical kingdom. In a world of super powered heroes, alien invaders, and magical monsters, it's not hard to convince someone that they would do well to have a little extraordinary power of their own. Thus it is usually the followers themselves who travel to cult meetings, spiritualist workshops, goth clubs, and anywhere else potential recruits like to spend their time. A few quick displays of true power, even simple spells that Followers can pull off, and the fish is on the hook, ready to be reeled in.

Because of their bodies, Followers have limited magical abilities. They usually know only a simple spell or two. Even the most experienced and developed Followers only have a handful of magical powers at their disposal. Their bodies simply can't channel any more energy than that. To augment their meager powers, they usually carry weapons of some kind. The highest-ranking followers, called Leaders oddly enough, always carry a magical weapon that distinguishes them from their followers.

The Followers arrange themselves into four different basic functionalities, wearing various colored robes to represent their purpose. A body tends to have a predilection towards one sort of magic or another, which is then reinforced by the practice of that type of magic. As a result once a body is put on a track for a particular duty type, it remains there.. The four types of followers are:

7.3.7.1.1 *Guard*

- Rank: Minion
- Levels 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
- Powers
 - **Sword:** This wavy sword attack does medium damage and can reduce your foes defense.
 - **Hand_Crossbow:** Small rapid fire Handheld Crossbow.
- AI:

Description: The Warriors serve as front line combatants. They have no fear of running into battle and engaging the foe directly. They wear brown robes and come from the commonest of human lineages.

7.3.7.1.2 *Archer*

- Rank: Minion
- Levels 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22
- Powers:
 - **Dagger:** Wavy ritual blade.
 - **Crossbow:** The Heavy Crossbow is slower to reload than the Hand Crossbow, but it has much longer range, deals more damage and can knock down foes.

Description: The Archers are also basic troops, but all of them possess missile weapons of some kind. They provide fire support for the warriors most of the time, but can also be sent into battle on their own. Like the Warriors, their magical spells focus on increasing their efficacy in combat. They wear dark green robes and usually carry some form of crossbow. They also come from very common lineages with little taint of Mu blood.

7.3.7.1.3 *Defender*

- Rank: Minion
- Levels 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30
- Powers
 - **Thorn_Sword:** The Thorn Sword poisons its victims with negative energy to slow them.
 - **Hand_Crossbow:** Small rapid fire Handheld Crossbow.
- AI:

Description:Defenders are the support troops of the Circle of Thorns. Their primary duty is to maintain the health and welfare of the Circle's stock of bodies. In combat situations they work primarily as healers but also no other magical spells designed to buff up their allies. They wear yellow-green robes and come from a stock with some trace amounts of Mu ancestry, giving them a little more magical energy than Warriors or Archers.

7.3.7.1.4 *Guide*

- Rank: Minion
- Levels: 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38
- Powers
 - **Scimitar:** This deadly weapon has been enchanted to channel negative energy damage to its victims.
 - **Hand_Crossbow:** Small rapid fire Handheld Crossbow.
- AI:

Description:The Guides are minions not designed for combat or direct confrontation, yet they are the most commonly found Circle of Thorns members on the surface world. Their primary role is to travel amongst occult circles and recruit new members to the Circle. They also serve as ambassadors to other magic oriented groups. They often meet with outsiders to arrange exchanges of knowledge or mystic paraphernalia. Finally, they are always on the look out for those with the blood of Mu running through their veins. Whenever they come across such a person they make every effort to recruit them, or at least mark them for further surveillance. They themselves have only a smattering of Mu ancestry, but do possess more magical ability than any of the other Followers.

7.3.7.2 Thorn Casters

The Thorn Casters provide the first line of defense within Oranbega proper and serve as potent magical back up for field operations. They represent the warrior class whose magical studies are focused entirely upon the pursuit of offensive spells and effects. They wear bodies with a significant portion of Mu ancestry and are thus capable of wielding mid to high-level magic. They wear the same style of robes as the Followers, but leave their heads bare, exposing their tattooed shaved heads and glowing green eyes. They never use weaponry, preferring to conjure up their own when it comes time for battle.

Unlike Followers, Thorn Casters tend to have the same Oranbegan ghost controlling them for their entire existence. A Thorn Caster's power level is roughly equivalent to that of the average Oranbegan citizen when they still had bodies. Although numerous Oranbegans reached much greater mystic heights, most remained at this level. As such, their ghosts cannot make best use of more powerful bodies and so they are content to keep the Thorn Caster form. As a result, individual Thorn Casters are much more likely to develop distinct personalities and character traits. It also means that the wearers have more fear for what might happen to their terrestrial form and thus take greater care to avoid permanent injury or death.

The Thorn Casters are organized around the simplest kind of magic: elemental spell casting. Manipulating the elements is one of the first tricks a young Oranbegan would learn, and although commonplace it is also very effective. There are four different kinds of Thorn Caster, each specializing in spells from a different element.

7.3.7.2.1 Fire Thorn Caster

- Rank: Minion
- Levels: 30,31,32,33,34
- Powers
 - Scimitar This deadly weapon has been enchanted to channel negative energy damage to its victims.
 - Fire_Ball A Fireball consumes a targeted foe, and any other enemy, in a tight radius. Anyone in that area is burned and damaged over a short period of time.
 - Flares A quick attack that throws Flares at the target. Little damage, but very fast.
 - Char Incapacitates a targeted foe at a distance by Charing him with soot and cinders around him.
 - Ring_of_Fire Immobilize your target in a Ring of Fire. Deals some damage over time. Very Accurate! More resilient foes may require multiple Fire Rings to Immobilize.
 - Consume The Caster can Consume some fuel from his nearby enemies to recover Endurance.
- AI: Default

Description: Fire Casters use their fire control abilities for both ranged and melee attacks. Their personalities tend to reflect their element: wild, a bit unpredictable, and quick to attack. All Fire Casters have complete Invulnerability to Fire based attacks in addition to whatever other spells they have available.

7.3.7.2.2 Earth Thorn Caster

- Rank: Minion
- Levels: 35,36,37,38,39
- Powers
 - Falchion This small curved short sword has been enchanted to channel negative energy damage to its victims.
 - Stone_Spears The Caster can cause Stone Spears to erupt around an enemy target and all nearby foes. The Stone Spears deal moderate lethal damage.
 - Quicksand The Caster can cause the ground to go viscous like Quicksand at a targeted location. Any foes that pass through the Quicksand will become snared and their movement dramatically slowed.
 - Stone_Prison Immobilize a single target within an earthy formation. Deals some crushing damage over time as it Immobilizes the target. Some more resilient foes may require multiple attacks to immobilize. Stone Prison can also reduce a target's defense.

- Rock_Armor While this power is active, the Caster's skin becomes Stone. Rock Armor make the Caster highly resistant to Smashing and Lethal based attacks. They are less likely to land and affect the Outcast.
- AI: Default

Description: Earth Casters are the stalwart, plodding, defense oriented soldier of the Circle's army. They rely on the earth itself to protect them in battle and tend to be the type that has little initiative but follows order extremely well. They all have a limited Invulnerability to Kinetic attacks that raises in effectiveness the higher their rank.

7.3.7.2.3 Air Thorn Caster

- Rank: Minion
- Levels: 40,41,42,43,44
- Powers
 - Falchion This small curved short sword has been enchanted to channel negative energy damage to its victims.
 - Thunder_Clap The Caster can call a tremendous Thunder Clap that will Disorient most foes in a large area around the Witch Doctor for quite a while.
 - Lightning_Bolt The Caster can send a large blast of electrical energy at a foe. Lightning bolt deals good damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - Snow_Storm While active, the chill from this Snow Storm can dramatically slow the attack and movement speed of all foes near the caster.
 - Fly Thorn Air Casters can Fly!
- AI: Default

Description: Air casters are the flighty, mercurial kind of Thorn Casters. They're prone to great leaps of inspiration and innovation, and spend most of their time involved in magical research as well as other, non-combat endeavors. However, they know their duty and when it comes time for battle, they give it their all, often inventing interesting new strategies to employ against the enemy. They wear blue-gray robes and all possess a limited invulnerability to energy attacks.

7.3.7.2.4 Ice Thorn Caster

- Rank: Minion
- Levels: 45,46,47,48,49
- Powers
 - Falchion This small curved short sword has been enchanted to channel negative energy damage to its victims.
 - Block_of_Ice The Caster can Freeze a single foe in a Block of Ice. The target is frozen solid, helpless, and can be attacked.
 - Ice_Blast Ice Blast hurls shards of ice at foes and slows their attacks for a time. Slower recharge than Ice Bolt, but more damage.
 - Freeze_Ray Although this power deal very little damage, the Freeze Ray encases your foe in a block of ice, Holding him helpless in place for quite a while. The ice, however, is fragile, and the victim can break free if attacked.
 - Chilblain Immobilize your target in an icy trap. Deals some damage over time and slightly Slows the target movement and attack speed

- Hoarfrost When activated the Caster becomes covered in a thick layer of frost, called Hoarfrost. While the Caster is covered in Hoarfrost, he takes less cold, smashing and lethal damage. Resistance to fire is minimal. Cannot be used with Frozen Armor, Wet Ice, Glacial Armor and Hibernate.
- AI: Default

Description: Cold Casters ostensibly have mastery over the element of water, but their magical tradition has come to rely on using ice and cold more than the liquid variety. They are the logical, calculating members of the Thorn Casters, and when not on missions they spend much of their time performing administrative magics for the Circle of Thorns. All of them wear dark blue robes and have complete invulnerability to cold-based attacks.

7.3.7.3 Thorn Wielders

- Rank: Minion
- Levels: 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13
- Powers
 - Greater_Thorn_Sword The Greater Thorn Sword poisons its victims with negative energy to slow them.
 - Throwing_Dagger Wavy ritual blade.
- AI: Melee Preferred

Description: The Thorn Wielders are the elite hand to hand combat soldiers within the Circle of Thorns. They carry the very same demonic swords that were given to the Oranbegans over 15,000 years ago for their war against Mu. Moreover, the ghosts who work through Thorn Wielder bodies belong to those same men and women who originally fought with the blades. Wielding a Thorn Blade is considered a great honor within the Circle of Thorns, much like any other elite military unit in human history.

The Thorn Blades themselves are enchanted so that their cutting edge phases in and out of substantiality a few hundred times every second. Made from diamond-hard, infernal stones, this phasing effect works somewhat like a chainsaw and allows them to break down all but the strongest materials in fractions of a second. The result is a weapon that ignores all Body Armor and reduces the victim's resilience by half.

The bodies the Thorn Wielder wear today have some measure of Mu in them, but actually a little less than the Thorn Casters. All Thorn Wielders wear the same red spiked shoulder harness, made from the same demonic material as their swords. This enchanted harness gives them most of their magical powers. The shoulder spikes heighten their own physical prowess in battle. All of them have enhanced their strength, stamina, and agility well beyond normal human levels. Protective charms give them limited Invulnerability to both Energy and Kinetic attacks. They also have a healing enchantment that constantly repairs any wounds they take, working as a minor level Regeneration. Only Thorn Wielders and the Inner Circle can wear these powerful mystic accoutrements.

Despite their elite status, not all Thorn Wielders are equal. Some prove more adept at combat or have bodies more suited for additional magical enhancement. They all wear the same red shoulder harness and carry the same weapon, but they have different colored robes to delineate their ranks.

7.3.7.4 The High

The High represent the most powerful magicians within the Circle of Thorns' ranks, aside from the actual inner circle itself. All of them wear bodies with almost pure Mu ancestry – a relatively rare thing indeed. Many of the bodies once belonged to some of Earth's greatest magicians. They were tricked into meeting with the Circle and joining its ranks. Few could resist the temptation of learning such ancient secrets as those buried in Oranbega. As far as the rest of the world is concerned, these are all men and women who have willingly joined the Circle. Little do they know that powerful Oranbegan ghosts have taken up residence in the bodies. The High always stay with a body once they come into possession of one. There is quite a waiting list for suitable bodies, since there are many more qualified Oranbegans than there are near-full blooded ancestors of Mu.

The High study the most intricate magical arts and obscure arcane specialties. Much of their magic is devoted to the creation of more permanent spells and enchantments. They're responsible for conjuring up the various wards and mystic shields that help protect Oranbega from intruders. They also make most of the magic items that the rest of the Circle use on a daily basis. Each of the High has mastery over several different kinds of magic, although usually only one of these is suitable for actual combat. Combat is something they try to avoid when possible. Their bodies are too precious to waste. Sometimes a mission is too important or difficult to trust to less powerful members. In those cases they always surround themselves with a bodyguard of Thorn Welders and high ranking Defenders, as well as any available Thorn Casters. The Defenders always stay close, ready to heal the High's body at a moment's notice.

The High all wear cylindrical hats that mark their rank in society. They also wear robes that cover their faces, leaving only their glowing eyes visible. They never have to use weapons of any kind, since their magical powers are more than enough to protect them. They do occasionally carry magic items of some sort to help augment their own abilities. All of The High have a number of different enchantments to boost their attributes to superhuman levels, making them quite hard to kill.

7.3.7.4.1 Life Mage

- Rank: Lieutenant
- Levels: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
- Powers
 - Brawl The Circle of Thorns High brawling attacks
 - Poison_Staff The Poison Staff can steal life.
 - Kamikaze Circle Mages will detonate themselves in a crisis, and attempt to take a few foes with them.
- AI: Stay back, avoid melee, buff and debuff. If alone, or if there are more than 2 people attacking him in melee range, he will use a suicide attack

Description: Life mages specialize in both giving and taking away from the living. Their research centers on delving into biological mysteries. Indeed, the Circle has had a magically determined map of the human genome for over 10,000 years. In combat they use their vast knowledge and power to attack where the body is weakest or to infect opponents with fast acting mystic cancers and other poisons. They wear green robes and all have an Invulnerability to poison and radiation attacks.

7.3.7.4.2 Energy Mage

- Rank: Lieutenant
- Levels: 11,12,13,14,15,16
 - Powers
 - Brawl The Circle of Thorns High brawling attacks
 - Thorn_Staff The Thorn Staff can hurl an explosive ball of energy.

- Kamikaze Circle Mages will detonate themselves in a crisis, and attempt to take a few foes with them.
- AI: Stay back, avoid melee, buff and debuff. If alone, or if there are more than 2 people attacking him in melee range, he will use a suicide attack

Description:Energy Mages use their magical abilities to manipulate and generate electricity and other forms of energy. Such powerful forces have obvious offensive uses and Energy Mages are quite deadly in combat. Most of the time, however, they focus not on fighting but on pure research and magical inquiry. Their studies include not just natural energy sources, but supernatural ones as well. From the soul to the spirit world to the demonic planes, Energy Mages find interesting ways of manipulating energy wherever they look. They are also responsible for providing light, heat, and protection for much of Oranbega. All Energy Mages have complete Invulnerability to Energy based attacks.

7.3.7.4.3 *Force Mage*

- Rank: Lieutenant
- Levels: 17,18,19,20,21,22
- Powers
 - Brawl The Circle of Thorns High brawling attacks
 - Crystal_Staff The Crystal Staff steals a targets strength, and adds it to your own.
 - Kamikaze Circle Mages will detonate themselves in a crisis, and attempt to take a few foes with them.
- AI: Stay back, avoid melee, buff and debuff. If alone, or if there are more than 2 people attacking him in melee range, he will use a suicide attack

Description:Force Mages deal with the primal forces that move the universe. They have mastery over gravity and can erect powerful invisible walls of force. Their main area of magic research is the universe itself and everything that holds it together. The Circle long ago mastered conventional physics and now spends much of its efforts on looking to other dimensions and planes of existence. They research demons in particular, but have recently begun trying to figure out how the Rikti portal technology works. Their mastery of force gives them a high (but not complete) Invulnerability to kinetic attacks.

7.3.7.4.4 *Soul Mage*

- Rank: Lieutenant
- Levels: 23,24,25,26,27,28
- Powers
 - Brawl The Circle of Thorns High brawling attacks
 - Darkness_Staff The Darkness staff can petrify a foe!
 - Darkness_Staff_Gloom The Darkness staff can slowly drains a target of life and reduces the his chance to hit.
 - Kamikaze Circle Mages will detonate themselves in a crisis, and attempt to take a few foes with them.
- Spawn Limit: 2
- AI: Stay back, avoid melee, buff and debuff. If alone, or if there are more than 2 people attacking him in melee range, he will use a suicide attack

Description: The final, and most important of the High Mages are the Soul Mages. They study the mysteries of the human spirit, an important undertaking when your entire civilization consists of ghosts. They are also students of extra-planar beings, particularly demons, and are often charged with dealing with the lesser demonic allies that the Circle of Thorns has at its disposal. In combat they tap into the darkest forms of magic, taking power from the infernal realms themselves in the form of Darkness Control abilities. Their study of the soul also gives them power over the mind itself, and they have mastered mind altering magics. They have total Invulnerability to both Darkness and Psionic based attacks.

7.3.7.5 The Circle

The Inner Circle of Thorns consists of the very same men and women who have ruled Oranbega since the war with Mu. After the war and the transformation into ghosts, the system of choosing new members by lottery was forgotten. The Circle now held absolute authority over the buried city and no one had any reason or desire to challenge it. For the thousands of years that followed, there was ruling to be done. As Ghosts the Oranbegans had few needs or worries. All they did was concern themselves with magical study and inquiry. The Circle's main duty was helping to direct that research, but only because they had more experience and talent than most. The actual circle met rarely and did little until they made contact with Baron Zoria and discovered the ancestors of Mu. Since that time they have been quite active and have exerted their authority over all the important decisions, from who gets what body, to where and when to go to war.

The eleven Circle members of course get their choice of body whenever they want it. Each has round the clock access to a human form with almost 100% Mu ancestry. Such beings are nigh impossible to find, but the Circle uses its magic to scour the world for them and seduce or cajole them into the Circle's cause by any means necessary. They know where every single pure blood on the planet is, and it's only a matter of time before they either gather them all or kill those won't join up. The Circle members each have bodies that the individual members use exclusively. These bodies are used almost exclusively for high-level research and interacting with the Circle's demonic allies. The Circle members will never risk these bodies in battle and all have the power to teleport away in times of danger.

There are also four pure blood forms that have been set aside for those rare and important instances when the Circle needs to exert its powers directly. These are called the Four Fates and each of them is capable of channeling the most powerful magical energies ever seen on Earth. All four of the Fates wear an enhanced version of the Thorn shoulder spikes worn by the Thorn Wielders. This armor, in addition to the many charms cast upon the bodies gives all of the Fates the following abilities: superhuman levels in all five attributes; high (but not total) invulnerability to kinetic, energy, cold, fire, and darkness based attacks; and increased base speed and endurance. Encountering even one of these Fates should prove a major challenge for the highest level heroes.

7.3.7.5.1 *Madness Mage*

- Rank: Boss
- Levels: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,11,12,13,14
- Powers
 - Falchion This small curved short sword has been enchanted to channel negative energy damage to its victims.
 - Dummy Dummy Power for AI purposes only
 - Fortitude Fortitude immensely enhances a single targeted ally's accuracy, damage potential, and defense. The target ally will even take less damage from those few attacks that do hit him. Fortitude even protects the target ally from psionic attacks and damage.

- Mesmerize Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
- Dominate Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
- Kamikaze Circle Mages will detonate themselves in a crisis, and attempt to take a few foes with them.
- Spawn Limit: 2
- AI: Stay back, avoid melee, buff and debuff. If alone, or if there are more than 2 people attacking him in melee range, he will use a suicide attack

Description: The Fate of Madness has powers principally dealing with mental magic. Their primary weapon of choice is the Psionic Blast, when fighting against a single opponent. For groups of enemies they use a mental version of the Sonic Screech, making people in the nearby area think they've heard the most horrifying sound imaginable and causing psychosomatic (but very deadly) damage. They can also Infuse Thoughts of doubt and despair at the maximum power level, crippling emotionally even the most dangerous foe. In order to confuse their enemies they will often Create Duplicates of themselves, flooding the field of battle with multiple Fates of Madness, each with the same basic powers (although easier to kill).

7.3.7.5.2 *Ruin Mage*

- Rank: Boss
- Levels: 15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24
- Powers
 - Falchion This small curved short sword has been enchanted to channel negative energy damage to its victims.
 - Dummy Dummy Power for AI purposes only
 - Earthquake The Ruin Mage can generate a powerful, yet localized Earthquake at a targeted location. Most foes that pass through the location will eventually fall down. Additionally, the violent shaking will reduce their accuracy and defense.
 - Dispersion_Bubble Creates a large bubble which protects all allies inside. While active, the Dispersion Bubble gives all allies within increase defense to all attacks except psionic. The Dispersion Bubble also protects allies inside from Immobilization, Disorient and Hold effects.
 - Siphon_Power The Ruin Mage can Siphon the Power from a targeted foe, reducing the targets damage potential, and increasing his own.
 - Tremor A tremendous attack. Tremor shakes the very Earth itself, damaging and knocking back everything in a nearby area.
 - Kamikaze Circle Mages will detonate themselves in a crisis, and attempt to take a few foes with them.
- AI: Stay back, avoid melee, buff and debuff. If alone, or if there are more than 2 people attacking him in melee range, he will use a suicide attack

Description: The Fate of Ruin is the most direct damage oriented of the Fates. His abilities focus on anything that causes massive destruction. His primary weapon is a full power energy blast with a maximum area of effect. When his enemies draw in closer, he can create a powerful Earthquake to wreak havoc in all directions around him. If actually drawn into melee combat he surrounds himself with a field of crackling electricity and wields a maximum level Flame Sword as his weapon. He also has the ability to summon additional swords to his side. He can use the Summon power to bring forth high-level Demon Brood to fight at his side. He can only summon a few at a time, but once the first ones fall, he'll keep bringing forth more of them until he himself falls in battle.

7.3.7.5.3 *Agony Mage*

- Rank: Boss
- Levels: 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34
- Powers
 - Falchion This small curved short sword has been enchanted to channel negative energy damage to its victims.
 - Dummy Dummy Power for AI purposes only
 - Tar_Patch Drops a large patch of viscous negative energy which dramatically slows down enemies that run through it.
 - Absorb_Pain This power has only a tiny Endurance cost, but dramatically heals an ally's wounds by sacrificing some of your own Health.
 - Kamikaze Circle Mages will detonate themselves in a crisis, and attempt to take a few foes with them.
- AI: Stay back, avoid melee, buff and debuff. If alone, or if there are more than 2 people attacking him in melee range, he will use a suicide attack

Description: The Fate of Agony prefers a slow death for his enemies, long, drawn out, and painful. He is the master of the Poison and Paralysis attacks, having all incarnations of both at maximum level. His chosen technique is to paralyze his enemies while they're still far removed and then poison them repeatedly, watching them writhe in agony. He can also use the Blinding effect from Light Control, causing his enemies even more grief. Just to make matters a little worse, he can summon forth whipping Darkness Tendrils to lash and sting his enemies, and likes to do so with abandon, creating dozens of the things all over the field of battle.

7.3.7.5.4 *Death Mage*

- Rank: Boss
- Levels: 35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44
- Powers
 - Falchion This small curved short sword has been enchanted to channel negative energy damage to its victims.
 - Chill_of_the_Night While active, the Death Mage channels negative energy to reduces all nearby foes chance to hit while slowly dealing damage.
 - Twilight_Grasp The Death Mage channels negative energy through himself to a targeted foe. Twilight Grasp drains the power from that target and Slowly transfer it to yourself and all allies near you. The targeted foe's accuracy and damage is reduced while you and your nearby allies are healed. Twilight Grasp can only heal you and your allies as long as there is a valid target to steal power from.
 - Kamikaze Circle Mages will detonate themselves in a crisis, and attempt to take a few foes with them.
- AI: Stay back, avoid melee, buff and debuff. If alone, or if there are more than 2 people attacking him in melee range, he will use a suicide attack

Description: The final Fate, the Fate of Death, uses Life Drain magic as his primary attack. He can do this from range or by touch with equal effectiveness. He also possesses the Dark Realm ability and will not hesitate to use it, creating an environment that's very dangerous and unfriendly to his enemies. He often compounds this darkness with other lingering area of effect spells, such as Radiation Aura, which slowly drains away health from any enemies caught within its range. All of these attacks make the Fate quite deadly, but the one power that strikes as much fear as any is the Fate's ability to summon forth a demonic Leviathan at any time. These massively powerful creatures can only come one at a time, but the Fate will keep summoning them until he himself falls.

7.3.7.6 Spectres

Some spells have enabled the insubstantial spirits of the Circle of Thorns to achieve a level of substantiality. All spectres' lower bodies tail off into an eerie mist.

7.3.7.6.1 *Spectral Follower*

- Rank: Minion
- Levels: 14,15,16,17,18
- Powers
 - Siphon_Life The Spectre taps the powers of the netherworld and its own psychic power to steal life from a target foe and transfer some of it to himself.
 - Midnight_Grasp A brutal attack that leaves the target exposed to dark tentacles that Immobilize and continue to drain the life from your foe.
 - Smite More powerful version of Shadow Punch, Smite deals more damage, but takes longer to recharge. Like Shadow Punch, Smite can reduce the targets accuracy.
 - Chill_of_the_Night While active, the Caster channels negative energy to reduces all nearby foes chance to hit while slowly dealing damage.
 - Ethereal Spectres can make themselves Ethereal and shift out of the matireal plane. Ethereal Spectres are invisible, and cannot affect or be affected by those in normal space.
 - Resistance Spectres are non corporeal and highly resistant to Immobilization smashing, lethal and negative energy damage. However, they are vulnerable to Energy and Psionic damage.
 - Fly Banished Pantheon Spirits can Fly!
- AI: HtH, Become ethereal from time to time, circle around combat

Description: The Spectral Follower is just that – the spirit of a long dead Circle of Thorns member given form. The Follower chooses to appear skeletal mostly for the effect – there's little need otherwise.

7.3.7.6.2 *Spectral Knight*

- Rank: Minion
- Levels: 19,20,21,22,23
- Powers
 - Siphon_Life The Spectre taps the powers of the netherworld and its own psychic power to steal life from a target foe and transfer some of it to himself.
 - Midnight_Grasp A brutal attack that leaves the target exposed to dark tentacles that Immobilize and continue to drain the life from your foe.
 - Smite More powerful version of Shadow Punch, Smite deals more damage, but takes longer to recharge. Like Shadow Punch, Smite can reduce the targets accuracy.
 - Chill_of_the_Night While active, the Caster channels negative energy to reduces all nearby foes chance to hit while slowly dealing damage.

- Ethereal Spectres can make themselves Ethereal and shift out of the matireal plane. Ethereal Spectres are invisible, and cannot affect or be affected by those in normal space.
- Resistance Spectres are non corporeal and highly resistant to Immobilization smashing, lethal and negative energy damage. However, they are vulnerable to Energy and Psionic damage.
- Fly Banished Pantheon Spirits can Fly!
- AI:

Description: The Spectral Warrior is the spiritual simulacrum of the old Circle bodyguards, who origins stretch back to the war with Mu.

7.3.7.6.3 *Spectral Daemon*

- Rank: Minion
- Levels: 24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers
 - Siphon_Life The Spectre taps the powers of the netherworld and its own psychic power to steal life from a target foe and transfer some of it to himself.
 - Midnight_Grasp A brutal attack that leaves the target exposed to dark tentacles that Immobilize and continue to drain the life from your foe.
 - Smite More powerful version of Shadow Punch, Smite deals more damage, but takes longer to recharge. Like Shadow Punch, Smite can reduce the targets accuracy.
 - Chill_of_the_Night While active, the Caster channels negative energy to reduces all nearby foes chance to hit while slowly dealing damage.
 - Ethereal Spectres can make themselves Ethereal and shift out of the matireal plane. Ethereal Spectres are invisible, and cannot affect or be affected by those in normal space.
 - Resistance Spectres are non corporeal and highly resistant to Immobilization smashing, lethal and negative energy damage. However, they are vulnerable to Energy and Psionic damage.
 - Fly Banished Pantheon Spirits can Fly!

Description: The Demonic Specters are the original type of demons first summoned to help drive the Mu out of their impregnable fortress. They are tougher and more dangerous than even the strongest Demon Brood and are usually only used in important circumstances. They guard the more vital and secret locations in Oranbega and are used on the surface world to help take down particularly tough heroes. The Demonic Specters all possess the Density Control power of Intangibility, allowing them to render themselves immune to physical attacks. Furthermore, they can fly at relatively slow speeds, but up to high altitudes if necessary.

Their primary weapon is their claws, which can easily tear through flesh, steel and bone. Thus they work like the claws power, with a high Piercing level. Of course, the claws cannot be used when the Demon is Intangible. Then it relies upon its power to summon forth a Chocking Fog to weaken their opponents before they go in for the kill. Demonic Specters also possess the power to turn themselves entirely Invisible, making them much harder to keep track of in combat and allowing them to slip in and surprise their enemies. As the name suggests, Demonic Specters like to haunt their foes rather than confronting them directly, sweeping in for a deadly assault and then fading away into the shadows. They'll often trail along after a group of heroes, striking every few minutes or so and then vanishing again, making them quite frustrating to combat.

7.3.7.6.4 *Spectral Daemon Lord*

- Rank: Lieutenant

- Levels: 14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers
 - Siphon_Life The Spectre taps the powers of the netherworld and its own psychic power to steal life from a target foe and transfer some of it to himself.
 - Midnight_Grasp A brutal attack that leaves the target exposed to dark tentacles that Immobilize and continue to drain the life from your foe.
 - Smite More powerful version of Shadow Punch, Smite deals more damage, but takes longer to recharge. Like Shadow Punch, Smite can reduce the targets accuracy.
 - Chill_of_the_Night While active, the Caster channels negative energy to reduces all nearby foes chance to hit while slowly dealing damage.
 - Ethereal Spectres can make themselves Ethereal and shift out of the matireal plane. Ethereal Spectres are invisible, and cannot affect or be affected by those in normal space.
 - Resistance Spectres are non corporeal and highly resistant to Immobilization smashing, lethal and negative energy damage. However, they are vulnerable to Energy and Psionic damage.
 - Fly Banished Pantheon Spirits can Fly!
- AI:

Description: Greater Demonic Spectres are identical to the Lesser version, except that they possess wings and horns.

7.3.7.7 Behemoth

7.3.7.7.1 Behemoth Master

- Rank: Boss
- Levels: 26,27,28,29,30
- Powers
 - Fire_Smash Behemoth fire punch attack
 - Scorch The Behemoth hands are engulfed in flames, igniting the target.
 - Fire_Sword The Behemoth can summon a fire sword that sets foes ablaze. Successful attacks will also do a slight damage over time.
 - Flares A quick attack that throws Flares at the target. Little damage, but very fast.
 - Leviathan_Jumping Behemoths can inherently jump real high.
 - Invincibility While this power is active, the Behemoth receives a huge bonus to Defense against melee attacks and some bonus To Hit for each additional foe in melee range. Most effective while fighting multiple opponents. This power is ineffective if you are battling foes at a range.
 - Resistance Behemoths are resistant to Fire Damage, but are vulnerable to cold.
- AI: HtH - Can have multiple targets - pick a primary target. Attack primary, attack someone else in range, attack primary...

Description: Summoned from the hellish pits of some other dimension, the Behemoths are fiery demons that will inspire nightmares in all who see them. Their's truly is the element of fire, which they form into flaming swords to strike down their enemies or breath directly from their mouths to incinerate all who stand before them.

7.3.7.7.2 Behemoth Overlord

- Rank: Boss
- Levels: 31,32,33,34,35

- Powers
 - Fire_Smash Behemoth fire punch attack
 - Scorch The Behemoth hands are engulfed in flames, igniting the target.
 - Fire_Sword The Behemoth can summon a fire sword that sets foes ablaze. Successful attacks will also do a slight damage over time.
 - Flares A quick attack that throws Flares at the target. Little damage, but very fast.
 - Leviathan_Jumping Behemoths can inherently jump real high.
 - Invincibility While this power is active, the Behemoth receives a huge bonus to Defense against melee attacks and some bonus To Hit for each additional foe in melee range. Most effective while fighting multiple opponents. This power is ineffective if you are battling foes at a range.
 - Resistance Behemoths are resistant to Fire Damage, but are vulnerable to cold.
- Spawn Limit: 1
- AI: HtH - Can have multiple targets - pick a primary target. Attack primary, attack someone else in range, attack primary...

Description: The Behemoth Lords are - fortunately - very rare. Likewise they are very deadly. Their mastery of fire allows them to immolate multiple foes simultaneously, while they can quickly heal any wounds they take merely by basking in their own infernal fire, making them almost impossible to kill.

7.3.7.7.3 *Behemoth*

- Rank: Lieutenant
- Levels: 29,30,31,32,33,34,35
- Powers
 - Fire_Smash Behemoth fire punch attack
 - Scorch The Behemoth hands are engulfed in flames, igniting the target.
 - Fire_Sword The Behemoth can summon a fire sword that sets foes ablaze. Successful attacks will also do a slight damage over time.
 - Flares A quick attack that throws Flares at the target. Little damage, but very fast.
 - Leviathan_Jumping Behemoths can inherently jump real high.
 - Invincibility While this power is active, the Behemoth receives a huge bonus to Defense against melee attacks and some bonus To Hit for each additional foe in melee range. Most effective while fighting multiple opponents. This power is ineffective if you are battling foes at a range.
 - Resistance Behemoths are resistant to Fire Damage, but are vulnerable to cold.
- AI:

Description: Summoned from the hellish pits of some other dimension, the Behemoths are fiery demons that will inspire nightmares in all who see them. Their's truly is the element of fire, which they form into flaming swords to strike down their enemies or breath directly from their mouths to incinerate all who stand before them.

7.3.7.7.4 *Behemoth Lord*

- Rank: Lieutenant
- Levels: 36,37,38,39,40
- Powers
 - Fire_Smash Behemoth fire punch attack
 - Scorch The Behemoth hands are engulfed in flames, igniting the target.

- Fire_Sword The Behemoth can summon a fire sword that sets foes ablaze. Successful attacks will also do a slight damage over time.
- Flares A quick attack that throws Flares at the target. Little damage, but very fast.
- Leviathan_Jumping Behemoths can inherently jump real high.
- Invincibility While this power is active, the Behemoth receives a huge bonus to Defense against melee attacks and some bonus To Hit for each additional foe in melee range. Most effective while fighting multiple opponents. This power is ineffective if you are battling foes at a range.
- Resistance Behemoths are resistant to Fire Damage, but are vulnerable to cold.
- Spawn Limit: 1
- AI: HtH - Can have multiple targets - pick a primary target. Attack primary, attack someone else in range, attack primary...

Description: The Behemoth Lords are - fortunately - very rare. Likewise they are very deadly. Their mastery of fire allows them to immolate multiple foes simultaneously, while they can quickly heal any wounds they take merely by basking in their own infernal fire, making them almost impossible to kill.

7.3.7.7.5 *Envoy of Shadow*

- Rank: Boss
- Levels: 34,35,36,37,38,39,40
- Powers
 - Fire_Smash Behemoth fire punch attack
 - Scorch The Behemoth hands are engulfed in flames, igniting the target.
 - Fire_Sword The Behemoth can summon a fire sword that sets foes ablaze. Successful attacks will also do a slight damage over time.
 - Flares A quick attack that throws Flares at the target. Little damage, but very fast.
 - Leviathan_Jumping Behemoths can inherently jump real high.
 - Invincibility While this power is active, the Behemoth receives a huge bonus to Defense against melee attacks and some bonus To Hit for each additional foe in melee range. Most effective while fighting multiple opponents. This power is ineffective if you are battling foes at a range.
 - Resistance Behemoths are resistant to Fire Damage, but are vulnerable to cold.
- AI: HtH - Can have multiple targets - pick a primary target. Attack primary, attack someone else in range, attack primary...

Description: Unbound and Un-Named, it has crossed the gulf of worlds on a bridge of greed and pain. The Envoy of Shadow is the ambassador of the Prince of Demons, here to offer the Circle of Thorns great power and dark alliances. It's consuming flames and cloak of darkness are manifestations of it's endless evil. Appears only in a mission.

7.3.8 Missions and Story Arcs

Stature Level 2 Missions	
SL2_CoT_Mission1	Recover the Jewel of Hera from CoT. You learn that it powers rituals of revenge, but you don't know why the Circle wants such a trinket.
SL2 CoT Errand1	Killtask to learn base locations so you can find missing civilians

Cryptic Studios

SL2 CoT Errand3	Killtask to discourage kidnappings
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Stature Level 2 Task Force Story Arc: Electricity, Electricity

A series of missions leads you to the conclusion that 3 separate villain groups are all interested in the Paragon City Dam. The Clockwork plan to destroy it, the Vahzilok plan to poison it, and the Circle wants to employ it as a focus for some sort of magic ritual. You have to stop the violence between the groups and make sure their varied plots fail.

Stature Level 2.5 Missions

SL2_CoT_Mission2.1	Save fortune teller from CoT. REVEALED: Very subtle hints that this woman was targeted because of her bloodline
SL2_CoT_Errand4	Killtask to recover CoT weapon. Can't do it, as the weapons always teleport away after their owner is defeated. REVEALED: These CoT weapons are prized. Perhaps in short supply?
SL2 CoT Errand2.1	Killtask to prevent CoT from working bad mojo in Perez Park

Hollows Missions

Hollows_Talshak_StoryArc.xls, Mission4	After learning Sam Wincott was kidnapped from the Trolls by the Circle, you go to a CoT lair to rescue him. You learn that the Circle has used the boy to divine the location of the mystical gateway at the heart of the Cavern of Transcendence. Furthermore, the Magmites have now made off with him.
Hollows_Talshak_StoryArc.xls, Mission5	Fight through the Cavern of Transcendence to save Sam Wincott and become the gateway's master.

Stature Level 3 Missions

SL3_CoT_Mission1	Prevent CoT from establishing a portal that will allow them to move more freely, grab more civilians
SL3 CoT Mission2	Disrupt ritual that would have put all of Paragon City to sleep forever
SL3 CoT Errand1	Killtask to reassure civilians, discourage public CoT rituals.
SL3 CoT Errand2	Killtask to stop kidnappings
SL3 CoT Errand3	Killtask to prevent demon summoning

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Stature Level 4 Missions

SL4_CoT_Mission1	Recover conquistador's armor stolen from museum. It turns out the CoT already understand its vast magics. They are indeed a fearsome foe!
SL4_CoT_Mission2	Rescue geology students who got too close to Oranbega
SL4_CoT_Errand1	General killtask
SL4_CoT_Errand2	General killtask
SL4_CoT_Errand3	Killtask to discourage rituals

Stature Level 5 Missions

SL5_CoT_Mission1	Recover conquistador's armor stolen from museum. It turns out the CoT already understand its vast magics. They are indeed a fearsome foe!
SL5_CoT_Mission2	Rescue geology students who got too close to Oranbega
SL5_CoT_Compound1	General killtask
SL5_CoT_Errand1	General killtask
SL5_CoT_Errand2	Killtask to discourage rituals
SL5_CoT_Errand3	General killtask

Stature Level 6 Missions

SL6_CoT_Mission1	Recover a spirit thorn for study
SL6_CoT_Mission2	<p>Rescue kidnapped magicians. Find that Circle was trying to contact Ermeeth by sacrificing people targeted because of their ancestry</p> <p>REVEALED: The Circle's connection to the god Ermeeth</p> <p>REVEALED: The Circle targets people based on their ancestry</p>
SL6_CoT_Mission3	Lawyer sells his soul to a demon, then reneges. The Circle comes calling to collect. You stop them from sucking the law firm into Hell.
SL6_CoT_Compound1	<p>Rescue three mediums from the Circle, then learn that they were targeted because of their blood. Visit Dr. Cheng, who explains about the kingdom of Mu. Stop kidnapping of mediums' father.</p> <p>REVEALED: The Circle has been tracking the descendents of the magical kingdom of Mu.</p>
SL6_CoT_Compound2	<p>A recently inhabited Circle acolyte spearheads a movement to separate all Paragon citizens from their souls. That way, the Circle won't have to fear them.</p> <p>REVEALED: A person's personality changes dramatically after they use one of the Circle's spirit thorns.</p>

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SL6 CoT Errand1	General killtask
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Stature Level 6 Story Arc: The Library of Souls

A dead investigator points the way to the Circle's magic library. You collect the library's crystals, and learn their secrets: they're prisons for trapped souls! All the while you are aided by a mysterious CoT mage, Akarist. In the Greater Library of Souls, you find the soul of Baron Zoria, the reputed founder of the Circle.

REVEALED: The Circle obliterates or captures people's souls, then assumes their bodies. The true Circle is composed of millennia-old Oranbegan ghosts!

Stature Level 7 Missions

SL7_CoT_Mission1	Save city council from CoT. Learn that one of their members had become inhabited by a Circle ghost. REVEALED: The Circle may be targeting important politicians for recruitment, replacement
SL7_CoT_Mission2	Rescue museum's Oranbegan artifacts from the CoT. REVEALED: Despite Circle's current brutality, Oranbega was a peaceful place. What happened to harden their hearts against humanity?
SL7_CoT_Mission3	Rescue cops who the Circle was using to craft a protection spell around Oranbega.
SL7_CoT_Mission4	Rescue the Paragon Protectors from the CoT, and break up a Crey/CoT battle. REVEALED: Hints that there is something strange about the Protector's souls. The Circle finds them lacking.
SL7_CoT_Compund1	Circle tries to sink Brickstown, bringing Oranbega to the surface. Stop their rituals at three locations.
SL7_CoT_Compund2	Circle contacts another world in which Oranbega flourished. They bring in some Oranbegans to swell their forces, but it turns out the new guys don't want to be part of such a cruel, vicious group. Stop the chaos.
SL7_CoT_Errand1	Killtask to stop kidnappings
SL7_CoT_Errand2	Killtask to discourage people joining Circle

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SL7 CoT Errand3

General killtask

Stature Level 7 Story Arc: The Envoy of Shadow

The Circle has learned that Hequat is still alive, and they're panicked. They begin negotiating with a demon at once. With the help of Akarist, you defeat the demon for good.

7.4 Clockwork

7.4.1 Overview

The Clockwork King is a low-level villain that should offer a challenge to beginning heroes but is not a big player in Paragon City. He does have hordes of half-pint robots who can be quite deadly in groups and offer heroes a chance to smash up lots of enemies with wild abandon. They can then graduate to the more dangerous machines that aren't quite so easily destroyed. They have no permanent base but tend to squat in factories and warehouses.

7.4.2 History

Paragon City has seen more than its fair share of inspired inventors. Many of the world's greatest scientists, engineers, and tinkerers live in the city. Some of them even use their skills to make gaudy costumes that allow them to fight crime. And then there are men like Russell Brandt, who never quite seems to get the recognition he deserves (or at least that he thinks he deserves). Russell was a mechanical prodigy from an early age, mastering his tinker toys and erector sets and moving on to home made go carts, radio controlled robots, and anything else he could get assemble from the scrap he salvaged at the junkyard. A career in engineering seemed obvious, and Russell did well at Paragon Polytechnic his first three years

Then came time for his final year. Having long ago learned everything the professors could teach him in class, Russell's entire final year was devoted to a single independent study. His graduation depended upon it. He spent the whole school year designing a kinetically powered robot – a walking, fully functional version of a small dog. Russell had experienced a real breakthrough in his thinking over the summer and he was thrilled to put it to the test in the lab. His friends and advisors couldn't see how his blueprints would possibly create a working machine, but every time he showed them his tests in action, the thing seemed to work.

When the final day came and Russell presented his finished robo-dog to the faculty, all were quite impressed. They criticized the schematics he'd presented as being vague on many key details, but the yapping, playful, ball catching robot dog certainly seemed impressive. They asked Russell to step out of the room while they consulted about his final grade. Curiously, once Russell was gone, the robot immediately ceased functioning. Nothing the professors did could get it to perform even the simplest function. They called Russell back in and the dog started working immediately. A little quick experimentation discovered that the robot dog was just a hunk of useless metal unless Russell was in the room. Suspecting some trick, the faculty delayed giving a grade until they could further investigate what was happening.

As it turns out, Russell Brandt is not quite the amazing inventor he thinks he is. He's certainly a very capable engineer, but his insights are actually the result of a rather tragic psychotic break. The truth is, Russell is a powerful telekinetic mutant, one of the most advanced ever recorded. His telekinetic abilities really came into their own while he was in college, while at the same time some vital link with reality was severed in Russell's mind. Russell thought he had discovered a new advance in mechanical engineering, a spring and gear system that could provide hours of kinetic energy powerful enough to motivate large-scale machinery. With a simple wind up key, you could have robots as powerful as those on an assembly line, with no electricity whatsoever. This idea was, of course, quite insane, but Russell's nearly limitless telekinetic power allowed him to fool himself into thinking he'd made a world-changing discovery.

His failure in front of the engineering faculty only further unhinged him. He didn't wait for a formal review, but instead left school without a word, stealing much of the engineering lab's equipment in the process. He set himself up in an abandoned warehouse in one of Paragon City's less fashionable neighborhoods. His first night there a group of thugs broke into his new lab, trashed the place and would have beat him to a pulp had not his robot dog suddenly activated and leapt to his defense. This was of course Russell's own telekinesis responding to the threat, but he didn't know that. What he did know was that he needed protection. He set about creating the first version of what he called Sprockets: diminutive humanoid robots with vicious tempers who could serve as both lab assistants and security guards. He made them mostly from scrap metal and scrounged pieces, so that even he was surprised at how quickly they came together and how ingenious his system really was.

Russell's goal was at first quite benign. He wanted to prove his theories to the world, revolutionize how machines are built, and save the planet from its reliance on fossil fuels. He continued with his research but soon found he didn't have the equipment or raw materials that he needed. With no money and no friends, he decided that he could just take what he wanted. He programmed his Sprockets to begin stealing things for him. This was a major leap for Russell's powers, though he didn't realize it. His mental abilities had expanded exponentially over the past year, so that he could unconsciously control scores of his "robots" often up to several miles from his actual location. In addition to telekinesis he could remote view any location where one of his creations traveled, thus allowing them to follow their "programming." This limitation on only "seeing" locations where his robots are is purely psychological. He could probably project his mind anywhere on the planet if he fully understood his own tremendous powers.

It didn't take long for Russell's robotic crime wave to attract the attention of the city's police and heroes. Things started to go from bad to worse when two of his Sprockets killed a police officer who was trying to prevent them from stealing a spool of copper wire from a cable company van. Not only was the police force up in arms, but so were the city's heroes. A massive manhunt began for the man behind the robots, although in his elf-induced exile, Russell was hardly aware of it. He was too busy building more Sprockets so they could steal him more stuff. When the cops raided his warehouse, all hell broke loose. In the gunfight that ensued, the warehouse caught fire, and three more policemen died in the ensuing blaze. Russell himself escaped, carried away on the shoulders of six of his robots while the rest held the SWAT team at bay.

The only person to see Russell's escape was a brooding hero who called himself The Blue Shield. Known for his close cooperation with the police (he was himself once a cop), the Blue Shield had made it his special mission to hunt down this robot-making cop killer. He tracked Russell to his new hiding place, where the inventor lay coughing and dazed from smoke inhalation. When word came over the radio that three more officers were down, the Blue Shield lost his already short temper. He descended upon the inventor and his robots in a righteous fury, smashing the machines to pieces and beating Russell into a bloody pulp. He checked the villain's vital signs after the twentieth kick to the head and found him dead. He left the broken body in a heap and went to go help fight the fire.

But Russell did not die. His brain would not allow it. His spectacular psychic abilities allowed him to cling to life, keeping his nervous system alive in spite of the body's total shut down. He subconsciously reached out and telekinetically assembled a makeshift body from metal, plastic, glass, and wire. It was a crude creation, but it did the job. Russell's brain had been saved. He crept off into the night, finding himself another abandoned warehouse to set up shop in, and left his broken body – sans brain – in a heap behind him.

That was the night the Clockwork King was born. In a trauma-induced hallucination, Russell saw himself as ruling over a perfect world of beautiful machines. Only partly conscious, he dreamed of massive assembly lines churning out hordes of stunning, perfectly loyal robots. It was a world where humanity no longer had any place and where no one would ever bother him again. When he finally came to his senses he found that weeks had passed and that a small part of his dream had come true. While he slept, his mind had built more Sprockets, who had in turn built themselves a king. He had a new body and a new calling in life.

And so The Clockwork King began to build his kingdom from the ground up, establishing it firmly on a base of scrap metal. As it turned out, his timing couldn't have been better, at least in terms of the amount of scrap heaps that he'd soon have to scrounge from. The Rikti Invasion caught him unawares of course, and when the aliens started pouring into our world, the King ran for cover. He and his Sprockets holed up in a warehouse and waited for the furor to pass them by. Once it finally did, they poked their heads out once more, and saw a devastated city.

This was a perfect opportunity for the Clockwork King to establish himself. He set up an assembly line and started pumping out Sprockets at record speed. He then dispatched them out into the city to help with the clean up. He thought that if he could show how useful his robots could be, society would begin to accept him. The Sprockets did help clean up, and at first the confused city government was thankful for their aid. In those grim days it was hard to tell who was good and who was evil. Instead of returning the scrap and debris to designated areas, the Sprockets kept their finds, using them to build more Sprockets.

Amazingly enough, it was a reporter named Maggie Greene, not a hero, who discovered what was really going on. She followed the Sprockets around for several days, trying to figure out who they belonged to. When she finally did uncover their assembly line, her pictures made the front page. Especially the one of the disturbing Clockwork King himself. The newspaper article drew the attention of the Regulators, who sent a few heroes around to check in on this mysterious robot factory. The Clockwork King panicked. It's entirely possible that a peaceful solution could've been found, after all, the King was helping and only stealing scrap metal. But it was too late. The skittish King set his army of robots upon the unlucky heroes, who barely escaped with their lives.

Thus began the still ongoing war between The Clockwork King and the city's heroes. He's not regarded as the most dangerous threat in the city. He's not even on the top ten. But he is a constant nuisance and he seems to be growing more dangerous, not less.

7.4.3 Goals

Since The Clockwork King no longer considers himself human, he has little compunction about killing anyone who stands in the way of his plans. Fortunately for the world, his psychic powers can currently only operate through the façade of one of his mechanical creations. This very significant limit on his abilities ensures that his ability to do harm remains relatively weak. Still, while he may not match the Rikti as a world-shaking threat, the average citizens who fall prey to his attacks can scarcely tell the difference.

One of The Clockwork King's primary goals is recognition for his true genius. He still resents the way the faculty treated him all those years ago and he finds it impossible to understand why the scientific community hasn't embraced his discoveries with open arms. He has developed an idea that the multinational oil and computer corporations are behind this plot to deny him the Nobel Prize. He figures that they must know that his inventions would put them all out of business. Likewise the money-soaked politicians who act as mouthpieces for the evil corporations are no better. Thus the King has taken to kidnapping scientists, engineers, and reporters and trying to prove the value of his discoveries to them by force. This never ends well.

Curiously, one of the stranger alliances that The Clockwork King has formed is with radical environmental groups (although not the Devouring Earth). Since he uses entirely recycled parts for his creations, he gets a certain amount of credit from such groups. Moreover since his devices work entirely on gears, springs, and pure mechanics (and telekinesis), they produce no harmful byproducts and cut down on fossil fuel emissions. Several groups have taken the Clockwork King up on his offers to help them strike back at the multinational corporations that are polluting the Earth (which he doesn't care about) and denying his inventions a place in the world (which he cares a great deal about).

Russell does not have his robots fight alongside the activists, but rather uses them as a source of information. These groups actually pass on suggestions to The Clockwork King on targets that might be partially responsible for his troubles getting recognized. In fact, most of the eco-terrorist leaders have figured out that whatever the Clockwork King's technology is, it's not perfect, since none of the devices he's given them work after he and his minions leave. Still, they find him an easy dupe to manipulate and have no qualms about using his strength to further their agenda.

There is also a certain jealousy factor at work in the Clockwork King's activities. He hates it when others receive recognition for their discoveries while his miraculous advances go unnoticed. Petty revenge has motivated a number of attacks, from killing newly famous scientists to attacking specialty shops selling the latest gadgets to disrupting school science fairs.

The King also wants to keep his army of robots growing ever larger and stronger. This isn't easy, since a number of them get smashed to pieces and melted down by heroes every day. Still they are quite easy to manufacture and in a city with so much ruin, there's always plenty of scrap material free for the taking. He hopes to someday have an army large enough to actually overwhelm the entire city. To do that he needs money, space, and resources, and so the wave of robot committed crime continues to sweep through the city.

Ultimately he hopes to establish an actual assembly line somewhere in Paragon City that can pump out a steady supply of robots and other creations. He wants to make cars, motorcycles, power generators, and other, more useful items that he could sell to the world at large. Whether or not this would work remains in doubt, since the limits of his power might not allow him to give life to that many different objects at once. On the other hand, it's entirely possible that he could do just that. He has the psychic potential to reach his mind out to the entire city at once, and perhaps his planned line of cars and household devices is the way in which he'll trick his brain into letting him do just that.

And of course, like every villain, The Clockwork King longs to be king of more than just his mechanized minions. He wants to subject the entire city to his rule, creating a utopia that's free of those who would scoff at his discoveries, and ultimately free of other people as well. He wants to mechanize all of Paragon City, and turn it into his own private erector set. For now though, he must content himself with lesser ambitions. His power is building, although very slowly thanks to the efforts of the city's heroes. As long as they stay on the job, it's unlikely he'll ever realize his dreams. Unless of course one day he wakes up and realizes just how frighteningly powerful he really is.

7.4.4 Behavior Patterns

The Clockwork King's minions can theoretically appear anywhere in the city, although in practice their activities are restricted fairly significantly by both heroes and rival villain groups. The King is not shy about sending his robots out into the world to do his bidding. As much as he has affection for them, they are all pretty easily replaceable. The Sprockets are by far the most commonly seen minions, with bands of them skulking around any ruined building or abandoned factory that might offer some choice salvage material. The Clockwork King regularly undertakes relatively significant criminal enterprises, usually in the form of attacking someone who has somehow earned his ire. Kidnapping, the destruction of property, and theft are all on the daily menu for the King and his robot minions.

The Clockwork King has no permanent base of operations, as much as he would like one. Every time he's tried to establish a headquarters, the city's heroes always discover it and quickly root him out. He has taken instead to setting up operations in a number of different, temporary facilities, so no one attack can cripple him. He prefers old warehouses and particularly likes abandoned factories. Anywhere where he has plenty of space to set up his assembly lines and gather raw materials for more robots. He does everything he can to keep these facilities a secret, posting guards up to half a mile away to make sure no one follows his scavengers back to their lair. Discovery is inevitable however, and few factories remain hidden for more than a month.

Taking out a factory is no easy feat, especially for the lower powered heroes who are often forced to contend with the Clockwork King. Every factory has a Sprocket Prince that is "in charge" of all activities there. There are also smaller factory sites and staging areas that are used almost exclusively by Sprockets. These are usually hidden in ruined buildings or old warehouses and serve as lightly guarded command and control centers for their scavenging and scouting operations. Taking out these advance bases is much easier, although they usually have hordes of dangerous Sprockets in and around them.

The Clockwork King himself keeps a low profile. He is constantly on the move from place to place, although how he gets there is something of a mystery, even to him. In fact he has the ability to teleport, although he would never admit it to himself, since it doesn't fit into his twisted worldview. He's never done any experiments with teleportation; therefore he can't consciously do so. Instead he simply moves from base to base and edits his memory of the journey. Since his minions have no memories of their own, there's no way for them to contradict his recollections.

7.4.5 Allies and Enemies

The Clockwork King has little in the way of allies, especially amongst other villain groups of his caliber. The Tsou are superstitious thugs and vermin, scarcely worth his time or notice (for what it's worth, they feel the same way). He has had no contact with larger villain groups like the Circle of Thorns and The Fifth Column.

Only Crey Industries has shown any interest in The Clockwork King, and even that is done in an indirect manner. Crey has rebuffed The King's attempts to show them his wondrous discoveries and as a result the company is at the top of his hit list. What he doesn't know is that the regular visits he has from various interested parties and possible investors are all actually agents of Crey. The Countess knows his machines are a fraud, but she's very interested in the amazing psychic mind that powers them. She's learned all there is to know about Russell Brandt, and hopes to some day use him for her own purposes.

The Devouring Earth has also taken an interest in the Clockwork King, although his very existence is anathema to them. He is in many ways their opposite, but he has some common ties to the environmental movement. The Devouring Earth is looking to exploit the King as well, encouraging them to attack enemies on their list as well as his. The fact that The Clockwork technology seems entirely non-polluting does intrigue The Devouring Earth, as does their penchant for recycling old materials for their machines. They're better than most human, but ultimately abominations that must be destroyed.

The Freakshow admire the group's outré designs and easy violence, but have little else in common with the group. They do find the King's minions a good source for high quality scrap metal, and often they'll attack groups of Sprockets just for access to the raw materials. Nemesis also sees the Clockwork King and his robots as little more than a source of raw materials for his technology. As a true master of clockwork mechanics, he sees how much of sham the King is and sees little use in the bottle-in-a-brain. The Rikti flat out scare the Clockwork King and he does everything he can to avoid them. For their part, they scarcely notice him.

7.4.6 Future

In his immediate future, the Clockwork King wants to build and design more robots. He knows that he's in a kind of super-villain arms race and that he's far behind groups like the Fifth Column and Nemesis. He longs to play in the big leagues some day and is working towards that goal. Over time, he should successfully expand, become more and more of a threat as his arsenal increases.

He also is considering making some machines that are actually designed to be worn by humans. A line of scrap built power armor. He would try and sell these to humans, mostly criminals, in an attempt to both win wider recognition for his technology and to gain some human allies. Of course the armor would still require his psychic energy to work, but that doesn't mean they wouldn't be effective tools.

There will come a time when the Clockwork King's psyche finally shatters and the true telepathic potential within him comes roaring out. At this point Russell Brandt will go from being a low level villain to one of the most dangerous people on the planet. This could be a real opportunity to change the villainous landscape, creating a whole new psychic oriented villain group around Russell even as the Clockwork King falls. The vaguely goofy low level boss from way back in the beginning suddenly becomes a top level threat, the heroes' roots coming back to haunt them.

7.4.7 Minions

There is only one living being associated with the Clockwork King, and that is Russell Brandt himself. He has never sought any human followers and certainly no one has asked to join up with him. Even when he still had his body, Russell was not the most socially adept of men. Now that he's a brain floating in a Plexiglas bowl, he's even less appealing. Thus he surrounds himself entirely with robots. All of them have been equipped with simple speakers that supposedly link to their mechanical "brains." It is a measure of the Clockwork King's madness that he believes a simple collection of gears can produce artificial intelligence. He often spends hours talking to himself through his different machines, but he can also use them to communicate with others, including his victims.

So far there seems to be no limit to the number of robots the Clockwork King can control and give life to with his psychic powers. Before his near-death experience and his transformation into a brain in a fishbowl, while he slept the group's activities fell dramatically. The robots would be sluggish or entirely non-mobile, with only their master's unfocused dreams to motivate them. Now that he no longer sleeps, there is also never any period of downtime for the hundreds of robots.

Each robot is only as strong as the materials it's made from and Russell's desire to keep it functional. They are built entirely from scrap and recycled materials. The Clockwork King values form and function over aesthetics and so never bothers to do much in the way of cleaning the raw materials or painting them beyond simple designs. His creations have a universally rough, weathered, and rusty appearance to them. The machines rarely include any kind of electronic equipment beyond what you could find in the discount bin at a Radio Shack. Certainly there are no computers or microchips involved in their functioning. Authorities and heroes have by now captured hundreds of these robots, and how they actually function remains a mystery. It seems impossible that the collection of pieces found can produce the results that eyewitnesses swear to. For his part, The Clockwork King never much minds when one of his servants falls into enemy hands. He figures that each time it happens there's a chance some engineer or scientist will finally see his true brilliance.

The Clockwork King never designs his robots with combat in mind. He instead tries to make functional, useful machines that can perform a variety of tasks, including defending themselves and him in battle. He often adds weapons as an after thought, and never uses traditional firearms. Again, he prefers to give his machines tools that they just happen to be able to use as weapons when needed. See the Technology section for full descriptions of the weapons his robots carry or have attached to them.

7.4.7.1 Sprocket

- *Rank:* Minion
- *Levels:* 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10
- *Powers:*
 - **Charged_Bolts:** The Clockwork can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Charged_Brawl:** Clockwork Sprocket brawling attacks
 - **Resistance:** Clockwork Minions are resistant to lethal damage and Disorient, but are vulnerable to psionic damage, Sleep and Knockback.
- *AI:* Easily distracted... sorted evenly to begin with. After each single clockwork's successful attack (or 3), it chooses the hero who'd done the last "action" to attack next. Prefers melee.

Description: The very first robot minions the Clockwork King created were Scouts, and to this day they still comprise the largest portion of his army. They are the size of children, and in many ways he thinks of them as his kids. Their behavior can at times seem playful, especially when Russell's in a happy mood himself. Their main function is to go out into the city and scavenge up raw materials for more robots. These materials do not always have to be scrap metal. They'll just as soon tear apart a brand new car as they will a junker that's been abandoned. As far as they're concerned, it's all grist for the mill. They're not any stronger than a normal person, except in their hands, which have the strength to tear apart steel. These hands are their only weapons, and they use them like claws. They're fast on their feet and when it comes time to fight they like to swarm over their enemies like a pack of rats. Scavengers can be found throughout city areas where the Clockwork King is active. He's more than happy to turn them loose and wait and what they bring back, if indeed they make it back in one piece.

7.4.7.2 Cog

- *Rank:* Minion
- *Levels:* 11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20
- *Powers:*
 - **Charged_Bolts:** The Clockwork can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Charged_Brawl:** Clockwork Sprocket brawling attacks
 - **Resistance:** Clockwork Minions are resistant to lethal damage and Disorient, but are vulnerable to psionic damage, Sleep and Knockback.
- *AI:* Easily distracted... sorted evenly to begin with. After each single clockwork's successful attack (or 3), it chooses the hero who'd done the last "action" to attack next. Prefers melee

Description: The Cogs are larger than normal sprockets, at least a full foot taller in height. They have "enhanced" strength and toughness to make them all the more formidable in combat. They're just as fast as their diminutive worker cousins and love to charge the enemy and overwhelm them with numbers.

7.4.7.3 Oscillator

- *Rank:* Minion
- *Levels:* 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11(Prototype Oscillator), 12, 13, 14 (Line Oscillator), 15, 16, 17 (Advanced Oscillator), 18, 19, 20 (Perfected Oscillator)
- *Powers:*
 - **Charged_Bolts:** The Clockwork can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Charged_Brawl:** Clockwork Sprocket brawling attacks
 - **Resistance:** Clockwork Minions are resistant to lethal damage and Disorient, but are vulnerable to psionic damage, Sleep and Knockback.
 - **Fly** : Clockwork Oscillators can Fly!

- *AI:* Easily distracted... sorted evenly to begin with. After each single clockwork's successful attack (or 3), it chooses the hero who'd done the last "action" to attack next. Prefers Ranged.

Description: The Oscillator's are the Clockwork King's latest creation. He hopes that they will eventually control the skies above Paragon City and, as a result, serve as witness to his genius.

7.4.7.4 Cannon Knight

- *Rank:* Lieutenant
- *Levels:* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
- *Powers:*
 - **Charged_Bolts:** The Clockwork can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Charged_Brawl:** Clockwork Sprocket brawling attacks
 - **Resistance** Clockwork Dukes are resistant to lethal damage and Disorient, but are vulnerable to psionic damage and Sleep.
 - **Lightning_Bolt:** The Clockwork can send a large blast of electrical energy at a foe. Lightning bolt deals good damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Ball_Lightning:** Hurls a highly charged ball of lightning that explodes on contact. Ball Lightning deals good damage in an area and also drains some Endurance from each target it hits.
- *AI:* Easily distracted... sorted evenly to begin with. After each single clockwork's successful attack (or 3), it chooses the hero who'd done the last "action" to attack next. Prefers Ranged.

Description: The Knights make up the bulk of the leadership class within the twisted court of the Clockwork King. Cannon Knights possess powerful, long range electrical attacks.

7.4.7.5 Tesla Knight

- *Rank:* Lieutenant
- *Levels:* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
- *Powers:*
 - **Charged_Bolts:** The Clockwork can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Charged_Brawl:** Clockwork Sprocket brawling attacks
 - **Resistance** Clockwork Dukes are resistant to lethal damage and Disorient, but are vulnerable to psionic damage and Sleep.
 - **Lightning_Field:** While active, the Clockwork emits a storm of electricity around himself that constantly damages all nearby foes.
 - **Tesla_Cage:** Tesla Cage confines the target in electrical prison. The target is overwhelmed by the electrical change and is left helpless. However, disturbing the victim can disperse the electrical charge, which will free the victim from the cage. Tesla Cage deals minimal damage.
- *AI:* Easily distracted... sorted evenly to begin with. After each single clockwork's successful attack (or 3), it chooses the hero who'd done the last "action" to attack next. Prefers Ranged.

Description: The Knights make up the bulk of the leadership class within the twisted court of the Clockwork King. The Tesla Knights are especially dangerous because they enclose foes in deadly electrical cages.

7.4.7.6 Cannon Duke

- *Rank:* Boss

- *Levels:* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
- *Powers:*
 - **Charged_Bolts:** The Clockwork can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Charged_Brawl:** Clockwork Sprocket brawling attacks
 - **Resistance** Clockwork Dukes are resistant to lethal damage and Disorient, but are vulnerable to psionic damage and Sleep.
 - **Lightning_Bolt:** The Clockwork can send a large blast of electrical energy at a foe. Lightning bolt deals good damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Ball_Lightning:** Hurls a highly charged ball of lightning that explodes on contact. Ball Lightning deals good damage in an area and also drains some Endurance from each target it hits.
- *AI:* Easily distracted... sorted evenly to begin with. After each single clockwork's successful attack (or 3), it chooses the hero who'd done the last "action" to attack next. Prefers Ranged.

Description: Like any monarch, the Clockwork King has his own court, although in his case it's composed of mechanical nobles called Dukes. These oversized robots are dangerous foes, possessing powerful long range electrical abilities.

7.4.7.7 Tesla Duke

- *Rank:* Boss
- *Description*
- *SpawnLimit* 2
- *Levels:* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
- *Powers:*
 - **Charged_Bolts:** The Clockwork can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Charged_Brawl:** Clockwork Sprocket brawling attacks
 - **Resistance** Clockwork Dukes are resistant to lethal damage and Disorient, but are vulnerable to psionic damage and Sleep.
 - **Lightning_Field:** While active, the Clockwork emits a storm of electricity around himself that constantly damages all nearby foes.
 - **Tesla_Cage:** Tesla Cage confines the target in electrical prison. The target is overwhelmed by the electrical charge and is left helpless. However, disturbing the victim can disperse the electrical charge, which will free the victim from the cage. Tesla Cage deals minimal damage.
- *AI:* Easily distracted... sorted evenly to begin with. After each single clockwork's successful attack (or 3), it chooses the hero who'd done the last "action" to attack next. Prefers Ranged.

Description: Like any monarch, the Clockwork King has his own court, although in his case it's composed of mechanical nobles called Dukes. These oversized robots are dangerous foes, possessing the ability to encage foes in swirling electrical arcs.

7.4.7.8 Assembler Duke

- *Rank:* Boss
- *Levels:* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
- *Powers:*
 - **Charged_Bolts:** The Clockwork can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Charged_Brawl:** Clockwork Sprocket brawling attacks

- Resistance Clockwork Dukes are resistant to lethal damage and Disorient, but are vulnerable to psionic damage and Sleep.
- **Summon_Clockwork:** The Clockwork Boss can summon a minion to fight at his side.
- *AI:* Easily distracted... sorted evenly to begin with. After each single clockwork's successful attack (or 3), it chooses the hero who'd done the last "action" to attack next. Prefers Ranged.

Description: Like any monarch, the Clockwork King has his own court, although in his case it's composed of mechanical nobles called Dukes. The Assembler Dukes can summon more Clockwork minions to their side during battle.

7.4.7.9 Cannon Prince

- *Rank:* Boss
- *Levels:* 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
- *Powers:*
 - **Charged_Bolts** The Clockwork can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Reassemble** When the Clockwork Assembler falls, some of his parts can reassemble into tiny little Clockwork called Gears.
 - **Pummel** Assembler brawling attacks
 - **Charged_Brawl** Clockwork Sprocket brawling attacks
 - Resistance The Clockwork Princes are resistant to Knockback, Disorient, and lethal damage but are vulnerable to psionic damage and Sleep.
 - **Lightning_Bolt** The Clockwork can send a large blast of electrical energy at a foe. Lightning bolt deals good damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Ball_Lightning** Hurls a highly charged ball of lightning that explodes on contact. Ball Lightning deals good damage in an area and also drains some Endurance from each target it hits.
- *AI:* Easily distracted... sorted evenly to begin with. After each single clockwork's successful attack (or 3), it chooses the hero who'd done the last "action" to attack next. Prefers Ranged.

Description: The heirs apparent to the Clockwork King's throne, the Princes represent the pinnacle of the mad genius' creations. Although Cannon Princes sometimes seem almost human because of their advanced robotic brains, they're still immune to psionic and other mind altering attacks and can deal out massive damage with their electrical blasts

7.4.7.10 Tesla Prince

- *Rank:* Boss
- *SpawnLimit* 2
- *Levels:* 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
- *Powers:*
 - **Charged_Bolts** The Clockwork can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Reassemble** When the Clockwork Assembler falls, some of his parts can reassemble into tiny little Clockwork called Gears.
 - **Pummel** Assembler brawling attacks
 - **Charged_Brawl** Clockwork Sprocket brawling attacks
 - Resistance The Clockwork Princes are resistant to Knockback, Disorient, and lethal damage but are vulnerable to psionic damage and Sleep.
 - **Lightning_Field** While active, the Clockwork emits a storm of electricity around himself that constantly damages all nearby foes.

- **Tesla_Cage** Tesla Cage confines the target in electrical prison. The target is overwhelmed by the electrical change and is left helpless. However, disturbing the victim can disperse the electrical charge, which will free the victim from the cage. Tesla Cage deals minimal damage.
- *AI:* Easily distracted... sorted evenly to begin with. After each single clockwork's successful attack (or 3), it chooses the hero who'd done the last "action" to attack next. Prefers Ranged.

Description: The heirs apparent to the Clockwork King's throne, the Princes represent the pinnacle of the mad genius' creations. Although Tesla Princes sometimes seem almost human because of their advanced robotic brains, they possess the decidedly inhuman ability to entrap foes in cages of electricity.

7.4.7.11 Assembler Prince

- *Rank:* Boss
- *Levels:* 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
- *Powers:*
 - **Charged_Bolts** The Clockwork can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Reassemble** When the Clockwork Assembler falls, some of his parts can reassemble into tiny little Clockwork called Gears.
 - **Pummel** Assembler brawling attacks
 - **Charged_Brawl** Clockwork Sprocket brawling attacks
 - **Resistance** The Clockwork Princes are resistant to Knockback, Disorient, and lethal damage but are vulnerable to psionic damage and Sleep.
 - **Summon_Clockwork** The Clockwork Boss can summon a minion to fight at his side.
- *AI:* Easily distracted... sorted evenly to begin with. After each single clockwork's successful attack (or 3), it chooses the hero who'd done the last "action" to attack next. Prefers Ranged.

Description: The heirs apparent to the Clockwork King's throne, the Princes represent the pinnacle of the mad genius' creations. Assembler Princes' powerful electricity attacks can blanket an area with painful lightning blasts, but it's their ability to rapidly produce more Clockwork soldiers that makes them truly insidious.

7.4.7.12 Clockwork_King

- *Rank:* ArchVillain
- *Levels:* 20
- *Powers:*
 - **Resistance:** The Clockwork King is resistant to Knockback, Disorient, Sleep, Fear, Confuse, Teleport and Lethal damage, but is vulnerable to smashing damage.
 - **Pummel:** Clockwork Kind brawling attacks
 - **Telekinetic_blast:** Blasts a targeted foe, tossing him like a rag doll.
 - **Will_Domination:** This powerful attack is so painful, it usually renders its target unconscious. The victim is asleep, but will awake if disturbed.
 - **Subdue:** Subdue deals moderate damage while leaving the targeted foe Immobilized for a brief time. The targeted villain can not move but can still attack.
- *AI:* Easily distracted... sorted evenly to begin with. After each single clockwork's successful attack (or 3), it chooses the hero who'd done the last "action" to attack next.

Description: The Clockwork King himself is without a doubt the most fearsome fighting machine in the entire villain group. However, he is, at heart, a coward and hates to expose himself directly to any kind of danger. His near death experience at the hands of the Blue Shield left him quite traumatized. When forced to fight he does so with a frenzy, swinging his mechanical claws wildly at anyone who comes in range. But it's not the claws that make him so dangerous, it's the brain.

When The Clockwork King finds himself in extreme danger, the blocks he's put on his psychic abilities begin to break down. He uses his telekinetic powers to defend himself. He can create force fields that deflect incoming attacks as well as blast his enemies with force bolts. He can also float them against their will, temporarily immobilizing them. Finally he can create a field of what amounts to High Gravity (downward telekinetic force) that hinders the movements of anyone trying to fight him. As a last ditch effort he teleports away.

7.4.7.13 Babbage

- *Rank:* BigMonster
- *Levels:* 19
- *Powers:*
 - **Lightning_Field:** While active, Babbage emits a storm of electricity around himself that constantly damages all nearby foes.
 - **Lightning_Bolt:** The Clockwork can send a large blast of electrical energy at a foe. Lightning bolt deals good damage and also drains some Endurance.
 - **Ball_Lightning:** Hurls a highly charged ball of lightning that explodes on contact. Ball Lightning deals good damage in an area and also drains some Endurance from each target it hits.
 - **Summon_Clockwork:** Babbage can summon a minion to fight at his side.
 - **Tesla_Cage:** Tesla Cage confines the target in electrical prison. The target is overwhelmed by the electrical change and is left helpless. However, disturbing the victim can disperse the electrical charge, which will free the victim from the cage. Tesla Cage deals minimal damage.
 - **Resistance:** Babbage is resistant to Knockback, Disorient, Fear, Teleport and Lethal damage, but is vulnerable to sleep and psionics.
- *AI:* Easily distracted... sorted evenly to begin with. After each single clockwork's successful attack (or 3), it chooses the hero who'd done the last "action" to attack next.

Description: For reasons unknown, the Clockwork King created a giant automaton and loosed it into Boomtown. Mostly, it seems interested in collecting metal scrap for the Clockwork King, though Babbage intensely defends his territory from any incursion by heroes.

7.4.8 Missions and Story Arcs

Intro Tasks

GC-DATA_Intro.1	Clockwork introduced. Retrieve a Clockwork piece.
DATA_Intro.1	Clockwork introduced. Retrieve a Clockwork piece.

Stature Level 1 Pools

L1_P_Clockwork_Mission1	Stop Clockwork from destroying some real robot parts (because King is jealous of others' success)
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L1_P_Clockwork_Mission2	Beat some Clockwork and find notes on their construction. You're not told yet about their nonsensical designs.
L1_P_Clockwork_Mission1-GC	Rescue Mensa members from Clockwork. It turns out the King, who thinks himself a genius, wanted them for company
L1_P_Clockwork_Mission2-GC	Investigate Clockwork base and find pile of bones. Contact speculates they're the King's remains. REVEALED: The Clockwork King is a brain inside a robot body!

Stature Level 2 Pools

SL2_Clockwork_Mission1	Clockwork have invaded Skull territory. Stop the violence.
SL2_Clockwork_Mission3	Investigate Clockwork base and find King's diary REVEALED: The Clockwork King lost his body at the hands of a hero. That is why he's constructed a metal body.

Stature Level 2 Story Arc: The Clockwork Captive

You rescue a mechanic forced to work for the Clockwork, then save his family.

REVEALED: The mechanic has examined the Clockwork designs, and believes they simply cannot function.

Stature Level 2 Task Force Story Arc: Electricity, Electricity

A series of missions leads you to the conclusion that 3 separate villain groups are all interested in the Paragon City Dam. The Clockwork plan to destroy it, the Vahzilok plan to poison it, and the Circle wants to employ it as a focus for some sort of magic ritual. You have to stop the violence between the groups and make sure their varied plots fail.

Stature Level 2.5 Pools

SL2_Clockwork_Mission2.1	Save successful scientist kidnapped by jealous Clockwork King
SL2_Clockwork_Mission4	Shut down Clockwork production at warehouse
SL2_Clockwork_Errand1.1	Test EMP glove in killtask. REVEALED: The EMP glove has little effect on the Clockwork.

Stature Level 3 Pools

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SL3_Clockwork_Mission1	Recover “power source” that proves to be anything but. REVEALED: Clockwork power source simply doesn’t work.
SL3_Clockwork_Mission3	Retrieve advanced Clockwork parts. Robots seem to recognize you. REVEALED: Contact speculates that robots share a hive mind.
SL3_Clockwork_Errand1	Test Wave Scrambler in killtask REVEALED: Though an EMP does nothing, you can hurt the Clockwork by disrupting incoming wave signals.
SL3_Clockwork_Mission2	Save some students from Clockwork who attacked a campus recycling drive
SL3_Clockwork_Mission4	Recover trophy belonging to Contact’s friend.

Stature level 3 Story Arc: The Mind of a King

You’re on a mission to find out how the Clockwork operate, but every lead seems a dead end. Finally you defeat some Clockwork for your Contact to study in his lab. When they come back to life of their own accord, your Contact concludes that they’re being psychically controlled by the Clockwork King.

REVEALED: The Clockwork operate by telekinesis, not mechanics!

Stature level 3 Task Force Story Arc: On the Trail of the Clockwork King

You’re after the King, and nothing will stand in your way. Through the parts that compose his Clockwork automatons, you track him to his lair and defeat him once and for all!

7.5 The Council

7.5.1 Design Goal

To create a villain group that can replace the 5th Column as smoothly as possible as well as tying into the latest Prestige Archetype: the Kheldian.

7.5.2 Success Criteria

This villain group must fit most of the basic function that the 5th Column fulfills and help introduce the new Prestige Archetype. The Council should also begin to introduce the back story for SPIDER as a precursor to City of Villains

7.5.3 Risks

The most difficult aspect of creating the Council is the need to replace all the 5th Column content. Most of the villain models will have to undergo at least a color swap and insignia change. The mission maps and content will have to be altered as well.

DN: The symbol of the Council should be a stylized letter C that appears to cast a shadow. The primary colors of the Council should be khaki, dark grey and olive drab.

7.5.4 Overview

7.5.5 Background

7.5.5.1 Fragments of the Web

In the final days of Benito Mussolini's days of power in Italy, the criminal organization known as Arachnos became factionalized. Conflicts in ideology split this powerhouse of terror into multiple fragments. The remnants of Arachnos were all arrested or killed when Mussolini was taken in. Some of the remaining agents moved on to form SPIDER. Another group of forward thinking individuals split off to form a shadowy brain trust known only as The Council.

7.5.5.2 Chariots of the Kheldian

The Council had several aces up their sleeve when they first broke off from Arachnos. The first was the fact that they had set up several bases of operation all over the globe in preparation for such an eventuality. The second advantage the Council had was a secret alliance they formed with a race of powerful beings from another galaxy, known as the Kheldians.

The Kheldians began observing our world long ago, trying to decide if we should be left alone or subjugated. The Kheldian ruling body decided due to their volatile nature, humans should be avoided. A group of observers was set up to continue monitoring Earth. A Kheldian named Takar was put in charge of this operation. In his continued observations, Takar decided that humans could be used to suit his own purposes. He began recruiting others among his people who felt the same way and gave them positions in the corps of observers.

When the leader of the Council, known as the Center detected Takar, they both realized that their agendas could be furthered through an alliance. The Council would help the Kheldians into key positions of power and the Kheldians would help the Center maintain his power. Each is withholding key information from the other, but for now their uneasy alliance is holding.

7.5.5.3 Striga Isle

The primary Council base is currently located on Striga Isle. The most obvious landmark on the island is Port Noble, a haven for assorted cutthroats and grey market traders. This is just the beginning of the danger on Striga Isle, however. The tree covered area to the North of the port is called the Bonney Morass. It is rumored to hold monsters that will tear the flesh from a man's bones.

DN: The monsters in the Bonny Morass will be Warwolves

The other major landmark on the island is Mount Richardson. Within this towering volcano lies the deepest secret of the island, the Council's largest headquarters.

7.5.6 The Legions of the Council

7.5.6.1 The Outer Bands

- **Nebula**

Description: This band of the Council is comprised of former 5th Column Fog/Nebel Soldiers.

- **Penumbra**

Description: This band of the Council is comprised of former 5th Column Nacht/Night Soldiers.

- **Vortex**

Description: This band of the Council is comprised of former 5th Column Raserei/Fury Soldiers.

- **Zenith**

Description: This band of the Council is comprised of former 5th Column Mek Men and Hoverbots.

- **Equinox**

Description: This band of the Council is comprised of former 5th Column Vampyri.

- **Eclipse**

Description: This band of the Council is comprised of former 5th Column Nightwolves.

7.5.6.2 The Inner Bands

- **Apogee**

- Rank: Minion, Lt., Boss

- Levels: 20-50

Powers: Repeating Sonic Rifle, Rifle Strike, Sonic Rifle AOE knockdown burst, Sonic Beam attack

- AI:

Description: Overall the Council does not have many frontline troops. The Apogee Band provides the bulk of them. They are all equipped with a Sonic Rifle that was developed by Council scientists using Maestro's abilities as a template.

They wear military style jumpsuits in the colors of the Council.

- **Helix**
- Rank: Minion, Lt., Boss
- Levels: 20-50
Powers: Stealth, High Defense, Critical Hits, Venom Blade, Archery
- AI:

Description: The Helix Band of the Council has been trained by Arakhn in stealth and infiltration. They have also been conditioned by Kheldian mind control techniques to be loyal to her above all others.

The Helix wear tight charcoal body suits with stylized fangs on their masks, similar to Arakhn's costume. They carry their short swords on their back underneath a quiver full of arrows.

- **Galaxy**
- Rank: Minion, Lt., Boss
- Levels: 30-50
Powers: Healing, Shield Self, Shield Others, Energy Blast, HTH Attacks
- AI:

Description: The personal guard of the Center, these crack soldiers are highly trained for protection and defense. Their equipment is geared toward healing and shielding their charge.

The Galaxy wear khaki and charcoal suits of power armor.

7.5.6.3 The Outer Chamber

- **Requiem, Nosferatu, and Vandal will fall within this group**

7.5.6.4 The Inner Chamber

- **Maestro**
- Rank: Arch-villain
- Levels: 20-24
Powers: Sonic Cage, Sonic Blast, Sonic Servant, Sonic Barrier, Flight, Sonic Stun
- AI:

Description: Vincenzo Alferi loved music even before he was born. When he was still in his mother's womb she played music of all types for him. Classical symphonies, jazz improvisations and big band blasts all caused Vincenzo to kick and squirm. While he was growing up Vincenzo continued his absorption of music and musical theory. He had a brilliant mind and seemed destined for greatness. He dreamed of a career as a composer but a car accident left him with minor brain damage and tone deafness. He could no longer fully appreciate music and trying to compose was extremely difficult.

His family visited many doctors and he had several surgeries to try and correct the problem but nothing worked. Vincenzo became despondent and increasingly desperate. That is when his family was contacted by an agent of the Council and offered the chance to try a radical experimental process. The Alferi's were hesitant but Vincenzo overruled them. He would try anything to return things to the way they were.

Using a combination of sonic stimulation and laser surgery the procedure was supposed to restore Vincenzo to the way he was before. Things did not go according to plan however. An attack on the facility by SPIDER during the surgery resulted in a power surge at the worst possible moment. Instead of restoring him to the way he was, the resulting explosion created a permanent resonance in Vincenzo's body. The blast also killed both his parents. Vincenzo agreed to join the Council if they would give him the opportunity for vengeance against SPIDER.

Maestro wears a green and midnight blue costume with a stylized representation of a sound wave on the chest.

- **Arakhn**
- Rank: Arch-villain
- Levels: 25-30
Powers: Dark Venom Strike, Dark Venom Blast, Piercing Strike, Stealth, Resistance to poison, High Defense, Critical Hits, AOE Dark Venom Spray
- AI:

Description: Very little is known about the mysterious figure known as Arakhn. She is a deadly assassin and is the last thing seen by many enemies of the Council. What most of the Council is unaware of is that Arakhn is actually a member of the Nictus race. She is the mate of Takar forming an unholy alliance between their group of Nictus and Kheldians.

Arakhn wears a skin tight brown bodysuit with black lines running from the torso out the arms and legs. She also wears a face mask with stylized fangs.

7.5.6.5 The Center

- Rank: Arch-villain
- Levels: 48-50
Powers: Mesmerize, Levitate, Mass Hypnosis, Transfusion, Siphon Power, Siphon Speed, Personal Force Field
- AI:

Description: Paolo Tirelli's parents doted on him throughout his childhood. He was told from an early age that he would be something special. In retrospect it is difficult to determine if Paolo's powers were already at work or if the encouragement he received as a child caused them to manifest in the manner that they did. Simply put Paolo was a very powerful mutant telepath. As he grew into his powers it became clear to him that he was destined for greatness. In his late teens he took a position as an aide to a minor politician and began puppet mastering him. It was a few years later, after Paolo had maneuvered his "superior" to a place of power and prestige within the Italian government that Arachnos first entered his life.

Il Recluse, who at that time was recruiting for Arachnos, spotted Paolo as the real power behind this rising politico. He offered the young man the chance to continue his activities but with the weight of Arachnos behind him. Sensing the opportunity he had been looking for, Paolo accepted. It wasn't long before the young man was put in charge of his own group within Arachnos.

Paolo primarily operated behind the scenes in Arachnos. He advised Il Recluse and investigated ways to increase their power base. It was during this time that he first encountered the Kheldians. Paolo had always been fascinated with Astronomy and detected a Kheldian observation team on one of their visits to Earth. He decided to make first contact. Once again fate had stepped in; he was speaking to the rogue Kheldian known as Takar. Takar was part of the Kheldian group that felt humans should not be left to their own devices. Sensing a mutual opportunity the two made a dark pact. Paolo would open up key positions throughout the world for Keldians from the rogue faction to occupy. This would slowly build a power base for the Kheldians. In return Paolo asked for the Kheldians to boost his already significant mental powers. All of this, Paolo kept to himself.

As things began to look dire for Arachnos in the early 1940's, Paolo advised Il Recluse to change courses but the old man stubbornly clung to his support of Mussolini. Paolo subtly began to pull his group out of Arachnos' operations at that time. When Mussolini fell most of the Council, as Paolo's group had become known as, were already elsewhere.

By this time Paolo had sequestered himself on a small island in the Atlantic, called Striga Isle. He was known only as the Center. The last person that could connect him to Paolo Tirelli, Il Recluse, was dead. Everything was in place for the Council to begin its new agenda...subsuming other villain groups and becoming the dominant force on the earth. The first step in this plan is for the Council to absorb the 5th Column. They have agents, both human and Kheldian scattered throughout the Column's forces. Their key advantage is that Requiem of the 5th Column is one of those agents. Unbeknownst to the Council, however, Requiem is also working as an agent of SPIDER.

The Center wears a charcoal grey suit in the style of Blofeld from the James Bond films. The high collar should have a pin on it bearing the Council's symbol.

7.6 Crey Industries

7.6.1 History

The true history of the Countess Crey is a mystery to all but a very few people in the world. The public story goes something like this: The beautiful and talented Clarissa Van Dorn, after graduating from some of the finest private schools in New England, traveled to Europe for her own Grand Tour. While there she met and fell in love with the dashing and very wealthy Count Alphonse Crey. The two had a whirlwind courtship followed by a grand wedding and a year long, round the world honeymoon. The new Countess Crey then returned to Zurich to help run one her husband's many holdings, a modest but profitable medical research firm called Crey Biotech. Shortly thereafter the Count fell into a mysterious coma, a state in which he lingers to this day. Since then, his talented and beautiful wife has done an amazing job managing the family finances and has turned Crey Industries into one of the three most profitable and powerful corporations in the world.

Almost all of that official story, except the part about turning the company into a global mega-corp with astonishing power, is absolutely false. For starters, Clarissa Van Dorn's real name is Julianne Thompson and she never went to any private schools at all, let alone the finest in New England. In fact, she's the product of Paragon City's fine public school system and is probably one of the ten smartest people in the world. Her whole life has been a carefully planned march towards this ultimate goal. She planned every step up to the top while her fellow seventh graders whiled away their hours contemplating who liked whom and who wasn't cool. Julianne knew damn well she was cool.

Unlike your stereotypical 13-year-old super-genius, Julianne hid her talents behind a veil of mere excellence. Good student, popular classmate, pretty girl, and obedient daughter, she excelled without showing off. Living the normal life occupied about a quarter of a percent of her mind however, leaving her plenty of time and brainpower to spare for more weighty matters. She saw an unlimited future for herself, a world where all doors lay open before her. She would be president, a captain of industry, a great inventor; she would be whatever she pleased.

Then, in her seventeenth year of life she discovered something many intelligent young men and women find – not the opposite sex, but rather a cause. Social injustice, the devastation of the Earth's environment, political corruption, racial inequality: they all called out to her. As it turned out, the world was a pretty nasty place and Julianne was smart enough to see that most of the world's leaders weren't willing to take the steps necessary to fix it. In fact, most of them didn't even have the brains to see what the necessary steps were. Thus young Julianne decided that it fell to her to fix the world's wrongs. Throughout college she tried the normal paths – political activism, local politics, journalistic commentary and punditry, even lobbying elected officials. She accomplished more than most would ever dream and yet left it all feeling decidedly unsatisfied. The simple truth was, she could not make a real difference, not legally at least.

Illegally remained a route untested for the young genius. When an important environmental law came before the U.S. Senate, Julianne learned that a single Senator on the governing committee was keeping the otherwise popular bill from being brought up for a vote. She was clever enough to dig up some rather embarrassing and incriminating information about the Senate committee chair. She even managed to insinuate herself into a position where she could threaten the Senator with blackmail if he didn't vote for the environmental law she wanted passed. What she didn't realize was that the Senator had resources of his own, including a super-powered security consultant whose telepathic powers saw right through Julianne's scheme and whose super strong henchman worked her over pretty good before turning her over to the cops.

Five years in a federal prison gave Julianne time to rethink her strategy. Growing up in Paragon City she knew all about super powered heroes, and she even knew that many of them worked for the government. However, it had never occurred to her that a corrupt and venal Senator would have super powered thugs on his payroll. Heroes were supposed to be shining examples of more rectitude and virtue, not lackeys for the coal mining lobby. She had simply failed to account for them in her plans, a mistake she would not again repeat. Now in fact they became the focus of her new future. Now she knew that heroes could be bought, just like anyone else. With enough money and resources Julianne could harness that kind of power to her intellect, and truly could change the world.

During her stay in prison (serving three years of her five year sentence before being paroled), Julianne gave a lot of thought to what her next move might be. Like many prisoners, she spent a lot of her free time studying heroes – not so she could defeat them the next time around, but in order to find some that she could work with. When she received parole, Julianne sought out some of the greatest living heroes in America, hoping to join forces with them, to offer them the guidance and direction they so obviously needed to help change the world. She saw herself as the head of a new worldwide hero organization that would fix the world's problems. Naïve? Yeah, sure, but she had to try. As one might expect, few superheroes had any interest in taking advice from a twenty-something ex-con. Those few doors she managed to open were uniformly slammed shut in her face.

Fine. Whatever. Screw them. She'd find her own heroes, build her own army. And that's exactly what she set out to do. First though, she needed financial and political backing and she needed it fast. Subsuming feminist pride beneath a growing megalomania, she set off for Europe, a wealthy husband firmly in her sights. Knowing full well that convicted felons seldom win prominent husbands, she created a new identity for herself. Creating a false background was just one of several useful skills she had picked up while in prison. She found a young woman from a good family named Clarissa Van Dorn. Clarissa's wealthy parents had died in a boating accident when she was sixteen and Clarissa herself had fallen into a deep depression, withdrawing from society to live alone in her family home. Julianne tracked her down and offered Clarissa a chance to do good – if she would allow Julianne to use her identity for a while, she could accomplish great things in the world. After all, Clarissa wasn't doing anything with her pedigree, so why shouldn't she "loan" it to this perfect stranger who'd just gotten out of a federal penitentiary.

Clarissa was frankly horrified and frightened. She refused. Julianne, like many incredibly intelligent people, had a hard time understanding why it was that Clarissa couldn't see the beautiful simplicity of her plan. Didn't she know what was at stake? Couldn't she see past her own selfishness? Julianne refused to take no for an answer. When the young woman tried to call the police, Julianne pulled the cord from the wall. When the poor girl tried to make a run for it, Julianne tackled her, all the while still trying to convince the terrified Clarissa that she was making the wrong decision. Finally, Clarissa grabbed a chef's knife from the kitchen and threatened Julianne with it. In the ensuing struggle both women were cut – but it was Clarissa's wound that proved fatal.

Although she was shocked at what had happened, more than anything Julianne was angry. Why would no one listen to her? What did she have to do to get someone to just do the right thing and follow her lead? Fine. It was over now, and she knew exactly what she had to do. The plan would proceed as she had laid it out. She would become Clarissa, woo some European moneybags, and have the resources she would need to realize her ambitions. Julianne had picked Clarissa because the two were roughly similar in size and age. Some hair dye, a new hair cut, and the right clothes were certainly enough to let her pass as Clarissa for passport purposes. After that, the rest would be easy.

With false pedigree and upper class manners in hand, she took the European blue bloods by storm. The new Clarissa did not have much experience with fancy parties or the jet set lifestyle, but she was an attractive woman and a very quick study. Her ability to speak five languages fluently helped as well. She quickly mastered the craft of coquette and set about finding just the right husband for herself. She settled upon Count Alfonse Crey, widely regarded as one of the most eligible bachelors in Europe. Known not only for his wealth and influence, Count Crey also had a profoundly conservative reputation. The relatively hedonistic culture of upper class youth in Europe offended his refined sensibilities. He wanted, and in Clarissa found, a prim and proper, dutiful and adoring wife. And of course, his doom.

But it was not the Count's title or conservatism that attracted her (although his firm rule about no sex before marriage was to her liking in this particular case). The real attraction was his family's extensive holdings in the fields of technology and bioengineering. She was particularly intrigued by a company called Crey Biotech, which had done some remarkable research into the origins of mutant powers in super powered heroes. After her initial rebuff at the hands of Paragon City's heroes, she had spent a lot of time trying to figure out how she could make her own super powered individuals. Perhaps Crey Biotech would offer her the key to unlocking that power for herself.

After much feigned trepidation and coyness, Julianne finally relented to the Count's marriage proposal. Their engagement was the toast of the town and their wedding was one of the gala events of the year. As they set off on a round the world cruise on the Count's private yacht, Julianne was already planning her next move. She had long been hinting to the Count that she wanted to become involved in the family business, particularly with the biotech firm. Alphonse had hinted that he would allow her to do just that, but it turned out that the two had very different ideas about what a woman should and should not do when it came to business. The Countess wanted to run the company and direct its research. The Count wanted her to have a powerless seat on the board and preside over charity dinners. Julianne was not amused.

The trip was cut short, largely because the Countess feigned seasickness for much of the time. The two returned to the Count's home in Zurich and the Countess began to move her timetable forward. While she had hoped for a relatively free and empty marriage, the Count took his vows very seriously. Julianne even made several attempts to set the Count up with beautiful mistresses, just so she could make some time for herself, but the Count's virtue remained intact. There was seemingly nothing she could do to be free of him. She used her empty seat on the board of Crey Biotech as an excuse to leave him at least once in a while, and it was on one of these trips that she met a promising young scientist named Rudolph Bein. Bein was a brilliant researcher who had a knack for pissing off the wrong people. He was going nowhere at Crey, but couldn't leave the job because his prospects of finding another were very slim.

The Countess took Bein under her wing and promised him great things if only he could help her solve one little problem – her husband. The Countess gave Bein a sample of her husband's DNA and asked the brilliant young geneticist to come up with a tailor made disease that would incapacitate but not kill her husband. A rather inconvenient pre-nuptial agreement that Julianne had been forced to sign ensured that there was no way she could benefit from the Count's death. However, she did manage to get his power of attorney in case he was incapacitated, and so the only logical solution was to remove him without killing him.

It took Bein a year to synthesize the formula, during which time the Countess played the role of a good and dutiful wife even as she prepared the ground for her eventual takeover. She tricked or convinced her husband to remove many of the corporate officers she did not think she would be able to control when her time came. Meanwhile, she strengthened her ties to those whom she could trust. She learned all the ins and outs of the Crey business empire, until the time finally came for her to step up and fill the role she had picked out for herself.

The tailor-made drug that Bein had created worked perfectly. The Count seemed to come down with a mild cold, but 48 hours later he fell into a deep coma. The Countess hired the best doctors in the world to find out what was wrong with her beloved, knowing full well that they would fail. The Count had fallen prey to some mysterious malady and the best minds in medicine could do nothing to help him. Knowing the importance of appearances, the Countess made a grand show of her devotion, seemingly dropping all other activities to focus on finding a cure for this terrible disease – whatever it was. In fact, although she dropped out of the charity dinners and meaningless social engagements, she was busier than ever. She quickly and quietly secured her position as the true power behind Crey Industries, firing or otherwise eliminating anyone that stood in her path.

Then she shocked the world by announcing that Crey Industries was moving its world headquarters from Zurich to Paragon City. The ostensible reason for this sudden shift was that the brightest minds in science and technology could be found in Paragon City and the Countess wanted to be close to where she felt sure a cure for her husband would someday be found. In fact, The Countess wanted to return to her home town, where she would be closer to her true research subject: the world's greatest heroes.

Away from the old European Board members and investors, the Countess was now free to run her company as she saw fit. After buying up a whole building for her and her husband, she set upon the American biotech industry like a hungry lioness. She began to acquire new companies left and right. If a company wouldn't sell or was beyond her means, she'd simply hire away their best researchers (sometimes with blackmail as an extra incentive for jumping ship) and then steal any patents and secrets the recalcitrant rival might still possess. Within a few years Crey Industries had come to dominate not only the biotechnology sector, but also medical technology and most importantly, pharmaceuticals. Crey now held the patents to seven out of ten of the world's most used prescription drugs. 95% of American households had at least one Crey product in their home. Her husband's family company now had an annual income close to a trillion dollars.

Of course those massive profits never showed up on any of its financial statements. Crey's accountants were experts at hiding the true extent of the company's holdings. When the SEC decided to actually investigate the biotech giant, they found out just how dangerous the life of a government oversight accountant can actually be. Crey had bought and paid for a number of agents in the FBI and lawyers in the Justice Department, all of whom came down fast and quiet on the SEC investigators. It didn't take long for them to give Crey a clean bill of health and move on to other, less deadly targets.

There was however, one exception. One SEC investigator just happened to be the cousin of a mid-ranking hero in Paragon City who called himself the Invisible Falcon. More of a detective than a brawler, the Invisible Falcon heard his cousin's horror stories and became intrigued by Crey Industries and its mysterious Countess. His flight power combined with his invisibility made him a great spy, and he didn't have to think twice about breaking into Crey's Paragon City headquarters. He was looking for any kind of incriminating evidence, but he certainly wasn't prepared for what he found.

The Falcon floated silently through the hallways, invisible to everyone and everything. He passed through the legitimate seeming front offices and paused long enough to look over a few managers' shoulders and memorize their passwords to the office network. He then managed to slip into the labs. Not being a scientist, he had no way of knowing if what the people were doing was legitimate or not, but he continued gathering data and taking pictures with his digital camera. He floated deeper and deeper into the building, hoping to find his way into the Countess' office (which strangely didn't appear on any maps of the building). He never did find that office – but he did stumble upon something much more incriminating.

Deep beneath the building he found a complex of secret labs, obviously the site of the company's top-secret research and development. Here again, he could not make heads or tails of what exactly they were doing, but he took plenty of pictures anyway. Then he found a room where even an untrained observer could ascertain that something was very, very wrong. In a room the size of a football field he found row upon row of coffin sized Plexiglas tanks, each containing a human body attached to some sort of life-support machinery. Scientists roamed up and down the aisles, periodically checking monitors or injecting drugs into the IV's that kept these bodies alive. Crey Industries was no hospital, and there was no way this was even close to being legal. The Invisible Falcon snapped more pictures and then prepared to make his escape.

But of course he never did escape. Crey security had identified him as soon as he entered within half a mile of their building. They had monitored his every movement since he entered the door. Electronic jamming equipment would have kept him from sending any signals if he had ever tried. Electro Magnetic Pulses had already erased the memory card in his camera, while x-rays had ruined any film he might have carried. The Countess herself watched his progress from her office once he penetrated the secure areas. She wanted to see just how far he would go, and maybe find out who had sent him. Once he tried to leave he found himself sealed in a stairwell that was quickly pumped full of anesthetic gas. The Invisible Falcon was never heard from again. His cousin tried to raise an alarm, but no one listened. There was no proof that he had ever gone into the Crey building. Crey agents had cleared out his home, and an impersonator was seen on the city streets in several locales. As far as the world was concerned, he had run off on his own. Who could say for sure with an invisible man?

In fact, The Invisible Falcon joined those bodies held in tanks deep beneath the Crey office tower. Not all of them were heroes with super powers. In fact, only half of them were. The rest were clones of those heroes, made by combining and recombining genetic material from those captured heroes in attempt to grow her own force of super soldiers. Ever since she came to Paragon City, the Countess had been secretly and slowly collecting fallen heroes. Most of these had not been direct victims of the Crey Security forces, but rather they had died in the regular course of their duties and Crey retrieval teams had been there to snatch up the bodies. However, about one quarter of them had been targeted as individuals possessing genetic materials that the Countess and her scientists wanted to use in their research. For these select subject "accidents" had been arranged or, as with the Invisible Falcon, impersonators had left the impression that the missing hero had left the crime fighting life of their own accord. The great thing about killing and capturing heroes is that most have secret identities, making a police investigation into their disappearance much more difficult. No one's even sure who it is that's gone missing.

The Countess called her top-secret program the Revenant Heroes Project. It was the next stage in realizing her long-term goal of having her own cadre of totally loyal heroes to do her bidding. Unfortunately for the rest of the world, she'd all but forgotten about all the reasons she wanted to work with heroes in the first place. Her youthful idealism about changing the world and making it a better place for one and all had been subsumed with in her obsessive drive to win at all costs. Her stated reason for developing the Revenant Heroes sounded nice enough: she wanted a reliable, super powered security force that could counteract any possible threat and yet not seize power for themselves (or even think for themselves for that matter). However, the truth was, she simply wanted it to show the world that she could. That in fact, she could have anything she wanted.

It was her old friend and co-conspirator, Dr. Bein, who oversaw the program. His unsurpassed knowledge of genetics provided amazing results, especially when it was combined with the nearly limitless resources of Crey Industries. The ability to experiment upon live, or even dead heroes propelled his research much faster than government-sponsored programs that operated within the guidelines of morality and ethics. Like many, at first he went down the path of trying to find an actual serum or treatment process (such as the one used by the 5th Column), but he decided that ultimately this would prove too time consuming and complicated for only meager results. He soon set off on a new course, one he called Recombinant Cloning.

The Recombinant Cloning technique isolates the individual physical and genetic characteristics that give a hero his or her powers. All of the DNA comes from mutants or humans who've been altered in some way. Magical powers don't reside in the genes and therefore aren't useful for Crey's purposes. Dr. Bein developed a process for growing what he calls Blanks – bodies made from adaptive cells that can accept donor material cloned from super powered beings. Thus once he has established a genetic line for a particular power, he can keep growing it and implant it in as many Blanks as he cares to.

Although developing this process and extracting the power genes was incredibly difficult and expensive, it turned out to be the simplest part of the procedure. The Revenant Heroes had powers sure, but getting to use them effectively (or indeed at all) proved much more difficult. The Blanks had the minds of infants. The next step was to develop a speed learning program that could train the Revenants in a reasonable amount of time, but this proved very difficult as well. After years of work, the project still had yet to produce a super powered individual capable of even testing in the field.

Growing more and more frustrated, the Countess herself stepped in to oversee the project directly. Although Dr. Bein resented the intrusion into his territory, he was in no position to argue. Especially once the Countess figured out a solution to his problem. She reasoned that, if they could copy a dead person's powers and reconstitute in endless iterations for their Blanks, then there must be some way to copy a live hero's knowledge and training and propagate it as well. Dr. Bein agreed that this would, in theory, work, but that no one knew how to copy memories. No one even really knew how memory worked. The Countess just smiled knowingly and went shopping.

What she was buying was companies and research firms, along with several think tanks, two churches, and a university psychology department (the last through a multi-million dollar endowment). The Countess was looking for the world's foremost experts on memory, and in Kane-like fashion she managed to buy up most of them. Unfortunately, what most of them told her was that the one person she needed was Dr. Carole Friedken, and she wasn't going anywhere. The seventy-five year old, Nobel Prize winning scientist had the keys to Crey's quandary locked inside her brilliant mind. The Countess just needed to find the right lever to pry it open.

Cash wasn't going to do it. Dr. Friedken lived comfortably and needed nothing. The Countess made offers to the scientist's favorite charities, but the older woman remained unimpressed. She knew very well that Crey Industries was up to no good. At the very least they would use her discoveries for some sort of crass, commercial product, but Dr. Friedken suspected that the Countess had much darker plans up her sleeve. She wanted no part of them. Even blackmail and intimidation failed. The doctor had no family left and felt no fear for her own life. The only person close to her was her assistant Paul, and even he stood firm in the face of threats and bullying. Or at least that's what the Countess led the Doctor to believe.

In fact, buying off Paul had been exceptionally cheap – just a few million dollars. Paul was a mediocre scientist who had long ago given up on ever making any great discoveries of his own. Instead, he had been proud to work alongside someone as brilliant and innovative as Dr. Friedken. But every man has his price it seems, and Paul had his own future to look out for, and that of his family. While he gained his boss' trust by standing up to Crey's intimidation tactics, he was secretly passing on her files and data to Crey scientists. But the true breakthrough's remained hidden even from Paul. Dr. Friedken had her own plans for the future, and she wasn't about to let anyone else interfere with them, even her trusted Paul.

The good doctor had discovered not only the truth about how the brain stores memory, but also how those memories can be copied. She had been secretly developing a process whereby she could transfer her thoughts and memories into another brain, or possibly even a computer, if one powerful enough could be found. All she had to do was solve the final problem – finding a suitable new host for her thoughts – and then she would be free from her dying body. Unfortunately for her, Crey decided to move her timetable forward. The files Paul had stolen provided Crey's researchers with plenty of clues about Dr. Friedken's research, but no firm answers as to how the memory transfer could be accomplished. Since every other tactic had failed, the Countess authorized direct intimidation.

Crey thugs came to Dr. Friedken's home and physically assaulted her, making it clear that she was dead if she didn't start cooperating soon. Knowing she had little time left, she finally confided in Paul. She needed his help to download her mind into a computer before it was too late. Paul was shocked, but he agreed to help his old mentor. He would make sure she was safe, but then he would give her technology to Crey. Thus everyone would be happy. The process was complex and used incredibly experimental and unreliable machinery, but it worked. All of Dr. Friedken's memories had been transferred into a machine. Her body remained much as it always had, although she was left weakened by the traumatic process. Paul then made the call to Crey.

The Countess' agents stormed through the lab and took everything, including Dr. Friedken herself. Now that they understood the process completely, they decided it might be useful to harvest the inventor's memories directly from the source. They also took the computer into which she had downloaded her memories, just to be sure. Paul received his reward and a plum research position at Crey Industries to provide an excuse for the new income. However, when the company's scientists examined the computer containing Dr. Friedken's memories, they were shocked. Although some of her memories were in the machine, in fact most of them were somewhere else. Dr. Friedken, suspecting treachery from her assistant, had transferred herself out into the Internet as a whole, spread out across millions of computers around the world.

There was no putting the genie back in the bottle when it came to Dr. Friedken, and as far as they could tell, she might not have even "survived" the transfer. So the Crey scientists put their worries about the missing doctor's memories aside and got on with unraveling her research, and eventually her mind. The Countess now had the tool she needed to program her Blanks and turn them into true heroes. It took less than a year for Bein and the other researchers to figure out how to isolate memory strings and even instincts and subconscious patterns. They could literally dissect a person's memory and put it back together any way they pleased, including mixing and matching memory strings from different subjects.

Initial tests with the Revenant Heroes proved even more successful than anticipated. These vat grown heroes could actually use their powers, follow orders, and still think for themselves when it came to solving problems and dealing with tactical situations. Emboldened by this tremendous success, the Countess ordered the live capture of more and more heroes. She wanted the best memory strings and genes for her Revenants and she wouldn't take no for an answer. It was becoming harder and harder to cover up all of these disappearances, and Crey's activities were beginning to attract unwelcome attention from top tier heroes like The Statesman.

Things might have gone very bad for Crey very quickly, were it not for one thing: the Rikti Invasion. The alien invaders overran the city with alarming speed and devastating power. Fortunately for Crey, the Rikti advance spy drones had failed to recognize the Crey headquarters building as a first tier target. The Countess was very careful about testing her Revenant Heroes, making it extremely difficult even for the aliens to trace them back to her. Thus, unlike the headquarters of many defense contractors and hero organizations, she and her company survived the first few days of the war relatively intact.

This brief reprieve gave her time to organize a stalwart defense. Indeed, she was more ready to defend her holdings than anyone else on the planet. For years she had been quietly kidnapping heroes and then holding them in captivity for experimentation. That's not the kind of activity you undertake without a well trained and very well armed private security force. In the months leading up to the war she had begun to anticipate possible attacks by teams of heroes, possibly even entire organizations like the Freedom Phalanx. As a result, she had been beefing up security even more, arming her troops with the most advanced weaponry and armor money could buy. She never dreamed that it would be extra-dimensional aliens her troops fought against, but they acquitted themselves well during the war.

The Countess fought a very defensive war. She did not combine her forces with those of the re government or the hero groups, but rather concentrated on fortifying and protecting her own holdings. The Rikti learned soon enough that the troublesome and well-equipped Crey soldiers presented little threat as long as the invaders left them alone. As a result, the Rikti soon began bypassing Crey guarded facilities entirely, unless there was some overriding strategic purpose to assaulting them. Quick to pick up on this fact, the Countess began to offer protection to other companies, particularly rivals whom she had yet to acquire or fully infiltrate. In exchange for stock grants, free patent licenses, and seats on various boards, the Crey security teams moved in to secure many of the city's other most important and prestigious tech companies. In the panic and desperation brought on by the invasion, many CEO's made decisions they would later severely regret.

With so many people dying in the streets, including heroes, the Crey retrieval teams were working overtime. The Countess' one contribution to the world-wide war effort was to offer deeply discounted medical supplies and pharmaceuticals to the human armies and heroes. In addition, Crey trained combat medics went into the field to help tend to and retrieve the wounded. What no one knew was that, in the chaos of the war, the Crey medics were diverting the most promising and powerful heroes that fell into their hand into Crey research facilities rather than hospitals. The hidden Crey labs swelled with new research projects, and the Revenant Hero Program suddenly had a cornucopia of genetic material and memories to choose from.

Meanwhile, Crey had a whole other set of retrieval teams out in the field, although these were not looking for the bodies of heroes. They were looking for Rikti technology. It was obvious to one and all that the Rikti tech level far exceeded the best our planet had to offer. As such, any piece of Rikti weaponry or equipment was a potential goldmine of new patents and inventions. The government and many hero groups were also snatching up the captured tech as fast as they could, and Presidential orders forbade civilians from keeping any Rikti devices they found. Never shy about ignoring laws and Presidential orders, the Crey teams continued to snatch up as much Rikti-made material as possible.

It was only after the dramatic end of the war that Crey finally revealed its Revenant Heroes to the world, although of course it didn't call them that. Indeed, the group presented themselves to the world as a brand new hero organization, born out of the ashes of the Rikti War and dedicated to securing the city and helping to rebuild it after the massive devastation that had laid it low. They called themselves the Paragon Protectors. They all wore tailored jumpsuits and helmets that hid their identities. They said that they operated not as individuals but as a team, and that their identities weren't what was important – it was the work that mattered above all else. They offered to help any business or residence that needed protection from the hostile world around them. It soon became clear that they weren't a traditional hero group at all. The Paragon Protectors were just what their name suggested – guards. They'd secure a location against attack, but they weren't planning on actively hunting down and capturing villains.

That limited role was fine with most people. Guards and police were just what the war-torn city needed at the moment. Soon the Protectors were guarding important locations all over the city, including all the places Crey Industries had helped protect during the war. A month later the Protectors announced that the Countess Crey had offered to personally sponsor the Protectors as a contribution to the safety and future prosperity of Paragon City. From that point on the two groups became more and more tied together in the public eye, with each good deed done by the anonymous heroes reflecting well upon their corporate sponsors. The two became, in many ways, inseparable in the public consciousness, which was appropriate since the Countess' scientists had grown every single one of the heroes in her labs.

Now Crey Industries is poised to make its next great leap. If even half of its current plans come to fruition, the corporation will become the largest and most important corporate entity in the world. It will also have an extraordinary influence over the health, safety, and general well-being of millions, maybe even billions of people. Which is, of course, just how the Countess Crey wants things to be.

7.6.2 Goals and Behavior Patterns

The Countess Crey has so many short-term goals that she has all but lost track of her long-term ambitions. The original drive to change the world for the better is pretty much forgotten, replaced instead by a general feeling that she knows what's best for all involved and she's not going to let anyone or anything get in her way. Overall she still sees herself as a very positive force in the world, and not as a villain at all. She's all about the ends justifying the means and at this point has no qualms about using any means necessary to achieve her goals.

There is however, a bit of a schizoid disconnect between what she's actually doing and what she tells herself she's doing. Sure, she wants to make the world a better place, but she can't worry about that right now. First she has to secure her position. One might think being the wealthiest woman in the world would be pretty secure, but the Countess sees enemies in every rival business and costumed hero that's out there. Not to mention the alien invaders and other trouble makers. Until all of that is brought under control, she feels compelled to devote all her time and resources to making Crey stronger and stronger. Once she's got everything under control, then she can turn her attention to good works and so forth.

In the meantime, the ceaseless expansion of Crey's holdings and influence continues. In the wake of the war, Crey Industries is seeing its most successful and profitable year ever. The company continues to expand on all fronts, both legal and illegal. The Paragon Protectors are becoming more and more accepted and have become one of the more trusted security icons in American Culture (surpassing Brinks and even rivaling the Freedom Phalanx and Hero Corps). Crey activities on each of these different fronts are discussed below:

Consumer Products

Crey Industries continues to be the leading pharmaceutical producer in the world, making a pill for seemingly every disease and occasion. Although there are a dozen different subsidiary companies that develop and market these drugs, the head researchers at Crey control the direction a research for every single drug the company makes. These head researchers in turn report directly to the Countess. Taking a cue from the tobacco industry, many of Crey's more expensive and popular drugs have been specifically engineered to be addictive over time. Thus, continued sales are assured. Pharmaceuticals still account for over one-third of the corporation's annual income, so the Countess protects its drug business fiercely. Not only does it squash the competition, it also spends millions upon millions of dollars buying off congressmen and FDA officials in order to ensure speedy approval for all of its products, no matter how dangerous.

More recently, Crey has begun experimenting with Rikti derived chemical compounds in their drugs. They've been particularly successful with formulae based upon samples recovered from The Lost and other Rikti sites. The Crey research staff has been working tirelessly to try and isolate the mutagenic effects that transform the Lost into monstrous beings. So far they've had some solid successes and are on the verge of a major breakthrough that will have vast implications for both the Revenant Hero Project and the world of prescription medicine.

The first product to hit the shelves is a prescription injection designed to quickly close and regenerate wounds. It is already in common use in most clinics and hospitals in Paragon City and has recently begun shipping across the country. It has also become popular with heroes, who can get a prescription from their doctors to carry the hypodermics in the field. In combination with the emergency teleportation system, this serum, marketed under the name Wound Wise, have saved thousands of lives already. The serum works by actually morphing the skin, bone, muscle, and nerves, causing them to heal themselves. This happens at an exceptionally rapid rate – taking seconds rather than weeks or months.

What no one outside of Crey Industries knows is that Wound Wise probably has some very serious long-term side effects that no one is aware of right now. Repeated usage (common in heroes, law enforcement, and military personnel) causes a gradual and seemingly irreversible degradation of the human DNA. Over the long term this will undoubtedly cause radically increased cancer rates at the very least. At the worst, it might actually end up transforming the users into monsters not unlike the Lost themselves. The Crey scientists are working on alleviating these deadly side effects, although newer and safer formulae might only show up in the serums given to Crey security personnel – not the Wound Wise sold to heroes.

Of course Crey makes a whole host of consumer products aside from pharmaceuticals and medical supplies. They're also a major supplier for all kinds of medical and scientific hardware, from electron microscopes to simple centrifuges for chemists. There's virtually not a lab in the world that doesn't have at least some piece of equipment manufactured in a Crey owned plant. Unlike the pharmaceuticals business, the scientific equipment part of Crey Industries usually loses money each quarter. The company sells its products at rock-bottom prices, yet provides some of the most advanced and reliable equipment in the world. What no one realizes is that most of that equipment, especially more advanced electronic and computer controlled devices, have special hardware and software designed to monitor every single output the device gives. When the Crey-employed technician comes by to do the regularly scheduled maintenance, he simply pops out the memory card and replaces it. Crey then employs an army of analysts to sift through and catalog all this data. Just one more way that Crey stays on top of the competition.

Only recently has Crey begun to break into providing products for the home (beyond medical related goods). Many of these items are actually the result of research on Rikti technology that produced surprising results. For example, a Rikti based ceramic is being used to make cheap, attractive, looks and feels like porcelain and yet is virtually indestructible dinnerware and is now available in most department stores. In a similar vein, Rikti military rations have an exceptional composition that is delivers vitamins and protein more efficiently than any natural food source. Thus, Crey now produces a top selling line of snack bars that are very popular with amateur and professional athletes alike. None of these items are particularly dangerous or inherently evil, although the research that led to them is certainly questionable. Still, the public at large might well find the idea of eating alien food off alien dinnerware to be more than a little unappetizing.

Forbidden Tech

The Countess Crey has become almost obsessed with Rikti technology. She has lobbied hard against laws restricting private access to alien artifacts and has lobbied even harder to win her companies the Rikti research contracts that the government has been handing out since the war's end. She sees the Rikti as the classic Chinese crisis – danger and opportunity perfectly intermingled as one. She knows that understanding the various Rikti inventions can catapult her corporation's tech level decades into the future, putting her well beyond the reach of any of her rivals. She also knows that if any of those rivals get the edge on her when it comes to Rikti tech, it could spell doom for her company. Therefore she is doing everything she can to find, buy, or steal anything Rikti that she can.

In fact, unknowingly, Crey Industries has been dealing with a number of different actual Rikti, who have been selling their technology to Crey and other companies while disguised as human dealers. Crey has no idea that they are actually buying from the Rikti, although it's uncertain how she would react if she did find out. Like most humans, she has no love for the aliens. On the other hand, now that the war is over, she might indeed consider working with them, although only in a very guarded and controlled manner. Her goal would primarily be to find out more about the Rikti and their operations on Earth rather than to trade money for technology. Both sides would no doubt be waiting for the ideal moment to drive a knife into the other's back.

While Crey has received hundreds of patents based on Rikti technology (both legally and illegally obtained) they still have yet to get their hands on the holy grail of Rikti devices – the body modification chambers used to transform Rikti into humans and vice versa. While there have been some damaged models of the device recovered, the Rikti take tremendous precautions about this technology, folding in a variety of security devices into its design. Any tampering with the machine results in an explosive self-destruction that makes it almost impossible to reconstruct the machine or even discern its original design. If Crey could get its hands on a working chamber, it would dramatically speed up and improve their Revenant Hero Project. The two technologies could be combined to pump out a steady stream of trained, loyal, and very powerful super powered soldiers – everything the Countess might need to crush all of her enemies.

One area where Crey lags sorely behind the competition is in the area of weaponry. The Delgado-Harris Corporation has been able to easily maintain its competitive edge over all its rivals and has thus won most of the government contracts for studying captured Rikti weaponry. The Countess has ordered her own weapons research firm to close the gap, and there are several weapon designs based on Rikti energy rifles now in R&D. However, the Countess doesn't place much emphasis on conventional weaponry. She's looking to her revenant heroes as the ultimate weapons in the war against heroes, aliens, and business rivals alike.

Revenant Heroes

The so-called Paragon City Protectors are the Countess Crey's pride and joy. The Protectors' first appearances during the war didn't arouse too much interest. Back then there were still so many big name heroes and organizations that another super powered private security firm didn't make much of an impression. But unlike the established groups, the Protectors actually survived the war. Well, actually that's not true. All of the original Protector clones are either dead or inactive, replaced by second and third generation Revenants with higher power levels and greater memory/skill enhancement packages.

Since then, the Protectors have gone on to become the security firm of choice for elites and Fortune 500 companies. Their main rival is Hero Corps, which operates on a very different model. While Hero Corps uses freelance heroes and takes on single jobs for a wide variety of clients, the Protectors only work on long-term contracts. A company or even a wealthy individual signs an agreement with the Protectors for a term of anywhere from one to five years. During that time, the Protectors agree to handle every aspect of the client's security, from handing out pass cards to employees to patrolling the halls to going out and finding thieves and would be saboteurs. In a city where a group like the Freakshow is just another street gang, it pays to have super powered protection on duty 24 hours a day. You can't always count on some random hero showing up on time.

Of course the connection between the Protectors and the Countess Crey is a great secret. As far as the rest of the world knows, the Crey Industries is simply the Protectors' largest client. Although there have been rumors of a connection between the two, the Crey accountants have covered their tracks well and there is no obvious paper trail connecting the two. The Countess is helped in this subterfuge by various city and state laws that have been passed over the years to help ensure the anonymity of super powered heroes. Since the Protectors obviously take great care to preserve their true identities, even from their clients, they fall under the aegis of these old laws.

The public excuse for keeping the identities of revenant heroes under the helmet is two-fold. One, the Protectors don't want any one hero to be seen as larger than the team as a whole. They want their customers to have faith in the organization and the individuals who comprise it without becoming attached to a particular superstar. Two, the Protectors themselves allegedly lead normal lives with family and friends and don't want their true identities exposed to those they fight against. In fact, the truth is also two fold, although the reasons are very different. The clones often have very similar or identical features to one another, especially if they possess similar power packages. As such, it would be readily apparent that something strange was going on if their faces could be seen. Secondly, the identities of various Revenant Heroes are entirely interchangeable, as are the memories. Thus the Protectors sometimes need to shuffle or replace personnel within a given client's security detail. Anonymity prevents the client from being aware that one Mr. Jones has been substituted for another, newer model.

Hiding the truth about the Revenants is the most important task for the Paragon City Protectors. Not surprisingly, there has been a great deal of interest in who these mysterious heroes are and where they come from. Numerous tabloid papers and television programs have put up large cash rewards for pictures of the Protectors out of uniform. Most of the official Protector facilities have paparazzi stationed outside of them around the clock, hoping to snap a picture of a recognizable hero or possible Protector. So far they have had no luck. Indeed, many of them have been very, very unlucky.

Crey knows better than to openly attack reporters. That would only serve to bring more attention to the matter. At the same time, since there's no known connection between the Protectors and Crey, so the Countess has a little more latitude about what it can do to counter the investigations of pesky reporters and private eyes. First and foremost, as one of the largest companies in the world, Crey buys a lot of ad space on television and in publications of all kinds. They can thus put a great deal of pressure on media outlets that publish stories critical of the Protectors. But sometimes that's not enough. Sometimes Crey needs to take more drastic measures. Noisome reporters end up having their bank accounts drained, compromising photos spread across the Internet, their taxes audited, and even their own lives threatened. Rather than forcing their victims to give up reporting on the Protectors, the Crey operatives take a more comprehensive approach – they make sure the reporter quits the business entirely. This policy not only makes for fewer free journalists, it makes it difficult to pinpoint an exact reason why the reporter was targeted, again deflecting attention away from the Protectors.

Of course, the Revenant Hero Project is not designed solely as a private security force. Indeed, the whole business of the Paragon City Protectors is really just the first stage of a much larger endeavor. The Protectors do serve as top-notch security officers and they have a startlingly high success rate when it comes to defending their clients. At several million dollars per month, the service had better be that good. But of course the real advantage for Crey is not the income, but the access. As part of their service contract, the Protectors have access to almost everything they're supposed to be protecting, including internal computer networks, files, vaults, and more. Anything their customers try to keep hidden from them inevitably gets discovered anyway. Thus Crey Industries now knows almost every corporate and private secret about each and every one of the Protectors' clients. With several government security contracts now coming up for bid, they're access to pilfered knowledge is set to increase even more in the coming year. As one might imagine, Crey makes great use out of all this intelligence.

Meanwhile, as the Protectors fight the various other villains set on attacking their clients, they get live-fire training and new memories and skills to add to the growing database of power and memory packages for the next generation of Revenant Heroes. Soon enough the process will be perfected, and the Countess Crey can embark upon the next stage of her great endeavor – the replacement of existing heroes with clones that are totally under her control. She knows that, as long as other heroes stand in her way, she can never be fully secure. While her Revenants might be as powerful as most heroes, they do not have the personality or popularity of some of the more famous heroes in the world. Her plan is therefore quite ambitious: to replace each and every hero in the world with a clone under her control. It might take billions of dollars, thousands of Revenants, and decades, but she has all of those things. She can be a very patient and methodical person when necessary.

Right now the Revenant Memory Implantation process is imperfect. Individual skills and sets of data (like how to use a power or operate a vehicle) can be reliably copied and transferred. It is more ephemeral characteristics like personality, emotions, and speech patterns that are difficult to transfer. Of course it's entirely within Crey's current abilities to transfer an entire mind into a Blank body, but that's only useful if the mind is already loyal to the Countess. The real remaining challenge is altering a mind subtly enough to ensure utter loyalty to the Countess and yet retain the essence that makes them who they are. Crey researchers are closing in on this goal and have already begun field tests.

Their first attempt to have a clone pass as a known hero was only a partial success. The hero was close enough to fool casual acquaintances and fans, but her husband began to suspect something was wrong. The program had to be aborted, the husband killed, and the clone was used to fake a disappearance (the real hero was safely in Crey custody during all this). More tests are under way. Soon, between the Rikti biomorphs and the Crey clones, it will be all but impossible for anyone to be sure they're talking to the real deal when they're in Paragon City.

7.6.3 Business Opportunities

Although it sometimes seems that way, Crey Industries does not own every business in the city. Indeed, there are some very lucrative and important industries that have thus far escaped any touch of the Countess' hand, although that is sure to change in the near future. One of the biggest and most important is the Emergency Teleportation system that heroes and police personnel use in times of crisis to evacuate wounded directly to hospitals. Developed by engineers from the long defunct Portal Corp and based upon captured Rikti technology, the citywide teleportation network promises to revolutionize the way the world travels. Right now it is still very expensive and a little untested and so not used very much by the public at large. While the industry is still young, there's a chance for someone else – like Crey, to sweep in and take advantage of the situation.

It frustrates the Countess to no end that, although she has no control over the teleporters, the medical treatment most heroes receive when brought to a hospital is done almost entirely with Crey products (including Wound Wise). She would like nothing better than to have control over the entire process, from first call to the final bill. Unfortunately for her, the government is deeply involved in the teleportation network, working in concert with Portal Corp. It was government money that paid for the installation of the teleportation transceiver stations that are spread throughout the city and the government still tightly controls access to the transport matrix. Thus, Crey's usually bold and illegal acquisition strategies can't be used in this case.

So instead Crey has to take a more round about path to victory. Of course the company has already stolen all of the plans for the teleporters, and has a number of hidden cameras, computer taps, and other devices sending them a steady and torrential stream of data about the teleportation network and how it works. They could, if they wanted to, build their own network right now. They certainly have the money. But they can't get government permission to do that, and so they wait and lobby hard for a change in the system. Crey operatives are busy searching for any bit of leverage they can find over the federal, state and local officials who have jurisdiction over the teleporter contracts. They're pouring massive amounts of money into lobbying and sometimes outright buying of politicians.

But the Portal Corp has its own lobbyists as well, and the two companies are engaged in a bitter feud on Capital Hill. Slowly but surely, Crey is winning this battle. The giant company simply has more resources to throw at the problem. But things are still progressing too slowly for the Countess' tastes, so she has ordered a stepping up "alternative measures" including blackmail, kidnapping, and even assassination if it proves necessary. She want utter control over the teleportation network within the next year, no matter what it takes.

Of course there are many sound business reasons for wanting to take control of the emergency teleportation system, but none of them really factor into the Countess' single-minded drive to take the industry over. She sees other opportunities as well. First of all, it would allow her Revenant Heroes much more flexibility. They could travel anywhere in an instant, hitting hard and then disappearing without a trace. Right now the matrix keeps records of who goes where and when, so no one using the citywide system does so in private. The Countess wants control over those records so that she can hide her movements.

Much more importantly, it can be a powerful tool for use against her enemies. The teleportation system is still an imperfect process and occasionally accidents do happen. Thus it would be easy to make a troublesome hero or two disappear into the ether without raising too many questions. Or, in less extreme cases, they could simply misdirect the transport to delay a hero's medical treatment. At the very least, they could monitor the activities of their enemies and keep track of their medical condition and possibly their weaknesses and patterns. Finally, Crey researchers are working on a way to siphon off DNA samples from heroes in transit. This would allow the Countess to secretly obtain thousands of samples for her Revenant Hero Project without ever having to worry about alerting suspicion by kidnapping heroes (although there's no way to steal memories during the transport process, so some kidnapping would still take place).

7.6.4 Prison of Tomorrow

Prisons are the next big project for Crey Industries. More and more states are turning to private companies to run their prisons, especially when it comes to special facilities designed to hold super powered criminals. These super-max prisons are very expensive to build and staff, often requiring guards with super powers as well – not an easy thing to find. Unless of course you're the Protectors and can just grow as many guards as you need in Crey's vats. The first pilot Protectors Detainment Facility is just about ready to go online in Paragon City. The Countess hopes this will be one of many such facilities across the country. Certainly no one else can match her bids for constructing the prisons, since no one else has free, super powered labor at their disposal.

Previously such prisons required advanced technology and incredibly tough walls and bars just to hold a moderately powerful super villain. Prisoners were often kept within experimental dampening fields meant to obviate their super powers, but it proved impossible to design such a machine that worked in all cases. Often times it was necessary to simply dope the prisoners up, leaving them unconscious in artificial comas. This was recently determined to be cruel and unusual punishment by the Supreme Court, necessitating a new way for controlling high-risk, high-power prisoners.

The Protectors offer an "old school" approach to imprisonment. Their facilities don't use any special machinery or even unusually thick walls. Instead they rely entirely upon their super powered guards to keep the prisoners in line. Everyone in the prison knows that, if they try anything, the guards have the power and the permission to come down on them with superhuman force. A few good beat downs by the eerily quiet and super powerful guards, and most prisoners are too scared to try making trouble twice. Those who do usually don't live to try a third time.

For the Countess, the Protectors Detainment Facilities offer yet another source for super powered DNA and memories of how to use them. Every prison will have a state of the art hospital ward that just happens to include all the material needed to take samples for cloning and for recording memories. Indeed, it is the memory theft that makes the guards so effective. In addition to their super powers, every Protector gets regular uploads from the prisoners' memories, allowing them to predict outbreaks and crimes before they even happen. In the future, the guards themselves will in large part be clones of the prisoners, possessing all the powers and expertise of a hardened super villain but still totally loyal to the Protectors and the Countess Crey.

7.6.5 Plausible Deniability

With all of their illegal activities it's important for the Countess Crey to maintain a buffer between herself and those who do her dirty work. After all, each day hundreds of crimes both corporate and violent, are committed in her name. Any one of them has the potential to land her in jail, if indeed any proof of her involvement could ever be found. Therefore, the Countess has gone to extreme lengths to make sure that nothing illegal can ever be traced directly back to her. Given that she is a very involved and hands on leader, this requires a very careful balancing act. But The Countess has spent her entire life on the high wire, and knows just where to step when.

The corporate organization of Crey Industries is incredibly Byzantine and convoluted. If you look at the official corporate power structure, the Countess has very little actual authority over anything. None of the responsibilities for making decisions actually fall within her purview. She's not even a member of the Board of Directors. Her sole official title is President Emeritus, which carries with it no duties or responsibilities. This is of course a legal fiction designed to insulate her from any legal action. She absolutely controls everything at Crey Industries, working through puppets and lackeys who she pays extremely well to be her yes men. At the same time, she has thick files on each of them, and super powered thugs on speed dial ready to harm them and their families if they step out of line. The Countess does not screw around and expects absolute obedience. And she gets it.

Even the corporation itself is protected within a labyrinth of dummy corporations and independent research facilities. For example, all of the most dangerous and illegal research takes place not in Crey owned facilities, but rather in independent research firms that happen to have gotten a grant from a think tank or foundation that happens to receive its funding from a company that Crey Industries holds a minority share in. Of course the Countess controls the research firm, the foundation, and the funding company, but not on paper and not in any way that would show up in a court of law. She holds together her entire financial empire through sheer force of will, a feat made somewhat easier by the fact that she now controls her own private army of super powered heroes.

The many illegal and questionable activities that the Revenant Heroes get involved in are also done under the umbrella of plausible deniability. As has already been shown, the Paragon Protectors are not officially linked to Crey in any capacity, although many suspect that the two have closer ties than they're letting on. Even within the group, it is often all but impossible for authorities or heroes to ascertain exactly which Protector is responsible for which action. The Countess even recently engineered a very public "scandal" within the Protectors, wherein a group of the anonymous heroes went rogue. This fictitious rogue element is now blamed anytime the Revenants are caught doing something illegal. While the "revelation" about the rogue element did hurt business for a while, the damage was minimal because the only client the alleged rogues were protecting was a Crey Industries subsidiary. Thus none of the real clients had their security compromised – at least as far as they know.

When the layers of obfuscation and misdirection do break down – which they do from time to time – then Crey has a whole building full of lawyers ready to jump all over anyone who publicly accuses the company of wrong doing. Crey Industries is more litigious than the Church of Scientology, and has better lawyers to boot. Anyone who makes the simplest accusation about the company better have filing cabinets full of evidence to back those claims up. Most papers and media outlets have been totally cowed into submission, afraid to print any story about Crey that isn't positive. Consumer advocates and watchdog groups have been driven into bankruptcy by Crey lawyers. There's almost no one left to stand up to the corporate juggernaut.

Even heroes who have gone public with their discoveries about Crey have suffered under legal avalanches. Crey has become expert at getting bought and paid for judges to sign off on restraining orders keeping specific heroes out of any Crey facility. Gag orders are another favorite tactic, imposed on heroes to prevent them from telling their side of the story. Dozens of heroes who have gone public about their battles with Crey minions have ended up in jail because of contempt of court. Once they're behind bars, it's relatively easy for Crey agents to strike at them directly. Most never live to serve out their full 30 day sentence.

Despite all their best efforts, word is beginning to get out about Crey Industries. There have been some very public disasters that even the Countess' crack PR and legal teams haven't been able to quash. The Countess herself is a controversial figure. Many people see her as a strong, successful businesswoman who's made a real fortune and yet still gives to charity and the community. Others see her as an evil and manipulative power broker who will stop at nothing to get what she wants. Both are right. She has become such a well-known celebrity that she is often the subject of jokes on late night TV and in political cartoons. In many ways, this celebrity helps her. The fact that people are joking about her means that they don't quite believe she's as evil as the extremists out there say she is. Sure she's a greedy, powerful business leader, but in America that's not necessarily a bad thing. So, for now, she's holding her own in the PR battle, but if too many more scandals come out, people are going to start believing she really is evil.

7.6.6 Relations With Others

For the most part, Crey doesn't care too much about other villain groups unless they directly interfere with or can benefit the company's own agenda. The Countess still considers herself to be a good person who's only trying to do what's best for the world. When it comes to doing good she's very much a generalists – she wants to help people in general, even if it hurts or kills people in particular. Thus she has no problem rationalizing her occasional alliances with groups who she would otherwise despise on moral and or political bases.

The Rikti are of course the big exception. While she wants to learn from/steal as much of their technology as she can, she hates the extra-dimensional invaders with a passion. They are a huge threat to her and her plans and she fear their power. Ultimately she favors a counter invasion of the Rikti home dimension, but not until her own private super powered army is fully operational and up to the challenge. At the same time, she's unknowingly buying a lot of technology from Rikti agents. Some of her security people have brought up the possibility that they are buying from disguised Rikti, but the Countess has been strangely adamant about her denial of this possibility.

The 5th Column is another group that the Countess has no use for. For all her problems, she's no racist and no fascist (or at least that's what she tells herself). Crey and the 5th Column fight constantly, although neither is quite powerful enough to take on the other directly. Still, 5th Column operatives are a favorite target for the Protectors when they're trying to make some headlines.

The Countess Crey is both fascinated by and wary of Nemesis. The two villain groups keep each other at arm's length. She's interested in the Nemesis technology and certainly she has protected her own buildings against infection by his machines, but for the time being she largely lets him be while she gathers more data and deals with other, more immediate problems.

The Circle of Thorns are another enigma. Along with other magic based groups like the Banished Pantheon, the Countess has little interest in magic. She finds it too unpredictable for her tastes. While her forces do often come into conflict with these magic-based villains, they tend to avoid confrontations whenever it is possible to do so.

The Devouring Earth is another group that hates Crey Industries. Indeed, Crey and its subsidiaries come under almost constant assault from members and monsters of the Devouring Earth. The mega corporations security protocols have, for the most part held, especially since the Protectors came online.

Lesser groups, like the Freakshow, are not viewed as particularly dangerous. Indeed, Crey has taken a great interest in the technological developments shown in Freakshow cybertechnology and has even sold the group medical supplies and other pieces of equipment in exchange for access to their technical schematics, although this is always done through intermediaries so there's no way to connect Crey directly to the gang and its activities.

The Countess is very interested in Vahzilok's developments, since they touch directly on Crey's own medical and biotech businesses. The Countess has tasked an entire department to keeping track of Vahzilok's advances and stealing any technology that is developed. Crey could, if it wanted to, recreate all of Vahzilok's experiments and probably improve upon them, but for the time being they're taking a simple watch and wait approach.

7.6.7 Future Developments

The Countess Crey thinks of herself as being very much in control of her own destiny. As shown above, she has a great many goals and plots for the future, all of which seem to be going according to plan. She's already begun building her own private army of super powered heroes and she's well on her way to having a stranglehold on the entire American healthcare system through her biotech, pharmaceuticals, and medical tech businesses. What she hasn't planned for is the unexpected. What she hasn't considered is that her past might come back to haunt her.

First and foremost of course is that fact that she's not really Clarissa DeVore. She's covered her first murder very well, but an intrepid investigator, especially one with supernatural powers of some sort, could still find a way to get to the truth. Of course finding the truth and proving it in a court of law are two very different things. The Countess has covered her tracks well enough that there will be no know admissible evidence found of her true identity. She's been particularly aided in this by her company's newfound ability to alter and manipulate memories. However, should a group of enterprising heroes find out her true identity, it will be a great embarrassment to the Countess and might even drive her to rash actions.

If charges that she is an imposter and a fraud become public, there will undoubtedly be lawsuits from her husband's family and a number of challenges to her authority to run Crey Industries at all. Of course, the Countess is much too formidable an opponent to fall to these kinds of attacks now – she has a super powered army and mind control experts in her arsenal, not to mention the best lawyers in the business. But it will be a distraction and an embarrassment and it might well spark other investigations into her life and activities as well.

An even worse development would be her husband waking up. After all, as stipulated in their pre-nuptial agreement, the Countess does not actually control any of the family wealth or holdings. Instead she manages them in her comatose husband's name. No single act would cause the Countess more discomfort and trouble than her husband waking up from his coma, especially if he could be safely spirited away from the Countess' control. Several of the Count's distant relatives are already plotting just such a move. They've begun formulating a plan wherein a group of super powered heroes will break into the Crey-owned (and guarded) private hospital where the Count resides and extract him back to Europe. They've already made several such attempts, but have failed to come close to penetrating Crey security. But with the right group of heroes, they just might succeed. If her husband wakes up, the entire company will be thrown into chaos. The Countess will have to step forward and take a much more active and obvious role in the affairs. This will in turn leave her more vulnerable to legal action for her company's crimes, something she very much wants to avoid.

Not everyone is happy working for the Countess Crey and not everyone is willing to go along with her plans for the rest of their lives. One very powerful and potentially dangerous malcontent is Dr. Bein, the man behind so much of Crey's Revenant Hero Project. Bein has always had great ambitions of his own, and he knows that he can never achieve his own goals as long as he's under the Countess' thumb. He's also a deeply disturbed misogynist whose hatred of women colors everything he does. He has long been plotting against his boss and soon he will be ready to make his move.

Not all the Revenant Heroes are as loyal as the Countess believes them to be. Although he no longer has direct control over the programming and mind alteration process, he has been able to introduce his own influences into some of the cloned heroes. When the time comes, he will have his own personal army to help protect him when he breaks away from Crey and starts his own villain group. Unlike the Countess Crey, Bein is a true sociopath who thinks it's a waste of time to hide behind a corporate façade and try and "do good" for the world as a whole. He will create a much more aggressive group, aimed at raising an army of vat-bred monsters and super soldiers to carry him towards world domination. Obviously, this is not a move that the Countess will approve of, resulting in a bitter war between the two groups, with Paragon City caught in the middle.

But without a doubt, the greatest lurking threat for the Countess Crey is the memory of Dr. Friedken. Dr. Friedken was the scientist who developed the memory removal technology that has become a cornerstone of Crey's Revenant Heroes project. Dr. Friedken's mind was downloaded into computers spread out across the world. It has taken some time for her to get used to this new and very bizarre state of being, but she has recently begun to come into her own as a digital being. For the moment her abilities are quite limited. She has only recently learned how to communicate with others through their computers. Dr. Friedken, has developed a small but fervent cult of personality around herself, composed mainly of hackers and Internet dwellers who've become obsessed with her digital state of being.

Dr. Friedken has made some test forays against the Crey computer networks, but so far she has been unable to find an opening. The Countess is incredibly paranoid about computer security and the Crey systems have the best security available. Thus for now Dr. Friedken has had to content herself with spreading rumors and news stories about Crey's malfeasances. She's become a major anonymous source for numerous blogs and other alternative news sources and is becoming quite a thorn in the Countess's side. She has already ordered her security department to track down the troublesome muckraker, but so far they've had no luck finding the woman's true identity. Luckily for Crey, Dr. Friedken has no idea what the company has used her technology for or that the Protectors are really clones with memory implants. Dr. Friedken has recently made contact with several super powered heroes and hopes to expand her contacts in this area. She will do anything and everything she can to bring Crey down.

7.6.8 Villains

7.6.8.1 Riot Guard

- **Rank:** Minion
- **AI:** Default Melee
- **Levels:** 30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39
- **Powers:**

<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Riot Baton</i>	Riot Baton deals minimal damage, but can Disorient a whole lot.
<i>Automatic Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.
<i>Resistance</i>	Crey Security Body Armor makes them resistant to lethal damage, but are vulnerable to confusion.

Cryptic Studios

- **Description:** Crey's Security Agents have become and almost ubiquitous sight in Paragon City, especially in any Crey owned or operated office or research facility. They're armed with standard law enforcement weapons, from riot batons to assault weapons

7.6.8.2 Patrol Guard

- **Rank:** Minion
- **Description:** Crey's Security Agents have become and almost ubiquitous sight in Paragon City, especially in any Crey owned or operated office or research facility. They're armed with standard law enforcement weapons, from riot batons to assault weapons
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Assault_Rifle</i>	Quickly fires a burst or rounds at a single target at very long range. Damage is average, but the fire rate is fast. Can also reduce targets defense.
<i>Resistance</i>	Crey Security Body Armor makes them resistant to lethal damage, but are vulnerable to confusion.

7.6.8.3 Mob Specialist

- **Rank:** Minion
- **Levels:** 30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	When all else fails, use your own 2 fists.
<i>Boxing</i>	A decent punch that has a small change to Disorient foes.
<i>Kick</i>	A modest kicking attack that has a small change to knock opponents down.
<i>Submachine_Gun</i>	Rapid fire rifle. Can reduce targets defense.
<i>Resistance</i>	Crey Security Body Armor makes them resistant to lethal damage, but are vulnerable to confusion.

- **Description:** Crey's Security Agents have become and almost ubiquitous sight in Paragon City, especially in any Crey owned or operated office or research facility. They're armed with standard law enforcement weapons, from riot batons to assault weapons

7.6.8.4 Research Assistant

- **Rank:** Minion
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41
- **Powers:**

<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Cryo_Pistol</i>	The Crey Cryo Pistol deals moderate damage, but this freeze ray can slow an opponent. Repeated blasts from this pistol may encase the target in fragile ice. Even is a target is captured in this fragile ice, he can break free if attacked or disturbed in any way.

- **Description:**

7.6.8.5 Scientist

- **Rank::** Minion
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41

Cryptic Studios

- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Cryo_Rifle</i>	The Crey Cryo Rifle deals nominal damage, but this freeze ray can lock its target in a fragile block of ice as well as slow an opponent. The ice is fragile, however, and the target can break free if disturbed. Recharge rate is slower than the pistol.

- **Description:** Crey Industries believes firmly in hands on, frontline research and demands more from their scientists than most companies. Indeed, Crey Scientists often venture into the field in armed teams, armed with Cryo weapons to help them collect samples - and do serious damage to anyone who get in their way.

7.6.8.6 Researcher

- **Rank:** Minion
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Cryo_Pistol</i>	The Crey Cryo Pistol deals moderate damage, but this freeze ray can slow an opponent. Repeated blasts from this pistol may encase the target in fragile ice. Even is a target is captured in this fragile ice, he can break free if attacked or disturbed in any way.

- **Description:** Crey Industries believes firmly in hands on, frontline research and demands more from their scientists than most companies. Indeed, Crey Scientists often venture into the field in armed teams, armed with Cryo weapons to help them collect samples - and do serious damage to anyone who get in their way.

7.6.8.7 Medic

- **Rank:** Minion
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **SpawnLimit:** 2
- **Levels:** 30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Hypo</i>	Heals a single targeted ally of some Hit Points and frees an ally from any Immobilization, Sleep, Disorient and Hold effects and leaves them resistant to such effects for a brief time. Should be performed away from combat as this power can fail if interrupted.

- **Description:** Crey Industries believes firmly in hands on, frontline research and demands more from their scientists than most companies. Indeed, Crey Scientists often venture into the field in armed teams, armed with Cryo weapons to help them collect samples - and do serious damage to anyone who get in their way.

7.6.8.8 Geneticist

- **Rank:** Minion
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **SpawnLimit:** 2
- **Levels:** 32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41

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- Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Reanimate</i>	Reanimates a fallen ally into a killing machine! The reanimated ally is extremely powerful, although these genetically altered subjects burn out fast, and will collapse dead after a short while. Should be performed away from combat as this power can fail if interrupted.

- Description:** Crey Industries believes firmly in hands on, frontline research and demands more from their scientists than most companies. Indeed, Crey Scientists often venture into the field in armed teams, armed with Cryo weapons to help them collect samples - and do serious damage to anyone who get in their way.

7.6.8.9 Radiologist

- Rank:** Minion
- AI:** Default Ranged
- SpawnLimit:** 2
- Levels:** 32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41
- Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Radiation_Infection</i>	Infects a targeted foe with deadly radiation. All foes the target comes in contact with will also become infected. The Radiation Infection will last as long as the Crey Scientist can keep this power toggled on or when the original infected targeted dies. Infected foes have severely reduced accuracy and defense.

- Description:** Crey Industries believes firmly in hands on, frontline research and demands more from their scientists than most companies. Indeed, Crey Scientists often venture into the field in armed teams, armed with Cryo weapons to help them collect samples - and do serious damage to anyone who get in their way.

7.6.8.10 Field Agent

- Rank:** Minion
- AI:** Default Ranged
- Levels:** 35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45
- Powers**

<i>Adv_Sub_Machine_Gun</i>	Rapid fire rifle. Slightly more accurate than a standard Sub Machine Gun. Can reduce targets defense.
<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks

- Description:** The stone-face, suit clad Field Agents are Crey's main investigative branch and can be found carrying out a variety of missions, from espionage to investigation and assassination ops. They carry the latest weapons and receive intense close combat training.

7.6.8.11 Melee Specialist

- Rank:** Minion
- Description:**
- AI:** Default Melee
- Levels:** 35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45
- Powers**

<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.
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<i>Bone_Smasher</i>	The Bone Smasher is a Slow attack, but makes up for it with a greater damage. Has a greater chance to Disorient than Energy Punch.
<i>Energy_Punch</i>	Powerful focused punch that may Disorients your opponent!
<i>Barrage</i>	Barrage is a short, quick one-two combo punch. Deals little damage, but is quick and has a chance to disorient the target.

- **Description:** The stone-face, suit clad Field Agents are Crey's main investigative branch and can be found carrying out a variety of missions, from espionage to investigation and assassination ops. They carry the latest weapons and receive intense close combat training.

7.6.8.12 Infiltration Specialist

- **Rank:** Minion
- **AI:** Default Melee
- **Levels:** 35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45
- **Powers**

<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.
<i>Crane_Kick</i>	A slow, high damage kick that can send your target flying!
<i>Thunder_Kick</i>	A typical martial arts attack that may Disorients its target.
<i>Storm_Kick</i>	Unleashes a flurry of quick kicks to pummel your foe.

- **Description:** The stone-face, suit clad Field Agents are Crey's main investigative branch and can be found carrying out a variety of missions, from espionage to investigation and assassination ops. They carry the latest weapons and receive intense close combat training.

7.6.8.13 Chief Cryo Scientist

- **Rank:** Lieutenant
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **SpawnLimit:** 2
- **Levels:** 30,31
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Heavy_Cryo_Rifle</i>	Heavy Cryo Rifle can Hold your opponent frozen solid in a block of ice. The victim can be attacked and will remain frozen and helpless. After the ice thaws, the victim emerges chilled and slowed. Bitter Freeze Ray deal minimal damage. The quick freeze from the Heavy Cryo Rifle deal minimal damage.

- **Description:** The leaders of every Crey research team - particular those that operate out in the field, receive special training in leadership, tactics, and combat techniques. They also have access to the latest advanced weaponry, making them especially dangerous.

7.6.8.14 Chief Plasma Scientist

- **Rank:** Lieutenant
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 30,31
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
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<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.
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- **Description:** The leaders of every Crey research team - particular those that operate out in the field, receive special training in leadership, tactics, and combat techniques. They also have access to the latest advanced weaponry, making them especially dangerous.

7.6.8.15 Elite Security Agent

- **Rank:** Lieutenant
- **Description:**
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 32,33,34
- **Powers:**

<i>Adv_Assault_Rifle</i>	Fires a large slug at a single target at very long range. This very accurate weapon hits hard, and can knock down foes.
<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Focus</i>	Crey Agent can Focus his mind to evade many melee and ranged attacks.

7.6.8.16 Special Agent Melee Specialist

- **Rank:** Lieutenant
- **AI:** Default Melee
- **Levels:** 32,33,34
- **Powers**

<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.
<i>Bone_Smasher</i>	The Bone Smasher is a Slow attack, but makes up for it with a greater damage. Has a greater chance to Disorient than Energy Punch.
<i>Energy_Punch</i>	Powerful focused punch that may Disorients your opponent!
<i>Barrage</i>	Barrage is a short, quick one-two combo punch. Deals little damage, but is quick and has a chance to disorient the target.
<i>Focus</i>	Crey Agent can Focus his mind to evade many melee and ranged attacks.

- **Description:** The Special Agents are the best of the Crey field operatives. They have superb training, the best weapons, and a seemingly preternatural focus on the task at hand. They often carry heavy weapons, since Crey trusts them enough to use them discreetly and appropriately.

7.6.8.17 Special Agent Infiltrator

- **Rank:** Lieutenant
- **AI:** Default Melee
- **Levels:** 32,33,34
- **Powers**

<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.
<i>Crane_Kick</i>	A slow, high damage kick that can send your target flying!
<i>Thunder_Kick</i>	A typical martial arts attack that may Disorients its target.

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<i>Storm_Kick</i>	Unleashes a flurry of quick kicks to pummel your foe.
<i>Focus</i>	Crey Agent can Focus his mind to evade many melee and ranged attacks.

- **Description:** The Special Agents are the best of the Crey field operatives. They have superb training, the best weapons, and a seemingly preternatural focus on the task at hand. They often carry heavy weapons, since Crey trusts them enough to use them discreetly and appropriately.

7.6.8.18 Special Agent Sharpshooter

- **Rank:** Sniper
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50
- **Powers**

<i>Sniper_Rifle</i>	Sniper Rifle is a powerful piece of hardware. It is very accurate and has very long range. The impressive round can knock down its target.
<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Focus</i>	Crey Agent can Focus his mind to evade many melee and ranged attacks.

- **Description:** The Special Agents are the best of the Crey field operatives. They have superb training, the best weapons, and a seemingly preternatural focus on the task at hand. They often carry heavy weapons, since Crey trusts them enough to use them discreetly and appropriately.

7.6.8.19 Crey Eliminator

- **Rank:** Lieutenant
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 35,36,37,38,39
- **Powers**

<i>Chain_Gun</i>	Sprays a massive burst of lead at a target. Lots of damage and a bonus to hit, but slow to reload.
<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Boxing</i>	A decent punch that has a small change to Disorient foes.
<i>Resistance</i>	Crey Body Armor issued to Bosses and Lts. Are resistant to lethal, smashing, energy, fire and cold damage, but the heavy gear makes them vulnerable to confusion.

- **Description:** With their heavy chain guns, and advanced training, these armor clad leaders carry enough firepower to stop a tank. They're also almost as hard to hurt as a tank, although they are vulnerable to mental based assaults.

7.6.8.20 Crey Crisis Unit

- **Rank:** Lieutenant
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 35,36,37,38,39
- **Powers**

<i>Sleep_Gas</i>	Crey Sleep Grenades can knock out foes in the affected area. Affected targets can awaken if disturbed.
<i>Grenade_Launcher</i>	Launches an M30 Grenade at long range. This explosion from this grenade affects all within the blast and can knock them back.

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<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Boxing</i>	A decent punch that has a small change to Disorient foes.
<i>Resistance</i>	Crey Body Armor issued to Bosses and Lts. Are resistant to lethal, smashing, energy, fire and cold damage, but the heavy gear makes them vulnerable to confusion.

- **Description:** Crey sends these specialized units to handle big problems. Their grenade launcher can fire a variety of munitions to handle any situation. These armor clad leaders carry enough firepower to stop a tank. They're also almost as hard to hurt as a tank, although they are vulnerable to mental based assaults.

7.6.8.21 Crey Juggernaut

- **Rank:** Lieutenant
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 35,36,37,38,39
- **Powers**

<i>Missile_Launcher</i>	This devastating weapon has extreme range capabilities. Its slow recharge and high endurance cost is compensated by its massive explosion and Knockback.
<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Boxing</i>	A decent punch that has a small change to Disorient foes.
<i>Resistance</i>	Crey Body Armor issued to Bosses and Lts. Are resistant to lethal, smashing, energy, fire and cold damage, but the heavy gear makes them vulnerable to confusion.
<i>Personal_Force_Field</i>	The Force Field is virtually impenetrable to all attacks. The impact of some powerful attacks may occasionally rattle you, however the Force Field will hold, and you will not suffer any damage or effects from the attacks. The Force Field works both ways, and while active, you can only affect yourself with other powers.

- **Description:** With their powerful personal force fields, missile launcher, and advanced training, these armor clad leaders carry enough firepower to stop a tank. They're also almost as hard to hurt as a tank, although they are vulnerable to mental based assaults.

7.6.8.22 Crey Protector

- **Rank:** Boss
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 30,31,32,33,34
- **Powers**

<i>Cryo_Rifle</i>	The Crey Cryo Rifle deals nominal damage, but this freeze ray can lock its target in a fragile block of ice as well as slow an opponent. The ice is fragile, however, and the target can break free if disturbed. Recharge rate is slower than the pistol.
<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Boxing</i>	A decent punch that has a small change to Disorient foes.
<i>Resistance</i>	Crey Body Armor issued to Bosses and Lts. Are resistant to lethal, smashing, energy, fire and cold damage, but the heavy gear makes them vulnerable to confusion.

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<i>Dispersion_Bubble</i>	Creates a large bubble which protects all allies inside. While active, the Dispersion Bubble gives all allies within increase defense to all attacks except psionic. The Dispersion Bubble also protects allies inside from Immobilization, Disorient and Hold effects.
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- **Description:** With their powerful force fields, heavy weapons, and advanced training, these armor clad leaders carry enough firepower to stop a tank. They're also almost as hard to hurt as a tank, although they are vulnerable to mental based assaults.

7.6.8.23 Crey Voltaic Tank

- **Rank:** Lieutenant
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 32,33,34,35,36,37
- **Powers**

<i>Charged_Bolts</i>	The Crey Voltaic Tank can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
<i>Lightning_Bolt</i>	The Crey Voltaic Tank can send a large blast of electrical energy at a foe. Lightning bolt deals good damage and also drains some Endurance.
<i>Thunder_Strike</i>	A massive attack. The Crey Voltaic Tank smashes his foes with all the power of the lightning to deal a blow. The pummeled victim may be Disoriented and all nearby foes may be knocked down and take additional damage from the resulting violent release of energy.
<i>Havok_Punch</i>	The Havoc Punch is a slower attack than Charged Brawl, but makes up for it with a greater damage. Also drains more Endurance.
<i>Ball_Lightning</i>	Hurls a highly charged ball of lightning that explodes on contact. Ball Lightning deals good damage in an area and also drains some Endurance from each target it hits.
<i>Charged_Brawl</i>	The Crey Voltaic Tank fists become electrically charged and the energy is released when this powerful punch is delivered. Charged Brawl can drain some Endurance.
<i>Power_Jumping</i>	Crey tanks can jump very high and travel very fast.
<i>Resistance</i>	Crey Tank Armor issued to Bosses and Lts. Are resistant to lethal, smashing, energy, fire and cold damage.

- **Description:** Crey's perfected Voltaic Armor can turn any soldier into the proverbial irresistible force. Voltaic Tanks can generate almost limitless electrical current, which they can hurl at great distances.

7.6.8.24 Crey Cryo Tank

- **Rank:** Lieutenant
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 32,33,34,35,36,37
- **Powers**

<i>Ice_Bolt</i>	Ice Bolt quickly pelts an enemy with small icy daggers; their chill slows a foe's attacks for a time. Fast, but little damage.
<i>Frozen_Fists</i>	Frozen Fists is a quick melee attack that deals light damage. Frozen Fists engulfs the Crey Cryo Tank's hands in ice that chills villains. The target attack speed is slightly

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	slowed.
<i>Ice_Blast</i>	Ice Blast hurls shards of ice at foes and slows their attacks for a time. Slower recharge than Ice Bolt, but more damage.
<i>Freeze_Ray</i>	Although this power deal very little damage, the Freeze Ray encases your foe in a block of ice, Holding him helpless in place for quite a while. The ice, however, is fragile, and the victim can break free if attacked.
<i>Frost</i>	This power emanates a very short cone of Frost from the Crey Cryo Tank's hands chilling all those in its arc. This attacks slowly chills the target over time, slowly dealing damage and slowing his attack speed.
<i>Power_Jumping</i>	Crey tanks can jump very high and travel very fast.
<i>Resistance</i>	Crey Tank Armor issued to Bosses and Lts. Are resistant to lethal, smashing, energy, fire and cold damage.
<i>Cryo_Rifle</i>	The Crey Cryo Rifle deals nominal damage, but this freeze ray can lock its target in a fragile block of ice as well as slow an opponent. The ice is fragile, however, and the target can break free if disturbed. Recharge rate is slower than the pistol.
<i>Brawl</i>	Crey brawling attacks
<i>Boxing</i>	A decent punch that has a small change to Disorient foes.
<i>Resistance</i>	Crey Body Armor issued to Bosses and Lts. Are resistant to lethal, smashing, energy, fire and cold damage, but the heavy gear makes them vulnerable to confusion.
<i>Dispersion_Bubble</i>	Creates a large bubble which protects all allies inside. While active, the Dispersion Bubble gives all allies within increase defense to all attacks except psionic. The Dispersion Bubble also protects allies inside from Immobilization, Disorient and Hold effects.

- **Description:** Crey's perfected Cryo Armor can turn any soldier into the proverbial irresistible force. The Liquid N2 cooled Cryo Tanks can absorb almost limitless heat and hurl ice at great distance.

7.6.8.25 Crey Power Tank

- **Rank:** Boss
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 32,33,34,35,36,37
- **Powers**

<i>Whirling_Hands</i>	Launches a dizzying attack against everything in a nearby area.
<i>Explosive_Blast</i>	Hurls a blast of charged energy that violently explodes on impact, damaging all foes near the target.
<i>Bone_Smasher</i>	The Bone Smasher is a Slow attack, but makes up for it with a greater damage. Has a greater chance to Disorient than Energy Punch.
<i>Energy_Punch</i>	Powerful focused punch that may Disorients your opponent!

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<i>Barrage</i>	Barrage is a short, quick one-two combo punch. Deals little damage, but is quick and has a chance to disorient the target.
<i>Power_Blast</i>	A much more powerful, yet slower version of Power Bolt. Power Blast sends a focused beam of energy at a foe that can knock him back.
<i>Power_Bolt</i>	A quick attack that rapidly hurls small bolts of energy at foes, sometimes knocking them down. Fast, but little damage.
<i>Power_Jumping</i>	Crey tanks can jump very high and travel very fast.
<i>Resistance</i>	Crey Tank Armor issued to Bosses and Lts. Are resistant to lethal, smashing, energy, fire and cold damage.

- **Description:** Crey's perfected Power Armor can turn any soldier into the proverbial irresistible force. Power Tanks can generate almost limitless power, which they can hurl at great distances.

7.6.8.26 Paragon Protector

- **Rank:** Boss
- **AI:** Default Melee
- **Levels:** 35,36,37,38,39,40
- **Powers**

<i>Explosive_Blast</i>	Hurls a blast of charged energy that violently explodes on impact, damaging all foes near the target.
<i>Energy_Punch</i>	Powerful focused punch that may Disorients your opponent!
<i>Energy_Torrent</i>	Unleashes a cone of energy that knocks foes back.
<i>Power_Bolt</i>	A quick attack that rapidly hurls small bolts of energy at foes, sometimes knocking them down. Fast, but little damage.
<i>Moment_of_Glory</i>	Activating this power reduces the Crey Cloned Hero to a small number of hit points, but makes him well-nigh invincible for a short time. His Endurance Recovery is also increased, and he is even highly resistant to Sleep, Disorientation, Immobilization and Hold.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Crey Cloned Hero can activate this power to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Whirling_Hands</i>	Launches a dizzying attack against everything in a nearby area.
<i>Bone_Smasher</i>	The Bone Smasher is a Slow attack, but makes up for it with a greater damage. Has a greater chance to Disorient than Energy Punch.
<i>Foot_Stomp</i>	The Crey Cloned Hero shakes the very Earth itself with a super Foot Stomp, attacking everything in a nearby area.
<i>Power_Blast</i>	A much more powerful, yet slower version of Power Bolt. Power Blast sends a focused beam of energy at a foe that can knock him back.
<i>Fly</i>	Crey Cloned Heroes can Fly!

- **Description:** Crey denies rumors that the Paragon Protectors are corporate pawns, but no one outside the company knows the truth for sure. The Claw Pattern hero is a master of melee combat, using both claws and enhanced physical attributes to make mincemeat of his or her opponents.

7.6.8.27 Paragon Protector

- **Rank:** Boss

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- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 35,36,37,38,39,40
- **Powers**

<i>Invincibility</i>	While this power is active, the Crey Cloned Hero receives a huge bonus to Defense against melee attacks and some bonus To Hit for each additional foe in melee range. Most effective while fighting multiple opponents. This power is ineffective if you are battling foes at a range.
<i>Barb_Swipe</i>	Small spikes protrude from the Crey Cloned Hero's hands that can be used to shred and poison your opponent.
<i>Lunge</i>	Extends a large Quill from the Crey Cloned Hero's arm. Lunge is a standard attack against used to stab a targeted foe and poison him.
<i>Temp_Invulnerability</i>	When the Crey Cloned Hero clicks on this power, he becomes highly resistant to smashing and lethal damage for a short duration.
<i>Quill_Throwing</i>	The Crey Cloned Hero throws a bunch of Quills in a wide cone arc and impale a group of foes. Impaled foes are dramatically slowed.
<i>Impale</i>	Impale shoots a large Quill at a targeted foe and impales in the chest. This attack injects a massive volume of neural toxin that completely Immobilizes most foes.
<i>Ripper</i>	The Crey Cloned Hero unleashes a spectacular slashing maneuver that attacks all villains in a wide arc in front of him. Ripper deals massive damage to a multiple target and can knock down foes. All affected targets are poisoned.
<i>Fly</i>	Crey Cloned Heroes can Fly!

- **Description:** No one knows who these helmet clad heroes are or where they come from, except that they are loyal only to Crey. The Power Paragon Protectors can generate powerful blasts of energy in both melee and ranged combat situations.

7.6.8.28 Paragon Protector

- **Rank:** Boss
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 35,36,37,38,39,40
- **Powers**

<i>Focus</i>	The Crey Cloned Hero can project a burst of focused power. Focus only travels a short distance, but it can also knock down foes.
<i>Slash</i>	A Slash attack deals high damage, and reduces the targets defense.
<i>Swipe</i>	A fast Claw attack that shreds your opponent.
<i>Focused_Fighting</i>	The Crey Cloned Hero can Focus his mind to evade many attacks.
<i>Spin</i>	The Crey Cloned Hero spins around with claws extended, slicing up all the nearby enemies.
<i>Eviscerate</i>	The Crey Cloned Hero spins and slashes around violently, attacking all nearby foes in a wide arc in front of him. Eviscerate is so deadly, that there is a chance of dealing

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	extra damage!
<i>Unstoppable</i>	When the Crey Cloned Hero activates this power, he not only becomes extremely resistant to most damage, but also to Disorient, Immobilization, Hold and Sleep effects. Endurance Recovery is also increased. Unstoppable costs little Endurance to activate, however, after the power wears off, he is left exhausted, Disoriented and drained of all Endurance.
<i>Strike</i>	Claw Strike is a standard claw attack against a targeted foe.

- **Description:** No one knows who these helmet clad heroes are or where they come from, except that they are loyal only to Crey. The Power Paragon Protectors can generate powerful blasts of energy in both melee and ranged combat situations.

7.6.8.29 Hopkins

- **Rank:** ArchVillain
- **AI:** Default Melee
- **Levels:** 32,33,34
- **Powers**

<i>Whirling_Hands</i>	Launches a dizzying attack against everything in a nearby area.
<i>Bone_Smasher</i>	The Bone Smasher is a Slow attack, but makes up for it with a greater damage. Has a greater chance to Disorient than Energy Punch.
<i>Energy_Punch</i>	Powerful focused punch that may Disorients your opponent!
<i>Foot_Stomp</i>	Hopkins shakes the very Earth itself with a super Foot Stomp, attacking everything in a nearby area.
<i>Cryo_Pistol</i>	The Crey Cryo Pistol deals moderate damage, but this freeze ray can slow an opponent. Repeated blasts from this pistol may encase the target in fragile ice. Even is a target is captured in this fragile ice, he can break free if attacked or disturbed in any way.
<i>Resistance</i>	Hopkins is resistant to Knockback, Disorient, Sleep, Confuse, Fear, Hold, Teleport and smashing damage.

- **Description:** Hopkins is the devoted servant and bodyguard of the mysterious Countess Crey. There has not been a day that he hasn't been seen by her side. Hopkins is clearly the second in command in the Crey hierarchy.

7.6.8.30 Countess Crey

- **Rank:** ArchVillain
- **AI:** Default Ranged
- **Levels:** 48,49,50
- **Powers**

<i>Telekinetic_blast</i>	Blasts a targeted melee foe, tossing him like a rag doll.
<i>Mental_Blast</i>	This basic psionic attack does moderate damage, and can slightly reduce a targets attack speed.
<i>Mass_Hypnosis</i>	Hypnotizes a group of foes at a distance and puts them to Sleep. The targets will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked. This power deal no damage, but if done discretely, the targets wont even be aware of your presence.

Resistance

Countess Crey is resistant to Knockback, Hold, Disorient, Sleep, Confuse, Fear and Teleport.

- **Description:** Countess Crey runs her corporation with an iron fist. Though on paper, others hold lofty titles such as President and CEO, everyone understands that this is just a legal fiction. The Countess is the one holding the strings behind the vast corporation - and woe to anyone who comes in her way.

7.6.9 Future Villains

Crey currently has a wide variety of soldiers, super powered heroes, and other minions in the field, but they're always expanding and upgrading their capabilities. Below are some of the new force assets that Crey hopes to bring online in the coming year, either to replace or augment their existing force structure.

All low-level personnel, like security guards and retrieval teams, are basically normal men and women who have signed on to work for Crey. They receive excellent pay and benefits and are treated very well by their employer. Almost all of them are happy in their work and don't ask too many questions. They are not subject to any invasive memory alterations or brain washing, beyond the normal corporate team building propaganda. Higher level personnel, particularly those with super powers or access to high technology are a different story.

The Countess cannot afford to have these higher level operatives showing any kind of disloyalty, even if it's inadvertent. Crey has too many secrets to tolerate loose lips. Thus anyone who knows these secrets has to have their minds altered to ensure loyalty. Using the same technology that allows the implantation of memories into clones, Crey can alter the memories and thought processes of its employees. The technique is expensive and time consuming, but Crey has plenty of money and time. The alterations are subtle and designed not to alter the person's personality or character, but sometimes accidents do occur and the subject is left a mindless automaton. These few losses are usually deemed a fair cost for the unflinching loyalty of the rest of her subjects.

These memory alterations are one of the keys to Crey's success in avoiding any real legal trouble. Corporate corruption cases usually rely on a whistleblower or insider of some sort. With Crey, such people simply don't exist. It's no longer within their mind's ability to think about betraying the Countess in such a manner.

Rank:

AI

7.6.9.1 Protector Corrections Officers, AKA Hacks

With the Protectors Detainment Facility coming online, the Correction Officers (more commonly called Hacks) are literally a new breed of cloned super soldiers in the Crey Arsenal. They are designed not only to guard prisoners, but to capture them as well. Each is a licensed bounty hunter and they often take on the job of tracking down villains and criminals that are too tough for normal law enforcement. This is especially true if the Crey research staff wants samples from a subject's DNA or memories. Thus heroes are likely to encounter them not only in Crey facilities, but also out on the streets hunting for bad guys. Of course, in some cases, those alleged bad guys might well be the heroes themselves.

Unlike the Revenant Heroes, the Hacks are designed to be as intimidating as possible. Therefore, all of them have gargantuan, heavily muscled bodies. They also eschew the sleek tights and aerodynamic helmets of the Revenants. Instead they wear bulky body armor, designed as much to make them look more fearsome as it is to give them protection from their enemies. Instead of helmets they wear tight black hoods that cover their eyes and forehead, leaving their nose and mouths exposed. The hoods have black lenses over the eyes, giving the Hacks a grim, almost alien visage.

Hacks specialize in powers designed to incapacitate their opponents. There are a wide variety of power packages available for hacks, including the various elemental power sets as well of other forms of entanglement. They tend to prefer solutions that are as painful as possible without being lethal. Basic Hack tactics involve disabling a target from a distance and then moving in close to subdue them with their super strong pummeling attacks. Hacks are also highly resistant to kinetic damage and various versions usually have some specialized invulnerability to a given damage type depending on what kind of prisoners they're assigned to guard. For example, Hacks assigned to psionic and telepathic heroes always have mind shields to protect them from the prying mental attacks of their charges.

Hacks usually rely on their own powers, but in special situations they do sometimes employ weapons of various kinds. In a prison environment weapons aren't ever used, lest they fall into the hands of the criminals. However, while out performing their bounty hunting duties, Hacks often carry weapons to both protect themselves from unexpected attackers (you never know where the Rikti will strike next) and to help soften up target before they move in for the capture (or kill). They prefer rocket launchers, machineguns, and other heavy weapons.

7.6.9.2 Revenant Heroes v.2.0

The next generation of Revenant Heroes will come in two different forms. The first will be a simple upgrade of the existing models, with more power/memory packages and better training. Also, they'll possibly receive a costume change, more as a media ploy than out of any utilitarian need. The Protectors PR department intends to release a line of clothing "inspired" by the uniforms their heroes wear in an attempt to make the security company more popular with the 18 to 35 year old demographic. They expect to change costumes every year in order to drive sales of new clothing lines.

But the big change in the Revenant Heroes will be the number of famous, high profile, and public heroes who start joining the ranks of the Protectors. They will form a separate and much more public group within the company that focuses on high profile, popular missions. Again, this is all part of the Countess' plan to make the Protectors the leading hero organization in the world. She knows that people want their heroes to have faces, but she just wants to make sure those faces are people she can trust. Thus, all of the so-called new converts to the Protectors will not be the actual heroes, but rather their clones, grown in Crey vats and programmed for service.

Crey retrieval teams have already begun capturing low to mid profile heroes. The plan is to take them into captivity, strip them of all their memories, make clones of their powers and physical appearance and then implant those memories – after some careful editing – into said clones. Thus are born the Revenant Heroes v2.0: perfect duplicates for the missing heroes. It is much more difficult to exactly clone someone with a reprogrammed personality, but Crey has pretty much perfected the process. It still takes months of work and millions of dollars for each clone, so initially there won't be very many of these doppelgangers.

Appearance wise, these doubles vary as widely as do the heroes they're meant to replace, so there is no specific description for all of them that would apply. However, it does offer the unique and frightening possibility that heroes will end up fighting themselves! With just a few samples, Crey can recreate any hero from one of their genetic blanks, including giving it the appropriate super powers. They may well decide that the best way to take out a hero they want to replace is to have his or her replacement do the killing. It will certainly be disorienting and confusing for the target hero.

7.6.9.3 Interdictors

Although most of the Revenant Heroes can fly, otherwise Crey is sorely lacking in the air-support area. Since they often try to leave a line of separation between the Protectors and Crey's own security operatives, the Countess has ordered the development of a flying security force that can be used publicly without drawing too much attention. The result of the research and development process is the Interdictor, an unmanned flying drone that provides air support for Crey operatives on the ground and patrols the skies around all Crey owned buildings and facilities.

The Interdictor's inspiration was a flying saucer, and indeed the machines are shaped like flying disks. The disks are about five feet in diameter and have a two-foot diameter hole in their center which is filled with the twin-prop rotor mechanism that provides them with lift. The rest of the housing contains an alternating sequence of jet nozzles for movement, sensor suites for control, and weapons systems for interdiction. The Interdictor is based on captured Rikti technology and thus employs high-power, compact batteries for power and energy weapons for its arsenal. The weapons mounts allow the Interdictor to fire in any one of four directions at any given time while the disk can spin quickly and efficiently to bring any one of these guns to bear on a target.

Interdictors are not robots. Rather, they are remote controlled devices that are managed by security officers in a safe location miles away. It is possible, but not easy to jam this control signal. If the device loses its control signal it has an autopilot that will safely return it to its base of operations. The Countess likes to have squadrons of Interdictors in the air at all times, protecting all of her holdings from any aerial intrusions. The machines have had numerous clashes with the Rikti flying drones, and the two machines appear to be pretty evenly matched.

7.6.9.4 Field Medics

The Field Medic is a new innovation for Crey Industries, filling a unique market need formerly held only by EMT's and ambulances. The Field Medic is billed as a wandering doctor, sent out into the city on patrol to help anyone unlucky enough to get caught up in the seemingly endless series of battles between heroes and villains. The Field Medics help anyone they can, usually by applying Wound Wise to victims and passing out free samples of Crey-made pharmaceuticals. They not only help trauma patients, they also provide other health care in the city's poorer neighborhoods, from flu shots and immunizations to treating more serious illnesses. The Field Medics have been a tremendous public relations success for Crey, earning them respect and support from many who might otherwise have believed the rumors of the company's evil intents.

In many neighborhoods, the Field Medics are viewed as being as cool or cooler than the heroes themselves. Since they travel into dangerous areas, Crey has felt justified in arming their medics to the teeth. They wear stylish, white body armor with red crosses on the chest and back. Unlike other powered armor suits, the Medics wear nothing that covers their head, leaving their faces exposed. Crey studies showed that people didn't trust medics that they couldn't look in the eye. While their armored backpacks carry their medical supplies, in their hands they usually have a powerful weapon of some sort, just in case.

The Field Medic's weaponry is usually a mix of lethal and non-lethal weapons. Some medics in the unit will carry high power lasers and assault rifles – for protection. Meanwhile, others will carry stun guns and other weapons designed to incapacitate rather than kill. Taking down a team of Field Medics is quite a challenge, since all of them are equipped to heal each other's wounds at a moment's notice.

Medics always travel in groups, again for security. They have regular beats so they can get to know the residents of the neighborhoods they are serving – and thus gain their trust and support. Even when they do get in a fight with a villain (or, just as often, a hero) that requires deadly force, they are always quick to use their Wound Wise applicators to heal the fallen enemy, even as they sedate him and take him into custody. If the target has potentially useful powers or memories, he is shipped off to a Crey controlled facility for harvesting. If he's just a common thug or enemy, he gets shipped directly to the Protector run detainment facility for holding.

Of course the real purpose behind the Medics goes far beyond the great PR they're earning for Crey. They're also out in the streets to identify any potentially troublesome and/or useful heroes. If they see a likely target, they provoke a battle with it, usually in a manner that makes it seem as if they're just innocent victims of a brutal attack by some so-called "hero." They then proceed to beat the target into submission and bring him or her back to the lab for harvesting and disposal.

Likewise, the immunization and free health care services are not entirely benign. Every time they give a shot they are secretly also taking a DNA sample from their target. These are all kept on file and analyzed for potential mutations and other interesting data. Likewise, the medications being handed out all have varying degrees of addictiveness to them, ensuring that a whole generation gets hooked on Crey pharmaceuticals. Of course, in these tight financial times, when few of the city's poor have any health insurance, no one's looking too closely at what the Crey Field Medics are doing. As long as they're helping people for free, not one's going to hold them accountable for their actions.

7.6.9.5 Non-Human Phenotypes, AKA Follies

Not every one of Crey's experiments with cloning has gone exactly as planned. In fact, there have been many more failures than successes, as is often the case in research. And like any field of research, sometimes those failures are quite spectacular and even surprisingly useful. Within the Crey research community, these are called Follies, although the Countess herself disapproves of the term. In all official paperwork and reports, these clones gone awry are referred to as Non-Human Phenotypes. Most people would call them monsters.

There have been many follies over the years, and few of them were worth keeping around. The biggest exception are the monstrous creatures that Crey secretly employs in its hunt to capture heroes and other subjects for their experiments. These creatures were the product of an attempt to give the clones some non-human qualities, such as enhanced senses and increased strength and muscle mass. The result was decidedly less than human, but still potentially useful. The resulting creature has been improved upon and modified since then. Once the researchers gave up on trying to make it look human, the follies became more and more specialized. There are certain tasks that nature still does much better than man, including discerning different scents. Dogs and other animals have amazing abilities to track all kinds of things that humans can't detect. Crey research and development has further heightened these abilities, producing monstrous creatures capable of tracking an individual scent from across the city.

These follies resemble a cross between a gorilla and a dog. They have very canine like heads, resembling a bulldog in many ways. Their bodies are hunched over and hulking, with long arms like a gorilla or other primate. They're covered with a thick coat of short, dark hair. The creatures are very strong and very fast. They often wear a simple belt and harness for carrying tools and weapons. Despite their bestial appearance, they are quite intelligent and are even capable of human speech. Their minds have been heavily modified so that they are utterly obedient to their masters.

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Crey security teams use the follies to track down escaped prisoners and anyone else who is trying to elude the Countess' scrutiny. Everyone who works for Crey, is taken prisoner by Crey, or receives Crey medical attention has a scent sample surreptitiously taken from them and stored in a sealed container. Thus, whenever Crey needs to track someone down, they can use the stolen scent to put their follies on the trail. Sometimes, when all Crey wants is the subject killed, they release the creatures in packs and let them kill the target on their own. When capture is the goal, the follies accompany retrieval teams of security forces in battle armor.

The follies prefer to engage their opponents directly with their bare hands and feet. They're quite adept at their own style of fighting and are deadly opponents. They're very fast and their powerful legs give them the super leap ability. They can also use weapons if necessary, including assault rifles and other high tech devices.

7.6.10 Missions and Story Arcs

Stature level 6 Missions

SL6_Crey_Mission1	Stop a DE raid on an environmentalist group that's been too soft in the DE's eyes. Fight some Crey agents who were trying to destroy evidence linking Crey to pollution in Turner Lake
SL6_Crey_Mission2	Stop 5 th Column from raiding a Crey lab investigating the Ubermenschen
SL6_Crey_Mission3	Stop "rogue" Crey scientist from tearing up a Crey lab.
SL6_Crey_Compound1	Recover stolen Crey genetic technology from Freaks. Find a selection of vials bearing skin samples, each marked with the name a famous hero. REVEALED: At a minimum, Crey is skirting laws about cloning experimentation. At a maximum, they're up to something sinister.
SL6_Crey_Compound2	Save a Crey lab from 5 th Column, then learn that they were after a AI program Crey created. It's actually intelligent, and it wants to be free. Free it, and learn that Crey wanted it to hurt other people and businesses. REVEALED: Crey's questionable ethics and downright dirty business schemes
SL6_Crey_Errand1	Killtask to stop agents from harassing people
SL6_Crey_Errand2	Killtask to stop unauthorized scavenging in Crey's Folly
SL6_Crey_Errand3	Killtask to stop Crey experiments that disrupt Zig security

Stature Level 6 Story Arc: Corporate Culture

Investigate an attempted murder of an innocent Crey accountant. As you follow the trail, you learn that Crey ordered the hit because this woman wanted to leave Crey, and take her husband with her. Moreover, they have erased the husband's memory of his wife. You manage to save one and all, and track down the memory alteration lab.

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REVEALED: Crey has memory alteration programs

REVEALED: Crey manipulates its own employees—how many are under mental controls?

Stature Level 6 Task Force Story Arc: Following Countess Crey

Dr. Friedkin tries to help you catch the countess while she's engaged in something illegal. The trouble is, you're always one step behind. Get led into an ambush by a Crey agent posing as Friedkin, then win the grudging admiration of Crey's bodyguard, Hopkins. Take him on and win the battle!

Stature Level 7 Missions

SL7_Crey_Mission1	Investigate a hacker who's after Crey. Learn that it's Dr. Friedkin, a scientist who worked for the countess and got double crossed REVEALED: Crey is researching "memory download and transference" REVEALED: You're warned that the Paragon Protectors are bad news
SL7_Crey_Mission2	Shut down Crey's illegal portal derived from Rikti tech REVEALED: Crey is investigating portal technology
SL7_Crey_Mission3	Track down the missing Invisible Falcon, who disappeared while investigating Crey REVEALED: Crey captured the Falcon and transferred him to something called the Revenant Hero Project
SL7_Crey_Mission4	Investigate Crey repair centers. Learn that Crey is using the products they sell for surveillance. REVEALED: Crey is quietly surveilling a huge number of businesses.
SL7_Crey_Mission5	Investigate Crey medications REVEALED: Crey is deliberately engineering their pharmaceuticals to be addictive
SL7_Crey_Compound1	Investigate Crey competitor, learn that the Freaks (hired by Crey) are after them REVEALED: Crey hires Freaks to ruin their competitors
SL7_Crey_Errand1	Killtask to link Crey to Paragon Protectors
SL7_Crey_Errand2	Killtask to stop illegal operations in Crey's Folly
SL7_Crey_Errand3	Killtask to stop citizen harassment

Stature Level 7 Story Arc: Revenant Hero Project

Dr. Friedkin leads you to investigate a Crey lab, where you come across files detailing the Revenant Hero Project. You go after the baddies and bring one of the chief scientists to justice

REVEALED: Crey has been kidnapping or killing heroes, then using their DNA to create the Paragon Protectors

Stature Level 8 Missions

SL8_Crey_Mission1	Rescue a Crey board member who tried to blow the whistle on Wound Wise REVEALED: Crey's primary pharmaceutical has drastic negative effects
SL8_Crey_Mission2	Crey attempts to gain portal technology, but their fledgling tech is accessed by the Rikti. Clean up the mess REVEALED: Crey is attempting to gain portal access
SL8_Crey_Mission3	Stop Crey from eliminating an entire neighborhood in order to cover up the fact that their illegal waste disposal has poisoned some people
SL8_Crey_Mission4	A tip leads you to a warehouse ambush wherein Crey tries desperately to get its hands on your DNA for use in the Revenant hero project
SL8_Crey_Mission5	A superhero's husband is kidnapped. Rescue him, and realize that he was kidnapped because he realized Crey had replaced his wife REVEALED: Crey is replacing heroes
SL8_Crey_Mission6	Count Crey's relatives ask you to get your hands on any evidence that the count is still alive. Find documents that indicate his disease was deliberately induced REVEALED: Count Crey is kept in a come due to his wife's machinations
SL8_Crey_Mission7	Investigate some strangely powerful Paragon Protectors. Learn that Crey has gotten its hands on a Rikti bio-morphing chamber and is forcing their scientists to work on it, despite the fact that Rikti booby traps have resulted in a number of deaths among their staff.
SL8_Crey_Mission8	Save a consumer reports magazine from harassment by Crey REVEALED: Crey controls the media with an iron fist
SL8_Crey_Mission9	Save your contact's secret lab from Crey. Learn that the Protectors have somehow got their hands on your memories!
SL8_Crey_Compound1	Get a sample of the new Crey Cola and learn that it contains nanites that would transmit genetic data back to Crey.
SL8_Crey_Errand1	Killtask to get samples of Paragon Protectors' DNA, in order to learn who has been sampled

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SL8_Crey_Errand2	Stop illegal surveillance in crash site
SL8_Crey_Errand2	Stop illegal dumping in crash site

Stature Level 8 Story Arc: The Evil Countess Crey

A woman asks you to find her daughter, Julianne Thompson, who's been gone for years. Track her down, and learn that she killed another woman in order to become Countess Crey. Also stop a Crey plot to release a computer OS that would exert mind control over its users.

REVEALED: Countess Crey used to be an idealistic young woman, but she killed another woman to get all the power she could grab. In doing so, she became permanently evil.

7.7 Devouring Earth

7.7.1 Overview

The Devouring Earth is a mid to high-level foe for players. It consists entirely of monsters of various sorts, all with a nature or animal origin to them. They are all bipedal, although few of them conform to traditional human bodies, often having inhuman limbs and/or heads. The group is meant primarily to be found in caves and active in ruined zones. They are particularly fond of wooded areas like parks and forests.

7.7.2 History

There's a theory known as the Gaia Principle that maintains that the Earth's worldwide ecosystem is resilient as a whole, and that as a whole it can adapt to any challenge that might come its way. While the principle might hold true when faced with threats from the natural world, humanity has proven an especially deadly foe for Gaia. In just a couple of centuries, mankind has done tremendous damage to every level of the global ecosystem; damage that might well prove irreparable. Scientists and environmentalists have cautioned about impending ecological doom for decades, but few in power have taken their warnings as seriously as they should. Faced with opposition from any number of powerful, anti-environmental interests, the environmental movement has had few victories, and many of them proved Pyrrhic.

When protests, lobbying, grass roots organizing, and even pro-eco terrorism all failed to seriously stem the tide of ecological disaster, one man despaired of ever saving the world through conventional means. Hamidon Pasalima was born on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi to a poor family with strong roots in the Bugis culture. The Bugis are a fierce, proud sea faring people who, like many in the third world, still live their lives very much in nature's shadow. Young Hamidon proved quite the prodigy and was the first in his community to leave Sulawesi for a more formal college education in Jakarta. There he studied biology and ecology and went on to get a PhD from Oxford before returning to home to help protect his native ecology. Hamidon learned the same harsh lessons countless other activists had learned before him, and rather than futilely fight on, he decided to take more drastic measures.

Hamidon had worked on one of the foremost molecular biology research staffs in the world during his time at Oxford, and had developed some startling original theories of his own that he hadn't shared with his fellow scientists. Back in Sulawesi, he was once again exposed to spiritual and magical systems that played such an important role in his family's belief system. Rather than eschew his ancestral knowledge as most scientists would, he embraced the rituals passed down through the generations. Like many another disheartened soul, he turned to the metaphysical for comfort when the terrestrial world seemed to offer nothing but bitter disappointment. He found much more than comfort. Within the magical practices he discovered the key to unlocking the vast potential within his own scientific theories. While magic and science failed individually to protect the world's environment, Hamidon saw how, together they could be used to teach the earth to protect itself.

As an environmentalist leader in a third world country, Hamidon faced one final hurdle before he could make his inspiration a reality. He had no money. He had no lab. He had no scientific equipment. In fact, there wasn't anywhere in the Eastern Hemisphere that had the equipment he needed. Even with full access to his old facilities at Oxford he couldn't have completed his task. There had been a well-equipped lab in Japan, but it was destroyed during the Rikti war, as was a comparable facility in Sydney that might have served his purposes. And so, his only option was to try and gain access to the equipment at the Paragon Technical Institute in Paragon City.

Hamidon had never been to the United States, and his Oxford academic credentials had long expired after a decade of working with the radical environmentalist fringe. He made the long journey to Paragon City and requested time in the labs anyway, revealing a part of his theories in hopes of inspiring interest amongst the Institute's research faculty. The Institute firmly but politely refused his entreaties. His past protests had landed him on more than one FBI and State Department watch lists. Ever inventive when faced with a crisis, Hamidon decided to turn his notorious past to his own advantage and used his eco-terrorist contacts to hook up with an Earth Liberation Front cell that was active in Paragon City.

The Earth Liberation Front had been sabotaging industrial facilities, freeing research animals, and destroying the storefronts of chain coffee shops for several years. In Paragon City they had a particularly effective cell that included two super-powered activists with Invisibility and Telepathic powers that time and again gave the cell access to heavily guarded locations. They welcomed the famed Indonesian environmentalist into his ranks, and once he revealed his plan to them, the cell readily agreed to help him out.

Hamidon and his team broke into the Molecular Fusion Lab over Christmas break, taking advantage of the holiday to work in the lab for several days without interruption. Hamidon had done much of the groundwork in less advanced facilities, and he needed the Institute's equipment for the final stage in his master plan. Surrounded by Earth Liberation Front activists dressed in traditional ceremonial garb, Hamidon presided over a powerful magical ritual that, combined with the lab's equipment, produced the final product of Hamidon's dream: a living, self-replicating colony of sentient bacteria with the ability to warp living material on a molecular level. He called the creation *The Will of the Earth*, and he was prepared to release its fury upon the city and then the entire world of man.

As it turns out, it's hard to conduct an hours-long ritual in a university laboratory without attracting some attention. Half an hour after his grand success, Hamidon and his Earth Liberation Front comrades were busy collecting themselves and their materials when campus security burst in on them. They security guards held the dozen or so conspirators at gun point while they radioed their situation to the police. Just after they finished their call the invisible Liberation Front member overpowered them. Hamidon and company managed to make it out of the building and were loading their van up when a costume-clad hero with flight boots landed in their midst and began swinging. The hero also wore infrared goggles that clearly revealed the invisible terrorist and thus he was the first to fall.

Hamidon saw all his dreams crumbling under the fists of this tight-wearing interloper, and so in desperation he opened the canister containing *The Will of the Earth* and exposed himself to it. At the same time he prayed to the great Earth spirit for the strength to protect the world and his friends from this super-powered foe. The magically infused bacteria colony worked just as Hamidon had foreseen, and in moments it had transformed the rogue scientist into a colossal creature of whipping, elephantine tendrils. The monster that was Hamidon destroyed the poor hero with ease, consuming most of the environmentalists as well.

The creature that Hamidon had become still retained the original man's intellect, but at that moment it was an intellect suffering from severe emotional shock at what had happened to him, at what he had become. When three more super-powered heroes appeared, two of them with powerful ranged energy attacks, the Hamidon thing's animal instincts took over and it fled. Its amorphous, tentacled form moved with surprising speed and, despite its girth, proved quite capable of slipping down into the city's sewer system. The daring heroes pursued, but eventually lost Hamidon when he slipped out of the sewers and into an adjoining network of caves.

Wounded both physically and psychologically, The Hamidon thing came to rest in a dark, damp cave while it tried to wrap its mind around what had just happened. Over the hours and days that followed, it was scarcely aware of what was happening, even as its body adapted and set down roots into the surrounding Earth to draw out nutrients to keep it alive. Nor did it understand the full significance of the pools of bacterial secretions that were slowly forming around its monstrous form. Only when it heard a sickening plop and felt a piece of itself fall to the ground did it truly stir from its torpor.

Over a period of several days the mutated bacteria in The Hamidon's system had been working its magic on the former Earth Liberation Front activists that it had devoured in its initial frenzy. The creature had thought its former friends long dead, but the Will of the Earth had other plans for its former servants. The devoured activists were remade inside the crucible that was the Hamidon. Once their transformations were complete, they emerged from their wombs fully formed, terrifying bipedal monsters with tentacles for arms and lamprey like circular jaws for teeth. The eyeless, plant like former men and women each had a limited Telepathic ability taken from the genetic material of the psionic mutant that had worked with the activist group. The Will of The Earth absorbed the telepathic talent and made it its own, allowing the devoured creatures to communicate with the Hamidon and each other, as well as giving them the ability to perceive the world around them.

The Hamidon came to think of these creatures he'd "given birth" to as The Devoured, and he understood innately that this was how his path would proceed. The more he devoured and thus exposed to the Will of the Earth, the more able the Earth would be to fight back at the pestilent humans that threatened it. And so the Devouring Earth was born, a movement of monsters bent on destroying everything that human civilization had ever created and restoring nature's rule.

The Devoured went forth from The Hamidon's cave, seeking new victims to force into the Earth's growing army. These first forays were far from subtle, with the Devoured burrowing up from beneath the ground in broad daylight and snatching innocent civilians as they recreated in a city park. As such events are wont to do in Paragon City, this quickly brought the attention of several nearby heroes, who ended destroying half of the Devoured before they knew what had hit them. A deadly melee ensued in which the heroes ultimately prevailed, but not without some losses of their own. One of the heroes, an altered human with super strength and resilience, fell under the combined onslaught of three of the Devoured. Although two of these creatures died in the ensuing moments, one of them managed to escape with the fallen hero in its clutches.

Only two of the original fifteen devoured managed to make their way back to The Hamidon's cave, but they brought the body of the fallen hero with them. The Hamidon quickly devoured the hero, and in its frenzy it caught up its other two servants as well. A few days later the monster regurgitated its meal, this time as three new Devoured, each stronger and tougher than the originals. Once again The Will of the Earth inside Hamidon had broken down the innate powers of the fallen hero's super powers and distributed it out to his followers, much as it had with the fallen activist's telepathy. The plan for future success became obvious. The more super powered heroes The Hamidon could devour, the more powerful its minions would become.

In the meantime, the thing had had another revelation. It did not need to devour just humans. No indeed, the Will of the Earth could work its magic upon anything that The Hamidon ingested through one of its many orifices. The scientist still lurking within its twisted psyche lighted upon a particularly ingenious use of a very common resource in its dank, dark cave: mold. The Mold came out from the transformation with limited intelligence and psychic abilities. On its own, a psychic mold still has little value, but the telekinetic abilities it developed allowed it to create a powerful body for itself out of the surrounding rock. The mold adhered to piles of rocks, forming a cement like bond that joined the stones together into humanoid forms that could move with surprising speed and power.

These Rock Troops became the base for The Hamidon's growing army. Although not nearly as intelligent or versatile as The Devoured, they could still do tremendous damage to the world of men. The Hamidon can easily produce the intelligent mold that holds the Rock Troops together, ensuring a constant supply of devoted, if dim-witted soldiers. Their first task was to capture more raw material for their creator to devour and reconfigure. The Hamidon had learned from his previous mistake, and this time employed a little more subtlety in his attack, choosing night in a densely wooded park for his next assault.

Under the command of one of the Devoured, a group of twenty Rock Troops tunneled their way into the park and set themselves up in ambush. The Devoured acted as a decoy, attacking a group of late night joggers and attracting police and then super powered hero attention. A team of three young heroes answered the calls for help and chased the Devoured into the deep woods. They cornered him in a small clearing filled with piles of rocks. As they moved in to capture the strange creature, the rocks sprang to life, assuming their Rock Troops forms, and pounced upon the hapless heroes. An hour later they repeated the process, and by the morning the Hamidon had nearly a dozen super powered genetic codes to munch on.

Pleased with the success of his mold made Rock Troops, the scientist that still lurked deep in The Hamidon decided to look elsewhere in the natural world for more useful fodder. He turned to the bountiful vegetation throughout the city and twisted them into his devoted Devouring Creepers. Likewise, the Hamidon mutated a fungus into the hideous Mushroom Men.

Obviously these repeated Devouring Earth body-snatching missions did not go unnoticed by Paragon City's heroes. Word soon got out about the mysterious monsters and their tactics for tricking and ambushing lesser heroes. The Dawn Patrol at first suspected it was the return of their foe from the 60's, Major Mutator or someone following in his perverted footsteps. They made a large-scale investigation into the attacks and, to the horror discovered just how much worse the Devouring Earth is than Major Mutator ever could have been.

A team of heroes working for the Dawn Patrol set up a sting operation designed to capture the Rock Troops and Devoured in the act of snatching a hapless hero. One of their most powerful heroes, an invulnerable brawler named Gate Smasher, pretended to fall prey to the Rock Troops' assault. His comrades then followed the Rock Troops back down into their caves, confident they could get to the bottom of the matter. They did just that, although they got much more than they bargained for. The Team managed to penetrate The Devouring Earth's inner sanctum, where The Hamidon sat enthroned amongst his creation, just in time to see the monster devour Gate Smasher whole, the invincible warrior kicking and screaming as he went down one of the abomination's many gullets.

Then it became obvious that The Devouring Earth had trapped the heroes, not the other way around. The walls came alive with Rock Troops, who were immediately joined in battle by hordes of other monsters. Only Kid Lightning managed to escape the slaughter and report back the horrifying results. The Dawn Patrol immediately responded with full force, converging on the cave from all over the city. Unfortunately, by the time they got there, the cave was deserted. All that was left was a 30,000 word rambling Manifesto of the Devouring Earth, written on the cave walls in the blood of the fallen heroes.

An hour later every news organization in Paragon City received a copy of a video tape showing the slaughter of the Gate Smasher's Dawn Patrol team, along with copies of the manifesto, also written in blood, but this time on sheaves of paper made from pressed and dried moss. The author was Hamidon, but he did not identify himself, instead referring to his group as The Devouring Earth and proclaiming his intention to wipe the polluting carcasses of man and its corrupt technology from the face of the planet. It ended with the now oft-repeated phrase "The time has come for the Earth to reclaim itself from the defilers and devour its foes."

Since they announced their existence to the world, the Devouring Earth has widened its activities to include the whole gamut of anti-industrial terrorism. No longer do they simply raid pet shops or capture lone heroes. Now they launch full-scale assaults on those who they view as the most egregious offenders. The Dawn Patrol has taken the lead in fighting back the monster menace of the Devouring Earth, but every hero in the city runs the risk of coming to grips with these bizarre creatures.

Interestingly, the Dawn Patrol and everyone else on the surface world assumes that the Devouring Earth is actually a human group of some sort, with human leaders. Linguists have examined all of the blood written communications and determined that an educated English speaker who was well versed in the policies and polemics of the radical pro-environment fringe wrote them. As a result, the Dawn Patrol has wrongly focused its investigations on other radical environmental groups, thinking that there must be some sort of link. Ironically, this wrong headed persecution is actually driving these other groups towards the Devouring Earth's camp, although for the moment The Hamidon seems uninterested in working with other humans of any kind.

The Hamidon currently holds total control over two areas of the city: Eden and the Hive. The Devouring Earth is partway through the process of rendering Eden back to a primeval state, while the Hive is Hamidon's own personal paradise. He has a piece of himself operating in the Hive and producing a constant flow of troops to assault the city.

7.7.3 Goals

The Devouring Earth's ultimate goal is to wipe mankind from the face of the earth entirely. They do not see any way in which humanity can ever be trusted. History has shown that 99% of the time humans choose their own needs and comfort over those of the planet and their non-human neighbors. Sure, there's the occasional tribe or individual that lives in harmony with nature, but they are few and far between, and not worth saving.

The Hamidon is quite smart and knows full well that his goal of zero humans is, at best, a nearly impossible task. Certainly in the short run the Devouring Earth cannot hope to make any serious dent in the human population. While the Rikti war did help move the process along, that's small consolation since the alien invaders are just as bad, if not worse than the native human defilers. So the Devouring Earth has a number of other goals that it wishes to achieve in the near future; stepping stones towards the final cleansing.

First and foremost, the Devouring Earth needs to expand its resources. While Rock Troops, Devouring Creepers and Mushroom Men are cheap and plentiful, they are of limited use. The Devouring Earth needs to swell its ranks with intelligent, capable creatures. The limiting factor here is of course The Hamidon himself, which can only produce a dozen or so creatures at any one time. As much as it galls it, The Hamidon has come to realize that it needs humanity's scientific equipment to create more of the transforming Will of the Earth that turned Hamidon into the monstrous and powerful progenitor that he is today.

Once it can replicate itself over and over again, the Devouring Earth will be able to expand its operations tremendously. To do this, the group needs a variety of scientific and mystic resources and has thus begun raiding any facility in Paragon City that might have the parts it needs. Likewise The Hamidon has commanded its followers to find as many scientists and mystics as they can so that it can devour them and steal their knowledge.

The next most important goal for the Devouring Earth, one it's pursuing in parallel with its "research," is the taking of territory on the surface that it can hold for its own. The Devouring Earth is forced to spend most of its time in caves and tunnels beneath Paragon City. This fact enrages The Hamidon, since it believes that the Devouring Earth has every right to walk freely on the face of the Earth. Moreover, many of the higher order creatures that make up the Devouring Earth do not like the caves, particularly the creatures based in large parts on plants.

The current fractured state of Paragon City offers a golden opportunity for the Devouring Earth to stake out a claim. In two zones, the Devouring Earth has set up more or less permanent habits on the surface world. They have also made forays into some of the larger and more densely wooded parks within the inhabited regions of the city. Meanwhile, outside the city the Devouring Earth has set up numerous retreats and safe locations within the woods and mountains surrounding Paragon City and has plans to start expanding into the ocean as well. However, since The Hamidon still desires a constant flow of fodder, especially super powered fodder, the majority of the Devouring Earth remains within the city walls (or beneath them).

Not all of the Devouring Earth's goals are so immediately practical and worldly. The Hamidon puts equal importance on spreading the message. While The Devouring Earth may wish to see all of humanity gone, they generally don't make this desire common knowledge. Their message is still quite radical: humanity should submit to the will of the Earth and serve nature, not the other way around. Few people would agree with such radical beliefs, but those few can still be useful to The Devouring Earth. The Hamidon does not yet wish to cut all ties with humans, not as long as there are those who can support him in his efforts. These human allies provide valuable information about likely targets and flagrant environmental offenders; information the inhuman creatures would have a hard time getting themselves.

To this end, The Devouring Earth almost always leaves some sort of message or a piece of its manifesto behind whenever they attack a location. Often written in the blood of those that fought them, these messages lay out the many sins against the world that mankind has wrought. The messages are usually specific to the target that the Devouring Earth has attacked. For example, when they assault the offices of a multinational bank, they'll leave scrawled on the walls a statement implicating all of the polluting factories that the bank has provided funding for. The Hamidon is very careful to make sure that there aren't any lies or misleading facts within these horrifying screeds. He believes that the truth is bad enough to frighten anyone. While most people have trouble separating the message from the, for some the message does get through. On a couple of rare occasions, the Devouring Earth's allegations have actually led to formal investigations by the EPA.

Still, for the most part the world's humans have proven less than receptive to the Devouring Earth's propaganda. This rejection comes as no real surprise to Hamidon, who is already pursuing more subtle strategies. The vast numbers of humans it has devoured has given The Hamidon an intimate knowledge of human and animal brain chemistry that is previously unparalleled in scientific history. More than any other being on the planet, it knows how the brain works. Up until recently it has used this knowledge to create the many minions that serve the Devouring Earth. Now it realizes that it can actually create specific chemicals that alter how human brains work.

These chemicals are not simple, brute force drugs like LSD or Prozac. The Hamidon can create and secrete specially designed chemicals that actually create specific thoughts and feeling within the human mind. The Devouring Earth has begun releasing such chemicals in gaseous form at the scenes of their attacks. Anyone who breathes in a sufficient dose of the chemical feels a sense of empathy for the Devouring Earth's cause; they believe for a short while that what theses monsters are doing is actually justified. One of The Devouring Earth's major new initiatives is to release more and more of these chemicals into human society, possibly even contaminating the city's water supply in an effort to really change how people think about the environment and the horrifying monsters that would save it.

7.7.4 Look and Feel

The Devouring Earth never uses any sort of man-made technology, with the lone exception of The Hamidon itself, which is trying to assemble its own lab so he can create more progenitors like it. First and foremost this means that none of the minions wear clothing of any kind. Every one of these things should seem a monster and have no trace of human civilization. The color schemes are also all very natural, earth tones. Browns, dark reds, and other Quake style colors predominate, except for plant-based creatures, which should be a bright, vibrant green.

7.7.5 Behavior Patterns

The Devouring Earth is among the most proactive of all villain groups. They have the fervor of the most zealous religious fanatics and, unlike many groups; the minions have literally been created for to serve their master's will. As a result, the Devouring Earth's minions do not do much lounging about waiting for something to happen. The Hamidon believes in keeping the pressure on both its followers and its enemies, so there is always some sort of Devouring Earth operation taking place somewhere in the city.

Since they live underground for the most part, the Devouring Earth does most of its traveling via tunnels, sewers, and abandoned subways. Never ones to be confined by the creations of man, the Devouring Earth likes to dig their own caves and tunnels whenever possible. The mold that makes the Rock Troops possible can quickly breakdown rock and move it out of the way. A mass of rock mold can dig tunnels as fast as a foot every couple of seconds through solid stone and much faster through soil. The Devouring Earth usually collapses these tunnels once they've used them so that no one else (like the Lost or the city's heroes) can follow them back to their bases.

Devouring Earth minions patrol the tunnels, caves, and sewers beneath Paragon City within a mile of each of their "bases." The Hamidon wants to ensure its own safety at all costs and relies on its soldiers to keep all intruders well away from the chambers where it breeds. Anyone wandering about beneath the city has a good chance of running into a creature from the Devouring Earth. Occasionally hapless spelunking heroes will even chance upon a skirmish between the Devouring Earth and The Lost.

When they do surface, the Devouring Earth's minions have a particular fondness for parks and anywhere else there is open greenery. The Hamidon views parks as prison cells; places where humanity is holding nature hostage. Freeing such places from mankind's tyranny is always a primary goal. The Devouring Earth does not want the people of Paragon City to feel safe in their parks. Of course this could well have a counterproductive effect, as a few neighborhoods have started paving over their parks in order to make them less appealing targets.

The Devouring Earth now plans to start trying to actively take back parts of the city and return them to a more natural state. Thus for the first time, Devouring Earth minions walk openly during the day in some parts of the city, particularly the abandoned Zones where they have a free reign to do as they please. The plant based Devouring Creepers are particularly common sights above ground, since they thrive on the sunlight and don't fare to well beneath the ground.

7.7.6 Allies & Enemies

It's fairly safe to say that the Devouring Earth does not get along with anyone, aside perhaps from a few other radical environmentalist groups. They certainly have no ties to any of the other major or minor villain groups. Indeed, some of them they view as particularly egregious examples of why humanity deserves to be wiped from the face of the earth as quickly as possible.

The Devouring Earth's greatest rival and favorite target amongst the other villains is **The Lost**. Since both groups operate from the cave network beneath Paragon City, they're constantly skirmishing over territory. More importantly, The Lost are an actively polluting force in the world. Their horrible mutations and frequent use of radiation and bio-hazardous material leaves a wake of disease and corruption in their path. Thus Devouring Earth often goes out of its way to attack concentrations of The Lost, while the Lost themselves never fail to strike down a minion of the Devouring Earth when they have the chance.

Crey Industries rivals The Lost for the top spot on the Devouring Earth's hate list. Were it not for the constant presence of The Lost underground, Crey would probably have no rivals at all. Before Hamidon even dreamed of founding the Devouring Earth he was protesting against the many excesses and crimes that Crey Industries had inflicted on the Earth. Thus, like any other major industrial corporation in the world, the Countess' mega corporation has become a prime target. Moreover, as one of the foremost research firms in the world, Crey offers a tempting target for The Hamidon in its quest for advanced technology to continue its experiments.

The **Rikti** present an interesting case. The Hamidon has had limited contact with the aliens, since they tend to teleport away whenever they run into a Devouring Earth contingent. It has only managed to devour a few of the aliens, but this has taught him much. Most importantly, he is the only non-Rikti on Earth who realizes just how close to human the Rikti are. The fact that they come from an alternate Earth offers great potential. Perhaps the Devouring Earth can find nature-loving allies on one of these other worlds. Still, although their technology doesn't pollute as much, the Rikti and their war have done significant environmental damage and the Devouring Earth views them as a dangerous enemy of earth.

Nemesis too is largely a mystery. His technological focus makes him a natural enemy, but since he largely operates on the surface world and in great secrecy, the Devouring Earth has had little contact with him. The **Fifth Column** do have underground bases and are definitely technologists and so are no friends of the Devouring Earth. Thus the villain groups tend to clash whenever they run into each other. The **Circle of Thorns** operate out of Oranbega, a realm the Devouring Earth cannot seem to penetrate. The Hamidon is very curious about their magical abilities, since they far outstrip its own. It hopes to establish contact with magicians and possibly learn their secrets and so refrains from any kind of conflict with them. The **Freakshow** are scientific abominations and deserve death like any other man.

When it comes to hero organizations, the Devouring Earth often finds itself at direct odds with its old enemy the **Dawn Patrol**. Ever since the Gate Smasher tragedy, The Dawn Patrol has made a special point of tracking Devouring Earth activities and trying to destroy the villain group. The Hamidon has come to view its ongoing duel with the group with a bit of amusement, and enjoys doing anything it can to especially aggravate or terrorize its members.

As for **origin types**, the Devouring Earth always has need of new raw materials for The Hamidon. Altered Humans, Mutants, and heroes with Magical Powers make the best grist for the mill, so whenever possible the minions will do their best to defeat and capture such heroes. Of course they also hate those heroes who rely on technology, like gadgeteers and cyberware heroes. They regard the latter in particular as an egregious affront to nature.

7.7.7 Future Developments

The Devouring Earth has big plans for the future. As a fledgling group, it is just getting started. What happens in Paragon City will prove the model for all of the group's future activities.

The group's very nature means that it always makes sense to add more monsters to their ranks. All of these future creatures should involve the natural world in some way, as this is the only kind of material that The Hamidon has to work with. Non-bipedal creatures are the next logical step, particularly a series of monsters based on insects and large four legged predators. The Hamidon could also turn dead humans into zombies using the same mold used to create the Rock Troops. These would probably be walking weapons, loaded up with sacs of exploding acid or poisonous and sent into populated areas to release their deadly weapons. Granted, current real world political conditions might make such creatures inappropriate for this game.

The Hamidon will also soon learn that, despite its tremendous power, it cannot go it alone in the world. It will work harder to reestablish its ties to other, human eco-terrorist groups. The Hamidon will supply them with technology in return for their help spreading the Devouring Earth's influence across the globe. In a similar vein, the various mind-altering chemicals that the Devouring Earth has released into the world will begin to take effect. More and more humans in Paragon City start to empathize with the Devouring Earth, against all possible reason.

The Devouring Earth will also seek safer refuges outside of Paragon City, particularly in wilderness areas and in the Hamidon's homeland of Indonesia. Of course, right now The Hamidon has no way of moving its vast bulk across great distances and so remains stuck in Paragon City. However, it has begun to develop seeds that grow into Devouring Creepers that it can ship overseas to prepared growing locations (with the help of its forthcoming human allies). Likewise, it is very easy to ship of container of mold anywhere in the world, as long as you have a human ally to go to the post office for you. In the near future the Devouring Earth will have established footholds all over the world.

The largest area for expansion will prove underwater. While mankind has certainly done its share to hurt the oceans and waterways, they still remain largely untouched by the hand of man. The Hamidon will begin to experiment with aquatic creatures as well, creating fish and shark men, giant battle squid, ultra-fast growing coral, and other aquatic nightmares with which to ravage humanity. This underwater expansion will invariably lead them into conflict with any other civilizations dwelling beneath the waves.

The ultimate goal (in the short term) is the creation of new progenitors like the Hamidon itself. Once the Devouring Earth gains this ability, and can place the beast makers all over the world, their global reach and impact will become truly terrifying.

7.7.8 Villains

The Devouring Earth is the most unified of villain groups, at least in attitude. Since every single member of the group is in some way created or descended from The Hamidon, they are all fanatically loyal to the group's cause. They could not be any other way, for loyalty and zealousness are literally in their genes. The group does not have a formal hierarchy, other than everyone does what The Hamidon wants. In the field the minions follow their orders to the best of their abilities and submit to the direction of the more intelligent and powerful minions. The Hamidon wisely always links greater intelligence with greater power. The Devouring Earth currently utilizes the following monsters as minions:

7.7.8.1 Devouring Creepers

- *Rank* Minion
- *Description* These horrid perversions of normal flora have become one of the most identifiable monsters in the Banished Pantheon's maniacal menagerie. In addition to their astonishing mobility, they can fire swarms of thorns at their enemies, tearing flesh to shreds in an instant.
- *Levels* 25,26,27,28,29,30 (Bladegrass), 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36 (Razorvine), 37, 38, 39, 40,41,42 (Blackrose), 43,44,45,46,47 (Deathblossom)
- *AI: Default*
- *Powers*

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<i>Pummel</i>	Devouring Earth brawling attacks
<i>Spur</i>	Throws a single Spure at an enemy target.
<i>Thorn_Blast</i>	The Plant can throw a bunch of Thorns in a narrow cone arc and impale a group of foes. Impaled foes may be knocked down.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Plant and Mushrooms are resistant to smashing damage, but vulnerable to lethal damage.

Background: Wanting representation from each of the different parts of nature and a long time lover of plants, The Hamidon set his mind to creating a vegetable creature that could help wreak vengeance for all the vegetation that humanity has used and abused over the millennia. The Devouring Creepers were the result of its efforts. Based upon the most horrific of plants, the Venus Flytrap, the Creepers have all the advantages of both plant and animal and have become the scourge of parks and wooded areas throughout the city.

The Creeper's torso is a mass of bright green vines, studded with sharp thorns and saw toothed leaves. The body is quite lithe, appearing generally humanoid but without the defining musculature of human bodies. The legs are two thick columns of vines, ending in a splay of roots that can sink down into earth or flesh to draw up nutrients into the body. The arms are single, thick vines, ending in "hands" that are splays of prehensile roots and vines, lined with thorns. Instead of a head it has a flytrap like pod, with sharp thorns for teeth. It has no eyes, but is capable of sensing any movement or temperature changes in its vicinity.

Devouring Creepers continue to grow for their entire lifespan, and there is theoretically no limit to their size. Most are the size of a normal human, but some of the tougher ones are the size of gargantuan males. There are even a few that have grown to much larger heights. These are few and far between however, because Creepers reproduce by cutting away a section of their own body which then grows into a completely new being. Thus, like the Beasts of Vengeance, the Devouring Creepers are capable of self-replicating. The only limiting factor on this reproductive cycle is that young Creepers need sunlight and good soil to grow, and must be rooted to the ground for the first few days of their existence. It is not uncommon to find heavily guarded Creeper farms in secluded areas of the city, where dozens of fledgling killer plants sit in neat rows, waiting for maturity.

7.7.8.2 Herder

- *Rank* Lieutenant
- *Description* The older, more mature plant creatures serve as leaders for their deadly cousins. They're stronger, tougher, and more deadly than the lesser plant creatures and also have the ability to summon forth Swarms to further trouble their enemies.
- *Levels* 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34
- *AI:* Herders occasionally plant "trees of life" which is an area of effect buff to enemy regeneration
- *Powers*

<i>Pummel</i>	Devouring Earth brawling attacks
<i>Spur</i>	Throws a single Spure at an enemy target.
<i>Thorn_Blast</i>	The Plant can throw a bunch of Thorns in a narrow cone arc and impale a group of foes. Impaled foes may be knocked down.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Plant and Mushrooms are resistant to smashing damage, but vulnerable to lethal damage.
<i>Summon_Swarm</i>	All Devoured can summon The Swarm
<i>Tree_of_Life</i>	Devoured Tree Beasts can plant a Tree of Life

7.7.8.2.1 Tree of Life

- *Rank* Pet
- *Levels* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50
- *AI*: None; its stationary and its power is automatic
- *Powers*:

<i>Tree</i>	Increase regeneration rate of all nearby allies.
<i>Resistance</i>	Tree of Life cannot move.

7.7.8.3 Mushroom Men

- *Rank* Minion
- *Description* Fungus run amok is probably the best way to describe these loathsome creatures. Like their non-animate ancestors, mushroom men prefer dark, dank places. In combat they can release clouds of deadly spores that choke and disable nearby enemies.
- *Levels* 26,27,28,29,30 (Fungoid), 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 (Deathspore), 36, 37, 38, 39, 40,41 (Deathcap)
- *AI*: Default
- *Powers*

<i>Pummel</i>	Devouring Earth brawling attacks
<i>Spore_Burst</i>	Expels a burst of concentrated spores around the Mushroom that chokes and Holds all nearby foes.
<i>Spores</i>	Hurls a Spore pack that explodes and can put to Sleep everyone in the affected area.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Plant and Mushrooms are resistant to smashing damage, but vulnerable to lethal damage.

7.7.8.4 Fungoid

- *Rank* Lieutenant
- *Description* These horrid parodies of men serve as the leaders amongst the fungi armies of the Devouring Earth. Their pummeling attack can shatter bones while their spore clouds disable their victims. Meanwhile, summoned Swarms hold other foes at bay.
- *SpawnLimit* 2
- *Levels* 26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41
- *AI* Plants a Fungus that provides an AOE buff to mez type effects.
- *Powers*

<i>Pummel</i>	Devouring Earth brawling attacks
<i>Spore_Burst</i>	Expels a burst of concentrated spores around the Mushroom that chokes and Holds all nearby foes.
<i>Spores</i>	Hurls a Spore pack that explodes and can put to Sleep everyone in the affected area.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Plant and Mushrooms are resistant to smashing damage, but vulnerable to lethal damage.
<i>Summon_Swarm</i>	All Devoured can summon The Swarm
<i>Swamp_Fungi</i>	Devoured Mushroom Beasts can plant a Swamp Fungi.

7.7.8.4.1 *Fungi*

- *Rank* Pet
- *Description* The Fungus grants Devouring Earth creatures resistance to knockdown, sleep, disorient and stun.
- *Levels* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50
- *AI*: None; the Fungi do not move and their power is automatic
- *Powers*

<i>Fungi</i>	Grants protection to Sleep, Disorient, Hold, Immobilize, Fear, Confuse and Taunt to all friends.
<i>Resistance</i>	Fungi cannot move.

7.7.8.5 Rock Men

- *Rank* Minion
- *Description* Made from an assemblage of rocks that are then somehow given form and consciousness by the Devouring Earth's magic, the Rock Troops are tough, resilient creatures who can either pound their opponents in close combat or hurl rocks from a distance depending on the circumstances.
- *Levels* 27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42 (Bedrock), 43,44,45,46,47,48,49 (Boulder)
- *AI* Default
- *Powers*

<i>Pummel</i>	Devouring Earth brawling attacks
<i>Hurl_Boulder</i>	The Rock can rip a Boulder out of the ground and Hurl it a moderate distance. The Hurlled Boulder deals medium damage and can Knockback foes.
<i>Rubble</i>	When the Rockbeast falls, he crumbles and may form into several smaller versions of himself.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Rock Beasts are resistant to lethal damage, but are somewhat vulnerable to smashing damage.

Background: The Rock Troops are the basic soldiers of the Devouring Earth, capable of carrying out simple instructions and taking a massive amount of damage before they finally fall in combat. They have a basic, humanoid body made up of numerous small to medium sized stones and rocks. They can vary quite a bit in color and composition, depending on the source material that was available when they first came together. The main unifying feature is that they are joined together by a glowing green or blue mold that cements the various pieces together. The Rock Troops are not bulky, ponderous stone golems. They actually have a somewhat lithe appearance, with sleek, sharp angles. Rock troops are able to collapse themselves down into just a pile of rocks, hiding their true nature. Then, at a moment's notice, they can assume their true form and spring into action.

The body and legs tend to be made of a fewer, larger pieces of rock, with little mold showing in the joins. For areas that need more articulation, like the hands and head and neck, there are numerous small stones suspended within the glowing mold. The razor sharp claws most Rock Troops have for hands consist of dozens of individual pieces. The Rock Troops do not have a solid piece of stone for a head. Rather they have scores of smaller stones shaped into a jack-o-lantern like visage, with a wide circular mouth full of grinning stone teeth. They also usually leave empty eye sockets, with just the glowing mold burning brightly in the empty holes. Most Rock Troops have numerous stone spikes jutting forth from their bodies to help them tear their foes to pieces.

In combat the Rock Troops move with a speed and grace equivalent to a normal human. For the most part they engage in hand to hand combat. Sometimes they use crude rock weapons, like clubs or primitive spears. They also carry a supply of small, sharp stones that they can hurl at opponents quite effectively. The moss colony usually coats the stones with a part of their own substance, making the stones glow green as they fly through the air. This effect is more than just for looks. The moss on these stones acts as a corrosive acid, causing extra damage to anyone unlucky enough to be struck by one.

7.7.8.6 Rock Men Leader

- *Rank* Lieutenant
- *Description* The leaders of the Rock Troops are tougher, smarter, and better equipped to take on whatever foes the Devouring Earth sets them against. In addition to the rock wielding abilities of their subordinates, they can also summon forth a deadly Swarm to overwhelm their enemies.
- *AI* Default
- *Levels* 46,47,48 (Sentry), 49,50 (Granite)

<i>Pummel</i>	Devouring Earth brawling attacks
<i>Hurl_Boulder</i>	The Rock can rip a Boulder out of the ground and Hurl it a moderate distance. The Hurling Boulder deals medium damage and can Knockback foes.
<i>Rubble</i>	When the Rockbeast falls, he crumbles and may form into several smaller versions of himself that attack a hero.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Rock Beasts are resistant to lethal damage, but are somewhat vulnerable to smashing damage.
<i>Cairn</i>	Devoured Rock Beasts can plant a Cairn.

7.7.8.6.1 Rubble

- *Rank* Small
- *Description* Large Rocks beasts might fall, but from rubble arises smaller creatures to vex heroes!
- *AI* Default
- *Levels* 27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50

7.7.8.6.2 Cairn

- *Rank* Pet
- *Description* The tiny cairn helps Devouring Earth in a small area resist damage.
- *Levels* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50
- *AI* None; the Cairn automatically emits a buff so that foes can resist damage better
- *Powers*

<i>Cairn</i>	All nearby allies resist damage.
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<i>Resistance</i>	Cairin cannot move.
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7.7.8.7 Geode

- Rank Minion
- Description The Devouring Earth grows these crystalline warriors in special caves deep beneath the Earth before unleashing them on the unsuspecting city above. While their blasts of shards can cut deeply into a target's flesh and bone and energy attacks have diminished effect, the crystal forms are susceptible to smashing attacks.
- Levels 31,32,33,34,35
- *AI* Default
- Powers

<i>Pummel</i>	Devouring Earth brawling attacks
<i>Crystal_Shards</i>	The Crystal Beast can fling Crystal Shards dealing smashing and lethal damage.
<i>Shatter</i>	When the Crystalbeast falls, he shatters and may form into several smaller versions of himself that attack heroes.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Crystal Beasts are resistant to energy and negative energy damage, but are very vulnerable to smashing damage.

7.7.8.7.1 Geode Shard

- Rank Small
- Description Even shards taken from a Crystal creature have life.
- Levels 31,32,33,34,35
- *AI* Default
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	Small Devouring Earth fragments pack a mighty punch for their size.
<i>Crystal_Shards</i>	The Crystal Beast can fling Crystal Shards dealing smashing and lethal damage.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Crystal Beasts are resistant to energy and negative energy damage, but are very vulnerable to smashing damage.

7.7.8.8 Quartz

- Rank Minion
- Description The Devouring Earth grows these crystalline warriors in special caves deep beneath the Earth before unleashing them on the unsuspecting city above. While their blasts of shards can cut deeply into a target's flesh and bone and energy attacks have diminished effect, the crystal forms are susceptible to smashing attacks.
- Levels 36,37,38,39,40
- *AI* Default
- Powers

<i>Pummel</i>	Devouring Earth brawling attacks
<i>Crystal_Shards</i>	The Crystal Beast can fling Crystal Shards dealing smashing and lethal damage.
<i>Shatter</i>	When the Crystalbeast falls, he shatters and may form into several smaller versions of himself that attack heroes.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Crystal Beasts are resistant to energy and negative energy damage, but are very vulnerable to smashing damage.

7.7.8.8.1 Quartz Shard

- Rank Small
- Description Even shards taken from a Crystal creature have life.
- Levels 36,37,38,39,40
- AI Default
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	Small Devouring Earth fragments pack a mighty punch for their size.
<i>Crystal_Shards</i>	The Crystal Beast can fling Crystal Shards dealing smashing and lethal damage.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Crystal Beasts are resistant to energy and negative energy damage, but are very vulnerable to smashing damage.

7.7.8.9 Sardonyx

- Rank Minion
- Description The Devouring Earth grows these crystalline warriors in special caves deep beneath the Earth before unleashing them on the unsuspecting city above. While their blasts of shards can cut deeply into a target's flesh and bone and energy attacks have diminished effect, the crystal forms are susceptible to smashing attacks.
- Levels 41,42,43,44,45,46
- AI Default
- Powers

<i>Pummel</i>	Devouring Earth brawling attacks
<i>Crystal_Shards</i>	The Crystal Beast can fling Crystal Shards dealing smashing and lethal damage.
<i>Shatter</i>	When the Crystalbeast falls, he shatters and may form into several smaller versions of himself that attack heroes.\.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Crystal Beasts are resistant to energy and negative energy damage, but are very vulnerable to smashing damage.

7.7.8.9.1 Sardonyx Shard

- Rank Small
- Description Even shards taken from a Crystal creature have life.
- Levels 41,42,43,44,45,46
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	Small Devouring Earth fragments pack a mighty punch for their size.
<i>Crystal_Shards</i>	The Crystal Beast can fling Crystal Shards dealing smashing and lethal damage.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Crystal Beasts are resistant to energy and negative energy damage, but are very vulnerable to smashing damage.

7.7.8.10 Guardian

- Rank Lieutenant

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- **Description** These Crystal captains command their sparkling soldiers in combat, chattering amongst one another with voices of broken glass. In combat they rain down shards of razor sharp crystal and pummel their opponents mercilessly, although they still fear smashing attacks, just like their followers.
- **Levels** 35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45
- **AI** The Guardian occasionally plants a Quartz, that provides an automatic buff to villains' accuracy.
- **Powers**

<i>Pummel</i>	Devouring Earth brawling attacks
<i>Crystal_Shards</i>	The Crystal Beast can fling Crystal Shards dealing smashing and lethal damage.
<i>Shatter</i>	When the Crystalbeast falls, he shatters and may form into several smaller versions of himself that attack heroes.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Crystal Beasts are resistant to energy and negative energy damage, but are very vulnerable to smashing damage.
<i>Quartz</i>	Devoured Crystal Beasts can plant a Quartz.

7.7.8.10.1Guardian Shard

- **Class** Minion_Small
- **Rank** Small
- **Description** Even shards taken from a Crystal creature have life.
- **Levels** 35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45
- **AI**
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	Small Devouring Earth fragments pack a mighty punch for their size.
<i>Crystal_Shards</i>	The Crystal Beast can fling Crystal Shards dealing smashing and lethal damage.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Crystal Beasts are resistant to energy and negative energy damage, but are very vulnerable to smashing damage.

7.7.8.10.2Quartz

- **Rank** Pet
- **Description** The small quartz shrine boosts the accuracy of all Devouring Earth attacks.
- **Levels** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50
- **AI** Default
- **Powers:**

<i>Quartz</i>	Increase accuracy of all nearby allies.
<i>Resistance</i>	Quartz cannot move.

7.7.8.11 The Swarm

- **Rank** Small
- **Levels** 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49
- **AI** Default
- **Powers**

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<i>Sting</i>	Poison from the Swarm's Sting can slow a target. Repeated stings can have a paralyzing effect.
<i>Swarm</i>	Poison from the Swarm's Sting can slow a target. Repeated stings can have a paralyzing effect.
<i>Fly</i>	Swarm can Fly!
<i>Resistance</i>	The swarm are very resistant to Smashing and Lethal Damage, vulnerable to fire, energy and negative energy damage.

7.7.8.12 Lesser Devoured

- Rank Boss
- Description The Devoured were once normal human beings, but they have since been transformed into horrifying creatures - their brains perverted into following the radical environmental beliefs of the Devouring Earth. In combat they show their hatred for the world of men by spitting poison at their foes.
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39
- *AI* Default
- Powers

<i>Pummel</i>	Devouring Earth claw attacks
<i>Spit</i>	Poison spray.
<i>Resistance</i>	Lesser Devoured are resistant to Knockback effects as well as Smashing and Energy Damage.
<i>Summon_Swarm</i>	All Devoured can summon The Swarm

Background: The lesser devoured represent normal human beings that have been consumed and transformed by The Hamidon. Instead of using the precious genetic material of heroes to empower these creatures, The Hamidon uses normal human and animal attributes to enhance his creations. It takes roughly six hours to produce one Lesser Devoured, and at its current side the founder of the Devouring Earth can process up to a dozen Lesser and Greater devoured at any one time. Usually eleven of those twelve creatures turn out to be of the Lesser Devoured.

The Lesser Devoured are far less powerful than their Greater brethren, but they still pose a significant threat. All Lesser Devoured have the same general appearance. More than one hero has described them as a wax sculpture melted in hell's furnace. The human skin has become tough and leathery, and hangs in folds on the creature's body. The head and neck have fused into a single fleshy protuberance that is one with the monster's massive shoulders. The head still has a vaguely human aspect to it, with patches of hair, beady black eyes, and melted looking skin. The mouth however resembles the maw of a Greater Devoured: a circular jaw structure with a row of razor sharp black teeth. The creatures arms are elongated and flabby looking, almost like tentacles. They end in human looking hands, but the center of each palm has a vicious squid like beak that is strong enough to tear through metal. The legs are really just thick columns of drooping flesh, resembling more an elephant's foot than a human limb.

These soldiers of the Devouring Earth still retain much of their original intelligence, and are fully capable of using tools and technology when the needs arise. Of course the Devouring Earth eschews such man made contrivances, but that doesn't stop the Lesser Devoured from picking up a rough-hewn hand weapon or from lobbing stones at their enemies. Although they have no super powers of their own besides their immense strength and toughness, they do have a naturally regeneration ability that makes them quite difficult to kill completely.

7.7.8.13 Greater Devoured

- Rank Boss
- Description The ultimate eco-warriors, the Greater Devoured incorporate the biomass of fallen heroes into their monstrous forms. They rend foes with their slashing talons, spitting poison on those they can't reach. A Greater Devoured is a formidable foe, resistant to most kinds of attacks.
- Levels 40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49
- AI Default
- Powers:

<i>Pummel</i>	Devouring Earth claw attacks
<i>Spit</i>	Poision spray.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devoured are resistant to Disorient, Immobilize, Hold, Knockback, effects as well as Smashing and Energy Damage. They are vulnerable to Negative Energy.
<i>Summon_Swarm</i>	All Devoured can summon The Swarm

Background: These are former super powered heroes that The Hamidon has twisted for his own ends. They are in no way recognizable as their former selves. After months of consuming heroes and assimilating their abilities, The Hamidon has settled on a number of formulas for creating the ideal Greater Devoured for his purposes. The Greater Devoured are the most powerful threats in the Devouring Earth's Arsenal.

All of the Greater Devoured look pretty much the same, with possible variations in color or details depending upon when The Hamidon created them. They have tough, leathery skin that is usually a shade of dark green or brown. Their torso is encased in a tough, bony chitin that protects their vital points from damage. This chitin looks almost gothic in appearance, with sharp edges and acute angles. Their arms are longer than would seem proportionate, and end in three sharp talons. Their heads are the most terrifying aspect of all, with nothing even resembling human features. Their long, sinuous necks remind one of a lamprey, especially since the main component of their faces is a wide, perfectly circular mouth rimmed with sharp, black teeth. Within this gaping maw is a tongue that can whip out up to two meters and pull enemies into the creature's grasp.

Fearsome enough just based on their physical characteristics, it's the super powers that makes the Greater Devoured so dangerous. The Greater Devoured can theoretically possess any power that a hero eaten by The Hamidon has eaten. In practice each hero only provides enough material for a few Greater Devoured, so the monstrous progenitor needs a constant supply of raw material for its creations. Most Greater Devoured possess super strength and body armor, and many of them possess regeneration as well (a trait found in some animals that The Hamidon takes full advantage of). It is fairly common to find Greater Devoured with powers like Energy Blast or Power Punch. Unlike many of the other minions of the Devouring Earth, the Greater Devoured are invariably quite intelligent and so know how to take full advantage of more subtle powers like Invisibility and Psionics. The Greater Devoured never use man made technology of any sort, although occasionally they do collect such items to bring back to The Hamidon as prizes.

7.7.8.14 Jurassik

- Rank BigMonster
- Description The giant monster was dubbed Jurassik by a hero some time ago, and the name has stuck (though unfortunately the hero has long since disappeared). It appears that Jurassik has been mutated by the many pollutants and chemicals in Crey's Folly. Now, Jurassik is a creature of pure violence.
- Levels 40
- AI Default

- Powers

<i>Hurl_Boulder</i>	The Rock can rip a Boulder out of the ground and Hurl it a moderate distance. The Hurlled Boulder deals medium damage and can Knockback foes.
<i>Jurassik_Club</i>	Jurassik wields a massive club twisted from steel girders, automobiles and other debris.
<i>Fault</i>	The Jurassik cracks the very earth and thrusts forth a column of rock that can toss foes into the air and Disorient them. Fault is a short ranged attack in a small area that deal minimal damage, but leaves all affected targets Disoriented for quite a while.
<i>Jurassik_Rubble</i>	When Jurassik falls, he crumbles and may form into several smaller versions of himself.
<i>Resistance</i>	Jurassik is resistant to Knockback, Disorient, Immobilize, Hold Sleep, Confuse, Fear, Teleport and Lethal Damage.

7.7.8.14.1 Jurassik Rubble

- Rank Minion
- Description Jurassik has fallen, but from the rubble has arisen a smaller creature to vex heroes!
- Levels 40
- AI Default
- Powers

<i>Pummel</i>	Devouring Earth brawling attacks
<i>Hurl_Boulder</i>	The Rock can rip a Boulder out of the ground and Hurl it a moderate distance. The Hurlled Boulder deals medium damage and can Knockback foes.
<i>Rubble</i>	When the Rockbeast falls, he crumbles and may form into several smaller versions of himself.
<i>Resistance</i>	Devouring Earth Rock Beasts are resistant to lethal damage, but are somewhat vulnerable to smashing damage.

7.7.9 Future Villains

7.7.9.1 Amoeba Men

One of the simplest and most beautiful creatures in the world, from the monstrous Hamidon's point of view, is the amoeba. Single celled, ultimately efficient, and capable of self-replication, they represent nature at its most elegant. What better then, than to turn the amoeba into one of the Devouring Earth's most potent, if not elegant killers. Like so many of the other minions, Amoeba Men are really conglomerations of many other, smaller creatures, melded together into a more effective fighting form. The simple form of the amoeba allows The Hamidon a wonderfully pliable canvas upon which to work its magic. By first enlarging the single celled creatures to about the size of a human hand and then connecting them together into a single hive mind, The Hamidon has created an intelligent being that is quite flexible and able to heal itself quickly when damaged.

The Amoeba Men are not much to look at. They basically resemble a mass of dripping, semi-opaque gel that has been formed into the vague outline of a human and then allowed to melt in the sun. In form they actually resemble the Lesser Devoured quite a bit, although their “skin” is much simpler. Like many other minions, they do not have true feet, but rather thick columns for legs that flare out into circular pads. Their flabby arms end in gelatin hands that aren’t much good for anything but taking an ineffective swipe at enemies. Their heads are faceless masses that rise up from the shoulders, with no real neck to speak of. They have no eyes, but do have sickening mouths full of stringy membranes through which they take in nutrients from the atmosphere, much as a whale takes in plankton through baleen.

The Amoeba Men are not particularly strong or tough, but they are hard to kill since their self-replicating individual cells can quickly repair damage, giving them a highly effective regeneration power. But the Amoeba Men are not designed for rending and tearing in close combat. Instead The Hamidon has given them highly enlarged and extremely modified mitochondria that are networked together throughout the body. As a result, the Amoeba Men can fire powerful blasts of electrical energy over long distances. They are quite accurate with these attacks, and use them not just to kill their enemies, but also to damage man-made electrical systems. When they are forced into a fight at close range, the Amoeba Men can simply charge their entire bodies, electrocuting anyone who comes near them. Thus the Amoeba Men usually operate in a support role along with other minions, lending their electrical attacks to the fray, but keeping a distance if they can. Although they can heal damage through self-replication, they’re actually far too complicated to reproduce on their own. Only The Hamidon can create more Amoeba Men, although it takes much less time than manufacturing a Devoured.

7.7.9.2 Beasts of Vengeance

The Beasts of Vengeance are second-generation monsters from the perverted transformation sacs of The Hamidon. Unlike the more powerful Devoured, the Beasts of Vengeance are truly a new species, capable of sexual reproduction and thus not dependant upon the Devouring Earth’s progenitor to increase their numbers. This means that they can breed and grow in numbers with ease, but it also means that each one does not have the personal infusion of power and strength that The Hamidon can convey to those it births directly.

The original raw materials for the Beasts came from dogs and cats for the most part, along with a few other animals captured from zoos. The result is a bipedal creature that is decidedly a mammalian beast, but who’s lineage is far from clear. The body is covered with short-cropped fur, usually some shade of black or brown, although other colors like white and gray do occur from time to time. The torso is long and sleek and very muscular and has a short, dog like tail. The legs resemble a human’s, although they too are covered with fur and are quite muscular. The arms are heavily muscled and end in human like hands that include opposable thumbs that allow the beasts to use weapons and tools. The creature’s head resembles something like a cross between a wolf and a tiger. It has the wolf like shape to the skull and ears, but its face is somewhat flat, almost human. It has a huge mouth full of sharp teeth that is accented by two long incisors, not unlike a saber tooth tiger.

The Beasts of Vengeance are quite deadly in and of themselves. The Hamidon infused them with an instinctual knowledge of martial arts, gathered from the brains and nervous tissue of a top ranked martial arts school that it devoured. These skills are “hard wired” into the Beasts’ brains, so that they are born with the knowledge of trained warriors. They also have a highly accelerated growth cycle that allows them to become full-grown within just a few months (assuming they have plenty of fresh meat to feed upon during this time period). The Beasts can also use weapons and are not above doing so. They use a variety of simple weapons they manufacture themselves, mostly from wood and stone. They are particularly fond of bows, from which they fire poison tipped arrows and projectiles that explode with a burst of acid.

7.7.9.3 Serpent Swarms

The Hamidon has a hard time changing the actual size of things. While it can radically alter a creature's appearance and abilities, it cannot add mass to its creations. As with the sentient mold that makes up the Rock Troops, The Hamidon can get quite creative when it wants to take advantage of a particular animal's abilities. Before his transformation, Hamidon had been quite a reptile enthusiast and had a number of pet snakes. He thought the serpents quite beautiful and was impressed with their survival abilities. Unfortunately, in Paragon City and environs, The Hamidon does not have access to large numbers of giant pythons or anacondas that might make worthy foes for the city's heroes. But, the thing realized, if you put enough small things together, you can mimic the effectiveness of one big thing.

And so were born the Serpent Swarms. These swarms are simply a mass of snakes that have been telepathically and physically melded together into a single, larger than man-sized creature. The average Serpent Swarm stands over seven feet tall and is quite gargantuan in build. The entire scaled body looks as if it has been woven together out of bands of scaled rope – in fact it is the bodies of hundreds of snakes. Each snake acts as a powerful muscle, enhanced by The Hamidon's powers to make the beast colony exceptionally strong. The beast's ropey arms end in groups of five snake heads, capable of both acting as fingers and sinking their poisoned fangs into anything within reach. The feet as column like masses of tails, woven tightly together to form a kind of hoof. The swarms head is another mass of snake heads, mimicking the human form with a head where each eye should be, a small mouth where the nose would be and an enlarged, gaping maws with giant, venomous teeth.

Serpent Swarms have a number of natural weapons at their disposal, and thus never need to use weapons of any kind. At long range the creatures can spit poison long distances from the tips of their "fingers." This highly corrosive toxin need only touch exposed skin to be effective and will even damage non-organic material. The Serpent Swarm can also detach a part of itself and hurl it at an opponent, creating a tangled mass of snakes that can entangle an opponent. They often do this before rushing in to use their deadly melee attacks, principally their deadly envenomed bites from both their head and their hands. Serpent Swarms are certainly smarter than normal snakes but are not quite human in their intelligence level. They follow orders well and serve as good soldiers for the Devouring Earth, but need strong leaders to work effectively in any role besides the simple slaughter of enemies.

7.7.10 Missions and Story Arcs

Stature Level 5 Missions	
SL5_DE_Mission1	Prevent DE from contaminating food for school lunch program
SL5_DE_Mission2	Prevent DE bombs from diverting river and drowning Paragon City
SL5_DE_Compound1	Save congressman from DE, learn that creatures were being controlled by the 5 th Column.
SL5_DE_Errand1	General killtask
SL5_DE_Errand2	General killtask
SL5_DE_Errand3	Killtask to protect Terra Volta Reactor

Level 5 Story Arc: An Unnatural Order

The DE's technology raids have to be stopped. It's gotten so bad, they're even taking scientists! You rescued most of them, but learned that one was in league with the DE. He was helping them produce a

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virulent mutagen, the Will of the Earth. You defeat the evil doctor, now a hideous DE creature, and recover the mutagen.

Stature Level 6 Missions

SL6_DevouringEarth_Mission1	Try to save missing hero. Turns out he was devoured!
SL6_DevouringEarth_Mission2	Stop DE from poisoning cosmetics line
SL6_DevouringEarth_Mission3	Stop conflict between Freaks and DE. Find and confiscate enzyme pills that increase metabolic rate.
SL6_DevouringEarth_Compound1	Stop a horde of DE who have a new mutation that allows them to release mutagenic spores
SL6_DevouringEarth_Compound2	Save an ambassador from an alternate dimension who was brought here by Portal Corp. The DE wanted information about her home planet, so they could invade.
SL6_DevouringEarth_Errand1	General killtask
SL6_DevouringEarth_Errand2	General killtask
SL6_DevouringEarth_Errand3	General killtask

Level 6 Story Arc: The Unity Plague

It seems the DE have a new mutagenic plan, and it's already in the works. 90% of the city has been infected; all they have to do is release the catalyst, and it's good-bye civilization, hello big, ugly tentacles! Engineer a cure, then distribute it about town. The DE develop a counter agent, but you prevent them from getting it into the water supply.

Stature Level 7 Missions

SL7_DevouringE_Mission1	Find out why other heroes are espousing sympathy for the DE. Turns out the DE have engineered pouches of gas that can directly affect the brain. REVEALED: The DE has mind-altering organic tech
SL7_DevouringE_Mission2	Stop DE "bacterial bombs" from leveling a building
SL7_DevouringE_Mission3	Nemesis is attacking a sports drink company's warehouse. You go, and find Nemesis engaged in a battle with the DE. It turns out the DE was working with a human eco-terrorist group to sell mutagenic drinks. REVEALED: The DE will sometimes work with eco-terrorists
SL7_DevouringE_Mission4	Administer meds to stockbrokers infected with DE mutagenic gas. Find a section of the DE manifesto

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	REVEALED: DE manifesto mentioned. Contact underscores that there's an intelligent mind organizing all these creatures.
SL7_DevouringE_Compound1	<p>Save some hostages and find a packet of cancerous issue. Harmless, unless the DE has a delivery system. Oh, wait. It turns out their first attack was to draw you away from their real target, a pharmaceutical company. If you don't retrieve the equipment they stole, it's cancer for Paragon City.</p> <p>REVEALED: The DE executes brutal raids solely for the purpose of distraction</p>
SL7_DevouringE_Compound2	Save a bunch of brainiacs who were kidnapped by the DE, in the hopes that they could be altered into new progenitors, like Hamidon
SL7_DevouringE_Errand1	Killtask to save park from being paved over (too attractive to DE)
SL7_DevouringE_Errand2	Killtask to keep DE away from the Paragon City Water Works
SL7_DevouringE_Errand3	General killtask

Level 7 Story Arc: The Terra Conspiracy

The DE are working with eco-terrorists again, this time to steal some drugs. You follow the trail, and learn that the DE have betrayed their two-legged friends; they've abducted one of the eco-terrorists, Tanya Tyler. You search for her, and learn that Hamidon appears to be in love with this woman. When you find her, she discloses the whole story of how Hamidon became what he is. They used to date. Now he's after her to make her a DE matriarch – a monster that can breed! You try valiantly, but Hamidon's evil plan succeeds, and you have no choice but to track down Tanya and defeat her.

REVEALED: Hamidon was once a man but is now a monster. He became a monster through the use of a mutagenic mold, the Will of the Earth.

7.8 Fifth Column

7.8.1 History

The Fifth Column came together under that code name only in 1939, but its principal members had operated together for some time before that, starting with the group's infamous leader, Requiem. Born in 1900 as Ridolfo Uzzano, Requiem grew up in the small independent Republic of San Marino, nestled in Northern Italy. From an early age Ridolfo was destined for a life in the church. His parents dreamed of their son becoming a bishop or even a cardinal one day, thus bringing long missing honor and respect to their family. Ridolfo went along with these plans readily enough. The Church fascinated him from an early age, especially the more mystical and even occult aspects of theology. He studied hard and seemed pious enough. Then the First World War came when he was just 14. Like so many others of his generation, the unparalleled death and destruction of that war shook him to his core. Unlike many others, he liked the feeling.

Ridolfo stayed with his church studies but his heart was no longer in it. More and more he looked back to the age of an Imperial Church, when the pope ruled with an iron fist and directly or indirectly commanded armies. The power and respect accorded a priest still attracted him, but the religion did not. In 1922, just as he was preparing to be ordained for the priesthood, he found a new religion: fascism. Fascism was on the rise all over Italy at that time, and the independent nation of San Marino was not immune to its allures. Ridolfo became a leading member of the young party, urging his fellow citizens to join with the greater cause for Italian prosperity. Fascism's roots did not sink deep in San Marino, so Ridolfo and his friend called upon Mussolini and the Italian Fascist Party to help bring/force the city into the fold. Ridolfo soon found his homeland too small for his ambitions, and having earned Il Duce's respect, asked to serve the dictator directly.

Ridolfo served as a minor fascist functionary in Rome for several months, often disregarded and disrespected by his older, Italian comrades. Chafing under his menial duties, Ridolfo sought to put his religious training to use in the pursuit of his ambition. He convinced Mussolini to pressure the Pope into giving him access to the Vatican Archives. In return he promised to find ancient Roman and Papal doctrines that would help further cement Mussolini's claim to ultimate authority and win the hearts and minds of his people. With access to the great libraries and archives of Rome and the Vatican, Ridolfo began to unearth dread secrets and mystic texts that few others knew even existed.

All of his scheming and research had a singular goal: Ridolfo wanted to find something, anything, that would set him apart from the herd. Something that would make him special, give him power over others. At first he thought he might find what he sought amongst the various forbidden tomes on black magic and witchcraft that the Vatican kept locked away, but Ridolfo had no interest in selling his soul to demons or any of the other unpredictable forces of hell. One story did strike Ridolfo's eye – an apocryphal tale of the last Roman Emperor in the west, Romulus Augustulus. According to this tale, in 476 the emperor was spirited away by a secret society in Vienna known as the Path of The Dark. There they preserved his bloodline and his power through some sort of dark magic. Ridolfo knew that this was just the kind of propaganda Mussolini was looking for – if he could find someone directly descended from the last Roman Emperor and manipulate them into ceding power to Il Duce, it would be a nice symbolic gesture. Of course it was these stories of dark magic that interested him most.

Ridolfo went to Ravenna and began his search for signs of the Path of the Dark. He had very little luck at first. There was simply no indication in any historical records that such a group had ever existed. But Ridolfo's instincts told him that the people here were hiding something, especially the older residents of Ravenna's most ancient neighborhoods. Unable to get them to talk, he decided to use his position in the Fascist party to force some answers out of them. Under threat of torture and death one old woman finally broke, revealing that the Path still existed and thrived beneath an ancient chapel.

Ridolfo found the chapel and the hidden stairway beneath the altar. He descended warily into darkness so deep that it swallowed up his lantern's light without illuminating anything. Ridolfo went down into that darkness and did not return for three months. His fellow fascists reported him dead, and the old folks he'd bullied sighed with relief. They thought that he's gotten what he deserved. In fact, Ridolfo was very much alive, although he soon took on a new kind of life that few could possibly understand. There he encountered a race of primordial beings composed of pure darkness called the Nicti. In his last, impotent days as emperor, Romulus Augustulus had stumbled upon these beings and offered them his life in exchange for protection. He ceded them dominion over the city of Ravenna and had a series of special vaults and hidden, underground fortresses created for their use. He also founded a secret society of humans devoted to worshiping the Nicti, known as the Path of the Dark. In return, they spirited him away when Odoacer descended on Rome.

The Nicti are beings of pure darkness who existed before the world was even created, and any contact with direct sunlight causes them immense agony – although it does not kill them outright. They can however infuse a human body (or any living creature for that matter) with their own dark energy. The result is a hybrid being that can walk in light but still wield the fantastic darkness control powers that every Nicti possesses. The fusion of life and dark is painful and often fatal for the human recipient, so few humans are brave enough to try it. Romulus Augustulus was one. Ridolfo Uzzano was another. The fusion gives the human immortality, something Augustulus had used to full advantage. As leader of the Path of the Dark he had secured his rule over Ravenna, controlling it from beneath and living a life of luxury in the darkness of his hidden caverns. Ridolfo's appearance was like a breath of fresh air – he had the ambition and drive that Augustulus had lacked for 1500 years. He made the young man swear allegiance to him and indoctrinated him into the Path of the Dark. He gave him great power and sent him forth into the world to spread the darkness. His only duty was to seek out those strong enough to undergo fusion with a Nicti and send them to Ravenna. Otherwise, he was free to follow the path his ambitions set for him.

The transformation left Ridolfo with skin that actually absorbed light and a host of super powers. Having been reborn he took on a new name inspired by his church upbringing – Requiem. He literally flew to Rome and offered his services to Mussolini. His timing could not have been better. Under other circumstances the dictator might have fled in terror before such an apparition, but at that moment Fascist Rome was being "terrorized" by some mysterious person calling himself the Freedom Fighter. The police and army were powerless to stop this mystery man, who seemed to have miraculous powers. The Freedom Fighter was beginning to rouse popular support against the fledgling fascist government, not to mention his constant attacks on party officials and military leaders. Mussolini made a deal with Requiem – take care of the Freedom Fighter and he would have a place in the new government and all the support he could ever want.

The battle, when it finally happened, lasted less than thirty seconds. The Freedom Fighter had no super powers of his own. He was simply a brave, resourceful man dedicated to fighting tyranny. His gadgets, daring, and skill were a match for the entire police force in Rome, but Requiem was a whole other order of power. He lay in wait in the shadows for the Freedom Fighter to appear. When the mystery man did, the darkness took form, reached out, and grabbed him. The poor young man never knew what hit him as the dark tendrils crushed every bone in his body. Requiem delivered the corpse personally to Mussolini, who thanked him somewhat warily.

As reward Requiem was given his own palazzo in Tuscany from which he was tasked with squashing all resistance to the Fascist government, especially from secret societies, cults, and the newly emerging super powered heroes. From 1924 to 1936 Requiem led a brutal campaign up and down the Italian peninsula. He killed thousands of resisters and several dozen emerging heroes. He also sent back a handful of candidates for Nicti fusion to Ravenna in order to fulfill his duties to the Path of the Dark. All that time he built up his own power and amassed his own followers – men devoted to the fascist cause and to Requiem personally. Requiem became a true believer in the tenets of Fascism and when a chance to fight for the cause on a larger stage presented itself, he accepted.

For all his devotion to Il Duce, Requiem had also become a great admirer of Chancellor Hitler in Germany. He made several visits to Hitler in the mid-30's. The Fuhrer was very intrigued by Requiem's powers and wanted to know everything he could about them. His devotion to the Path prevented Requiem from disclosing any sensitive information to the German, but the two men did become close. When The Spanish Civil War erupted in 1936, Hitler sent planes to help the fascist government there and suggested Requiem go as well. Mussolini reluctantly agreed to Requiem's request. He headed to Spain to fight against the handful of heroes who had sailed over from America to help fight fascism's spread. This was his first experience with truly powerful heroes and Requiem relished the challenge. He defeated all who opposed him until he first came across a super strong, super tough American hero named The Steel Bull.

Nothing Requiem could do could hurt the Steel Bull, while his own powers kept him safely out of the American hero's crush grasp. At a loss, Requiem turned to Hitler for help. He knew that the Nazis had been developing their own. Hitler's researches included the occult, but were mostly centered on science-based methods of empowerment. One of the more controversial scientists was a mountain of a man named Othman DouL. Othman was an Austrian inventor of "questionable" ethnic heritage. His outspoken, gruff, uncultured manner had won him few friends in the Third Reich's reaches. Still, he was a supremely gifted inventor, especially when it came to new weapons systems. Hitler decided to put Othman to the test and sent him to Spain to help Requiem.

The two did not get along well. Othman found Requiem's powers interesting but ultimately trifles compared to the future science offered. Requiem found Othman's demeanor coarse and offensive. They never did come to like one another, but in Spain they earned each other's respect. Othman and Requiem confronted the Steel Bull on the field of battle, and none of the weapons he'd brought could penetrate the hero's steely hide. Requiem had to use his darkness powers to hide them both and spirit them away, and even so Othman was severely wounded. He has however managed to scrape off a sample of the Bull's skin before they fled the field. IT wasn't long before the resourceful Othman created a special bullet capable of making a small but deep hole in The Bull's skin. They confronted him again, Othman's weapon was successful and Requiem used the hole to introduce a tendril of darkness into the Bull's body, which quickly ripped him apart from the inside.

With their sole remaining champion defeated and their armies routed, the freedom fighters in Spain soon fell before the new fascist government. Othman and Requiem returned to Germany to report upon their success. Requiem now proceeded to help the Nazi's do what he had already accomplished in Italy: root out and destroy any super powered or secret resistance. Othman DouL made special weapons and even armor to equip the storm troopers under Requiem's command. Meanwhile, Hitler's other super soldier programs were continuing apace, principally under the direction of a doctor and biologist named Dr. Ehren Haff.

Dr. Haff was not necessarily the most faithful of Nazi Party members. He did not believe in the inherent superiority of one race to another. Indeed, he thought all humans to be relatively equal in their imperfection. He believed truly and deeply that only science and medicine could truly create a superior race. Dr. Haff developed a series of special formulae and radiation treatments designed to create the perfect soldiers. In 1938 he had his first major success: he created a formula that, when administered properly along with surgical adjustments and so forth, resulted in a human specimen with incredibly strong muscles, damage resistance, and speed. Unfortunately the process left the subject looking decidedly inhuman. Indeed, the very first time Hitler saw one of Dr. Haff's creations he said they looked like vampires. Thus the name stuck: Vampyri.

Hitler and the leaders of the Reich were not pleased with Dr. Haff's Vampyri. They were monstrous, obviously base creatures, despite their impressive physical prowess. They did not fit the image of the golden haired Aryan superman that the Nazis wanted to promote in the world. Hitler was quite disappointed. In an effort to convince his Fuhrer that the vampyri were truly the next phase of human evolution, Dr. Haff administered the treatment to himself, becoming one of the disturbing creatures. This metamorphosis only served to make him even more of a pariah within the Reich.

As Nazi Germany extended its power and influence into neighboring countries it became clear that a massive war was brewing. It was also clear that the United States could potentially play a deciding role in that war, should it choose to become involved in European affairs. The Reich decided that it would be best to start covert operations in America as soon as possible and to have agents in place to both influence and undermine American society and war plans.

Requiem had been snubbed and largely ignored since his return from Spain. The SS were jealous of his power and quickly outmaneuvered him politically. Hitler no longer took meetings with him and his assignments tended to be routine and unimportant. When he heard of the plans to send a covert team to the United States he quickly volunteered to lead it. Hitler agreed to his request and took the opportunity to rid himself of two other important but noisome underlings: Dr. Ehren Haff and Othman DouL. The trio was sent by U-boat along with several squads of commandos, and no one ever really expected to see them in Germany again.

Thus in 1938 the 5th Column was born, although it had yet to take on that name. Requiem retained the name he had chosen as a code name. He had earned a bit of a reputation in fascist circles and he planned to use that fame to recruit support from sympathetic Americans. Othman DouL chose the code-name Vandal, while Dr. Haff took the rather obvious but fitting name Nosferatu. The three men and their soldiers snuck onto a deserted beach on a moonless Nacht, with Requiem's powers providing all the extra cover they needed. They were just 20 miles north of their destination: Paragon City.

For the first year Requiem and his team remained entirely in the shadows (often quite literally). Each of the three commanders took a full twelve months to set up operations. Requiem spent most of his time playing the role of spy – sneaking into government and military buildings, stealing top secret data and then sending it back to the Fatherland. Vandal and Nosferatu spent their time setting up their labs and machine shops to carry on their work. Vandal's first task was to design himself a suit of self-powered armor to help protect him in battle. He also worked furiously at creating a series of radio controlled automatons and drones that could be used to augment their meager strike force when it came time to attack. Nosferatu began work on a second generation formulae that would have less drastic effects on the human body, all the while improving upon the original Vampyri formula. He created dozens more vampyri to guard the secret labs and underground bases the team was building.

Requiem's secondary task was the recruitment of more soldiers from the local population. At this time, before the war broke out, there were a disturbingly large number of pro-fascist or at least sympathetic individuals in the U.S. With the Great Depression still lingering and isolationism a very popular political stance, Requiem had fertile ground to sow his seeds of hate. Using all the fascist propaganda scare tactics he knew, Requiem managed to win over several dozen fanatics to his cause. These he sent out across the country to find more like minded souls. All the while a trickle of recruits came from Germany and Italy – usually very competent but politically inept soldiers and officers who had done nothing wrong but who had crossed someone in the Party elite. Requiem and company welcomed them one and all.

In 1939 Requiem's team began to operate in earnest, moving from simple espionage to full fledged sabotage. They began small and clever, disguising their attacks as accidents or random violence rather than their true nature. A gas main would break just below a munitions factory, causing an explosion. A drunken truck driver would lose control of his vehicle carrying explosives and smash into an army base's gates. And ship's boiler would malfunction and explode, gutting the vessel and sending it to the bottom. Requiem's darkness powers combined with Vandal's ingenious sabotage devices allowed the group to destroy millions of dollars worth of war materiel and kill hundreds of innocent people without raising any suspicions.

Well, almost without raising suspicion. Fortunately there was one hero who wasn't fooled. In late 1940, as war raged in Europe, a member of the Freedom Phalanx, Dr. Mnemonic, noticed what was happening. He noticed the statistical leap in accidental deaths and decided to investigate some of the scenes. His planet-sized intellect quickly discerned that it was murder and sabotage – not an accident at all. He soon linked several other "accidents" to the same culprits and had strong suspicions that the Germans were somehow behind it all. He then laid a rather clever trap – offering up a notoriously accident-prone ship carrying vital cargo. His trap worked, although he failed to catch anything. Although the Freedom Phalanx had the ship surrounded, Requiem's powers allowed him to slip in unnoticed and plant the sabotage device. As he was leaving he noticed one of the heroes flying high above. Requiem flew high and intercepted the unsuspecting hero, entangling him in tendrils of darkness and dragging him away into the Nacht.

Nosferatu used every trick in his torturer's book to interrogate the hero and quickly broke the poor soul. The fascist saboteurs now knew that the Freedom Phalanx was on to their existence. Indeed, now that one of their own had fallen, they would be even more interested than before. It was time to move on to phase two. The 5th Column stopped operating in total secrecy and now made an attempt at misdirection. Vandal had been hard at work on his automatons and had come up with a number of different attack robots that could operate fairly effectively and independently in the field. The 5th Column launched a series of very public attacks using some of these robots – robots designed to look like Communist creations. Colored red and emblazoned with the Hammer and Sickle, these humanoid mechanized beasts terrorized the east coast for the next six months.

The "communist" attacks quickly became known in the press as the Red Robots and served their job well. Even Dr. Mnemonic was fooled or distracted enough to pursue Vandal's carefully crafted false leads instead of the true menace. Requiem and Nosferatu were left to run their intelligence and sabotage operations. Throughout 1940 and the first half of 1941 they focused almost entirely upon gathering as much data as they could about the American military and its plans for entering the war. Requiem spent a lot of his time in Washington D.C. during this period, even infiltrating the White House on several occasions. Nosferatu continued to use his Vampyri to try and sabotage U.S. attempts to send aid and war materiel to Britain and the Soviet Union, all the while putting the final touches on his Ubermensch formula. Vandal provided weapons and sabotage devices for the Vampyri and ran the Red Robot attacks against infrastructure and political targets.

The group was providing an invaluable service to the Nazi regime, but Hitler had other plans. He suspected the Americans would enter the war at any time and knew that the Japanese planned to attack Pearl Harbor. And so, not wanting to be one-upped by Japan, he ordered Requiem to gather all his might for a single attack on the American fleet gathered at Paragon City harbor. Requiem was loathe to reveal his power so blatantly, but the Fuhrer would brook no argument. And so, on Dec 7, 1941, the Fifth Column (still not known by that name) revealed itself to the world.

A fleet of cargo ships and navy escorts had assembled in the safe harbor of Paragon City with plans to steam out the next morning. Guarded by several heroes trained in anti-submarine warfare, it was hoped that the large fleet could safely penetrate any u-boat patrols and reach Britain with its cargo of munitions and other supplies fully intact. Instead, it never left the harbor. Although they all opposed the plan, Requiem, Vandal, and Nosferatu executed it perfectly. Most historians remember only the hordes of Vandal's flying robots and rocket-equipped soldiers. Few are even aware of the vampyri who swan below and placed limpet mines or that the Nacht before Requiem himself assassinated all of the heroes assigned to defend the fleet. It was all over in a few minutes, and not a single ship remained above the waves.

Taken with the even more devastating losses at Pearl Harbor, the country was frightened and outraged. The enemy had struck them at home, and done so with seeming impunity. The U.S. immediately declared war on the Axis and began to mobilize both soldiers and heroes to fight the war. The Nazi attack on Paragon City had not been without its own casualties: several dozen soldiers had died and a number of Vandal's robots shot down. As a result Dr. Mnemonic had plenty of evidence to sift through in his investigation. He quickly realized that the Red Robots had been a ruse to distract him. The same hand had obviously designed the flying robots and advanced weaponry used in the attack. This was proof that the Germans had been active in the U.S. for over a year, a thought that frightened the good doctor.

The papers went wild with speculations about the nefarious Nazi's responsible for the attack. It had obviously been the work of spies and saboteurs stationed right here in the United States. More likely than not, they still hid within our midst. Papers talked of a Fifth Column operating in secret against freedom and democracy. As the Germans had thus far failed to identify themselves, the name stuck.

Requiem and company now entered a new phase of the war. There were police, military, and heroes all searching for them. The time for drawn out plans and fake accidents had passed. The insurgents began a campaign of guerilla warfare and terrorist style attacks. They took to lightning raids on power facilities, steel plants, bridges, factories, docks, and other infrastructure targets. They stayed well away from the "hardened" military targets such as naval bases and army facilities. With civilians taking most of the casualties, the military and heroes were forced to hunt the 5th Column down rather than wait for them to attack a well-defended target.

Requiem only risked one more large scale engagement. When the 1st Hero Brigade gathered in Liberty Plaza before shipping off across the Atlantic, he knew he could not pass up such a choice target, no matter how great the risk. Requiem massed almost his entire strength for the attack, but this time he lacked the element of surprise. Dr. Mnemonic had predicted such an attack and the Freedom Force and Hero Brigade had prepared accordingly. The resulting battle was the bloodiest and most destructive that Paragon City had ever seen. Dozens of heroes fell, but their losses were nothing compared to those suffered by the 5th Column. Hundreds of robots and flyers were destroyed and scores of soldiers killed. Even a dozen or so vampyri fell in battle. This was Requiem's first great defeat and he did not savor it. He knew well enough that the time had come to quit the field, and so he retreated, beaten for the moment.

With most of the country's heroes shipping out to Europe, Asia, and Africa to help fight the war, only a few remained to directly combat the 5th Column. While its terror attacks were certainly troublesome and were causing millions of dollars of damage, they still didn't compare to the worldwide threat posed by the Axis overseas. Only a handful of experienced heroes remained in the States, and almost all of them focused their attention on fighting Requiem and his followers. For six months the 5th Column laid low, launching diversionary attacks using robotic forces. Since the United States had entered the war the Reich had stopped sending Requiem new recruits and with patriotism running at a fevered pitch it was impossible to recruit from the local population.

The 5th Column never truly recovered from the loss at Liberty Plaza. It continued to harass and cause trouble throughout the remainder of the war, but as the American economy and industrial base kicked into war time overdrive, the small acts of sabotage and destruction became less and less significant. Seeing this, Requiem redirected his efforts against the country's remaining domestic heroes, carrying out a personal vendetta against them. With little or no direction from Hitler, the group was free to act as it pleased. Nosferatu all but withdrew from the war, preferring to carry on his experiments in a secret underground lab. Vandal spent more and more energy testing bizarre and experimental weaponry, more out of his own curiosity than in an effort to help win the war for Germany. Requiem continued to fight on with what troops remained, but he had ceased to be much more than a terror for the heroes of Paragon City and other parts of the East Coast.

When the war ended, Requiem and the rest of the 5th Column faded away as well. Defeated and demoralized, the three villains decided to lay low and disappear rather than risk facing trial as war criminals. Requiem arranged for them all to flee to South America. He ventured into Europe and managed to destroy all official record of their existence, although he was almost caught on several occasions. Post-War Europe was awash with super powered spies and soldiers, making any kind of clandestine activity extremely dangerous. He then returned to South America and helped his cohort set up a new base of operation – a secret mountain fastness where all three of them could carry out their researches in relative peace and security.

Vandal was happy to have a well-equipped workshop where he could develop his engineering marvels without interruption or pressure for immediate results. An aging man with a heart problem, he worked first to ensure his own long life, developing implants and systems to replace his failing organs and give him what could easily amount to eternal life. Then he began to dramatically improve upon the simple, nearly mindless robots that had served the 5th column so well before and during the War. Nosferatu had now perfected his vampyri formula. A full course of treatment took less than a week and resulted in a total transformation without any ill-effects. The vampyri had incredible strength, toughness and speed and were immune to most types of damage, including bullets. The Ubermenschen formula proved more troublesome, and over the ensuing decades he went through thousands of "test subjects" culled from the neighboring villages. Eventually he did perfect the formula, achieving some truly remarkable results.

Meanwhile, Requiem planned. Having never before suffered a defeat so complete, he yearned for vengeance. He had little love for South America, viewing it as a backwards, corrupt, and morally vapid place that was still largely the domain of savages under lesser races. Nor did he want to return to Europe, which to him stank of defeat and capitulation. No, he wanted to return to America, only this time as a conqueror. Easier said than done of course, and Requiem knew this. While giving Vandal and Nosferatu everything they needed to conduct their research, Requiem set about building an army of his own.

For the next 30 years he traveled the globe promoting the cause of fascism. He supported guerilla groups, right wing government cabals, and political parties. All the while he sought new recruits and sent them back to South America for training (and occasionally experimentation). He operated under a number of different aliases and was wanted by Interpol as three separate people. He stayed away from America though, knowing that, with all the heroes there, it was still too dangerous for him.

As his confidence and drive began to loose steam Requiem received a summons from the Path of the Dark. He had largely ignored his masters for quite some time and they were not pleased. He made a pilgrimage to Ravenna and prostrated himself before his dark masters. They chastised him for his lack of faith and forced him to remain in their black lair for a full decade. Vandal and Nosferatu suspected him dead and went their separate ways (neither had liked the other very much) becoming villains in their own rights. All the while Requiem received wisdom, power, and strength from his constant devotions to the Nicti.

Reinvigorated with the power of the Path, Requiem left Ravenna and sought out his old allies. Vandal was running a crime syndicate in Rio while Nosferatu had set himself up as some kind of feudal vampiric lord in the mountains of Peru. Neither was satisfied and when they saw what Requiem had brought with him, they agreed to “get the band back together.” The Nicti had given Requiem a new group of followers – humans who had fused with Nicti to create the terrifying and powerful werewolf-like Nacht Wolves. All agreed that the next logical step was returning to Paragon City and taking vengeance upon the nation that had shamed and defeated them.

With no Hitler to force their hand, the 5th Column took its time preparing for their triumphal return. They operated entirely under the radar in the United States for over a decade before they made their stunning debut in the wake of the Rikti invasion. Indeed, they might well have waited another decade had they not seen a great opportunity in the invasion’s aftermath, with so many of the greatest heroes dead or missing. The city was weak and ripe for the taking.

Requiem and company had used their time to prepare well for their attack. They had dispatched recruiters all over the country to bring fresh, committed blood into the organization. As their number swelled, Vandal was hard at work using a new technology he had developed – digging and mining machines that could hollow out a cave network in record time. The 5th Column riddled the ground beneath Paragon City with tunnels and caves, setting up scores of secret outposts and fire bases beneath the city streets. There they trained and housed their troops, manufactured their robots, and prepared for the coming war.

When the Rikti invaded the 5th Column was as surprised as anyone. They took a wait and see attitude, fighting off more than a few Rikti incursions into their bases but otherwise keeping a very low profile. If the war had gone too badly they would have stepped in to help beat back the aliens, but Requiem had faith the Statesman and his fellow heroes would eventually beat back these beast men. He was right, and moreover he was pleased with the result: not only did the humans win, but they managed to lose the vast majority of their most powerful heroes in the process and destabilize the entire world economy. Paragon City was carved into a patchwork of chaotic, often untamed zones. Now was the perfect moment to attack.

And so, for the first time in over 50 years 5th Columnists stalked the streets of Paragon City. They followed much the same pattern as before, striking in secret at targets of opportunity, not revealing their presence until a group of heroes including Statesman discovered them. At first the venerable hero could not believe his eyes. The 5th Column was back with a vengeance and at the worst possible time.

7.8.2 Beliefs and Goals

The renewed and reformed Fifth Column wants nothing less than to create a fascist state in America. From there it plans to expand outwards and bring the entire world to heel under a single, beneficent ruler. Their readings of Plato and Aristotle, along with other philosophers justify their contention that it is morally right for a self-selected elite to rule through deception, hyper-nationalism and state-sponsored ideology. They appeal to the basest, most self-deceitful instincts in humanity. They tell themselves and their followers that they are better than everyone else, and that once the war is over, the world will for the first time know peace and prosperity in every corner of the Earth.

They justify the mass destruction and killing that accompanies their crusade with a particularly twisted form of Social Darwinism. They are the fittest – physically, morally, and ideologically – therefore they will survive where all other will perish. They have grand plans for a time when iron laws will keep everyone in America safe from crime and free to life a fulfilling life, but in the meantime they must first tear down the corrupt, morally degenerate society that exists solely to exploit and abuse the average citizen. They promise a return to some mythical, heroic golden age when everyone knew their place in society and everyone was happy with a select group of white, male rulers making all their decisions for them.

The Fifth Column appeals to a wide variety of hates and discontents. Their propaganda takes the most vitriolic complaints from both the political right and left: The U.S. government seeks to control your life. It is morally bankrupt because it recognizes the rights of women, gays, and non-whites. The democracy has been entirely subverted by special interests so that rich, greedy elites use the tyranny of the masses to control the lives of normal, working class men. Pornography, gambling, video games, movies, and television rot the minds of America's youth. Most importantly it appeals to a twisted kind of patriotism: America has forgotten its roots to the point where now there is no real America: it's all a corporate controlled moral cesspool that's forgotten the meaning of words like honor and nationalism. Everything is for sale. Everything is permitted. Nothing is sacred. All are equal – even those who aren't.

This heady fascist brew wouldn't pass the laugh test for most educated people, but there are plenty of weaker minds out there that readily fall for the Fifth Column line. What sets the Fifth Column apart from all the other militias and extremist groups is that these fascists have very real power to offer those who put on a uniform and mask. They will indeed make you a literal superman, assuming you have the guts, strength, and determination to rise through the ranks. A new recruit has every expectation that one day he will indeed be, if not better, then at least stronger, tougher, and more dangerous than 99.5% of the world's population. That's a very tempting offer, and more and more people take them up on it each day. The Rikti invasion proved a special boon to the 5th Column's recruiting drive. Many felt powerless in the face of such a seemingly unstoppable foe. The 5th Column offered them a way to get some of that power for themselves.

Requiem continues to exploit this feeling of weakness and insecurity that many feel. Most of 5th Column's propaganda these days focuses on spreading the fear that the government cannot and will not protect the common man when time comes. The leaders squabble, look after their political leaders and rely on paid costumed heroes for their safety. It is up to the moral, honorable man to take his future in his own hands and fight with the 5th Column. Requiem also makes much use of the Rikti ability to transform themselves into humans. They stress that aliens could be anywhere, including in the government – including even amongst the city's so-called heroes. Only the 5th Column has the technology, organization, and will to constantly test all of its members to ensure none of them are aliens. Or so they claim.

All of these claims help support the 5th Column's most important talking point: heroes are not the saviors, but the oppressors of mankind. The 5th Column teaches that heroes are a menace because they have no control. They are free agents who cause ten times more chaos and destruction than they do good. They have stolen the power that should rightly belong to the good and decent men of the world. They set themselves up as gods and lord their powers over common, morally upright men. That power must be restored to those who deserve it – racially pure, morally upstanding men.

Thus the ultimate goal for the 5th Column is quite simple: eradicate anyone who disagrees with them. Once they've achieved universal approval for their ideology, then the world will be at peace. Anyone who disagrees with that ideology is thus an enemy of the peace and must be eliminated forthwith. Simple.

7.8.3 Behavior Patterns

The Fifth Column runs constant operations in Paragon City. Their basic philosophy is to stay on the offensive at all times, masking their more long-term schemes with a never-ending series of small raids and attacks. The group expects a high turn over and casualty rate, especially amongst its lower ranking troops. Thus MekMen are very popular for basic harassment missions, as are Iron Valkyries. Wolfpack bots are too expensive and important to be frittered away on distractions.

These harassment attacks take all forms, from thefts and raids designed to provide funds and equipment to the cause to kidnappings, bombings, and terror attacks designed to do nothing more than scare and distract the local authorities. Hand in hand with every attack there is always a propaganda message to “justify” it. The 5th Column’s strict and hateful ideology make it easy to find an excuse to attack almost every decent, civilized person in the city. Race, creed, political leanings, corporate affiliations, friendships, education, and even the clothes they wear have all served as excuses for death and terror. The 5th Columnists always leave pamphlets or other media behind to explain their actions.

The lower ranking troops do not usually operate directly out of the many underground bases that the 5th Column maintains throughout the city. Vandal has built some truly amazing drilling and building machines that make creating an underground cave network much easier than one might imagine. Nevertheless, the 5th Column values these facilities and does not want cannon fodder level captives revealing their location to every fledgling hero who manages to capture one of them. These lower level soldiers have their own hideaways – sometimes in sewers or caves, but more often in abandoned buildings or warehouses.

The underground facilities serve as launching points for more serious attacks on the city and its heroes. They are of course much sought after by heroes and law enforcement, but the villains have proven very skilled at hiding them. Some connect directly to the underground levels of existing buildings while others are accessed through existing cave or sewer tunnels. The caves allow the 5th Column to move around beneath the city with relative freedom, although they must avoid Rikti, Lost, Devouring Earth, and other threats as they travel.

Requiem and friends are masters of patience and long-term planning. They will set the seeds for an operation months or even years in advance. They have placed moles and infiltrators throughout the city, using their influence only when necessary in order to preserve their security. These long-term operations are usually aimed at the total destruction of some valued capitalist or democratic institution. They don’t just rob banks, they drain their assets, destroy their buildings, discredit their officials, and terrorize their employees. A crusading left wing politician does not just have his name smeared, he is assassinated, framed as a pedophile, discredited as a liar and drug addict, and has his entire family and most of his friends brought to ruin. They have learned the lesson that you should never leave an enemy any room to strike back. Defeat him utterly and move on to the next target.

While politicians, scientists, writers, artists, journalists, actors, police officers, and military leaders are all viable targets (basically anyone who promotes a world view counter to their own) the favorite targets of such operations are heroes. The 5th Column wages a constant war against heroes, plaguing them with ambushes and harassment attacks. But when they set their sites on eliminating a hero entirely they take their time and study the hero’s every facet. They often start by attacking him where he’s weak – family, friends, loved ones, and cherished institutions. Then they move in for the kill, exploiting his weaknesses and cutting him off from any possible sources of aid. They don’t always succeed, but when they do it is invariably final and spectacular.

The Fifth Column's quest for real social change in the United States has led it to form a "legitimate" political party that ostensibly has no ties to the terrorist activities of the parent group. Known as the American Empire party, it seeks to create a United States where wise laws and benevolent rulers ensure safety, prosperity, and moral certitude for every man woman and child. A place for every person and every person in his place. Not surprisingly, this is not the most popular political party in American history. Nevertheless, it does have its adherents and serves its two main functions: a legal way for Requiem to distribute his propaganda and an outreach tool for finding new recruits. The 5th Column is very scrupulous about hiding any direct ties to the group and so far it has avoided being classified as a domestic terrorist supporting group.

Of course there's more than one way to manipulate politics. Requiem knows that almost every politician has a dark secret or two that they don't want the public to know. He uses his Nacht troops and Vampyri to gather sensitive information on every politician, right or left wing, in the city. He doesn't use it for blackmail or to influence the process – he just releases it to the public through various media contacts. When there are no secrets worth revealing he has his troops plant false evidence and then reveals that. Requiem wants total dissatisfaction with the current U.S. government at every level. The more people become dissatisfied, the more likely they are to turn to extremes, like his own American Empire party or the 5th Column itself.

One of the least talked about but most pervasive activities of the 5th Column is its propaganda machine. The group puts out a constant stream of fascist and hate literature under a bevy of different publishing fronts. They also maintain several dozen right wing Web sites. They even have a pirate radio station that broadcasts in Paragon City on an irregular basis. Most of the propaganda is ridiculously right wing and extremist, but some of it hides in sheep's clothing. These publications mimic more accepted right wing ideals and then serve as gateways to the publications that more accurately present the 5th Column's twisted message.

Finally the 5th Column is doing its best to win the hearts and minds of the people it hopes to rule – white, fascist males. If you fit into this decidedly narrow category then the 5th Column will do a great deal to help you, even if you don't ask for it. They secretly pay bills, arrange for employment opportunities, provide scholarships for children to attend "right-minded" schools and so on. While these "charity" operation have had only limited success, they do sometimes win over support from someone who would otherwise view the group with disdain.

7.8.4 Enemies and Allies

As one of the largest and most powerful villain groups in Paragon City, the Fifth Column has little need for allies, but it certainly has many enemies. Their very ideology, casting themselves as heroes in the face of oppression and moral failure means that they must openly oppose most of the other villain groups. In truth Requiem has little use for any of them, although he's not above manipulating and using them when it suits his needs.

The Rikti are of course dire foes. The 5th Column fights them as ferociously as it fights the city's heroes and they are always sure to trumpet their successes every time they defeat an alien cohort or uncover a hidden nest of invaders. The Rikti don't even distinguish between heroes and the 5th Column. As far as they're concerned, both are equally dangerous.

Lesser but equally evil groups like the Banished Pantheon and the Devouring Earth also draw a similar amount of hatred and disdain. The Banished Pantheon is viewed as a mongrel religion for lesser races and a bane to all decent, civilized men. The Devouring Earth are merely monsters in need of extermination, like any other pest.

The 5th Column views the Circle of Thorns with a kind of fearful respect. Requiem senses in them a power even greater than that of the Nicti and he is loathe to cross them until he understands them better. The group has little to do with magic and so leaves such occult matters to the Circle and its followers. Their party line is that such practices destroy the moral fiber of man, but they do not actively seek a conflict with the underground sorcerers.

The 5th Column has some hopes for groups like Freakshow and the Sky Raiders. Both represent radical political statements that are anti-government. Although neither has an ideology that is on the face of it compatible with the 5th Column, Requiem thinks he can subvert them both and win them over. So, for now, he sometimes works with these groups.

Crey Industries is considered as much of an enemy as the Rikti, and for many of the same reasons. While Requiem has nothing against the Countess personally, he recognizes that corporate greed and malfeasance are great motivators and that by acting directly against the company he appeals to the prejudices of his constituency. The two are locked in a bitter, continuing feud, although Crey is too powerful for the 5th Column to attack directly.

As for the lesser groups like Vahzilok, the Tsoo, and the Clockwork King, Requiem scarcely pays them any mind. The Tsoo are of course despised for racial reasons while the Clockwork King is thought a madman. Nosferatu has taken some interest in Vahzilok's work, but the two groups have had little direct contact.

7.8.5 The Future

The future for the 5th Column involves branching out their activities and searching for new paths to achieve their victory. Even with a decade of planning and laying groundwork for their assault, the 5th Column has not had the quick victory it hoped for. The influx of new heroes and rival villains has made their task much more daunting than they ever imagined. At this rate, America will not fall into fascism any time soon – if indeed it ever does.

One of the most major changes will be dramatically increased cooperation with the Path of the Dark. Right now only Requiem even knows where the Nacht Wolves truly come from and who the Nicti are. In the not too distant future the beings of pure darkness will extend their tendrils into Paragon City, unleashing a whole new horde of foul creatures.

The 5th Column will also begin to take a very strong interest in portal technology, something that right now they have very little exposure to. Their primary goal will be to reestablish a link with the forbidden world of Axis America. If they can bring the Reichsman and other alternate-Earth Nazis onto their dies, they would have a much greater chance for victory.

Although Requiem rules the 5th Column with an iron fist and has substantial support from his subjects, there are small factions of discontent. Some of the vampyri and Ubermenschen have taken their own propaganda to heart and view themselves as better than the rest of the world, including their leaders. A cabal of them is likely to split off and form its own, competing villain group, possibly with a very different, radically left wing ideology.

Finally there will be the 5th Column's very public push to exterminate the Rikti once and for all. They will create a new "hero" group devoted to fighting the aliens and recruit heroes into its service. No one will know this is actually a 5th Column front group which Requiem can manipulate into not only attacking Rikti but other targets that he falsely identifies as "Rikti Controlled" or "Rikti Influence" or even "Rikti Sympathetic." Even player heroes will get sucked into this group until they come to realize its true nature.

7.8.6 Villains

The 5th Column owes much of its current success to its incredibly successful recruiting program. It relies heavily on a constant influx of men willing to serve in battle for the fascist cause. Unlike many other groups in the city, the 5th Column has the ability to recruit from all over the country and even in Europe. They have recruiters and propagandists in every major city and others who travel through rural regions. Of course they do not advertise as such. Instead they spread the 5th Column ideology without attaching it to a specific group. The recruiters use scores of different aliases and cover organizations to spread their hate. When they find likely candidates for full admission into the 5th Column they pay their way to travel to Paragon City where they're approached by one of Requiem's personnel recruiters. Then the prospect either joins the group or is killed quietly.

7.8.6.1 Nebel, Nacht & Raserei Soldiers

The 5th Column's front line troops are organized into three different basic battlefield roles. The Nebel wear gray uniforms and serve as the basic soldiers in the army. The Nacht are special operations troops, often with stealth and hand to hand combat abilities. The Raserei are the elite troops, with better weapons and higher-level super powers.

7.8.6.2 Rifle

- Rank Minion
- Description It doesn't take much training or expertise to join the 5th Column, and members who don't have any of either receive basic weapons skills and are immediately put into service in the ranks of the Nebel, the 5th Column's code name for its front-line, raw recruit soldiers. The 5th Column believes in survival of the fittest, and feel the best way to prove your worthiness is to survive and blossom in the crucible of combat.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 1,2,3,4
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Cryonic_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Cryonic rounds explode and can ignite a target.
<i>Incendiary_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Incendiary rounds explode and can ignite a target.

7.8.6.3 Nebel Rocket

- Rank Minion
- Description It doesn't take much training or expertise to join the 5th Column, and members who don't have any of either receive basic weapons skills and are immediately put into service in the ranks of the Nebel, the 5th Column's code name for its front-line, raw recruit soldiers. The 5th Column believes in survival of the fittest, and feel the best way to prove your worthiness is to survive and blossom in the crucible of combat.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 1,2,3,4
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Missile_Rocket</i>	This devastating weapon has extreme range capabilities. Its slow recharge and high endurance cost is compensated by its massive explosion and Knockback.

7.8.6.4 Nebel Grenade

- Rank Minion
- Description It doesn't take much training or expertise to join the 5th Column, and members who don't have any of either receive basic weapons skills and are immediately put into service in the ranks of the Nebel, the 5th Column's code name for its front-line, raw recruit soldiers. The 5th Column believes in survival of the fittest, and feel the best way to prove your worthiness is to survive and blossom in the crucible of combat.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 1,2,3,4
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Grenade_Rocket</i>	Launches an M30 Grenade at long range from under the barrel of your Assault rifle. This explosion from this grenade affects all within the blast and can knock them back.

7.8.6.5 Nebel Fire

- Rank Minion
- Description It doesn't take much training or expertise to join the 5th Column, and members who don't have any of either receive basic weapons skills and are immediately put into service in the ranks of the Nebel, the 5th Column's code name for its front-line, raw recruit soldiers. The 5th Column believes in survival of the fittest, and feel the best way to prove your worthiness is to survive and blossom in the crucible of combat.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 1,2,3,4
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.

7.8.6.6 Nebel Force

- Rank Minion
- Description It doesn't take much training or expertise to join the 5th Column, and members who don't have any of either receive basic weapons skills and are immediately put into service in the ranks of the Nebel, the 5th Column's code name for its front-line, raw recruit soldiers. The 5th Column believes in survival of the fittest, and feel the best way to prove your worthiness is to survive and blossom in the crucible of combat.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 1,2,3,4
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Chain_Gun</i>	Sprays a massive burst of lead at a target. Lots of damage and a bonus to hit, but slow to reload.

7.8.6.7 Nebel Fist

- Rank Minion

Cryptic Studios

- **Description** The 5th Column believes in survival of the fittest, and feel the best way to prove your worthiness is to survive and blossom in the crucible of combat. The 5th Column Martial Artists are the best of their squad.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 1,2,3,4
- **Powers**

<i>Crane_Kick</i>	A slow, high damage kick that can send your target flying!
<i>Thunder_Kick</i>	A typical martial arts attack that may Disorients its target.
<i>Crippling_Axe_Kick</i>	This sharp kick that can Immobilizes you opponent and slow his attack rate.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.8 Nebel Unteroffiziere

- **Rank** Lieutenant
- **Description** Only those Nebel Soldiers who have proven themselves both resilient and trustworthy achieve the rank of an 'underofficer.' Through combat and dedication to the cause they have begun to earn real respect from their masters. In return, they receive better equipment and training and are trusted with some low level secrets that other Nebel Soldiers would never have access to.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 1,2,3,4
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.9 Nebel Oberst

- **Rank** Boss
- **Description** A Nebel Soldier who receives a commission as a Colonel has now truly proven himself over the course of numerous battles and operations. Many of them resent having to still work with basic soldiers, but they are on this dissatisfaction is more than compensated for by their first taste of super soldier serums and body enhancements. Lieutenants undergo a few basic upgrades that increase their strength and stamina which, when coupled with their own experience, make them formidable foes.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 1,2,3,4
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>12 Gauge</i>	Good at medium range. Longer range and more deadly than most Shotguns, The 12 Gauge Shotgun Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.

7.8.6.10 Nebel Elite Rifle

- **Rank** Minion

Cryptic Studios

- **Description** Once a soldier has proven his true and total commitment to the cause, he is transferred into the ranks of the elite. Only 1 in 5 Soldiers survive long enough to achieve this promotion. Nebel Elites receive first stage super soldier serum injections that improve their physical prowess to the level of Olympic athletes. They also go through special training and equipment certification courses before being put back into the battle lines. The masters now have a vested interest in their survival.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Cryonic_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Cryonic rounds explode and can ignite a target.
<i>Incendiary_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Incendiary rounds explode and can ignite a target.

7.8.6.11 Nebel Rocket Elite

- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** Once a soldier has proven his true and total commitment to the cause, he is transferred into the ranks of the elite. Only 1 in 5 Soldiers survive long enough to achieve this promotion. Nebel Elites receive first stage super soldier serum injections that improve their physical prowess to the level of Olympic athletes. They also go through special training and equipment certification courses before being put back into the battle lines. The masters now have a vested interest in their survival.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Missile_Rocket</i>	This devastating weapon has extreme range capabilities. Its slow recharge and high endurance cost is compensated by its massive explosion and Knockback.

7.8.6.12 Nebel Grenade Elite

- **Class** Minion_Grunt
- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** Once a soldier has proven his true and total commitment to the cause, he is transferred into the ranks of the elite. Only 1 in 5 Soldiers survive long enough to achieve this promotion. Nebel Elites receive first stage super soldier serum injections that improve their physical prowess to the level of Olympic athletes. They also go through special training and equipment certification courses before being put back into the battle lines. The masters now have a vested interest in their survival.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Grenade_Rocket</i>	Launches an M30 Grenade at long range from under the barrel of your Assault rifle. This explosion from this grenade affects all within the blast and can knock them back.

7.8.6.13 Nebel Fire Elite

- Rank Minion
- Description Once a soldier has proven his true and total commitment to the cause, he is transferred into the ranks of the elite. Only 1 in 5 Soldiers survive long enough to achieve this promotion. Nebel Elites receive first stage super soldier serum injections that improve their physical prowess to the level of Olympic athletes. They also go through special training and equipment certification courses before being put back into the battle lines. The masters now have a vested interest in their survival.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.

7.8.6.14 Nebel Gunner Elite

- Rank Minion
- Description Once a soldier has proven his true and total commitment to the cause, he is transferred into the ranks of the elite. Only 1 in 5 Soldiers survive long enough to achieve this promotion. Nebel Elites receive first stage super soldier serum injections that improve their physical prowess to the level of Olympic athletes. They also go through special training and equipment certification courses before being put back into the battle lines. The masters now have a vested interest in their survival.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Chain_Gun</i>	Sprays a massive burst of lead at a target. Lots of damage and a bonus to hit, but slow to reload.

7.8.6.15 Nebel_Elite_Martial_Arts

- Rank Minion
- Description Once a soldier has proven his true and total commitment to the cause, he is transferred into the ranks of the elite. Only 1 in 5 Soldiers survive long enough to achieve this promotion. Nebel Elites receive first stage super soldier serum injections that improve their physical prowess to the level of Olympic athletes. They also go through special training and equipment certification courses before being put back into the battle lines. The masters now have a vested interest in their survival.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Crane_Kick</i>	A slow, high damage kick that can send your target flying!
<i>Thunder_Kick</i>	A typical martial arts attack that may Disorients its target.
<i>Crippling_Axe_Kick</i>	This sharp kick that can Immobilizes you opponent and slow his attack rate.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.16 Nebel Elite Unteroffiziere

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description A high-ranking Nebel Elite Underofficer is a force to be reckoned with, even when encountered alone. Unfortunately, he is seldom encountered alone. His increased physical prowess is now matched by improved tactical thinking skills and the cold, steely resolve of a combat veteran. The super soldier serum and attendant propaganda process left the Elite Sergeant utterly devoted to the 5th Column's cause and willing to follow any order hes given.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.17 Nebel Elite Oberst

- Rank Boss
- Description The leaders of the Nebel Elite are near perfect soldierly specimens. They have often been fast tracked through the ranks because of their leadership potential and sharp tactical thinking. In addition, they receive a special, modified super soldier serum regimen that enhances intellect and problem solving skills in addition to the physical benefits. An Elite Colonel is fully capable of leading his soldiers without any direction from above for long periods of time and still remaining loyal to the 5th Column cause.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.18 Nebel Uberrnenschen Rifle

- Rank Minion
- Description An Uberrnensch, or 'Over Man' is a 5th Column soldier who has gone through a long and sometimes painful regimen of super soldier serum treatments. The Nebel Uberrnenschen are by far the most numerous type of muscle-bound super soldier, but that doesn't mean they're common. They've had extensive training and thousands of dollars worth of body and mind altering drugs poured into them, making them a valuable investment for the 5th Column - but one that often pays off since a mere First Rank Uberrnensch is stronger than 5 normal men.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Cryonic_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Cryonic rounds explode and can ignite a target.

Incendiary_Assault_Rifle

The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Incendiary rounds explode and can ignite a target.

7.8.6.19 Nebel Rocket Ubermenschen

- Rank Minion
- Description An Ubermensch, or 'Over Man' is a 5th Column soldier who has gone through a long and sometimes painful regimen of super soldier serum treatments. The Nebel Ubermenschen are by far the most numerous type of muscle-bound super soldier, but that doesn't mean they're common. They've had extensive training and thousands of dollars worth of body and mind altering drugs poured into them, making them a valuable investment for the 5th Column - but one that often pays off since a mere First Rank Ubermensch is stronger than 5 normal men.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Missile_Rocket</i>	This devastating weapon has extreme range capabilities. Its slow recharge and high endurance cost is compensated by its massive explosion and Knockback.

7.8.6.20 Nebel Grenade Ubermenschen

- Rank Minion
- Description An Ubermensch, or 'Over Man' is a 5th Column soldier who has gone through a long and sometimes painful regimen of super soldier serum treatments. The Nebel Ubermenschen are by far the most numerous type of muscle-bound super soldier, but that doesn't mean they're common. They've had extensive training and thousands of dollars worth of body and mind altering drugs poured into them, making them a valuable investment for the 5th Column - but one that often pays off since a mere First Rank Ubermensch is stronger than 5 normal men.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Grenade_Rocket</i>	Launches an M30 Grenade at long range from under the barrel of your Assault rifle. This explosion from this grenade affects all within the blast and can knock them back.

7.8.6.21 Nebel Fire Ubermenschen

- Rank Minion
- Description An Ubermensch, or 'Over Man' is a 5th Column soldier who has gone through a long and sometimes painful regimen of super soldier serum treatments. The Nebel Ubermenschen are by far the most numerous type of muscle-bound super soldier, but that doesn't mean they're common. They've had extensive training and thousands of dollars worth of body and mind altering drugs poured into them, making them a valuable investment for the 5th Column - but one that often pays off since a mere First Rank Ubermensch is stronger than 5 normal men.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
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Cryptic Studios

<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.
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7.8.6.22 Nebel Gunner Ubervmenschen

- Rank Minion
- Description An Ubervmensch, or 'Over Man' is a 5th Column soldier who has gone through a long and sometimes painful regimen of super soldier serum treatments. The Nebel Ubervmenschen are by far the most numerous type of muscle-bound super soldier, but that doesn't mean they're common. They've had extensive training and thousands of dollars worth of body and mind altering drugs poured into them, making them a valuable investment for the 5th Column - but one that often pays off since a mere First Rank Ubervmensch is stronger than 5 normal men.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Chain_Gun</i>	Sprays a massive burst of lead at a target. Lots of damage and a bonus to hit, but slow to reload.

7.8.6.23 Nebel_Ubervmenschen_Martial_Arts

Rank Minion

- Description An Ubervmensch, or 'Over Man' is a 5th Column soldier who has gone through a long and sometimes painful regimen of super soldier serum treatments. The Nebel Ubervmenschen are by far the most numerous type of muscle-bound super soldier, but that doesn't mean they're common. They've had extensive training and thousands of dollars worth of body and mind altering drugs poured into them, making them a valuable investment for the 5th Column - but one that often pays off since a mere First Rank Ubervmensch is stronger than 5 normal men.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Crane_Kick</i>	A slow, high damage kick that can send your target flying!
<i>Thunder_Kick</i>	A typical martial arts attack that may Disorients its target.
<i>Crippling_Axe_Kick</i>	This sharp kick that can Immobilizes you opponent and slow his attack rate.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.24 Nebel Ubervmenschen Unteroffiziere

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description The pinnacle of frontline soldiers, the Ubervmenschen Underofficers are nearly unstoppable fighting machines. It often takes an anti-vehicle weapon just to harm one of these meta-human juggernauts. Fortunately, their numbers are small, although the 5th Column keeps making more and more of them as time passes and their soldiers become more experienced.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
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Cryptic Studios

<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.25 Nebel Ubermenschen Oberst

- Rank Boss
- Description The highest ranking Nebel Troopers in the 5th Column, the Nebel Ubermenschen Colonels are strikingly capable field officers, able to formulate and execute entire grand strategies for long military campaigns. Unlike most modern officers, these Ubermenschen are not afraid to personally lead their soldiers into battle, as their own abilities and powers far surpass those of all normal men and many super powered heroes.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.26 Nacht Rifle

- Rank Minion
- Description The Nacht is the 5th Column's special operations division, tasked with covert ops, assassinations, and espionage activities. Even the lowest level recruits receive some extra training - particularly in stealth and evasion techniques. Most new recruits must have some military or law enforcement experience before being accepted into the Nacht.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Cryonic_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Cryonic rounds explode and can ignite a target.
<i>Incendiary_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Incendiary rounds explode and can ignite a target.

7.8.6.27 Nacht Rocket

- Rank Minion
- Description The Nacht is the 5th Column's special operations division, tasked with covert ops, assassinations, and espionage activities. Even the lowest level recruits receive some extra training - particularly in stealth and evasion techniques. Most new recruits must have some military or law enforcement experience before being accepted into the Nacht.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
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Cryptic Studios

<i>Missile_Rocket</i>	This devastating weapon has extreme range capabilities. Its slow recharge and high endurance cost is compensated by its massive explosion and Knockback.
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7.8.6.28 Nacht Grenade

- Rank Minion
- Description The Nacht is the 5th Column's special operations division, tasked with covert ops, assassinations, and espionage activities. Even the lowest level recruits receive some extra training - particularly in stealth and evasion techniques. Most new recruits must have some military or law enforcement experience before being accepted into the Nacht.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Grenade_Rocket</i>	Launches an M30 Grenade at long range from under the barrel of your Assault rifle. This explosion from this grenade affects all within the blast and can knock them back.

7.8.6.29 Nacht Fire

- Rank Minion
- Description The Nacht is the 5th Column's special operations division, tasked with covert ops, assassinations, and espionage activities. Even the lowest level recruits receive some extra training - particularly in stealth and evasion techniques. Most new recruits must have some military or law enforcement experience before being accepted into the Nacht.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.

7.8.6.30 Nacht Gunner

- Rank Minion
- Description The Nacht is the 5th Column's special operations division, tasked with covert ops, assassinations, and espionage activities. Even the lowest level recruits receive some extra training - particularly in stealth and evasion techniques. Most new recruits must have some military or law enforcement experience before being accepted into the Nacht.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Chain_Gun</i>	Sprays a massive burst of lead at a target. Lots of damage and a bonus to hit, but slow to reload.

7.8.6.31 Nacht Martial Artist

- Rank Minion

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- **Description** The Nacht is the 5th Column's special operations division, tasked with covert ops, assassinations, and espionage activities. Even the lowest level recruits receive some extra training - particularly in stealth and evasion techniques. Most new recruits must have some military or law enforcement experience before being accepted into the Nacht.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- **Powers**

<i>Crane_Kick</i>	A slow, high damage kick that can send your target flying!
<i>Thunder_Kick</i>	A typical martial arts attack that may Disorients its target.
<i>Crippling_Axe_Kick</i>	This sharp kick that can Immobilizes you opponent and slow his attack rate.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.32 Nacht Unteroffiziere

- **Rank** Lieutenant
- **Description** These higher ranking Nacht soldiers have completed all the basic covert ops training and are on the verge of being promoted to elite status. They have yet to benefit from a course of super soldier serum treatments, but have honed their stealth and physical skills to almost the level of human perfection. Underofficers are often tasked with leading squads of their fellow Nacht on small raids and robberies meant to raise funds for the 5th Column.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.33 Nacht Oberst

- **Rank** Boss
- **Description** A Colonel in the Nacht Soldiers is responsible for overseeing squads of covert operatives. Colonels are allowed very little initiative in planning operations. Since covert ops need to be precise and perfectly executed, a Nacht Colonel is valued chiefly for his abilities to follow orders precisely and make sure his troops do the same. In return for loyalty and good service, Colonels receive the first taste of super soldier serum, making them stronger and quicker than any normal human could ever be.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.34 Nacht Oberst

- **Rank** Boss

- **Description** A Colonel in the Nacht Soldiers is responsible for overseeing squads of covert operatives. Colonels are allowed very little initiative in planning operations. Since covert ops need to be precise and perfectly executed, a Nacht Colonel is valued chiefly for his abilities to follow orders precisely and make sure his troops do the same. In return for loyalty and good service, Colonels receive the first taste of super soldier serum, making them stronger and quicker than any normal human could ever be.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.
<i>Lycanthropy</i>	Some 5th Column Bosses can transform into Nightwolves.

7.8.6.35 Nacht Elite Rifle

- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** The Nacht Elites are world-class Special Forces operatives, as well trained as any SEAL or SAS team in history. They're expert insurgents, capable of infiltrating a target swiftly and silently and then taking it down. Elites undergo a basic super soldier regimen designed to heighten those traits most useful in covert operations: awareness, speed, stealth, accuracy, and concentration. These super enhancements push them well past the normal human limits and make them incredibly dangerous, especially when encountered in force.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Cryonic_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Cryonic rounds explode and can ignite a target.
<i>Incendiary_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Incendiary rounds explode and can ignite a target.

7.8.6.36 Nacht Elite Rocket

- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** The Nacht Elites are world-class Special Forces operatives, as well trained as any SEAL or SAS team in history. They're expert insurgents, capable of infiltrating a target swiftly and silently and then taking it down. Elites undergo a basic super soldier regimen designed to heighten those traits most useful in covert operations: awareness, speed, stealth, accuracy, and concentration. These super enhancements push them well past the normal human limits and make them incredibly dangerous, especially when encountered in force.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Missile_Rocket</i>	This devastating weapon has extreme range capabilities. Its slow recharge and high endurance cost is compensated by its massive explosion and Knockback.

7.8.6.37 Nacht Elite Grenade

- Rank Minion
- Description The Nacht Elites are world-class Special Forces operatives, as well trained as any SEAL or SAS team in history. They're expert insurgents, capable of infiltrating a target swiftly and silently and then taking it down. Elites undergo a basic super soldier regimen designed to heighten those traits most useful in covert operations: awareness, speed, stealth, accuracy, and concentration. These super enhancements push them well past the normal human limits and make them incredibly dangerous, especially when encountered in force.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Grenade_Rocket</i>	Launches an M30 Grenade at long range from under the barrel of your Assault rifle. This explosion from this grenade affects all within the blast and can knock them back.

7.8.6.38 Nacht Elite Fire

- Rank Minion
- Description The Nacht Elites are world-class Special Forces operatives, as well trained as any SEAL or SAS team in history. They're expert insurgents, capable of infiltrating a target swiftly and silently and then taking it down. Elites undergo a basic super soldier regimen designed to heighten those traits most useful in covert operations: awareness, speed, stealth, accuracy, and concentration. These super enhancements push them well past the normal human limits and make them incredibly dangerous, especially when encountered in force.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.

7.8.6.39 Nacht Elite Gunner

- Rank Minion
- Description The Nacht Elites are world-class Special Forces operatives, as well trained as any SEAL or SAS team in history. They're expert insurgents, capable of infiltrating a target swiftly and silently and then taking it down. Elites undergo a basic super soldier regimen designed to heighten those traits most useful in covert operations: awareness, speed, stealth, accuracy, and concentration. These super enhancements push them well past the normal human limits and make them incredibly dangerous, especially when encountered in force.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Chain_Gun</i>	Sprays a massive burst of lead at a target. Lots of damage and a bonus to hit, but slow to reload.

7.8.6.40 Nacht Elite Martial Artist

- Rank Minion
- Description The Nacht Elites are world-class Special Forces operatives, as well trained as any SEAL or SAS team in history. They're expert insurgents, capable of infiltrating a target swiftly and silently and then taking it down. Elites undergo a basic super soldier regimen designed to heighten those traits most useful in covert operations: awareness, speed, stealth, accuracy, and concentration. These super enhancements push them well past the normal human limits and make them incredibly dangerous, especially when encountered in force.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Crane_Kick</i>	A slow, high damage kick that can send your target flying!
<i>Thunder_Kick</i>	A typical martial arts attack that may Disorients its target.
<i>Crippling_Axe_Kick</i>	This sharp kick that can Immobilizes you opponent and slow his attack rate.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.41 Nacht Elite Unteroffiziere

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description A Nacht Elite at the peak of his game earns the rank of Underofficer and with it a large upgrade in super soldier serum doses. He is on the verge of *Urbemensch* status, and his mind has become focused with laser-like intensity. High ranking Elites are some of the best shots, most dedicated insurgents, and most dangerous close-combat assassins in the world. They can, and have, killed heads of state and world famous heroes.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.42 Nacht Elite Unteroffiziere

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description A Nacht Elite at the peak of his game earns the rank of Underofficer and with it a large upgrade in super soldier serum doses. He is on the verge of *Urbemensch* status, and his mind has become focused with laser-like intensity. High ranking Elites are some of the best shots, most dedicated insurgents, and most dangerous close-combat assassins in the world. They can, and have, killed heads of state and world famous heroes.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.

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<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.
<i>Lycanthropy</i>	Some 5th Column Lieutenants can transform into Nightwolves.

7.8.6.43 Nacht Elite Sharpshooter

- Rank Sniper
- Description Those gifted with incredible accuracy are quickly transferred into the Nacht division, where they undergo lengthy treatments to refine their abilities. The Sharpshooters are natural loners and disdain associating with the rank & file. The only praise they seek is the satisfaction of a silent kill.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Sniper_Rifle</i>	Sniper Rifle is a powerful piece of hardware. It is very accurate and has very long range. The impressive round can knock down its target.

7.8.6.44 Nacht Elite Oberst

- Rank Boss
- Description While most Elites concentrate on learning the basic functions of special operations: infiltration, ambush, assassination, and so on, the Colonels receive additional training in coordinating and planning missions as well as technological skills such as wire-tapping and circumventing security systems. Combined with their prodigious super soldier enhancements, these skills make Elite Colonels perfectly suited for planning and carrying out small to medium scale covert ops.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.45 Nacht Ubervmenschen Rifle

- Rank Minion
- Description The Ubervmenschen of the Nacht have transcended mere special operations status. They are each unto themselves a powerful covert force, capable of performing on their own operations that would normally require an entire team of commandos. In addition to their enhanced physical and mental attributes they also receive a complete training in security systems, computer infiltration techniques, and the creation and operation of surveillance equipment. They are the perfect spies.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
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<i>Cryonic_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Cryonic rounds explode and can ignite a target.
<i>Incendiary_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Incendiary rounds explode and can ignite a target.

7.8.6.46 Nacht Ubermenschen Rocket

- Rank Minion
- Description The Ubermenschen of the Nacht have transcended mere special operations status. They are each unto themselves a powerful covert force, capable of performing on their own operations that would normally require an entire team of commandos. In addition to their enhanced physical and mental attributes they also receive a complete training in security systems, computer infiltration techniques, and the creation and operation of surveillance equipment. They are the perfect spies.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Missile_Rocket</i>	This devastating weapon has extreme range capabilities. Its slow recharge and high endurance cost is compensated by its massive explosion and Knockback.

7.8.6.47 Nacht Ubermenschen Grenade

- Rank Minion
- Description The Ubermenschen of the Nacht have transcended mere special operations status. They are each unto themselves a powerful covert force, capable of performing on their own operations that would normally require an entire team of commandos. In addition to their enhanced physical and mental attributes they also receive a complete training in security systems, computer infiltration techniques, and the creation and operation of surveillance equipment. They are the perfect spies.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Grenade_Rocket</i>	Launches an M30 Grenade at long range from under the barrel of your Assault rifle. This explosion from this grenade affects all within the blast and can knock them back.

7.8.6.48 Nacht Ubermenschen Fire

- Rank Minion
- Description The Ubermenschen of the Nacht have transcended mere special operations status. They are each unto themselves a powerful covert force, capable of performing on their own operations that would normally require an entire team of commandos. In addition to their enhanced physical and mental attributes they also receive a complete training in security systems, computer infiltration techniques, and the creation and operation of surveillance equipment. They are the perfect spies.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29

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- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.

7.8.6.49 Nacht Übermenschen Gunner

- Rank Minion
- Description The Übermenschen of the Nacht have transcended mere special operations status. They are each unto themselves a powerful covert force, capable of performing on their own operations that would normally require an entire team of commandos. In addition to their enhanced physical and mental attributes they also receive a complete training in security systems, computer infiltration techniques, and the creation and operation of surveillance equipment. They are the perfect spies.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Chain_Gun</i>	Sprays a massive burst of lead at a target. Lots of damage and a bonus to hit, but slow to reload.

7.8.6.50 Nacht Übermenschen Martial Artist

- Rank Minion
- Description The Übermenschen of the Nacht have transcended mere special operations status. They are each unto themselves a powerful covert force, capable of performing on their own operations that would normally require an entire team of commandos. In addition to their enhanced physical and mental attributes they also receive a complete training in security systems, computer infiltration techniques, and the creation and operation of surveillance equipment. They are the perfect spies.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Crane_Kick</i>	A slow, high damage kick that can send your target flying!
<i>Thunder_Kick</i>	A typical martial arts attack that may Disorients its target.
<i>Crippling_Axe_Kick</i>	This sharp kick that can Immobilizes you opponent and slow his attack rate.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.51 Nigh Übermenschen Unteroffiziere

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description Unlike the other branches of the 5th Column hierarchy, the Nacht Übermenschen Underofficers have considerable autonomy. The commanders of the 5th Column feel that the subversive activities that fall in the Nacht's responsibilities require a certain amount of independence. This makes the Nacht Übermenschen quite unpredictable at times - and thus, more deadly.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
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<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.52 Nacht Übermenschen Unteroffiziere

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description Unlike the other branches of the 5th Column hierarchy, the Nacht Übermenschen Underofficers have considerable autonomy. The commanders of the 5th Column feel that the subversive activities that fall in the Nacht's responsibilities require a certain amount of independence. This makes the Nacht Übermenschen quite unpredictable at times - and thus, more deadly.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.
<i>Lycanthropy</i>	Some 5th Column Lieutenants can transform into Nightwolves.

7.8.6.53 Nacht Übermenschen Oberst

- Rank Boss
- Description The Nacht Übermenschen Colonels author their own plans to sow terror and fear across Paragon City. Many exist in small cells, completely cut off from their compatriots, both for the sake of security, and to encourage independent thinking.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.54 Raserei Rifle

- Rank Minion
- Description The Raserei are the pride and joy of the 5th Column's army. They represent the ideal to which all other followers of the cause should aspire. Not only are they disciplined, well-trained soldiers, they'e also perfect students of the fascist and racist beliefs that form the core of the 5th Column's ideology. Only those who have proven both their ability and loyalty are permitted to join the ranks of the Raserei.
- AIConfig 5thColumn_Raserei_Base
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Cryonic_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Cryonic rounds explode and can ignite a target.

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Incendiary_Assault_Rifle

The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Incendiary rounds explode and can ignite a target.

7.8.6.55 Raserei Soldier Rocket

- Rank Minion
- Description The Raserei are the pride and joy of the 5th Column's army. They represent the ideal to which all other followers of the cause should aspire. Not only are they disciplined, well-trained soldiers, they'e also perfect students of the fascist and racist beliefs that form the core of the 5th Column's ideology. Only those who have proven both their ability and loyalty are permitted to join the ranks of the Raserei.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Missile_Rocket</i>	This devastating weapon has extreme range capabilities. Its slow recharge and high endurance cost is compensated by its massive explosion and Knockback.

7.8.6.56 Raserei Soldier Grenade

- Rank Minion
- Description The Raserei are the pride and joy of the 5th Column's army. They represent the ideal to which all other followers of the cause should aspire. Not only are they disciplined, well-trained soldiers, they'e also perfect students of the fascist and racist beliefs that form the core of the 5th Column's ideology. Only those who have proven both their ability and loyalty are permitted to join the ranks of the Raserei.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Grenade_Rocket</i>	Launches an M30 Grenade at long range from under the barrel of your Assault rifle. This explosion from this grenade affects all within the blast and can knock them back.

7.8.6.57 Raserei Soldier Fire

- Rank Minion
- Description The Raserei are the pride and joy of the 5th Column's army. They represent the ideal to which all other followers of the cause should aspire. Not only are they disciplined, well-trained soldiers, they'e also perfect students of the fascist and racist beliefs that form the core of the 5th Column's ideology. Only those who have proven both their ability and loyalty are permitted to join the ranks of the Raserei.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.

7.8.6.58 Raserei Soldier Gunner

- Rank Minion
- Description The Raserei are the pride and joy of the 5th Column's army. They represent the ideal to which all other followers of the cause should aspire. Not only are they disciplined, well-trained soldiers, they'e also perfect students of the fascist and racist beliefs that form the core of the 5th Column's ideology. Only those who have proven both their ability and loyalty are permitted to join the ranks of the Raserei.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Chain_Gun</i>	Sprays a massive burst of lead at a target. Lots of damage and a bonus to hit, but slow to reload.

7.8.6.59 Raserei Soldier Martial Artist

- Rank Minion
- Description The Raserei are the pride and joy of the 5th Column's army. They represent the ideal to which all other followers of the cause should aspire. Not only are they disciplined, well-trained soldiers, they'e also perfect students of the fascist and racist beliefs that form the core of the 5th Column's ideology. Only those who have proven both their ability and loyalty are permitted to join the ranks of the Raserei.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Crane_Kick</i>	A slow, high damage kick that can send your target flying!
<i>Thunder_Kick</i>	A typical martial arts attack that may Disorients its target.
<i>Crippling_Axe_Kick</i>	This sharp kick that can Immobilizes you opponent and slow his attack rate.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.60 Raserei Unteroffiziere

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description Raserei Underofficers are zealots in every sense of the word. The Underofficers believe in the 5th Column creed so fiercely that they often recruit new members from the disaffected elements of society. Raserei Underofficers are in equal parts soldier and proselytizer.
- AIConfig 5thColumn_Raserei_Base
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.61 Raserei Oberst

- Rank Boss

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- **Description** The Raserei Colonels are the living essence of the 5th Column beliefs. While the Underofficers brim with enthusiasm, the Colonels radiate an aura of dread and fear. The Raserei carefully foster this mystique in order to keep order within the ranks of the 5th Column.
- **AIConfig** 5thColumn_Raserei_Base
- **Levels** 15,16,17,18,19
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.62 Raserei Elite Rifle

- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** Elite members of the Raserei have not only proven their loyalty to the cause, they have also shown themselves capable of bringing new members to the fold. Aside from combat, the Raserei are also responsible for recruiting and training new members of the 5th Column. Only those who have achieved elite status are allowed to interact directly with potential recruits. Their fanatical devotion to the cause ensures that they will either bring in the potential new member or kill him. Either way, the secrets of the 5th Column remain secure.
- **AIConfig** 5thColumn_Raserei_Base
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Cryonic_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Cryonic rounds explode and can ignite a target.
<i>Incendiary_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Incendiary rounds explode and can ignite a target.

7.8.6.63 Raserei Elite Rocket

- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** Elite members of the Raserei have not only proven their loyalty to the cause, they have also shown themselves capable of bringing new members to the fold. Aside from combat, the Raserei are also responsible for recruiting and training new members of the 5th Column. Only those who have achieved elite status are allowed to interact directly with potential recruits. Their fanatical devotion to the cause ensures that they will either bring in the potential new member or kill him. Either way, the secrets of the 5th Column remain secure.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Missile_Rocket</i>	This devastating weapon has extreme range capabilities. Its slow recharge and high endurance cost is compensated by its massive explosion and Knockback.

7.8.6.64 Raserei Elite Grenade

- **Rank** Minion

- **Description** Elite members of the Raserei have not only proven their loyalty to the cause, they have also shown themselves capable of bringing new members to the fold. Aside from combat, the Raserei are also responsible for recruiting and training new members of the 5th Column. Only those who have achieved elite status are allowed to interact directly with potential recruits. Their fanatical devotion to the cause ensures that they will either bring in the potential new member or kill him. Either way, the secrets of the 5th Column remain secure.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Grenade_Rocket</i>	Launches an M30 Grenade at long range from under the barrel of your Assault rifle. This explosion from this grenade affects all within the blast and can knock them back.

7.8.6.65 Raserei Elite Fire

- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** Elite members of the Raserei have not only proven their loyalty to the cause, they have also shown themselves capable of bringing new members to the fold. Aside from combat, the Raserei are also responsible for recruiting and training new members of the 5th Column. Only those who have achieved elite status are allowed to interact directly with potential recruits. Their fanatical devotion to the cause ensures that they will either bring in the potential new member or kill him. Either way, the secrets of the 5th Column remain secure.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.

7.8.6.66 Raserei Elite Gunner

- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** Elite members of the Raserei have not only proven their loyalty to the cause, they have also shown themselves capable of bringing new members to the fold. Aside from combat, the Raserei are also responsible for recruiting and training new members of the 5th Column. Only those who have achieved elite status are allowed to interact directly with potential recruits. Their fanatical devotion to the cause ensures that they will either bring in the potential new member or kill him. Either way, the secrets of the 5th Column remain secure.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Chain_Gun</i>	Sprays a massive burst of lead at a target. Lots of damage and a bonus to hit, but slow to reload.

7.8.6.67 Raserei Elite Martial Artist

- **Rank** Minion

- **Description** Elite members of the Raserei have not only proven their loyalty to the cause, they have also shown themselves capable of bringing new members to the fold. Aside from combat, the Raserei are also responsible for recruiting and training new members of the 5th Column. Only those who have achieved elite status are allowed to interact directly with potential recruits. Their fanatical devotion to the cause ensures that they will either bring in the potential new member or kill him. Either way, the secrets of the 5th Column remain secure.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24
- **Powers**

<i>Crane_Kick</i>	A slow, high damage kick that can send your target flying!
<i>Thunder_Kick</i>	A typical martial arts attack that may Disorients its target.
<i>Crippling_Axe_Kick</i>	This sharp kick that can Immobilizes you opponent and slow his attack rate.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.68 Raserei Elite Unteroffiziere

- **Rank** Lieutenant
- **Description** The Elite Raserei Underofficers are those destined for positions of authority in the 5th Column hierarchy. Their authority supersedes nearly every other rank; these Underofficers reward the 5th Column with fanatical devotion to the cause. By the time someone has reached this lofty level, they have given up any semblences of a normal life.
- **AIConfig** 5thColumn_Raserei_Base
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.69 Raserei Elite Oberst

- **Rank** Boss
- **Description** The Raserei Elite Colonels are among the few that are able to give their opinions to the leaders of the 5th Column, though most wisely avoid doing so. They control almost all the internal operations of the 5th Column organization.
- **AIConfig** 5thColumn_Raserei_Base
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.70 Raserei_Ubermenschen Raserei Ubermenschen Rifle

- **Rank** Minion

Cryptic Studios

- **Description** Every member of the 5th Column aspires to become one of the Raserei Ubermenschen, but few of them achieve this lofty goal. They are the spiritual and philosophical leaders of the 5th Column - totally devoted to its beliefs and goals. And like any good soldier, they lead by example. Their intense training and super serum infused bodies make them both perfect soldiers and models of perfect behavior. In battle they serve as an inspiration to all who fight at their side.
- **AIConfig** 5thColumn_Raserei_Base
- **Levels** 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Cryonic_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Cryonic rounds explode and can ignite a target.
<i>Incendiary_Assault_Rifle</i>	The 5th Column Advanced Assault Rifle can fire a number of modified rounds. Incendiary rounds explode and can ignite a target.

7.8.6.71 Raserei Ubermenschen Rocket

- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** Every member of the 5th Column aspires to become one of the Raserei Ubermenschen, but few of them achieve this lofty goal. They are the spiritual and philosophical leaders of the 5th Column - totally devoted to its beliefs and goals. And like any good soldier, they lead by example. Their intense training and super serum infused bodies make them both perfect soldiers and models of perfect behavior. In battle they serve as an inspiration to all who fight at their side.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35, 36,37,38,39,40
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Missile_Rocket</i>	This devastating weapon has extreme range capabilities. Its slow recharge and high endurance cost is compensated by its massive explosion and Knockback.

7.8.6.72 Raserei Ubermenschen Grenade

- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** Every member of the 5th Column aspires to become one of the Raserei Ubermenschen, but few of them achieve this lofty goal. They are the spiritual and philosophical leaders of the 5th Column - totally devoted to its beliefs and goals. And like any good soldier, they lead by example. Their intense training and super serum infused bodies make them both perfect soldiers and models of perfect behavior. In battle they serve as an inspiration to all who fight at their side.
- **AIConfig** Default
- **Levels** 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Grenade_Rocket</i>	Launches an M30 Grenade at long range from under the barrel of your Assault rifle. This explosion from this grenade affects all within the blast and can knock them back.

7.8.6.73 Raserei Uberrnenschen Fire

- Rank Minion
- Description Every member of the 5th Column aspires to become one of the Raserei Uberrnenschen, but few of them achieve this lofty goal. They are the spiritual and philosophical leaders of the 5th Column - totally devoted to its beliefs and goals. And like any good soldier, they lead by example. Their intense training and super serum infused bodies make them both perfect soldiers and models of perfect behavior. In battle they serve as an inspiration to all who fight at their side.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.

7.8.6.74 Raserei Uberrnenschen Gunner

- Rank Minion
- Description Every member of the 5th Column aspires to become one of the Raserei Uberrnenschen, but few of them achieve this lofty goal. They are the spiritual and philosophical leaders of the 5th Column - totally devoted to its beliefs and goals. And like any good soldier, they lead by example. Their intense training and super serum infused bodies make them both perfect soldiers and models of perfect behavior. In battle they serve as an inspiration to all who fight at their side.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Chain_Gun</i>	Sprays a massive burst of lead at a target. Lots of damage and a bonus to hit, but slow to reload.

7.8.6.75 Raserei Uberrnenschen Martial Artist

- Rank Minion
- Description Every member of the 5th Column aspires to become one of the Raserei Uberrnenschen, but few of them achieve this lofty goal. They are the spiritual and philosophical leaders of the 5th Column - totally devoted to its beliefs and goals. And like any good soldier, they lead by example. Their intense training and super serum infused bodies make them both perfect soldiers and models of perfect behavior. In battle they serve as an inspiration to all who fight at their side.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40
- Powers

<i>Crane_Kick</i>	A slow, high damage kick that can send your target flying!
<i>Thunder_Kick</i>	A typical martial arts attack that may Disorients its target.
<i>Crippling_Axe_Kick</i>	This sharp kick that can Immobilizes you opponent and slow his attack rate.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.76 Raserei Uberrnenschen Unteroffiziere

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description Raserei Uberrnenschen Underofficers are given the responsibility of leading significant amounts of troops. They are concerned with training their men into peak fighting form - and recruiting new people to the cause. None have ever been taken alive by authorities.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.77 Raserei Uberrnenschen Oberst

- Rank Boss
- Description The Raserei Uberrnenschen Colonels make up the inner circle that surrounds the 5th Column leadership. They are charged with the grand stratagems to further the goals of the 5th Column: the eventual domination of the world. The leaders of the 5th Column foster a competitiveness between these high ranking officers in order to prevent any single one of them from acquiring too much power and becoming a threat.
- AIConfig Default
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	5th Column brawling attacks
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Automatic_Pistol</i>	Small caliber side arm.

7.8.6.78 MekMen

The MekMen are the direct descendents of the original Red Robots that Vandal created in the 1930's. They've advanced quite a bit since then and no longer bear the hammer and sickle icon on their chests. Vandal has been on the forefront of combat AI research for decades, and his MekMen have benefited well from his discoveries. They can react, attack, cooperate, and follow verbal or electronic orders. Despite all these wonderful advancements, they are still just cannon fodder. Vandal produces hundreds of them each week and lets them loose in the city to wreak havoc on their own or support living troops in their operations.

7.8.6.79 Mek Man

- Rank Minion
- Description Vandal, the technological genius behind the 5th Column's equipment and robots, created the first model Mek Men during World War II. He's been improving on them ever since. The tough and deadly versions in operation today are 100 times more dangerous than their predecessors of 60 years ago. Modern Mek Men have tough, thick armor, redundant systems that resist damage, and a powerful onboard AI that makes them faster and smarter than most human soldiers. Coupled with their built-in armament, the Mek Men are dangerous foes indeed.
- AIConfig 5thColumn_Fifth_Mek_Man
- Levels 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34

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- Powers

<i>Whirling_Hands</i>	Launches a dizzying attack against everything in a nearby area.
<i>Stun</i>	Stun blow deals a little bit of damage, but Disorients its targets a whole lot. This attack can Disorient most opponents.
<i>Barrage</i>	A short quick punch. Deals little damage, but is quick and has a chance to Disorient the target.
<i>Energy_Punch</i>	Powerful focused punch that may Disorients your opponent!
<i>Mek_Man_Blast</i>	Mek Man Blast sends a focused beam of energy that can knock foes back.
<i>Resistance</i>	Fifth Column Robots are resistant to energy, lethal and smashing damage. Since they are machines, they are immune to Sleep and Fear powers and resistant to psionic damage.

7.8.6.80 Steel Valkyries

The Steel Valkyries do not even remotely resemble to comely maids on flying horses who fought for Odin. They're instead large, boxy flying machines with jet engines, anti-gravity pods, and that are studded with weaponry. The Steel Valkyries are one of the more advanced weapon systems that Vandal has created. Their ability to hover in place or fly as high as any hero makes them the perfect urban, air-superiority weapons platform. While no match for an advanced jet fighter, they are tough, highly maneuverable and capable of being used indoors or underground (unlike an F-15). Vandal created them specifically to help deal with flying heroes, but they have rapidly proved themselves useful in a wide variety of roles, particularly in helping troops on the ground.

7.8.6.81 Steel Valkyrie

- Rank Minion
- Description The Steel Valkyrie class hover-bot is one of the 5th Column's more ingenious and disruptive inventions. Rumor has it that Vandal (the 5th Column's engineering genius) was inspired by the Rikti attack drones, but there have been versions of the Valkyrie in service since WW II. Mounted with omni-directional jets and banks of fire and forget armor piercing rockets, the Steel Valkyries are very maneuverable and pack a deadly punch. They can make the skies a very dangerous place for heroes and civilians alike.
- AIConfig Default_Ranged
- Levels 30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42
- Powers

<i>Robot_Missile_Rocket</i>	Hoverbots can launch small missiles at long range.
<i>Resistance</i>	Fifth Column Robots are resistant to energy, lethal and smashing damage. Since they are machines, they are immune to Sleep and Fear powers and resistant to psionic damage.
<i>Fly</i>	Fifth Column Hoverbots can Fly.

7.8.6.82 Nacht Wolves

The Nacht Wolves are the newest and most dangerous addition to the 5th Column's already impressive roster. When Requiem returned from his pilgrimage to Ravenna, he brought with him a group of Nicti who had bonded with human hosts. Few in this world are as suitable for bonding as Requiem was. For most it is a traumatic, body-shattering ordeal that leaves little remnant of humanity. When they bond with such lesser men, the Nicti can warp the body to suit their pleasure. Knowing of Requiem's fondness for the wolf as a symbol, they decided to do him the honor of becoming Nacht Wolves.

The Nacht Wolves look somewhat like werewolves. They are humanoid creatures with wolves heads and claws for hands standing close to 8 feet in height. However, they do not have fur like a werewolf. Instead they have thick, tough black skin like that of a rhino or elephant. A fur-like patch of short black spikes covers the back of their shoulders and runs down their spine. Their eye sockets are empty save for an eerie red glow. Tendrils of black smoke seep from their fang-filled jaws.

The Nacht Wolves are certainly fearsome creatures in close combat, as their aspect suggests, but this is merely the surface of their terrifying power. As Nicti, the Nacht Wolves have access to a wide variety of Darkness Control related powers, along with other supernatural abilities. Their semi-insubstantial nature makes them very difficult to kill and grant immunity to many types of attack. Light and Fire based attacks always do full damage however.

Within the hierarchy of the 5th Column, the Nacht Wolves answer only to Requiem directly. Only the vampyri seem truly pleased to be working with the fearsome creatures. For their part, the Nacht Wolves show little emotion or interest in what others think. Their main duty in life is to serve Requiem and find new sacrifices for the Path of the Dark.

The longer a Nicti possesses a body the more fully they can express their own power through its physical form. Thus the older Nicti have more power than the younger ones. They constantly search for viable candidates for fusion and have thus far found several, allowing the Nacht Wolves to expand their presence in the city.

7.8.6.83 Nightwolf

- Rank Minion
- Description The nature of the Nacht Wolves remains a terrifying mystery. These monstrous, werewolf like creatures were clearly once human beings, but they have been warped beyond all recognition or sanity. Unlike the Vampyri, these beasts are not the result of some super serum treatment. Science had nothing to do with their transformation, and many suspect either demons or magic of some kind.
- AIConfig Default_Melee
- Levels 35,36,37,38,39 (Nightwolf), 40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50 (Darkwolf)
- Powers

<i>Claw_Swipe</i>	Nightwolf claw attacks
<i>Wolf_Jumping</i>	Nightwolf can inherently jump real high and travel very fast.
<i>Resistance</i>	Nightwolves are highly resistant to Immobilization.

7.8.6.84 Nightwolf Champion

- Rank Lieutenant

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- **Description** The Nacht Wolf Champion has lost all of his humanity to whatever supernatural force it is that has transformed his body into a monstrous killing machine. Unlike the warriors, the Champions are in a wild state where they can barely be controlled. They are berserkers, unwilling to obey any orders when their enemy is in sight. They are also incredibly tough and almost impossible to kill, which more than makes up for their wild nature.
- **AIConfig** Default_Melee
- **Levels** 35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- **Powers**

<i>Claw_Swipe</i>	Nightwolf claw attacks
<i>Wolf_Jumping</i>	Nightwolf can inherently jump real high and travel very fast.
<i>Resistance</i>	Nightwolves are highly resistant to Immobilization.

7.8.6.85 Nightwolf Champion

- **Rank** Lieutenant
- **Description** Some 5th Column troopers have somehow mastered the ability to transform from a bestial werewolf back into a human. This allows these soldiers to infiltrate safely just about any facility. The authorities have little time to react once they realize what they're dealing with.
- **AIConfig** Default_Melee
- **NoAutoSpawn**
- **Levels** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50
- **Powers**

<i>Claw_Swipe</i>	Nightwolf claw attacks
<i>Wolf_Jumping</i>	Nightwolf can inherently jump real high and travel very fast.
<i>Resistance</i>	Nightwolves are highly resistant to Immobilization.
<i>Metamorphosis</i>	This power is simply the visual fx for a transformed Lycanthrope.

7.8.6.86 Warwolf

- **Rank** Boss
- **Description** The Warwolf has lost all of his humanity to whatever supernatural force it is that has transformed his body into a monstrous killing machine. Unlike the warriors, the Warwolves are in a wild state where they can barely be controlled. They are berserkers, unwilling to obey any orders when their enemy is in sight. They are also incredibly tough and almost impossible to kill, which more than makes up for their wild nature.
- **AIConfig** Default_Melee
- **Levels** 35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- **Powers**

<i>Claw_Swipe</i>	Nightwolf claw attacks
<i>Wolf_Jumping</i>	Nightwolf can inherently jump real high and travel very fast.
<i>Resistance</i>	Nightwolves are highly resistant to Immobilization.

7.8.6.87 Warwolf Boss_Nightwolf_Lycan

- **Rank** Boss
- **Description** Some 5th Column troopers have somehow mastered the ability to transform from a bestial werewolf back into a human. This allows these soldiers to infiltrate safely just about any facility. The authorities have little time to react once they realize what they're dealing with.

- AIConfig Default_Melee
- NoAutoSpawn
- Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50
- Powers

<i>Claw_Swipe</i>	Nightwolf claw attacks
<i>Wolf_Jumping</i>	Nightwolf can inherently jump real high and travel very fast.
<i>Resistance</i>	Nightwolves are highly resistant to Immobilization.
<i>Metamorphosis</i>	This power is simply the visual fx for a transformed Lycanthrope.

7.8.6.88 Vampyri

The Vampyri are the results of one of the first super soldier experiments undertaken in Nazi Germany. They have developed quite a bit since their original versions. Nosferatu has incorporated his discoveries from the Übermensch into the vampyri creation process, resulting in some of the strongest and most terrifying altered humans on the face of the planet. Creating a single vampyri takes as much as a full year to complete, but it takes only a week or so to begin the process. The treatment involves a series of mutagenic drugs and surgical alterations that leave the person with a monstrous appearance and formidable powers. The result of this first treatment is a Rank 1 Vampyri. Over the following year a series of additional surgeries and drug regimens result in the slow transformation from Rank 1 through Rank 5, with new powers and abilities gained at each rank.

The Vampyri are without a doubt the elite troops within the 5th Column. Even the high-ranking Übermensch fear them to a certain degree (although they would never admit it). They form a sub-group unto themselves within the 5th Column, answering directly to Nosferatu and no one else, with the possible exception of Requiem. Nevertheless, they often operate in concert with other troops, especially on missions involving infiltration or lighting raids. They take special delight in any opportunity to prove themselves against one or more of the city's heroes, sometimes even toying with their prey to prolong the pleasure of the hunt.

Vampyri have none of the classic weaknesses of a vampire, although they do have many of their strengths. All vampyri are exceptionally strong and very, very fast. Likewise they all have at least partial invulnerability to kinetic based attacks. They also have the ability to regenerate wounds at a rapid pace, making them very difficult to defeat with any finality. They have no special defenses against Fire or Psychic based attacks, although they aren't especially vulnerable to them either. One of Nosferatu's most proud achievements was the perfection of the Life Drain process. All vampyri can drain a target's life essence and thus restore their own energy reserves. The higher the rank, the more effective this power becomes.

7.8.6.89 Vampyr Parasite

- Rank Minion
- Description The Vampyri are not true vampires at all. They are instead the ultimate result of the 5th Column's super soldier program. It takes a full year of chemical treatments and surgical enhancements to create a single Vampyri, but the result is one of the most deadly killing machines in the world. All vampyri have incredible strength, speed, and resilience in addition to various specialized powers that make them truly formidable opponents. The Parasite Vampyri has the ability to drain the life from its targets - and strengthen itself in the process.
- AIConfig 5thColumn_Fifth_Vampyr_Base
- Levels 35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43, 44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- Powers

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<i>Gloom</i>	Gloom slowly drains a target of life and reduces the his chance to hit. Slower than Dark Blast, but deals more Damage over time.
<i>Pummel</i>	Vampyri brawling attacks
<i>Shadow_Punch</i>	A basic punch draws power from the netherworld. Shadow Punch deals moderate damage and reduces the targets accuracy.
<i>Siphon_Life</i>	The Vampyri taps the powers of the netherworld to steal life from a target foe and transfer some of it to himself. A successful hit can reduce the targets accuracy.
<i>Life_Drain</i>	The Vampyri taps the powers of the netherworld to steal some life from a target foe and reduce his chance to hit. Some of that life is then transferred to the Vampyri.
<i>Fast_Healing</i>	The Vampyri naturally heals at a faster than a normal rate. This power is always on and does not need to activated.

7.8.6.90 Vampyr Mesmerist

- Rank Minion
- Description The Vampyri are not true vampires at all. They are instead the ultimate result of the 5th Column's super soldier program. It takes a full year of chemical treatments and surgical enhancements to create a single Vampyri, but the result is one of the most deadly killing machines in the world. All vampyri have incredible strength, speed, and resilience in addition to various specialized powers that make them truly formidable opponents. The Mesmerist Vampyri have potent hypnotic abilities to entrance their enemies and render them helpless.
- AIConfig 5thColumn_Fifth_Vampyr_Base
- SpawnLimit 2
- Levels 35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43, 44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- Powers

<i>Gloom</i>	Gloom slowly drains a target of life and reduces the his chance to hit. Slower than Dark Blast, but deals more Damage over time.
<i>Pummel</i>	Vampyri brawling attacks
<i>Shadow_Punch</i>	A basic punch draws power from the netherworld. Shadow Punch deals moderate damage and reduces the targets accuracy.
<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Reconstruction</i>	The Vampyri can concentrate for a few moments to heal himself.
<i>Dominate</i>	Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
<i>Fast_Healing</i>	The Vampyri naturally heals at a faster than a normal rate. This power is always on and does not need to activated.

7.8.6.91 Vampyr Adjutant

- Rank Lieutenant

Cryptic Studios

- **Description** The Vampyri Adjutants are usually soldiers who have been promoted from the Ubermenschen ranks and given the singular honor of becoming a Vampyri. This is quite a rare honor, and one the masters of the 5th Column are loathe to give without good cause since it means a year of inactive duty for the Ubermensch. The result however is an incredibly powerful and experienced Vampyri who has both the power and the experience to lead his monstrous soldiers into battle.
- **AIConfig** 5thColumn_Fifth_Vampyr_Base
- **SpawnLimit** 2
- **Levels** 35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43, 44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- **Powers**

<i>Gloom</i>	Gloom slowly drains a target of life and reduces the his chance to hit. Slower than Dark Blast, but deals more Damage over time.
<i>Pummel</i>	Vampyri brawling attacks
<i>Shadow_Punch</i>	A basic punch draws power from the netherworld. Shadow Punch deals moderate damage and reduces the targets accuracy.
<i>Siphon_Life</i>	The Vampyri taps the powers of the netherworld to steal life from a target foe and transfer some of it to himself. A successful hit can reduce the targets accuracy.
<i>Life_Drain</i>	The Vampyri taps the powers of the netherworld to steal some life from a target foe and reduce his chance to hit. Some of that life is then transferred to the Vampyri.
<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Reconstruction</i>	The Vampyri can concentrate for a few moments to heal himself.
<i>Dominate</i>	Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
<i>Fast_Healing</i>	The Vampyri naturally heals at a faster than a normal rate. This power is always on and does not need to be activated.

7.8.6.92 Vampyr Commandant

- **Rank** Boss
- **Description** The Vampyri Commandants are the assistants to Nosferatu, the man responsible for creating both the Vampyri and the 5th Column's entire super soldier program. Commandants are scientists as well as super soldiers, and have a hand in designing and creating other Vampyri. As such, they often personalize their own transformation process, giving themselves special abilities and powers that lesser beings can only dream of. They tend to be a little more risk averse than most Vampyri, since they come from scientific, not military backgrounds.
- **AIConfig** 5thColumn_Fifth_Vampyr_Base
- **SpawnLimit** 2
- **Levels** 35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43, 44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- **Powers**

<i>Gloom</i>	Gloom slowly drains a target of life and reduces the his chance to hit. Slower than Dark Blast, but deals more Damage over time.
<i>Pummel</i>	Vampyri brawling attacks
<i>Shadow_Punch</i>	A basic punch draws power from the netherworld. Shadow Punch deals moderate damage and reduces the targets accuracy.

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<i>Siphon_Life</i>	The Vampyri taps the powers of the netherworld to steal life from a target foe and transfer some of it to himself. A successful hit can reduce the targets accuracy.
<i>Life_Drain</i>	The Vampyri taps the powers of the netherworld to steal some life from a target foe and reduce his chance to hit. Some of that life is then transferred to the Vampyri.
<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Reconstruction</i>	The Vampyri can concentrate for a few moments to heal himself.
<i>Dominate</i>	Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
<i>Fast_Healing</i>	The Vampyri naturally heals at a faster than a normal rate. This power is always on and does not need to be activated.

7.8.6.93 Dark Vampyr

- Rank Boss
- Description The Dark Vampyrs are the assistants to Nosferatu, the man responsible for creating both the Vampyri and the 5th Column's entire super soldier program. Commandants are scientists as well as super soldiers, and have a hand in designing and creating other Vampyri. As such, they often personalize their own transformation process, giving themselves special abilities and powers that lesser beings can only dream of. They tend to be a little more risk averse than most Vampyri, since they come from scientific, not military backgrounds.
- AIConfig 5thColumn_Fifth_Vampyr_Base
- NoAutoSpawn
- Levels 35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43, 44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- Powers

<i>Gloom</i>	Gloom slowly drains a target of life and reduces the his chance to hit. Slower than Dark Blast, but deals more Damage over time.
<i>Pummel</i>	Vampyri brawling attacks
<i>Shadow_Punch</i>	A basic punch draws power from the netherworld. Shadow Punch deals moderate damage and reduces the targets accuracy.
<i>Siphon_Life</i>	The Vampyri taps the powers of the netherworld to steal life from a target foe and transfer some of it to himself. A successful hit can reduce the targets accuracy.
<i>Life_Drain</i>	The Vampyri taps the powers of the netherworld to steal some life from a target foe and reduce his chance to hit. Some of that life is then transferred to the Vampyri.
<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Reconstruction</i>	The Vampyri can concentrate for a few moments to heal himself.
<i>Dominate</i>	Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
<i>Fast_Healing</i>	The Vampyri naturally heals at a faster than a normal rate. This power is always on and does not need to be activated.
<i>Lycanthropy</i>	Some 5th Column Bosses can transform into Nightwolves.

7.8.6.94 Wolfpack

The Wolfpack robots are the largest, toughest, and most dangerous of Vandal's robotic creations. They serve much the same role a tank serves on the battlefield: they are largely immune to small arms fire, can destroy the heaviest armored targets and dominate their zone of operations. They also provide heavy support for infantry and other troops. The Wolfpack bots are incredibly strong and can crush lesser foes beneath their feet without even resorting to weaponry. They do however have a variety of powerful weapons systems at their disposal. All models also have a crushing claw that can easily tear through metal, flesh and bone.

7.8.6.95 Mk I Wolfpack robot

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description The Mk I Wolfpack robot has been favorably compared to a main battle tank when it comes to both firepower and resilience in battle. The big difference is that the Mk I is controlled by an ingenious artificial intelligence that can capably command troops in the field. It also carries enough firepower to take out heavily armored targets and its armor resists anything less than an anti-tank weapon.
- AIConfig Default_Ranged
- Levels 40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- Powers

<i>Pummel</i>	Wolfpack brawling attacks
<i>Missile_Launch</i>	Wolfpack can launch small missiles at long range.
<i>Power_Blast</i>	Power Blast sends a focused beam of energy at a foe that can knock him back.
<i>Resistance</i>	Wolfpack are highly resistant to Knockback.
<i>Resistance</i>	Fifth Column Robots are resistant to energy, lethal and smashing damage. Since they are machines, they are immune to Sleep and Fear powers and resistant to psionic damage.

7.8.6.96 Mk II Wolfpack robot

- Rank Boss
- Description The ultimate in automated fighting systems, the Wolf Pack is much larger than a standard Mek Man, and has correspondingly greater firepower and armor plating. These robots are fearsome in a fight, capable of taking on whole armored companies by themselves. Their unerring aim and large caliber weaponry make them a threat to any hero they come across. Furthermore, their enhanced AI allows them to coordinate with both other Mek Men and the 5th Column's human troops, making them the perfect battlefield commanders. A truly awesome and terrifying machine.
- AIConfig Default_Ranged
- Levels 30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39
- Powers

<i>Pummel</i>	Wolfpack brawling attacks
<i>Missile_Launch</i>	Wolfpack can launch small missiles at long range.
<i>Power_Blast</i>	Power Blast sends a focused beam of energy at a foe that can knock him back.
<i>Resistance</i>	Wolfpack are highly resistant to Knockback.
<i>Resistance</i>	Fifth Column Robots are resistant to energy, lethal and smashing damage. Since they are machines, they are immune to Sleep and Fear powers and resistant to psionic damage.

7.8.6.97 Leaders

Nosferatu

The head vampyri himself seldom likes to get into the thick of things, but that doesn't stop him from being a very, very fearsome opponent. He is seldom, if ever found without a pair of 5th rank vampyri bodyguards at his side – although with their invisibility you probably won't know they're there until it's too late. He has all the powers of a Rank 5 vampyri but more so. He is totally immune to kinetic attacks and his quick regeneration and life drain powers make him very difficult to kill. He is however a bit a coward and will retreat when wounded in order to heal back up, which is when his Flight and Invisibility powers come in so handy.

Vandal

Vandal is a huge armored brute of a man who has the resilience and firepower of a walking tank. While he seldom goes on missions himself he is never afraid of a fight. His armor gives him incredible strength and a maximum body armor ranking. His right arm has an integrated energy cannon that has several different modes of fire. It can project an armor-piercing bolt that can penetrate all but the toughest armor. Or it can fire a powerful area of effect blast. Vandal can also use it to project a disruptive sonic blast in all directions, hurting anyone near him. Finally he can use it to ensnare targets in fields of electricity. Vandal's armor provides him with complete invulnerability to all psychic and life drain attacks. It can also project a powerful force field around himself or others. Vandal is seldom found without a pair of Wolfpack robots to guard him.

Requiem

The most powerful of all the 5th Columnists, Requiem's powers all derive from his fusion with the Nictus and the gifts from the Path of the Dark. Thus his primary powers are all related to Darkness Control. He has maximum strength Dark Blasts and summons tendrils of darkness with wild abandon. He can also regenerate and create fields of darkness around him and of course assume a dark form. He is totally invulnerable to darkness based attacks and mostly immune to kinetic attacks. He has partial immunity to energy, cold, and psychic attacks. Fire and Light do full damage. He can also teleport. Requiem almost always has a cadre of Nacht Wolves for added protection, although he doesn't really need it.

7.8.6.98 Requiem

- Rank ArchVillain
- AIConfig Default_Ranged
- Levels 48,49,50
- Powers

<i>Healing_Flames</i>	Requiem can concentrate for a few moments and to dramatically heal himself with Healing Flames. The power of the flames can also protect the caster from Disorientation for a while.
<i>Blazing_Aura</i>	While active, the Requiem is surrounded by flames that continuously burn all foes that attempt to enter melee range.
<i>Resistance</i>	Requiem is resistant to Knockback, Disorient, Sleep, Confuse, Fear, Hold, Teleport and Fire damage, but vulnerable to cold.
<i>Scorch</i>	Requiem hands are engulfed in flames, igniting the target.
<i>Fire_Blast</i>	Sends a Blast of Fire at a targeted foe and sets the target on fire for a short period of time. Slower recharge rate than Flares, but more damage.

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<i>Fire_Ball</i>	A Fireball consumes a targeted foe, and any other enemy, in a tight radius. Anyone in that area is burned and damaged over a short period of time.
<i>Flares</i>	A quick attack that throws Flares at the target. Little damage, but very fast.

7.8.6.99 Vandal

- Rank ArchVillain
- Description The fiend known as Vandal was once a humble tinkerer named Othman DouL. In the late 1930's, the villain Requiem recognized DouL's usefulness and recruited him into the nascent 5th Column. Othman was happy to oblige, since that meant he could indulge his scientific curiosity without restraint. Vandal's devices aided the 5th Column's sabotage efforts up and down the East Coast. Over the years, Vandal mechanically augmented himself to prolong his lifespan. Now, Vandal seeks to promote his own position within 5th Column and perhaps even challenge Requiem for supremacy.
- AIConfig Default_Melee
- Levels 28,29,30
- Powers

<i>Resistance</i>	Vandal is resistant to Knockback, Disorient, Sleep, Confuse, Hold, Fear, Teleport and smashing damage, but vulnerable to psionics.
<i>Bone_Smasher</i>	The Bone Smasher is a Slow attack, but makes up for it with a greater damage. Has a greater chance to Disorient than Energy Punch.
<i>Energy_Punch</i>	Powerful focused punch that may Disorients your opponent!
<i>Explosive_Blast</i>	Hurls a blast of charged energy that violently explodes on impact, damaging all foes near the target.
<i>Power_Bolt</i>	A quick attack that rapidly hurls small bolts of energy at foes, sometimes knocking them down. Fast, but little damage.
<i>Power_Blast</i>	Power Blast sends a focused beam of energy at a foe that can knock him back.

7.8.6.100 Nosferatu

- Rank ArchVillain
- AIConfig 5thColumn_Fifth_Vampyr_Base
- Levels 38,39,40
- Powers

<i>Dull_Pain</i>	Nosferatu can activate this power to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Reconstruction</i>	Nosferatu can concentrate for a few moments to heal himself.
<i>Fast_Healing</i>	The Nosferatu naturally heals at a faster than a normal rate. This power is always on and does not need to be activated.
<i>Resistance</i>	Nosferatu is resistant to Knockback, Disorient, Sleep, Hold, Confuse, Fear, Teleport and Negative Energy Damage, but vulnerable to energy damage.
<i>Siphon_Life</i>	The Nosferatu taps the powers of the netherworld to steal life from a target foe and transfer some of it to himself. A successful hit can reduce the target's accuracy.
<i>Pummel</i>	Nosferatu brawling attacks
<i>Smite</i>	More powerful version of Shadow Punch, Smite deals more damage, but takes longer to recharge. Like Shadow Punch, Smite can reduce the target's accuracy.

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<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Gloom</i>	Gloom slowly drains a target of life and reduces the his chance to hit. Slower than Dark Blast, but deals more Damage over time.
<i>Total_Domination</i>	Tear at the mind of a group of foes around one targeted foe. Total Domination renders its victims helpless, lost in their own mind and unable to defend themselves

7.8.7 Missions and Story Arcs

Intro Tasks

ELITE Intro.1	Find missing people who were being recruited by the 5 th Column
ELITE Intro.1 (GC)	Find missing people who were being recruited by the 5 th Column

Stature Level 1 Missions

L1_P_5thColumn_Compound1.1	Stop 5 th Column from stealing a painting rumored to be a map to a cache of Axis-stolen art REVEALED: It seems the 5 th Column is under their original leadership
L1 P 5thColumn Compound2.1	Stop 5 th Column from getting their hands on an artifact
L1_P_5thColumn_Compound1-GC	Find file that details 5 th Column's old activities. In doing so, publicly discredit 5 th Column.
L1 P 5thColumn Compound2-GC	Recover stolen weapons from Column

Stature Level 2.5 Missions

SL2_5thColumn_Mission1.1	Shut down recruiting center.
SL2_5thColumn_Mission2.1	Shut down 5 th Column cell that planned bombing
SL2_5thColumn_Mission3.1	Rescue kidnapped physicist. The Column had him working on some sort of small power source. REVEALED: The original 5 th Column had deadly robot soldiers
SL2_5thColumn_Errand1.1	Killtask to use Cryoprojection Bracers on Column
SL2_5thColumn_Errand2.1	Killtask to stop recruiting
SL2_5thColumn_Errand3	Killtask to stop sabotage of tech businesses
SL2_5thColumn_Mission4.1	Break up 5 th Column cell and find leads to other cells

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Stature Level 3 Missions

SL3_5thColumn_Mission1.1	Find 5 th Column terrorist before he flees the country. Also find the Column's extraction plan
SL3_5thColumn_Mission2	Save citizens held for re-education REEVEALED: The 5 th Column has very effective brainwashing techniques
SL3_5thColumn_Errand1	Killtask to learn about 5 th Column's targets
SL3_5thColumn_Errand2	Killtask to stop civilian harassment
SL3_5thColumn_Errand3	Killtask to stop destructive training exercises

Stature Level 4 Missions

SL4_5thColumn_Mission1	Break up cell and gain data on other training facilities
SL4_5thColumn_Mission2	Save kidnapped scientists and their deadly explosive compound from 5 th Column
SL4_5thColumn_Errand1	General killtask
SL4_5thColumn_Errand2	Killtask to stop fighting between villain groups
SL4_5thColumn_Errand3	Killtask to stop recruiting

Stature Level 5 Missions

SL5_5thColumn_Mission1	Save politician from attempted assassination
SL5_5thColumn_Mission2	Stop 5 th Column and Sky Raiders from stealing Rikti tech from a lab
SL5_5thColumn_Compound1	Find and destroy secret research base developing new Ubermen
SL5_5thColumn_Errand1	General killtask
SL5_5thColumn_Errand2	Killtask to stop Column fighting Family
SL5_5thColumn_Errand3	Killtask to forestall gang war

Stature Level 5 Story Arc: The Mysterious Ubelmann

Stop a time traveler from the 40's from collecting data and returning to his time to change the outcome of WWII. You're led along the way by an anonymous informant who turns out to be none other than Requiem

REVEALED: Requiem is indeed behind the 5th Column

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Stature Level 5 Task Force Story Arc: Bastion's Children

Stop production of new Mekmen developed from Bastion's technology

Stature Level 6 Missions

SL6_5thColumn_Mission1	Collect robot parts for analysis
SL6_5thColumn_Mission2	Stop Column from purchasing illegal weapons from Crey REVEALED: Crey will sell weapons to Column
SL6_5thColumn_Mission3	Prevent 5 th Column from accessing Axis America
SL6_5thColumn_Compound1	Rescue a 5th Column defector before he's converted into a vampyr
SL6_5thColumn_Compound2	Several 5th Column robots have become self-aware. Ascertain their motives (Replace humanity).
SL6_5thColumn_Errand1	Killtask to scare new 5 th Column recruits
SL6_5thColumn_Errand2	General killtask
SL6_5thColumn_Errand3	Killtask to provide distraction so some other heroes can hit a base

Stature Level 6 Story Arc: The Mysterious Ubelmann

Stop 5th Column from producing a new Vampyr that can breed true

Stature Level 7 Missions

SL7_5thColumn_Mission1	Stop 5 th Column from reanimating dead Nazi leaders
SL7_5thColumn_Mission2	Save newspaper office from 5 th Column strike after an unflattering article
SL7_5thColumn_Mission3	Stop 5 th Column from destroying Holocaust evidence
SL7_5thColumn_Mission4	Rescue district attorney after he refuses to prosecute a 5 th Column defector on trumped up charges
SL7_5thColumn_Compound1	Go after a Rikti base that's developing a paralyzing toxin to infect all the city. Find the Column already there. They take credit for stopping the plague, and public opinion starts to sway in their direction. To stop this, you have to go to their base and find evidence that they're actually trying to replicate the toxin
SL7_5thColumn_Compound2	Rescue sons of 5 th Column members who underwent genetic alteration to make their children good candidates for fusion with the Nicti.

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SL7 5thColumn Errand1	Killtask to stop harassment of Zig guards
SL7 5thColumn Errand2	Killtask to discourage folks from aiding the 5th Column
SL7 5thColumn Errand3	Killtask to prevent the Column from targeting you

Stature Level 7 Story Arc: A Path into Darkness

Stop 5th Column from planting a Shadow Seed that would begin a new Path of the Dark in Paragon City.

REVEALED: The Nightwolves are created by magical means.

REVEALED: Requiem got his powers by fusing with a Nicti

7.9 Freakshow

7.9.1 History

Daniel Watson's biggest problem in life during the early 1990's was deciding what tie to wear to work. A handsome, successful young businessman, Daniel was one of the up and coming go-getters in Crey Industries' mergers and acquisitions department. He oversaw the forcible takeover of dozens of small research firms and independent laboratories, each time earning himself a big fat bonus check in the process. He has money, women, power, and all the legal and illegal fun he could handle. And yet, despite all of his money and influence he was never really happy. Truth be told, he hated his life.

If Daniel had been able to swallow his pride and see a therapist, he might have found out that a prescription anti-depressant would wash those hate-filled feelings away. But Daniel has never been one to swallow his pride, so instead he wallowed in his hate. He became even more cut-throat in the business world and more vicious in the backstabbing office politics of Crey Industries. But of course all this made him all the more depressed. His life had no meaning, no purpose beyond self-gratification. And yet he didn't really care about other people all that much either. He didn't hate them, but he felt no motivation to help them.

And so finally he snapped. Daniel had never been a violent person. He'd never been in a fight in his life. As he prowled the streets of his upper income neighborhood one sleepless night he chanced upon another young businessman very much like himself. He even vaguely recognized the man, who was drunk and returning home after a night of revelry. Daniel stopped him to ask for a light and then hit him. He kept on hitting him. Daniel pounded the poor drunken yuppie into unconsciousness. He stole the man's wallet and watch and ran off into the night. He had never felt so alive...so happy. For the first time in his life he felt really and truly fulfilled, like he'd done something good for once.

Over the next month Daniel got into a fight almost every night. He had no formal training, just a body sculpted on exercise machines at the gym and a ferocious temper. He always fought men like him – wealthy, young, cocky, and handsome. He felt glorious. For the first time in years he slept like a baby, was pleasant to work with, and actually showed some consideration towards his co-workers. Life was finally seeming worth living. But of course this is Paragon City we're talking about, and no crime wave goes unpunished. One night when Daniel went on the prowl for a yuppie to beat, he found a costume clad hero instead. This time it was Daniel who received the beat down, and a stern talking to as well.

This defeat at the hands of a young, inexperienced hero proved a very sobering moment for Daniel. He tried to give up his nightly brawls but found he couldn't get any sleep. He tried amateur boxing, martial arts, and wrestling, and while the violence was there, the risks and rewards of his illegal assaults were still missing. He still couldn't sleep. And then, one night, as he worked out at the all-night gym, he finally just snapped. He stood up on a weight bunch and let loose with an eloquent, if crazed tirade about the chains of bondage that society imprisons us all within. He declared himself a free man and called on others to join him – to experience absolute freedom to live as they pleased and take what they wanted from life. He then took a pair of 40 pound weights and started smashing the gym up. He was quickly tackled and thrown out, his membership revoked.

As Daniel sat on the sidewalk, panting and exhilarated, two men who had been inside the gym came up to him. They said they liked what he said – and what he'd done. They felt the same way. One was a heart surgeon, the other a successful lawyer. Both hated their lives as much as Daniel seemed to. Neither of them could sleep. Daniel said he had just the cure: the fancy uptown bars would be closing soon and there would be plenty of prey on the streets.

Thus was born the Freakshow – a group of stressed, whiny yuppies who couldn't get to sleep unless they were jumping other yuppies in the streets and pounding them into the pavement. The group grew and grew, expanding out to include men and women from all walks of life. The police and heroes had a hard time tracking the gang because it had no name, never stole anything, and seemed totally random in its choice of victims. One hero had a theory though, a man calling himself The Red Raptor who had, over a year ago, stopped a single crazed businessman named Daniel Watson.

The Red Raptor tracked Daniel down and, using his ability to fly, easily followed the businessman from his offices at Crey Industries, to his apartment, and then back out into the night. The flying hero watched from above as Daniel met up with more and more of his friends. He looked on as they prowled the back alleys looking for prey and then, just as the group prepared to pound on a financial analyst out for his evening jog, The Red Raptor swooped down and engaged the enemy.

Even the lone hero was more than a match for the dozen or so men that Daniel had with him that night. None of them had any real training, while the Red Raptor had his speed, flight, and martial arts expertise. The hero finished the lot of them off in under a minute. He gave them another stern talking to and let it be known that he was watching them. With that he flew off into the night sky. Daniel felt more enraged and more impotent than he ever had in his entire life. He was apoplectic. Then he thought about his job, and a plan began to form.

In the preceding week Daniel had overseen Crey's acquisition of a medium sized biotech firm that had developed an experimental drug designed to help fight pain. As a surprising and welcome side effect, it not only made the user immune to pain while keeping him alert and awake, it also increased strength and endurance. As part of his duties in the acquisition, Daniel still had access to the company's labs and samples of the drug. The next morning he went and made a big show of wanting to see everything again. He managed to distract the company managers and steal several dozen doses of the drug.

That night he distributed the serum to his cohort and went into the middle of an empty lot and called the Red Raptor out. As he suspected, the flying hero had been watching him. Thinking he had another easy victory at hand, the cocksure hero landed in the middle of the group and prepared to beat them all once more. But it didn't happen that way. Instead Daniel and company, juiced on the powerful drug, beat the Red Raptor, breaking his every bone before leaving the dead carcass draped atop a pile of garbage. The group had never felt more alive – they'd made their first kill.

Now Daniel knew that this drug, called Excelsior, was the key to unlocking all of his future dreams. He returned the next day and stole more samples, but he knew he would need a much larger supply. Indeed, he needed a way to manufacture the drug for himself. Stealing the formula was easy enough, but finding someone to synthesize it for him would prove more difficulty. In the meantime he needed a large enough supply to carry him and his friends through until they could start making their own. Once again his Crey connections came in handy. He was able to learn about a truck carrying a large supply of the drug to a local hospital for trial studies.

The next day, Daniel and his friends dressed in wild, punk rock inspired clothing, died their hair, donned masks and injected large doses of Excelsior. Then they carried out the first of what would be many daring daylight robberies. They waylaid the truck carrying the cases of Excelsior, tipping it over with their bare hands and ripping off the back door. Laughing manically they ran off with several months worth of drugs, while one of them stayed behind long enough to spray paint the words "What a Freakshow" on the truck's roof. When Daniel asked the young accountant why he'd done that, the man said, "I dunno, seemed like it'd be fun. And it was."

The nightly news led with the story of this bold attack by a group of clownish thugs calling themselves the Freakshow. Daniel and his buddies liked the sound of it and so the name stuck. They were now officially a gang, albeit a gang with day jobs that paid in the six-figures. This made them one of the better funded gangs out there, as each member cashed in his 401k, sold his stocks, and put everything he had into the Freakshow's first and most important product: making their own Excelsior. All the while their membership continued to grow, with new members coming from many other parts of the city.

The Freakshow's crimes were seldom as well planned and executed as the truck heist. Instead they would simply head out into the city and do as they pleased. Their wild hair, piercings, makeup, and clothes not only hid their identities, they also helped them let loose all of their inhibitions. They followed Daniel's first and only precept: Take what you want, but be ready to fight for it. They stole alcohol, food, and drugs for parties. They trashed fancy restaurants and jewelry stores just because they could. They got into fights with other gangs, and with plenty of costumed heroes. Sometimes they won, sometimes they lost, but they always had fun doing it.

Fate smiled upon the group when they found a gifted young scientist who was willing to join the gang. He brought with him all the expertise needed to synthesize Excelsior. Once the Freakshow stole the equipment and raw materials, the drug factory was up and running. The gang's membership soared, as they started selling the drug on the streets or sometimes just giving it away. People who sought direction or meaning in their otherwise hopeless lives flocked to the gang for the fun, freedom, and power it offered them. The Freakshow became a regular part of the underground party scene in Paragon City. Sometimes they would crash a party and make it even better – giving out drugs and favors and just kicking things up a few notches. Other times they would crash a party and just trash it – fighting everyone there. Sometimes they'd do both. Any way it went down, it was always exciting.

Not surprisingly, Daniel's performance at work was beginning to suffer. He scarcely paid attention to his duties, and were it not for his innate ability to cover up mistakes and spread blame onto others, he probably would have been fired much sooner. As it was, he held his job just long enough to learn about yet another technical acquisition by Crey Industries. This time it was the Delgado-Harris Cybernetics firm. They had been developing new advances in replacement limb and organ technology with military applications. In other words, they were making cyborgs. Daniel was intrigued. Already growing greedy for strength beyond what Excelsior could give him, he saw great potential in this new technology. It also appealed to him aesthetically, since he had recently become a big proponent of tattooing and body piercing and modification.

Daniel ended up inviting Delgado-Harris' chief engineer out to dinner and the two hit it off almost immediately. Risking everything, Daniel invited the man, Victor Bluecek, to come to a party with him. It was, of course, a Freakshow gathering. Daniel knew that if Victor didn't join that night he'd have to kill him. Fortunately Victor took to it like a fish to water. Freakshow had found another member – and this one brought with him some very special knowledge that would change the gang forever.

With Viktor on board, Daniel needed to find a way to steal the parts and equipment necessary to build his own cybernetic enhancements. Ultimately a clever plan eluded him, so the Freakshow went with its old standby: overwhelming violence. The gang assembled, juiced up on Excelsior and one night simply stormed the Delgado-Harris labs in force. They overran the security guards and handily dealt with a trio of heroes who happened by. Using stolen trucks they carted off several tones of equipment before setting the entire building ablaze.

The group set up its first cybernetics lab in a sprawling warehouse that Daniel had purchased at bargain prices through his connections at Crey. It took a few more raids and truck heists to get everything else Viktor needed, but within a month they were ready to try out their new toys on a live subject. Ever the leader, Daniel insisted on going first. He through a huge party of course, to celebrate his rebirth. He had quit his job at Crey earlier that morning and now announced that he was taking the leap – he would live the Freakshow life for the rest of his days and give up the name his parents had cursed him with. Now he was nothing – and as nothing he was utterly free. He was Dreck. Daniel went away when Viktor removed his arm and replaced it with a clunky, deadly mechanical limb that could crush steel. Now there was only Dreck.

The crude cybernetic limb would not have worked with a normal person – which is to say, someone not already addicted to Excelsior. The crude nerve attachments and muscle implants caused intense pain. Fortunately, as long as Dreck kept taking his drug of choice, he never felt a thing. Seeing how powerful their leader had become, the other Freakshow members lined up to be next. Of course there was only so much cybernetic equipment to go around – much less than the demand. Thus a trend was set that persists within the Freakshow to this day. The cyberware went not necessarily to the first in line or the most senior members of the gang, but rather to those strong enough to fight off anyone else who tried to take it from them. And of course once they had their mechanical limbs or other implants, they were very much stronger indeed.

In this spontaneous rumble for replacement limbs, several different Freakshow members emerged as among the strongest and most ambitious in the gang. They also proved to be among the most capable of the group's new leaders. Among them was a dominating young woman named Eve Van Dorn, who took on the new name Clamor. There was also an outspoken veteran named Ralph Francesco, who took the name Bile. Both Bile and Clamor had been active in the Freakshow for quite some time and it was no surprise that they were able to assume the mantle of leadership. The third new leader was surprising – a scrawny 17 year old boy named Ike White managed to win his way to the front of the line through sheer tenacity and willpower. He took the rather fitting name Upstart. These three became Dreck's top lieutenants and each soon attracted a devoted following of Freaks willing to follow their every command.

Word of the gang's new found robotic power spread quickly through the city's underground, and new members flocked to the gang. Between the drugs, the parties, and the radical body modifications, the Freakshow appealed to the most desperate and depraved elements, as well as those looking for a total escape from their lives. Of course this flood of new members only increased the drive for more cybernetic parts and more drugs. It didn't take long for the gang to grow into a major criminal force within the city.

It also didn't take long for the new made leaders of the gang to start asserting themselves more strongly. For his part, Dreck had no particular ambitions for the Freakshow beyond the simple heartfelt desire to create a group where everyone fought together to live as free as they pleased. As long as the group as a whole remained committed to this ideal, he refused to give any more direction. He viewed his main job as making sure there was always plenty of Excelsior to go around and a steady supply spare parts and new technology to keep the body modifications coming. Achieving those two goals usually meant dealing with police and do-good heroes and proved more than enough of a challenge for Dreck to handle. If he started caring about anything else then he wouldn't have time to party – and then what would the point be?

But others saw greater potential within the group. Here was a veritable army of powerful men and women with nothing to lose and a burning hatred for the establishment. Some thought it would be a shame to waste such potential. If the members wanted to destroy things so badly, why not direct their destructive impulses towards some socially responsible or politically active goals? As a result, numerous different sub-factions within the Freakshow began to emerge, each forming around the ambitions and personalities of an individual leader.

Clamor was one of the first to form a politically minded coterie. In her former life she had been an organizer for anti-globalization movements and other, more radical left wing causes. She rallied about her Freaks willing to fight the forces of globalization and one-world economies. Her troop continues to thrive to this day, attacking, pranking, and otherwise disturbing the various multinational corporations and government offices that maintain offices in Paragon City.

Bile took a more philosophical approach to his group. He preached a doctrine of self-empowerment and freedom from the “toxic memes” of modern day life. Bile’s group targets media outlets, schools, and other institutions that try to influence the way people learn and think. Bile’s group believes empowerment must come through absolute freedom of information. They’ve been known to use the Internet to spread any secrets they find themselves in possession of – no matter who gets hurt as a result. Because of this use of the ‘Net, Bile is often referred to as “Bile the Technophile.” They also support various guerilla theater and free speech movements. On a slightly tangential note they’re also promoters for radical local bands and proponents of music trading and copyright busting/piracy.

Upstart has perhaps the most radical agenda of all. He is a through and through anarchist and his followers are devoted to smashing all forms of authority in the world. Upstart established one of the larger sub-groups very quickly, primarily because his philosophy is quite simple to execute: attack and destroy anything that represents “the Man,” which turns out to be almost anything at all.

As these three and other leaders emerged within the Freakshow, the group as a whole became much more active in the city. Where once they were a dangerous gang of thieves, now they became a coalition of dangerous and disruptive social disruptors. As a result, they suddenly received much more attention from both local law enforcement and the city’s heroes. With so many of the Freakshow’s new targets highly placed and wealthy corporations, there was tremendous political pressure to deal with the group as quickly as possible.

In the first of what was meant to be a series of crackdowns, a team of experienced heroes led by a hero calling himself Max Justice ran a year long campaign to round up the sub-group they found most dangerous: Upstart’s anarchists. In the end they were successful, or so they thought. They captured Upstart and brought him to trial, along with hundreds of his followers. Sentenced to life in prison, Upstart’s movement seemed sure to die off. But others picked up where he had left off, and the anarchist corps within the Freakshow continues to operate today, only they have numerous different leaders instead of just one.

Max Justice and his crew might well have continued rounding up different parts of the Freakshow one by one, but the Rikti invasion suddenly interrupted their plans. During the war even the Freakshow members banded together with the city’s heroes to fight the alien menace. Certainly the Rikti seemed willing to attack the cybernetic gangsters as they were the army and heroes. After the war, with the city and world still in chaos, the Freakshow pretty much took up where it had left off. Max Justice was crippled during the war and most of his crew killed or driven into retirement. Ever since the Freakshow has continued to grow, with more and more people asking themselves why they have to live in a society with walls, gates, and rampant corporate greed. Feeling powerless and hopeless they turn to the Freakshow for an escape from it all. And if your idea of escape is body alteration, drugs, crime, violence, and self-mutilation, then the Freakshow is the place for you.

7.9.2 Beliefs and Goals

The Freakshow does not have any one, overarching goal. Indeed, to have such a single minded purpose would belie the gang's very existence. They exist to enjoy a kind of freedom and even hedonism that simply do not exist in civilized society. For many it seems that the Freakshow want to overthrow society and bring about a state of global anarchy. Indeed, for some of the members this is no doubt true. There is no prescribed doctrine and so each member is free to think and feel as they please. If there is one rule in the Freakshow, it is "Take what you want, but be prepared to fight for it."

Although founded on the idea of freedom of thought and self-gratification, it turns out that most people aren't that comfortable making ideological decisions for themselves. Those who join the Freakshow seek guidance and direction as much as anyone else. They've made the big decision for themselves: they've dropped out of society and become rebels. Now they need to know how to be a rebel. As head honcho and spiritual guru to the Freakshow, Dreck stays above such issues. He guides the group from above and makes sure it adheres to the core principal of freedom from any constraint. He is the sole person who can get the entire Freakshow rallied around any specific goal. This seldom happens though, unless the Freakshow's very existence is somehow threatened.

The one rule that Dreck and his Enforcers insist upon being honored is absolute freedom within the group. No one is forced to join, anyone can leave whenever they want. No one has to do anything they don't want to do and there are no obligations to anyone except yourself. This presents some problems from time to time, but not as much as you might think. Certainly there is theft and infighting within the group, but it is relatively rare. Moreover, the Freakshow members are pretty good at policing themselves. Someone deemed harmful to the group as a whole is liable to end up dead or beaten until he learns his lesson. Dreck is fine with this kind of justice. After all, everyone should face the consequences for their actions.

Below Dreck are the other gang leaders within the Freakshow. Each has its own philosophy that compliments the group's core beliefs and applies them to the world at large. Clamor and her cohorts take much of their ideology from the anti-globalization movement, particularly focusing on the malfeasance of big companies. Bile focuses on freedom of information and expression and promotes a certain kind of independent artistic spirit while lashing out at anything else. Upstart's followers continue to honor his pursuit of total anarchy in America. There are of course dozens of other groups within the Freakshow, some consisting of only a handful of members, others comprising hundreds. It is also perfectly feasible for a single Freak to belong to several different sub-groups. Indeed, they often cooperate with one another and swap members back and forth. They rarely compete directly with one another, although spirited contests do take place fairly often (such as which group can blow up the most chain coffee shops in a single day).

One factor that all of these sub-groups have in common with each other is that they all feel that violence is indeed the answer. Unlike the many protest groups and political movements they take their cues from, the Freakshow have no use for protest, peaceful marching, and non-violent demonstrations. For the Freakshow the answer is always violent, direct action.

7.9.3 Technology

The Freakshow doesn't develop any special technology of their own. They simply use things created by others. They'll occasionally tinker with them or even heavily modify them (in the case of the cyberware arms) but they invent next to nothing on their own. When it comes to weaponry, they only use what they can beg, borrow, or steal. They have very limited access to high tech weaponry such as laser weapons, although a few such devices do fall into their hands from time to time.

The only real technology they can claim as their own is the drug Excelsior, which the original maker long ago abandoned as too dangerous and addictive. The effects of Excelsior are almost immediate, giving the user a boost in all physical attributes and a temporary boost to hit points.

7.9.4 Behavior Patterns

The Freakshow's decentralized organization means that some part of the group is always active somewhere in the city, and like a hydra, if you cut off one head, two more will seemingly grow to replace it. The group's behavior patterns fall into two distinct categories: activities that support the gang as a whole, and activities that support a particular ideological constituency within the group.

When it comes to the larger group behavior, robbery tops the list. The Freakshow members have no jobs and produce no products besides the drugs they use to keep themselves from collapsing in pain from their implants. As a result, they must steal everything they use, from party supplies to electrical generators and weaponry. Roving gangs of Freakshow members constantly rob citizens, shops, offices, labs, and anything else they can get their hands on. They tend to prefer to steal from the upper classes rather than the lower, though if they grow desperate or bored, they become less discriminating.

Of course the commodity most in demand is cybernetics. The Freakshow has no capacity to produce its own cybernetics. The group's chop shops are all temporary structures where back-alley surgeons can implant and tinker with the existing electronics, but there's no way they could manufacture computer chips, precisely machined parts, and other materials necessary even for the crude contraptions they use. Much of Dreck's time is spent organizing or just encouraging raids on laboratories, factories, warehouses, and arsenals to get the parts the group needs. In Paragon City the theft of these kinds of parts is so rampant that, even with increased security, anyone who deals in them expects to lose 10-20% of their stock to theft.

Since the war there has been an even tighter clamp down on such high-tech parts and security has gotten even tighter. As a result Dreck has had to start making other arrangements to meet the demand. He now has some more traditional business deals with several manufacturers, including a number of subsidiaries of Crey Industries. Some of the smaller companies he simply blackmails, threatening an all out attack by the Freakshow if they don't pay a weekly tithe of parts. Others, like Crey, he offers to do favors for – attack competitors, take out meddlesome heroes, and so on. Dreck keeps these arrangements a secret from most of the rest of the group, especially his more ideologically fervent followers like Bile and Clamor. Out of respect they don't ask too many questions. As long as the parts keep coming, they're happy.

The other key ingredient for Freakshow happiness is Excelsior. Although they long ago gathered the knowledge and equipment necessary to make the drug, they still need the raw materials, some of which are quite rare. Keeping a steady supply of the drug is absolutely vital for the group's continued existence. Without it those with cyberware enhancements would soon become crippled with pain and their bodies would begin to reject the implants. The results would be catastrophic. One of the most organized and forward thinking things Dreck has done is to secret large emergency stashes of the drug all over the city – a kind of strategic drug reserve in case the flow of raw materials ever gets cut off. Meanwhile, the chemicals for the drug keep flowing in much the same way as the cybernetic parts do. The Freakshow steals most of them and Dreck secretly trades for some, especially the rarer and more expensive ingredients.

The final key ingredient in making the Freakshow a success is the parties. The whole point of joining the Freakshow is to free oneself from the constraints of society and live a happy, joyful life. How can you do that without frequent parties? Well, according to the Freakshow, you can't. As a result, a sizable portion of the group's energies goes into preparing for and holding massive, drunken celebrations. Of course all the food, beverages, and even the locations have to be stolen first, and entertainment secured. The gang contains a number of talented DJ's and musicians and the parties themselves often attract talent from outside the Freakshow. Within a certain segment of the city's population, it has become all the rage to attend Freakshow parties whenever possible. While deadly brawls and random violence are de rigueur at such events, the added danger only heightens the enjoyment for these thrill seekers. And, inevitably, a few of them never leave, choosing to join the gang and make it a lifetime commitment.

The various sub-groups provide the driving force behind most of the Freakshow's many other activities. Each has its own list of targets it likes to concentrate on. Clamor and company go after big business. Bile attacks media outlets and stages his own thought provoking events. The Upstarts smash government property whenever and wherever they can. All of the groups are particularly fond of various kinds of pranks, some of them quite dangerous. Computer hacking, identity theft, forgery and vandalism are all integral elements for every group.

Another politically active sub-group has recently sprouted up, although this one doesn't have any particular leader as a driving force. Calling themselves the HypoCritix, they are a band of vicious pranksters who take great pleasure at revealing hypocrisies within the modern world. They watch the activities of politicians, government officials, corporate executives, and leading members of society for any sign of misbehavior. Naturally they seldom have to wait long. Once they see something that strikes them as particularly outrageous, they strike. They usually try to invoke some kind of poetic justice. For example, a moralizing politician found cheating on his wife would end up kidnapped, drugged, and photographed with a bevy of brothel workers. They are seldom subtle in their techniques, and someone almost always gets hurt in the process. They can also be quite enterprising when it comes to investigating potential targets. On more than one occasion they have found evidence the police would have missed, although its admissibility in court is usually in doubt.

There are also sub-group's that don't have any particular political aspirations, but are rather bound by some common interests. One of the more important groups is the Wrenches, the tech-heads who take it upon themselves to help the rest of the gang maintain their cyberware and install new upgrades onto their comrades. Each member is responsible for providing their own parts and equipment, but most people end up trading with others for what they need. The Wrenches' skills are in such high demand that they never have to find anything for themselves or go out and fight. They get all the parts, drugs, drinks, food, and fun they can handle, as long as they keep their friends in working order.

One of the more interesting sub-groups is the Terminal Ward, made up exclusively of members with serious health problems for which there are no cures. Obviously this is a relatively small group with a very high rate of turnover. The Terminals jack themselves up with cyberware and fill their systems with Excelsior just to keep moving and active. With nothing left to lose, they've decided to throw themselves into the world of the Freakshow and do whatever they can to fully live out their last days on earth. This desperation makes them extremely dangerous and deadly – two qualities the other Freakshow members find very admirable and useful.

Another sub-group within the Freakshow calls itself IDX. They specialize in information and identity crimes, and their most important function is erasing any computer or paper trail a Freakshow member might have left in the "real world." IDX not only hacks computer networks, it also blows up records halls, destroys family homes, and does anything else necessary to remove every trace that a Freak ever existed. They're also quite adept at creating new ID's when needed, although it's usually impossible to disguise a person with a mechanical arm's true nature.

7.9.5 Enemies and Allies

The Freakshow have very few permanent friends or sworn enemies. As with so many other aspects of their unruly lives, there's little predictability and even agreement upon how to feel about the other groups operating in Paragon City. Of course everyone agrees that the heroes are the enemy, but beyond that, different factions will inevitably work with any other villain group when the mood strikes them. Some bonds are stronger than others however.

There is for example a contingent within the Freakshow that very much supports and admire the 5th Column. While their fascist ideology repels some, others admire their relentless crusade to tear society down to the ground. While the Freakshow might not like the new society that the 5th Column wants to build, that's a battle for another day. For now it's fun to help the funny men in their uniforms smash things up, especially when the pay is good.

On the issue of pay, no one can compete with Crey Industries. No one in the Freakshow knows for sure how much the Countess Crey knows about the ties between Dreck and Crey Industries, but it's safe to assume that she has some idea. If so, she doesn't seem too worried or angry about it. While some Freakshow crews do attack Crey targets from time to time, it is more common to see Crey paying Freakshow to perform some unsavory task, such as burning down a rival company's corporate headquarters or stealing some prototype invention. The relationship with Crey is especially important since the company continues to be a major source for spare parts and new cybernetic enhancements.

At the other end of the spectrum are the Rikti, with whom the Freakshow has no real dealings – or so they think. Even the drug addled mind of a Freakshow thug has some residual feelings of devotion to the Earth as a whole, and few of them want to see their planet ruled by aliens. However, the Freakshow has worked with the Lost on numerous occasions, not realizing that the group is in fact a human wing of the Rikti invasion plan. The Freakshow have a definite affinity for the homeless savagery of the Lost and it's not uncommon to see the two groups working towards a common goal.

As for the more mystically oriented groups, well, few members of the Freakshow have much faith or interest in such matters. The Circle of Thorns even scares the group to a certain extent, given how incredibly powerful and mysterious they are. The one exception is the Banished Pantheon, which seems to have just the right kind of nihilistic attitude for many Freakshow crews. Thus, while not common, it occasionally happens that the two groups will work together.

7.9.6 The Future

In the coming months and years, the Freakshow's fragile coalition of different sub-groups will begin to fracture apart. Dreck holds the group together through his personality and his continuing ability to provide the cyberware and drugs that are so important to the group's continued survival. Once the more politically active sub-groups find out the kind of deals Dreck's been cutting with groups like Crey, fractures will begin to develop. The group will splinter into several different distinct criminal organizations, each of which will quickly evolve along its own line.

Clamor takes her group of anti-corporate activists and is the first to break away. They form their own group of hard-core radicals who eschew the pleasure seeking attitudes of the Freakshow for a much more militant activism. The group becomes almost paramilitary in nature, carrying out a highly organized campaign of guerilla warfare against corrupt corporate interests.

Bile's group of free idea loving individualists get swept up in a kind of technology collective, supporting the free software and music movements and the creation of a kind of computerized hive mind. They drift away from the main Freakshow not out of malice, but because it is no longer possible for the rest of the gang to communicate with them, or even understand what they're talking about. Their technophile, hive mind discourse alienates anyone outside their group.

Upstart's followers also grow disgusted with Dreck's pandering to "the man" and so they also break away, letting loose a self destructive, anarchic wave of violence and terror on the city. While destined to burn out, the question remains: how much damage can they do before they die?

Finally a new sub-group will emerge, only to be quickly ousted from the main gang. A group of young Freaks begin experimenting with a new kind of body-modification, one based on stolen Rikti technology. The Rikti have been using this technology to transform the Lost. Now Freakshow members begin using it to transform themselves. The use of alien technology gets them booted from the Freakshow and they start their own gang of body morphing hooligans.

7.9.7 Villains

The Freakshow's minions are primarily differentiated by two factors: the amount of cybernetic enhancements they possess and the amount of Excelsior that has built up in their systems. The stronger, tougher, and more charismatic a person is, the more cyberware they'll manage to get their hands on. Indeed, there are members who have been in the gang for years and still have no cyberware simply because they lack the strength of will to fight others for it. As for the Excelsior, the gang makes as much as its members want, so for the most part anyone who wants it has access to a normal daily dose. Over time, the drug builds up in the system, permanently changing the nerve and muscle structures and eventually producing more profound mutations and distortions in the body. As a result, unlike some drugs that lose their efficacy over time, Excelsior becomes more and more effective as the months and years of continued use pass by.

There is no formal hierarchy of any sort within the Freakshow. Dreck alone has some sort of invested authority because he founded the group and many see him as a kind of spiritual guru. Other leaders, like Clamor and Bile, only "lead" because people like what they have to say and agree with their various schemes. Anyone can have such a scheme and exert such influence. It's not at all uncommon for a member who's been in the gang less than a month to sway a clutch of much more experienced and powerful members to his cause and end up leading them into battle. Of course, they'll give up on him as soon as they find something more interesting to do or lose faith in him, but never let it be said that the opportunity wasn't there.

7.9.7.1 Freaks

The Freaks make up the vast majority of the Freakshow membership. They are generally members who have been with the group for only a few weeks or months. As with any gang, there is a high level of turn over amongst these low level troops. They're the most likely to get caught by heroes or police, the most likely to die in action, and the most likely to quit once they realize what they've gotten themselves into. Unlike many other criminal organizations, the Freakshow does not care if people leave the gang after deciding they don't like it. After all, freedom is the group's byword, and it's something they truly believe in. Thus across the city one can find hundreds of former members, many of whom look back on their time in the gang as a period of youthful indiscretion. More than a few still maintain loose ties with the group and continue to support its basic beliefs.

Since Freaks have not yet had any cybernetic implants, many of them still live double lives. They work by day and party, rob, and fight by night. More importantly, many of them hold decent, sometimes even high paying jobs. The group still appeals to the nihilistic drives lurking deep within the city's professional class. Thus the Freaks are continually a valuable resource for the Freakshow. Eager to please and be a part of the gang, they often steal valuable technology and information from their day jobs and pass it on to the gang.

Freaks arm themselves with whatever weapons they can lay their hands on. Without any cybernetic enhancements, they rely solely on the drug Excelsior to give them an edge in combat. Fortunately, it's quite an edge, putting even the newest Freak head and shoulders above your average thug when it comes to strength, toughness, and accuracy with a weapon.

7.9.7.2 Freak Chopper

- Rank Minion
- Description The dregs of Freakshow society, the Freaks are newbies who haven't earned their metal yet. Instead they try and prove themselves useful by using axes, bats, guns, and whatever else they can get their hands on to cause as much damage as possible.
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26
- AI Close Ranged weapon, self-buffing - healing buff at 20% health. (Power needs infinite recharge)
- Powers

<i>Fireman_Axe</i>	The Fireman Axe deals medium damage and can decrease a targets defense when it hits.
<i>Heavy_Revolver</i>	Large caliber sidearm. Slower than a standard pistol, but can knock down foes.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.

7.9.7.3 Freak_Slammer

- Rank Minion
- Description The dregs of Freakshow society, the Freaks are newbies who haven't earned their metal yet. Instead they try and prove themselves useful by using axes, bats, guns, and whatever else they can get their hands on to cause as much damage as possible.
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26
- AI Close Ranged weapon, self-buffing - healing buff at 20% health. (Power needs infinite recharge)
- Powers

<i>Sledgehammer</i>	There is nothing like slugging someone in the head with this baseball bat.
<i>Heavy_Revolver</i>	Large caliber sidearm. Slower than a standard pistol, but can knock down foes.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.

7.9.7.4 Freak Buckshot

- Rank Minion
- Description The dregs of Freakshow society, the Freaks are newbies who haven't earned their metal yet. Instead they try and prove themselves useful by using axes, bats, guns, and whatever else they can get their hands on to cause as much damage as possible.
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26
- AI Close Ranged weapon, self-buffing - healing buff at 20% health. (Power needs infinite recharge)
- Powers

<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
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<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
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7.9.7.5 Freak_Gunner

- Rank Minion
- Description The dregs of Freakshow society, the Freaks are newbies who haven't earned their metal yet. Instead they try and prove themselves useful by using axes, bats, guns, and whatever else they can get their hands on to cause as much damage as possible.
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26
- AI Close Ranged weapon, self-buffing - healing buff at 20% health. (Power needs infinite recharge)
- Powers

<i>Submachine_Gun</i>	Rapid fire rifle. Can reduce targets defense.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.

7.9.7.6 Mad Freaks

One of the most popular and easy to insert cyberware enhancements is an Excelsior Feeder. This is an external attachment grafted to the person's chest that constantly pumps a supply of Excelsior directly into the wearer's blood stream. This process gives the wearer a dramatically increased boost in strength and speed as well as producing a euphoric state and totally negating the need for sleep. The user becomes manic and aggressive, totally wired and ready for action. As a result they've earned the nickname Mad Freaks. Most Mad Freaks have also managed to supplement their gear with some simple armor attachments – usually spiked shoulder pads. These are attached directly to the bone and cannot be removed without a socket wrench.

An interesting fact is that because they don't have any other cyberware, Mad Freaks over time actually benefit more from the Excelsior than other members. For those with mechanical arms and other replacements, just fighting the pain and tissue rejection associated with the implants takes massive amounts of Excelsior. They thus reap fewer benefits from the drug. Mad Freaks who go without cyberware for long periods of time build up such huge dosages that their bodies actually begin to mutate and develop special powers and other heightened abilities.

7.9.7.7 Mad Freak Chopper

- Rank Minion
- Description Mad Freaks have earned their Excelsior Feeder, which pumps the drug straight into their bloodstream. That makes them both stronger and tougher than humanly possible and more than a little crazy. A dangerous combination.
- Levels 21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33
- AI Close Ranged weapon, self-buffing - healing buff at 20% health. (Power needs infinite recharge)
- Powers

<i>Fireman_Axe</i>	The Fireman Axe deals medium damage and can decrease a targets defense when it hits.
<i>Heavy_Revolver</i>	Large caliber sidearm. Slower than a standard pistol, but can knock down foes.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.

7.9.7.8 Mad Freak Slammer

- Rank Minion
- Description Mad Freaks have earned their Excelsior Feeder, which pumps the drug straight into their bloodstream. That makes them both stronger and tougher than humanly possible and more than a little crazy. A dangerous combination.
- Levels 21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33
- AI Close Ranged weapon, self-buffing - healing buff at 20% health. (Power needs infinite recharge)
- Powers

<i>Sledgehammer</i>	There is nothing like slugging someone in the head with this baseball bat.
<i>Heavy_Revolver</i>	Large caliber sidearm. Slower than a standard pistol, but can knock down foes.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.

7.9.7.9 Mad Freak Buckshot

- Rank Minion
- Description Mad Freaks have earned their Excelsior Feeder, which pumps the drug straight into their bloodstream. That makes them both stronger and tougher than humanly possible and more than a little crazy. A dangerous combination.
- Levels 21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33
- AI Close Ranged weapon, self-buffing - healing buff at 20% health. (Power needs infinite recharge)
- Powers

<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.

7.9.7.10 Mad Freak Gunner

- Rank Minion
- Description Mad Freaks have earned their Excelsior Feeder, which pumps the drug straight into their bloodstream. That makes them both stronger and tougher than humanly possible and more than a little crazy. A dangerous combination.
- Levels 21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33
- AI Close Ranged weapon, self-buffing - healing buff at 20% health. (Power needs infinite recharge)
- Powers

<i>Submachine_Gun</i>	Rapid fire rifle. Can reduce targets defense.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.

7.9.7.11 Enforcers

The Enforcers are the iconic Freakshow gang members. They're what everyone in Paragon City thinks of when they hear the gang's name and they're not too different from Dreck's original form when he first cut off his arm and got a cyberware enhancement made. In the early days these were the top-flight members of the organization – thus the name Enforcers. The name stuck; although the Freakshow has gone on to develop even more outrageous and inhuman configurations. Nevertheless, the Enforcers remain an important part of the Freakshow organization and serve an important role. They are the bridge between humans and machines. The mere fact that they have one human arm sets them apart from the more extreme members, but their mechanical arm gives them the cyberware “cred” to make them accepted as part of the gang.

Although all one-armed Freaks are referred to as Enforcers, the toughest and most experienced of them actually are. There is a coterie of Enforcers devoted directly to Dreck. They are his eyes and ears and sometimes his strong arm within the widespread Freakshow community. They make sure that all the basic rules are being followed – that freedom of action is honored and that no one tries to subvert the group or force anyone to do anything. Other gang members should always feel free to come and talk to a real Enforcer and express their concerns or report any malfeasance.

7.9.7.12 Enforcer_Swiper

- Rank Minion
- Description The Enforcers are what everyone thinks of when you say Freakshow - dangerous punks with over-sized mechanical arms that end in large, nasty looking weapons. They are the true heart of the Freakshow - deadly in combat but not yet totally insane.
- Levels 22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32
- AI HtH, self buffing - individual target - - healing buff at 20% health.
- Powers

<i>Cybernetic_Blade</i>	A Cybernetic Blade is a powerful lethal attack
<i>Heavy_Revolver</i>	Large caliber sidearm. Slower than a standard pistol, but can knock down foes.
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.

7.9.7.13 Enforcer_Smasher

- Rank Minion
- Description The Enforcers are what everyone thinks of when you say Freakshow - dangerous punks with over-sized mechanical arms that end in large, nasty looking weapons. They are the true heart of the Freakshow - deadly in combat but not yet totally insane.
- Levels 22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32
- AI HtH, self buffing - individual target - - healing buff at 20% health.
- Powers

<i>Heavy_Revolver</i>	Large caliber sidearm. Slower than a standard pistol, but can knock down foes.
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.

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<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.

7.9.7.14 Juicers

Juicers utilize dangerous implants to create and control bursts of electrical energy. This painful super power is mitigated only the constant use of Excelsior. The Juicers can also use their electrical abilities to fly – which makes them a flexible troop for the leaders of the Freakshow.

7.9.7.15 Juicer Freak

- Rank Minion
- Description Juicers undergo a very specific and unusual cybernetic enhancement - one that sets them apart from all the other Freaks and does strange things to their brains. A network of electrical wiring and emitters allows the Juicers to shoot forth great gouts of e
- Levels 27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34
- AI Ranged weapon, self-buffing - - healing buff at 20% health. - (Power needs infinite recharge) Have flight, stay on the ground normally
- Powers

<i>Shock_Punch</i>	Juicer brawling attack can lightly electrocute its target.
<i>Lightning_Bolt</i>	The Juicer can send a large blast of electrical energy at a foe. Lightning bolt deals good damage and also drains some Endurance.
<i>Ball_Lightning</i>	Hurls a highly charged ball of lightning that explodes on contact. Ball Lightning deals good damage in an area and also drains some Endurance from each target it hits.
<i>Fly</i>	Juicer can Fly!
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.

7.9.7.16 Stunner Freak

- Rank Minion
- Description Stunners undergo a very specific and unusual cybernetic enhancement - one that sets them apart from all the other Freaks and does strange things to their brains. A network of electrical wiring and emitters allows the Stunners to immobilize even the strongest heroes for a short period of time.
- SpawnLimit 2
- Levels 27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34
- AI Ranged weapon, self-buffing - - healing buff at 20% health. - (Power needs infinite recharge) Have flight, stay on the ground normally
- Powers

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<i>Shock_Punch</i>	Juicer brawling attack can lightly electrocute its target.
<i>Charged_Bolts</i>	The Juicer can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
<i>Tesla_Cage</i>	Tesla Cage confines the target in electrical prison. The target is overwhelmed by the electrical charge and is left helpless. However, disturbing the victim can disperse the electrical charge, which will free the victim from the cage. Tesla Cage deals minimal damage.
<i>Fly</i>	Juicer can Fly!
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.

7.9.7.17 Juicer Chief

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description
- Levels 27,28,29,30,31
- AI Ranged weapon, self-buffing - - healing buff at 20% health. - (Power needs infinite recharge) Have flight, stay on the ground normally
- Powers

<i>Shock_Punch</i>	Juicer brawling attack can lightly electrocute its target.
<i>Lightning_Bolt</i>	The Juicer can send a large blast of electrical energy at a foe. Lightning bolt deals good damage and also drains some Endurance.
<i>Ball_Lightning</i>	Hurls a highly charged ball of lightning that explodes on contact. Ball Lightning deals good damage in an area and also drains some Endurance from each target it hits.
<i>Fly</i>	Juicer can Fly!
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.

7.9.7.18 Stunner Chief

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description It takes some skill to control death dealing levels of electricity as they course through your nervous system, and Juicer leaders have that control. They can use their implants to fire balls lightning and even create fields of crackling lightning around t
- SpawnLimit 2
- Levels 27,28,29,30,31
- AI Ranged weapon, self-buffing - - healing buff at 20% health. - (Power needs infinite recharge) Have flight, stay on the ground normally

- Powers

<i>Shock_Punch</i>	Juicer brawling attack can lightly electrocute its target.
<i>Charged_Bolts</i>	The Juicer can quickly hurl small bolts of electricity at foes. Charged Bolts deals light damage and also drains some Endurance.
<i>Tesla_Cage</i>	Tesla Cage confines the target in electrical prison. The target is overwhelmed by the electrical change and is left helpless. However, disturbing the victim can disperse the electrical charge, which will free the victim from the cage. Tesla Cage deals minimal damage.
<i>Fly</i>	Juicer can Fly!
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.

7.9.7.19 Metal Freaks

Metal Freaks represent man who have given themselves entirely over to the machine/man fusion. By replacing both arms with powerful metal tools of destruction, they're saying that they not only believe with all their hearts in the Freakshow credo, they also are admitting that they can't live life as a loner. With only giant claws or hammers in place of arms, they cannot use tools of any sort. They live for one reason, and one reason only: to smash things and people. Their Excelsior pumps have been modified to also input nutrients and fluids, but most Metal Freaks rely on other to help feed them. It is actually a much coveted duty to help pamper such brave and impressive men who have devoted themselves so utterly to the cause of personal freedom and expression and there is no shortage of groupies and hangers on who will undertake the task.

Metal Freaks are, by nature, incredibly unbalanced mentally. Some may regret their life changing decision, but few ask to have the operation reversed. Instead they throw themselves into their new lives as killing machines with total, senseless abandon. Most add various forms of narcotics and even hallucinogens to their nutrient mixture. As a result they seldom see the world through sober eyes. Life passes them by in a haze of violence and simple pleasures of the flesh and mind. Metal Freaks are easy to manipulate and seldom hold positions of responsibility or leadership within the Freakshow.

7.9.7.20 Metal Swiper

- Rank Minion
- Description The Metal Freak's devotion to the cause is obvious - he's had both arms replaced with robotic contraptions good only for destruction. He relies on others just to feed him - but in combat he is a whirling nightmare for anyone he faces.
- Levels 28,29,30,31,32,33,34
- AI HtH, self buffing - individual target - - healing buff at 20% health. (Powers needs infinite recharge)
- Powers

<i>Cybernetic_Blade</i>	A Cybernetic Blade is a powerful lethal attack
<i>Cybernetic_Blades</i>	A Two Handed Cybernetic Blade is a very powerful lethal attack

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<i>Sawblade</i>	Cybernetically enhanced Freakshow can throw Sawblades with deadly force. So much force that they can sometimes knock down foes.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.

7.9.7.21 Metal Smasher

- Rank Minion
- Description The Metal Freak's devotion to the cause is obvious - he's had both arms replaced with robotic contraptions good only for destruction. He relies on others just to feed him - but in combat he is a whirling nightmare for anyone he faces.
- Levels 28,29,30,31,32,33,34
- AI HtH, self buffing - individual target - - healing buff at 20% health. (Powers needs infinite recharge)
- Powers

<i>Cybernetic_Hammer</i>	A Cybernetic Hammer is a powerful pummeling attack, and it may Disorient foes.
<i>Cybernetic_Hammers</i>	A Two Handed Cybernetic Hammer is a very powerful pummeling attack, and it may Disorient foes.
<i>Hammer_Clap</i>	Freakshow with 2 Cybernetic Hammers can clap their hammers together to send a shockwave that can Disorient most foes in a nearby area.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.

7.9.7.22 Chief Swiper

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description A combination of revolutionary fervor and massive doses of drugs allow the Enforcer leaders to ignore the effects of pain and keep fighting on when by all rights they should have dropped dead. This a trait all the Freakshow shares in common, but at which
- AIConfig Freakshow_Enforcers_Base
- Levels 22,23,24,25,26
- AI HtH, self buffing - individual target - - healing buff at 20% health. (Powers needs infinite recharge)
- Powers

<i>Cybernetic_Blade</i>	A Cybernetic Blade is a powerful lethal attack
<i>Heavy_Revolver</i>	Large caliber sidearm. Slower than a standard pistol, but can knock down foes.
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.

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<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.

7.9.7.23 Chief Smasher

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description A combination of revolutionary fervor and massive doses of drugs allow the Enforcer leaders to ignore the effects of pain and keep fighting on when by all rights they should have dropped dead. This a trait all the Freakshow shares in common, but at which
- Levels 22,23,24,25,26
- AI HtH, self buffing - individual target - - healing buff at 20% health. (Powers needs infinite recharge)
- Powers

<i>Cybernetic_Hammer</i>	A Cybernetic Hammer is a powerful pummeling attack, and it may Disorient foes.
<i>Heavy_Revolver</i>	Large caliber sidearm. Slower than a standard pistol, but can knock down foes.
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.

7.9.7.24 Champion Swiper

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description These are the heroes of the Freakshow - devoted utterly to both smashing the State and having a hell of a good time while they're doing it. They're totally without care or mercy - point them in the right direction (or the wrong one) and mayhem ensues.
- Levels 32,33,34
- AI HtH, self buffing - individual target - - healing buff at 20% health. (Powers needs infinite recharge)
- Powers

<i>Cybernetic_Blade</i>	A Cybernetic Blade is a powerful lethal attack
<i>Cybernetic_Blades</i>	A Two Handed Cybernetic Blade is a very powerful lethal attack
<i>Sawblade</i>	Cybernetically enhanced Freakshow can throw Sawblades with deadly force. So much force that they can sometimes knock down foes.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.

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<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.
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7.9.7.25 Champion Smasher

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description These are the heroes of the Freakshow - devoted utterly to both smashing the State and having a hell of a good time while they're doing it. They're totally without care or mercy - point them in the right direction (or the wrong one) and mayhem ensues.
- Levels 32,33,34
- AI HtH, self buffing - individual target - - healing buff at 20% health. (Powers needs infinite recharge)

<i>Cybernetic_Hammer</i>	A Cybernetic Hammer is a powerful pummeling attack, and it may Disorient foes.
<i>Cybernetic_Hammers</i>	A Two Handed Cybernetic Hammer is a very powerful pummeling attack, and it may Disorient foes.
<i>Hammer_Clap</i>	Freakshow with 2 Cybernetic Hammers can clap their hammers together to send a shockwave that can Disorient most foes in a nearby area.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.

7.9.7.26 Tank Freaks

The tank freak is the most extreme incarnation of Freakshow cybernetic enhancement technology. Unlike the Metal Freaks, who live a kind of strange human life and still consider themselves men, the Tank Freaks have given up all pretenses to humanity. They think of themselves as machines first – the ultimate expression of human self-determination and freedom from the strictures of society. As machines, the rules of mankind simply do not apply to them anymore.

All that is left of the original human inside a Tank Freak is the head and spinal cord. Everything else has been replaced with machine parts, while the brain and spine have both undergone extreme modifications. The process has a powerfully traumatic effect on the person's brain that varies wildly from person to person. Some lose all emotional ties to the world around them, becoming almost robotic. Others go nearly mad with the constant flow of various contradictory feelings. A few unlock a kind of inner brilliance within their minds, but just as many becoming slobbering idiots. For the most part though, Tank Freaks can keep a kind of even keel and function normally. Unlike their drug addled compatriots the Metal Freaks, the Tanks don't resort to drugs and cheap pleasures of the flesh to amuse themselves. They're often clear headed enough to serve as able leaders within the gang.

All Tank Freaks are incredibly hard to hurt, with very high armor ratings and partial immunities to Cold, Fire, Electricity, and Psychic based attacks. Their primary weaponry is their two great weapons of destruction they have in place of arms. Additionally, most have added various upgrades to their suits to help them overcome the Freakshow's many foes.

7.9.7.27 Tank Swiper

- Rank Boss

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- **Description** These fully armored, incredibly tough Freaks are a rare breed indeed, but as their name suggests, they are almost unstoppable in combat. The one ray of hope when confronting a Tank Freak is that their electronics are not always top of the line, leaving th
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34
- **AI** Attacks "smart", multiple targeter
- **Powers**

<i>Cybernetic_Blades</i>	A Two Handed Cybernetic Blade is a very powerful lethal attack
<i>Sawblade</i>	Cybernetically enhanced Freakshow can throw Sawblades with deadly force. So much force that they can sometimes knock down foes.
<i>Tank_Grenade</i>	Launches an M30 Grenade at long range from The Tanks backpack. This explosion from this grenade affects all within the blast and can knock them back.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow Tanks are resistant to smashing and lethal damage, Knockback and Disorient. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.

7.9.7.28 Tank Smasher

- **Rank** Boss
- **Description** These fully armored, incredibly tough Freaks are a rare breed indeed, but as their name suggests, they are almost unstoppable in combat. The one ray of hope when confronting a Tank Freak is that their electronics are not always top of the line, leaving th
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34
- **AI** Attacks "smart", multiple targeter
- **Powers**

<i>Cybernetic_Hammers</i>	A Two Handed Cybernetic Hammer is a very powerful pummeling attack, and it may Disorient foes.
<i>Hammer_Clap</i>	Freakshow with 2 Cybernetic Hammers can clap their hammers together to send a shockwave that can Disorient most foes in a nearby area.
<i>Tank_Grenade</i>	Launches an M30 Grenade at long range from The Tanks backpack. This explosion from this grenade affects all within the blast and can knock them back.
<i>Dull_Pain</i>	A Freakshow can activate this power to heal himself and to increase his maximum Hit Points for a short time.
<i>Revive</i>	If the Freakshow falls, his cybernetics may Revive him from the brink of death, returning with some of his hit points.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow are resistant to cold. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.
<i>Resistance</i>	Freakshow Tanks are resistant to smashing and lethal damage, Knockback and Disorient. However, they are vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts them out.

7.9.7.29 Arch Villains

7.9.7.30 Clamor

- Rank ArchVillain
- Description Eve van Dorn's had a hard time finding friends as dedicated to violence as herself. For a while she found a home in the 5th Column, but she could only make it so far in that organization. So she turned to the Freakshow. Under the name Clamor, Eve's had no trouble rallying other Freaks to her banner.
- Levels 25
- Powers

<i>Resistance</i>	Clamor is resistant to Knockback, Disorient, Sleep, Confuse, Fear, Teleport and Cold Damage. However, she is vulnerable to energy damage. It shorts her out.
<i>Cybernetic_Claw</i>	A Cybernetic Claw is a powerful slashing attack.
<i>Neutrino_Bolt</i>	A very quick, but low damage attack. Neutrino Blast can reduce the targets defense.
<i>Neutron_Bomb</i>	This devastating attack lobbs an explosive sphere of deadly radiation damaging the target and all nearby foes. Neutron Bomb can bypass some of a targets defenses and reduce the targets defense.

7.9.7.31 Bile (not used)

- Rank ArchVillain
- Description Ralph Francesco was an early members of the nihilistic group that would later become the Freakshow. his experience as an army veteran made it inevitable that he'd become one the organization's top men. Because of this lofty position, Ralph was one of the first to undergo cybernetic augmentation. Henceforth, he became known only as Bile.
- Levels 30

7.9.7.32 Drek (not used)

- Rank ArchVillain
- Description Born Daniel Watson, Dreck is the glue that holds the militantly independent Freakshow together. The Freaks may chafe at his orders, they may laugh at his haircut, but they all have to respect Dreck's absolute lust for violence.
- Levels 34

7.9.8 Missions and Story Arcs

Stature Level 4 Pools	
SL4_Freakshow_Mission1	Recover a "Chameleon Suit" disguise from the Freaks, thus foiling their plot to wreak chaos on City Hall
SL4_Freakshow_Errand1	General killtask
SL4_Freakshow_Errand2	Killtask to prevent protest of Upstart's imprisonment REVEALED: Freaks are divided into factions REVEALED: Upstart is in jail

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SL4 Freakshow Errand3	Killtask to protect Terra Volta reactor
SL4 Freakshow Mission2.1	Recover stolen weapons from Freakshow

Stature Level 4 Story Arc: A Hand of Iron

After running a few missions against the Freakshow, you learn that your actions have put an undercover cop in danger. You try to rescue him, but learn that he's gone over to the Freakshow.

Stature Level 4 Task Force Story Arc: Clamor and Destruction

Some disturbing sonic technology has fallen into the Freaks' hands, and you have to contain the potential damage. It won't be easy, since the Freakshow have their eyes on the prize: the Ziggurat! Clamor and her men plan to break their fellow hooligans out of the Zig using their strange sonic bombs.

REVEALED: The Freakshow faction leader Clamor is a female 5th Column defector.

Stature Level 5 Pools

SL5 Freakshow Mission1	Rescue a corrupt politician from the Freakshow
SL5 Freakshow Mission2	Stop Freaks from disrupting satellite communications conference
SL5_Freakshow_Mission3	Stop Freakshow from hacking into a military contractor's computer system and making off with the designs
SL5 Freakshow Errand1	Killtask to discourage Freaks from targeting you
SL5 Freakshow Errand2	General killtask
SL5 Freakshow Errand3	Killtask to protect Terra Volta reactor

Stature Level 5 Story Arc: The Freaklympics

Those nutty Freaks are running a contest to see who can cause the most chaos! When the Upstart team tries to break their leader out of jail (along with Clamor, of course), you have to stop them.

REVEALED: Dreck betrayed Upstart, sending him to jail. Apparently Upstart found out something about Dreck that Dreck wanted kept under wraps.

Stature Level 6 Pools

SL6_Freakshow_Mission1	Recover plutonium from Freakshow. Learn that they stole it from Crey—but Crey never reported the theft! REVEALED: Hints at Freakshow/Crey connection
SL6 Freakshow Mission2	Recover stolen Rikti tech from Freaks

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SL6 Freakshow Mission3	Shut down Excelsior lab
SL6 Freakshow Compound1	Stop contest to see which Freaks can torch the most buildings!
SL6 Freakshow Compound2	Recover techno-magic implants from Freakshow
SL6 Freakshow Errand1	General killtask
SL6 Freakshow Errand2	General killtask
SL6 Freakshow Errand3	General killtask

Stature Level 6 Story Arc: Burning Dreck

A dead reporter's files lead you to investigate the Freakshow's connections. Before too long, you learn that they are deeply connected to Crey. They work as mercenaries for Crey, and Dreck has even deeper connections – he used to be a Crey employee! You stay on the trail and learn that Dreck's willing to sell the services of his loyal Freaks to just about anybody. When this information goes public, the Freakshow starts to splinter. After a few battles, Dreck manages to pick up the pieces.

REVEALED: The Freaks will work as mercenaries

7.10 Gangs of Paragon City

7.10.1 The Superadine Connection

This coalition lead by the Family is trying to return the drug Superadine to the streets of Paragon City. Their primary base of operations is Talos Island but they have holding areas in Skyway City as well. Recently they have established a strong presence and begun pushing Supes on the streets in the Atlas Park area. Their primary rivals are the Smugglers and the Tsoo.

7.10.2 King's Row: The Skulls

Background: King's Row has always been a rougher, darker side of town. Even when the garment factory was at the peak of its production this area had a grittier feel to it. In the present day this shadowy reflection of the brighter parts of the City has become a haven for a gang that call themselves the Skulls.

Initially this group struggled to maintain a foothold. They were few in number and despite their combat prowess and ritual magic they were in danger of being driven out. It was about this time that Sebastian Frost began looking for a gang to be his presence in King's Row. He got word of the Skulls and arranged a meeting with them and the largest other gang in the area, the Shadows. Frost proposed that the gangs merge and become part of his operation. He sweetened the pot by explaining how much profit they could count on when Supes hit the street again. There were dissenters but after several of them were killed by Trolls Frost had brought with him, the rest saw reason. Having the Trolls as allies instead of enemies made a lot of sense to everyone present.

The former Shadows brought numbers and knowledge of the streets of King's Row to the union. The Skulls brought fighting techniques that they began to pass on to the others through training sessions. To this day it is not unusual to find Skulls members on the Streets of the Row in the middle of a combat class.

The Tsoo have recently taken notice of the increased activities of the Skulls and are not pleased by their growth and incursion into Tsoo territory. Tension often erupts between the two groups.

Look and Feel: All the Skulls use skull style face paint. The thugs have outfits that are primarily grey. Lieutenants and bosses tend to black.

Hierarchy: Fatal, Lethal, Baneful, Baleful, Grim, Pernicious, Ruthless, Grave, Elegy, Hymn, Lament, Dirge, Requiem

Powers: Thugs will use knives, bats and guns. Lieutenants and bosses might add powers indicative of mental abilities.

Stature Level 1 Pools	
GIFT_Intro-GC.1, GIFT_Intro.1	Investigate a gang warehouse and find it is a Skulls' distribution site
L1 P Skulls Mission1	Confiscate Superadine
L1 P Skulls Compound1.2	Stop Skulls from attacking a Rave
L1 P Skulls Errand1	Patrol Atlas Park
L1 P Skulls Mission1	Bust up a Superadine lab

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L1 P Skulls Compound1.1	Stop a gang war between Hellions and Skulls
L1 P Skulls Errand1	Patrol Galaxy City

Stature Level 2 Story Arc: Bonefire

A stolen mystic cloak leads you to a kidnapped mystic, who ahas learned the secrets of the artifact cartel composed of the Hellions, Outcasts, and Warriors. Go after more gang members when Athena Currie sens you to investigate the Skulls. Uncover a ledger that links the Superadine ring to the Trolls and the Family.

REVEALED: The inner workings of the gangs of Paragon City

Stature Level 2 Pools

SL2 Skulls Mission1	Stop fight between Hellions and Skulls
SL2 Skulls Mission2	Destroy drug lab
SL2_Skulls_Errand1	Killtask to investigate drug sales REVEALED: The Skulls have a larger, more powerful partner in crime
SL2 Skulls Errand2	Killtask to discourage drug sales in Perez Park

7.10.3 Skyway City: The Trolls

Background: Most people are not entirely sure how the Trolls came to exist. Some say that the bridges of Skyway City were built and the Trolls simply came with them, others blame the Rikti Invasion. The truth is rooted on the streets of Paragon City. It has always been public knowledge that Superadine is extremely addictive but no official studies were ever done to determine the effects of the drug over a lifetime. The oldest Trolls are all examples of what can happen to a longtime Supes addict. They have had their strength and endurance permanently increased, but are twisted and misshapen as well. Their skin has also been tinted green by the process. The leader of this gang is simply known as Grendel. He was once a close friend of Sebastian Frost, the leader of the gang known as the Family. He was dosed with Superadine by a rival within the Family and was transformed into the first Troll. Grendel was like a wild beast for a time. He hunted down and killed the man that drugged him and several other key Family members. As always, Sebastian Frost saw an opportunity where others might have seen a problem. He found Grendel hiding out on the streets in Skyway city and offered him a deal. Frost would back him and give him the opportunity to run his own gang. In return Grendel would cease his attacks on the Family and help Frost with his Supes operation. Grendel grudgingly accepted on one condition. He asked Frost to help him create more beings like him and thus the Trolls were born.

Superadine is the core of this gang. Taking the drug has been turned into dares, rites of passage, and even rituals. They hold the drug in reverence and embrace the changes that it causes within them. New members are often given the “Test of Tolerance”. They are given a large dose of the drug and if they cannot remain conscious and functional they are not allowed in. They are taught to spread the drug with an almost religious fervor. Finally there are ceremonies wherein a group of Trolls all take Superadine and go on a rampage together. This willingness to embrace all the effects of the drug both positive and negative makes them deadly in combat.

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The Trolls believe strongly in the survival of the fittest. To transition to the leadership of the group one must first serve in the position of Gardvord. All lieutenants in the group are called by this title which is derived from the name of a legendary troll chaser or killer. It is the duty of each Gardvord to test those beneath him and weed out the weak ones.

Look and feel: As previously mentioned the leaders of the Trolls are hulking greenish brutes. The longer they have taken Supes the more it has affected them and the higher up they are likely to rise in the gang. The lower echelons tend to tattoo and modify their bodies to try and emulate their masters.

Hierarchy: The five ranks of thug in the Trolls are as follows: Trollman, Trollkin, Jutal, Joten, Gyger. Lieutenants are Gardvord and bosses have names like Caliban or Morlock.

Powers: The Thug rank Trolls will have minor powers from the Regeneration, Super Strength and Earth Grasp power sets. The Lieutenants and Bosses will add powers from Stone Armor and higher level Earth Grasp powers.

Stature Level 3 Pools	
SL3 Trolls Mission1	Stop Trolls' contest of strength
SL3 Trolls Mission2	Save guests from underground dance party the Trolls have busted up
SL3 Trolls Errand1	Killtask to stop thefts
SL3 Trolls Errand2	Killtask to stop drug induced rampages
SL3 Trolls Errand3	Killtask to stop assaults

Hollows Pools	
Hollows_Wincott_StoryArc.xls, Errand1	Defeat Trolls in Cherry Hills
Hollows_Flux_StoryArc.xls, Mission 2	Stop Troll assault on police barracks
Hollows_Julius_Pool.xls, Hollows_Julius_Errand1	Killtask to stop Trolls treating people as slaves
Hollows_Julius_StoryArc.xls, Errand2	Killtask to discourage damming of Red River
Hollows_Julius_StoryArc.xls, Mission3	Clear out Troll slave camp
Hollows_Talshak_Pool.xls,	Killtask to discourage continued tunneling

Hollows Talshak Errand1	
Hollows_Talshak_StoryArc.xls, Compound1	Clear out 2 Superadine storehouses
Hollows_Talshak_StoryArc.xls, Mission3	Clear out Den of Atta

7.10.4 Independence Port: The Family

Background: Sebastian Frost was born in Paragon City during the height of the drug war of the 1970's. His father Harry was one of the chief drug connections on the streets at that time. Harry eluded the grasp of the Regulators for many years. After the attacks by the Regulators and the Dawn Patrol on South American and Central Asian drug fields left a vacuum of narcotics, most of the street dealers panicked. Knowing that something would fill the gap, Harry saw it as an opportunity. He kept his eyes open and his ear to the ground which is how he heard about Superadine. Superadine or Supes as it came to be known was a modified version of the soldier enhancement formulas developed by the US Army during WW II. Harry heard that someone was making enough of it to flood the streets. After some discreet inquiries he managed to get in touch with the mysterious group that was manufacturing the new drug. After some delicate negotiations Harry became the primary street contact for Superadine. Numerous dealers jumped at the chance to work for Harry and get back on the gravy train.

During this turbulent time Harry tried to keep most of his activities a secret from his son. He wanted a better life for him.

“Someday you will make your mark on this town Sebastian.” He would say.

Most of the boy's friends worked for his father however and Harry couldn't hide everything from the lad.

Sebastian was devastated when his father died during an assault by the Back Street Brawler on a Supes warehouse. Shortly after his father's death, while still grieving intensely, Sebastian found a secret room in their house and it was only then that he discovered the depth of his father's connection to Superadine. There were notes, a great deal of money and a small reservoir of the original soldier enhancement drug. Among all of this Sebastian also found a letter from his father. In it Harry expressed hope that the boy would never find these things and encouraged him to destroy them if he did. The words entreated Sebastian to make something of his life.

Torn with grief and rage the boy injected almost the entire dose of the enhancement drug into himself. Instead of dying as he might have wished in that moment when Sebastian woke up he was... different. The drug had made him stronger, faster and most definitely tougher. He also found that his grief was replaced by a burning sense of purpose. He would do something with his life. He would build the strongest criminal organization that Paragon City had ever seen. Sebastian gathered his friends from the streets to him and formed the Family.

The first step was finding a way to create a close approximation of the soldier enhancement formula. Sebastian hired top chemical engineers who, after a great deal of work, were able to do so. The process was extremely expensive however. The pure drug would have to be saved for Family members only. From there Sebastian instructed his scientists to cut the drug and make enough of the much more addictive Superadine to satisfy the users in Paragon city.

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To assist him in spreading this vile substance Frost has made deals with two other Paragon city gangs. The first is the Trolls. The inner circle of the Trolls were all used as test subjects for the various incarnations of Supes that Frosts scientists were creating. They were made more powerful by these tests but were also twisted by them. Most importantly for Frost they became addicted to the drug. He uses that addiction to keep them in line. The other gang that Frost is using is known as the Ronin. Frost forged two gangs together to form a stronger gang to represent him in King's Row.

With the help of these allies Frost has been able to begin making Supes readily available on the street again.

Look and feel: The Family has become roughly equivalent to an enhanced version of the Mafia. Positions in the group are often given to family members or close friends and passed down thorough the generations. The upper echelon dress in suits and even the low level members never look ratty. Every member of the Family has been given small doses of the soldier enhancement formula and is therefore stronger and tougher than the average thug. Upon promotion to Lieutenant the dosage is increased and when a Lieutenant is made a boss he becomes almost as powerful as Sebastian Frost himself. This edge has kept the Family at the top of the food chain for years.

Hierarchy: The five ranks at the bottom of the Family are Tough, Runner, Dealer, Cleaner, and Consultant. Lieutenants are addressed by the title Foreman and their last name. Some examples would be Leland, Marko, or Pierce. (Note: These names will all reference the Family of Evil Mutants) Leaders of the Family simply go by their names such as Sebastian Frost, Erik Cassidy or Black Tom. (These will reference Evil Mutant Leaders.)

Powers: The Family thugs will have powers from the Invulnerability, Weapon Master and Firearms sets. Lieutenants and bosses will add powers from the Kinetic Boost, Super Reflexes and Empathy sets.

Stature Level 4 Pools	
SL4 TheFamily Mission1	Bust up Superadine Lab
SL4 TheFamily Compound1	Stop battle between Family and Tsoo
SL4 TheFamily Errand1	Killtask to stop bullying of business owners
SL4 TheFamily Errand2	Killtask to stop protest of Family member's trial
SL4 TheFamily Errand3	General killtask

Stature Level 5 Pools	
SL5 TheFamily Mission1	Stop Family from hiring Freakshow to do their dirty work
SL5 TheFamily Mission2	Stop assassination of witness
SL5 TheFamily Mission3	Protect harassed business owner
SL5 TheFamily Mission4	Bust up warehouse that was fueling Superadine trade
SL5 TheFamily Mission6	Stop torching insurance scam

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SL5 TheFamily Errand1	General killtask
SL5 TheFamily Errand2	Killtask to stop harassment
SL5 TheFamily Errand3	Killtask to stop harassment
SL5 TheFamily Mission5.1	Rescue Family member who's about to roll over

7.10.5 Smugglers Run

This group is dedicated to distributing art treasures and antiquities throughout Paragon City for fun and profit. There is a darker side to their operation that only the leadership of the Warriors, the gang at the top of this particular food chain, is aware of. Their primary rival is the Superadine Connection who they are fighting with for control of Too Dark Park. Recently they have also garnered the attention and hostility of the Circle of Thorns.

7.10.6 Atlas Park: The Hellions

Background: Once upon a time there was a second rate gang called the Hellions in Atlas Park. Their leader was called Nick Pocker. Pocker had always wanted the Hellions to be power players in the Paragon City gang scene but in a town filled with tech, magic and supers they just couldn't get off the ground. Then along came Odysseus. He offered Pocker the deal of a lifetime. He would make certain that the Hellions could not only defend their turf but increase the size of it. He would see that their ranks stopped shrinking and started growing. He would give them everything they ever wanted and all of it would come through the power of a little idol. He told Pocker it would bring them good fortune.

Nick was skeptical at first, even derisive but Odysseus remained resolute. He told the ganger that he was going to leave the idol and let Nick decide. If it helped the Hellions he would be back to talk about the future. In the face of this wealthy mans determination and never being one to look a gift horse in the mouth Pocker figured he might as well give it a try. After accepting Odysseus' "gift" things changed almost immediately. That night the Hellions attacked a rival gang and defeated them utterly. The rival members still alive promptly joined up and literally overnight the Hellions turf and numbers almost doubled. The trend continued for a week and at the end of that time the Hellions owned Atlas Park.

Odysseus came back at that time and offered the gang a new deal. He would let them keep the idol and give them the opportunity to get their hands on more objects like it. In return they would have to help him distribute certain items on the black market and one other request that he would name later. Intoxicated by his new found position and power Pocker jumped at the deal.

Since that time Pocker has realized that no gift is without a price. The Hellions have had great fortune but all their members are darker and more sinister than they used to be. Nothing seems to matter to them anymore other than accumulating and passing on the items that are passed to them through Odysseus' organization. Pocker knows that his people are being twisted, he knows that he is likely the most twisted of all. The kicker is that he just doesn't care.

Recently the Circle of Thorns has begun to suspect that the mystical backing the Hellions are receiving is the work of their ancient Demon enemy. They have no proof, just a cold fear that is slowly forming in their stomach. They are starting to investigate the Hellions and the Warriors. It could be some time before they find anything concrete. In the meantime they should take that most basic of advice, always trust your gut.

Look and feel: The Hellions have taken to wearing vests similar to the ones the Warriors use but theirs are darker. The Lieutenants vests are marked with arcane symbols. The bosses wear demonic masks in addition to the other regalia.

Hierarchy: Seeker, Fallen, Imp, Initiate, Acolyte, Destroyer, Serpent, Snake, Deceiver, Trickster, Tempter,

Powers: Thugs will have Weapon Master and Firearms. Lieutenants and/or bosses will add powers from Dark Cast and Dark Armor.

Stature Level 1 Pools	
MAGI Intro-GC, MAGI Intro	Investigate a Hellions hideout and find a strange statue
L1 P Hellions Mission1	Retrieve artifact stolen from MAGI member
L1 P Hellions Mission2	Capture one of Hellions' ringleaders
L1 P Hellions Errand2	Killtask to stop harassment of civilians
L1 P Hellions Errand1.2	Delivery task to warn a contact of great peril
L1 P Hellions Mission1-GC	Retrieve jewelry stolen from Van Horn mansion
L1 P Hellions Mission2-GC	Check out Hellions' hideout, hear reference to Odysseus
L1 P Hellions Errand2-GC	General killtask
L1 P Hellions Errand1.2-GC	Delivery task to learn history of artifact taken from Hellions

Stature Level 2 Pools	
SL2 Hellions Mission1	Take out one of Hellions ringleaders
SL2 Hellions Errand1	Killtask to retrieve artifacts
SL2 Hellions Errand2	Killtask to stop extortion of civilians

7.10.7 Steel Canyon: The Outcasts

One of the more common manifestations of powers in Paragon city is the manipulation of the elements. One example of this was a young man named Leonard Calhoun. Leonard only ever wanted one thing in life. His dream was to be a hero. At an early age he developed the power to generate intense blasts of heat and cold. He grew up admiring the heroes of Paragon City and was determined to be like them one day.

When Leonard was in his teens he thought he had found his chance to prove himself. He was at the local convenience store when a man with a gun rushed in to rob the place. Leaping into action Leonard attempted to disable the thief with his powers. Unfortunately in his excitement the young man lost control. He not only froze the robber in place but caught the store clerk too. When he attempted to free the clerk with his flame a fire broke out. In the resulting chaos the building burned down and several people were killed. All of this occurred during a time when public opinion on supers was very low. Leonard placed himself in the hands of the justice system convinced he would be exonerated. Much to his chagrin however he was convicted and sentenced to prison. Leonard was stunned at first, not knowing what to do. The dream of a lifetime had turned into a nightmare. Then, while being transported to the Ziggurat something inside him snapped. If he was going to be treated like a criminal he would start acting like one. Quickly overpowering his guards Leonard escaped.

Adopting the identity Frostfire, he began a crime spree. During that rampage he was robbing a bank when someone else burst through the door in a flash of electricity. Leonard thought it was a hero at first and prepared for a fight. It turned out that the newcomer was a petty criminal known as the Spark who was there to rob the bank as well. The two teamed up to defeat the police officers who arrived on the scene a moment later and the Outcasts had begun.

Frostfire and the Spark soon realized there were many individuals who had powers in the city similar to theirs. Some were hopeful heroes like Leonard whose dreams had also been shattered. Some had larceny in their heart and were hoping to get noticed by one of the big players in Paragon City. All of them had something in common. They had a small amount of power and they wanted more. Since then the Outcasts have rapidly become a powerful force in Paragon City. They have taken over Steel Canyon and are just starting to get noticed by the city's heroes as a serious threat.

Their alliance with the Warriors is a development that both groups would prefer to keep secret.

Look and feel: The Outcasts all have outfits that imply costumes. The lower level members might simply be color coordinated or have a symbol on their outfit. The further up they get the more they look like full fledged super villains.

The Outcasts are more powerful than the average gang but they are smaller in number and not very well organized. Frostfire is nominally in charge but most of the other members, particularly the Spark chafe upon occasion. The Spark was primarily responsible for brokering the deal with the Warriors which is not altogether pleasing for Frostfire.

Hierarchy: The lower echelons of this gang are separated into groups based on types of powers. Their titles are: Shocker, Pyron, Terran, Borealis, and Freon. The lieutenants and bosses will all have code names like Coldsnap or Cumulous. (Alternatively the Lieutenants names could be drawn from the Flash's Rogues Gallery like Leonard Calhoun)

Powers: Thugs will have one ranged power chosen from Electricity, Fire, Earth, Air or Ice. Their melee attack will be either Super Strength or an appropriate elemental attack such as a power from Fiery Fray. Lieutenants and bosses will have more potent elemental attacks.

Stature Level 3 Pools	
SL3_Outcasts_Mission1	Stop Outcasts from tearing an auction house to shreds. Realize that they were double crossed by the dealer, who had been allowing them to fence artifacts through her establishment.
SL3_Outcasts_Compound1	Stop Outcasts from selling off some dangerous artifacts
SL3_Outcasts_Errand1	Killtask to recover artifact

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SL3 Outcasts Errand2	General killtask
SL3 Outcasts Errand3	Killtask to stop harrassment

Hollows Pools	
The Hollows Wincott Errand1	Killtask top create buffer zone between Trolls, Outcasts
Hollows_Wincott_StoryArc.xls , Compound2	Clear out a couple of Outcast hideouts. Destroy weapons in the first; recover artifacts in the 2 nd
Hollows_Flux_Pool.xls, Mission1	Killtask to help police against Outcasts
Hollows_Flux_StoryArc.xls, Mission1	Killtask to stop Outcasts from bombing Troll warren
Hollows_Flux_StoryArc.xls, Errand3	Killtask to divert suspiscion from Flux
Hollows_Flux_StoryArc.xls, Errand4	Take out Outcasts' leader, Frostfire

7.10.8 Talos Island: The Warriors

Background: David Odysseus Hill was everything that his father Walter could hope for. He was strong, healthy and above all else, clever. Walter began grooming him from an early age to take over his import/export empire. Walter specialized in moving rare and exotic items from place to place at a huge profit. David received the best classical education and physical training that money could buy. His father constantly sent him abroad to learn the business. Eventually Odysseus began assisting with the operations and even initiating some of his own. It became clear to Odysseus, as he liked to be called, that simply continuing his fathers business would not satisfy him. Wanting more, he began looking into the acquisition of items that were legally questionable. One of these dealings changed his life forever.

Odysseus was following the trail of an ancient Greek urn that was purported to have mystical powers. In the course of his investigation he stumbled across a cult that worshiped the demon prince enemy of the Circle of Thorns. Odysseus tracked the cult to their lair in a series of caverns near the sea. He snuck in to the caverns and found himself on a rock ledge overlooking the cultists in the midst of a ritual to the demon prince. Moving to get a closer look Odysseus made a critical misstep. The rock of the ledge crumbled beneath him and he fell into the midst of the cultists. They seized him and were about to kill him when the prince himself intervened. For many years the prince had been searching for ways to gain a stronger foothold on the earth. In David Odysseus Hill he saw such an opportunity. The demon bargained with the young man. He would spare Odysseus' life, remove all obstacles to the power than he had always dreamed of, and through the ancient urn unlock the full potential of his mind. In return the prince simply asked that Odysseus distribute certain objects that the demon wanted "found". Seeing no downside to the bargain the young man accepted and a pact was sealed that would affect Paragon City for years to come.

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Carrying the urn with him Odysseus returned home immediately and found out the first obstacle to his climb to power had already been removed. His father had died under mysterious circumstances on the very same day that Odysseus was in the caverns. Steeling himself to the conflicting emotions he was feeling Odysseus began to create the plan he would need to keep his end of the bargain he had made with the demon. His first step was recruiting for his cadre of Warriors. He knew that he would need a force to back his rise to power. Odysseus knew that the urn was the key. All Warriors have some exposure to the urn through their training. The higher a soldier is in the organization the more exposure they get. This boosts their martial skills. Of course Odysseus takes many precautions to make certain that none of his men will ever have the direct connection to the urn that he does.

With the Warrior training regime in place he began to look at what other groups in the city could assist him. There were two obvious choices to his mind, the Outcasts and the Trolls. They had power to be used and were waiting for direction. The Outcasts happily accepted his offer but his meeting with Grendel did not go well. The Troll rejected him out of hand, a rebuff that Odysseus would not soon forget. Determined to make the Troll Lord pay Odysseus began to use one of the “trinkets” that the demon prince was providing to bolster the strength of a small time gang called the Hellions. This demon influenced power allowed them to become the top gang in Atlas Park almost overnight. Eventually Odysseus hopes to use the Hellions to drive the Trolls out of Skyway City.

Look and feel: The Warriors is currently one of the largest gangs in Paragon City. Its members are recruited from all over the city but they must have one common trait, the ability to fight and fight well. From there they are trained to be superb soldiers. Discipline and skill are clear in all their actions. The foot soldiers all wear leather vests. Lieutenants will add helmet style headgear and the bosses will have stylized mask/head coverings.

Hierarchy: The new members are organized into groups that are named for ancient Greek city-states. Members start as Minoan Warriors and grow through Megarian, Corinthian, Athenian and finally become Spartan Warriors. Lieutenants in Odysseus gang take the names of Greek warriors such as Achilles, Ajax or Patroclus. The bosses are named for Greek leaders and Kings like Theseus or Agamemnon.

Powers: Thugs in the Warriors will have higher level Weapons Master and Firearms powers as well as Invulnerability. Lieutenants and bosses will add Psychic blast and Mental Control.

Stature Level 4 Pools

SL4 Warriors_Mission1	Recover the Platonic Solids, which can aid in geometric magic
SL4 Warriors_Errand1	Killtask to show people that the Warriors aren't invincible
SL4 Warriors_Errand2	Killtask to take back Talos Island
SL4 Warriors_Errand3	Killtask to stop harassment in Talos
SL4 Warriors_Compound1.1	Stop Warriors' tournament

Stature Level 5 Pools

SL5 Warriors_Mission1	Stop battle between Warriors and Freaks
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SL5_Warriors_Compound1	Do several killtasks and defeat a great Warrior in order to convince another Warrior to turn state's evidence
SL5_Warriors_Errand1	General killtask
SL5_Warriors_Errand2	General killtask
SL5_Warriors_Errand3	Killtask to stop Warriors from hunting you

7.11 Igneous the Magma Master

7.11.1 Background

7.11.1.1 The Golden Time

Before everything in his life melted away, Ingelbert Maahs was well on his way to becoming the most famous explorer of his time. His advanced degrees in Geology and Archeology combined with a thirst for adventure to create an adventurer without peer. After leaving school, Maahs used his skill and influence to put together expeditions that uncovered lost treasures; brought to light scientific facts and benefited all those involved. His partner throughout this early success was his best friend, Marcus Janssen. Maahs had a keen eye for his craft but there was one thing that he overlooked...jealousy. Janssen was frustrated by all the credit that Maahs was receiving for their efforts. He began to plan a way to take his colleague out of the picture.

7.11.1.2 A Dark Turn

Since he first dreamt of being an explorer, Ingelbert Maahs had a Holy Grail. When he was a young boy he found his first reference to the Cavern of Transcendence. It was vaguely mentioned in a book that Ingelbert found while prowling the library. He searched for information about it his whole life, but few details were available. Over the years he was able to determine that the Cavern was underground and part of a network of tunnels. He also discovered that there would be trials to face when seeking it but there would also be some sort of reward. Of course, Janssen knew of his friend's obsession and found a way to capitalize on it. He lured Maahs under Paragon City using rumors of a 'mystic cavern'. There, he treacherously pushed his comrade into a flow of Magma and fled the tunnels to report the 'terrible tragedy'. Somehow Ingelbert did not die, however. He was barely able to crawl free after being horribly burned. He was found by the Magmites, part of an underground society of rock people. They managed to heal Maahs but in the process permanently infused his flesh with molten rock. Maahs' mind was warped by the betrayal of his partner and the shock of his new appearance. He left behind his humanity and became Igneous the Magma Master.

7.11.1.3 Boiling Point

Since his transformation Igneous has led the Magmites in a slow advance toward the surface world. They have altered and enhanced natural tunnels to suit their purposes and are preparing for a strike on Paragon City. Igneous has come to believe that his new state is the transcendence he dreamed of his whole life. He and his new people guard the Cavern fiercely. Anyone venturing beneath the surface of Paragon City will find a powerful group facing them.

7.11.2 The servants of Igneous

7.11.2.1 Magmites

- Rank: Minion, Lt.
- Levels: 5-15
 - Powers: Lava blast (Area denial), Lava Burst (AOE), Lava Hold (Single target DOT/Hold), Magma Punch, Resist Fire, Vulnerable to Cold
- AI:

Description: These creatures are made of molten rock. They are composed of blackened slabs of rock with lava flowing through the cracks. Small chunks of magma fall off them when they attack or move. The Magmites can travel freely through lava and can ambush a player by popping up out of a pool

or river.

Magmites are usually measured, relentless enemies. They will normally defend an area until they are defeated. They use their own bodies to summon forth flows of magma to trap and then burn their opponents. If their underground areas are disturbed by explosions or earth tremors the Magmites can become frenzied. If this happens they will move toward the surface and attack anything in their path.

DN: If time permits replacing the legs with a ball of roiling magma below the waist would be ideal. The Magmites would propel themselves along the ground, hovering on a flow of lava and rock.

7.11.2.2 Pumicites

- Rank: Minion, Lt.
- Levels: 5-15
Powers: Swipe (Lethal Melee+ Debuff Endurance), Fast Attacks, Fast Movement, Superleap, Resist Fire, Vulnerable to Smashing
- AI:

Description: Light and fast attack creatures that shred anything they come in contact with. They are made of light gray porous stone that is abrasive like the skin of a shark. Their flesh resembles a sponge because of the gas bubbles frozen with it. These bubbles burst and release the gas within making it more difficult to breathe near them. Since they are light the Pumicites move quickly and are more agile than they appear.

DN: If it is necessary to save time these creatures could be created by making slightly larger versions of the smallest Devouring Earth grey Rock Men and changing their texture to look more porous.

The red areas below are not for the second update. They are ideas to be added when the rest of this villain group is incorporated.

7.11.2.3 Scoria

- Rank: Minion
- Levels:
Powers: Ash Blast (Damaging accuracy de-buff), Ash Burst (AOE), Choking Cloud (AOE Endurance/Heath DOT), Vulnerable to Cold
- AI:

Description: Charred rock creatures made of fused glassy rock. They should be blue and slightly iridescent. They have a faint aura of ash around them at all times. Their attacks obscure vision and accuracy. They transform into ash clouds when destroyed.

7.11.2.4 Ash Clouds

- Rank: Lt., Boss
- Levels:
Powers: Sticky Ash Cloud (Health and Endurance DOT), Phasing, Resist Lethal, Resist Smashing, Vulnerable to Cold
- AI:

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Description: Flying clouds of ash that hold and poison their opponents. When a Scoria is defeated it explodes into an Ash Cloud and latches itself onto the Hero that defeated it. It will slowly drain that Hero's health and Endurance until defeated. It is very difficult to hit and dissipate.

7.11.2.5 Basalt

- Rank: Lt.
- Levels:
Powers: Mystic Heat (AOE damage field), Knockdown, Runefire (Exploding blast)
- AI:

Description: Huge black stone golems with bright orange lava runes carved into their forms. Their bodies consist of huge slabs of dark rock. They have very large hands and feet. Their faces are twisted into angry, hateful expressions. This reflects the rage with which they were created. The Basalt were created through a mystic ritual that Igneous discovered when he gained full access to the Cavern of Transcendence. These creatures radiate a mystical heat that drains the health and endurance of those around them. They are tremendously strong and can channel the runic energy in their bodies into exploding blasts of energy.

7.11.2.6 Igneous the Magma Master

- Rank: Arch-villain
- Levels:
Powers: Lava Blast, Lava Burst, Lava Hold, Summon Magmites, Magma Punch, Lava Ground Eruption, Ash Cloud Debuff
- AI:

Description: The transformation that changed Ingelbert Maahs into Igneous left him physically and mentally altered. His skin is living magma, constantly shifting and moving. He still looks human but he was burned horribly and his features are uneven. Internally Igneous blood was changed to lava and it causes his veins to glow red hot, particularly when powering up for an attack.

Hollows Pools	
Hollows_Julius_StoryArc.xls, Mission1	Clear out Magmite cave
Hollows_Talshak_StoryArc.xls, Errand2	Defeat Magmites in the Ravines
Hollows_Talshak_StoryArc.xls, Mission5	Battle through Magmites to save Sam Wincott and become master of the Mystical gateway at the heart of the Cavern of Transcendence

7.12 The Malta Group

7.12.1 History

The 1960's were a turning point for the twentieth century in ways that historians today are only beginning to understand. Of course there were the well-known advances in liberalism, civil rights, and political awareness, but it was also the decade that saw the birth of the modern super powered hero. The gaudy costumes, devil-may-care attitudes, and wildly powerful heroes of the 1960's reinvented how the modern world thought about its heroes. No longer did they work in the shadows, secretly fighting crime. Nor were they necessarily soldiers fighting for the military. They were each individual personalities, with their own foibles, desires, agendas, and powers, and a lot of them could level whole city blocks with their powers. It was the 1960's that cemented this concept of the hero as Other. They lived amazing lives and fought bizarre enemies that the rest of us could only cower in fear before. The public at large looked up to the heroes – but more as rock stars and pop culture icons than true heroes – chiefly because their battles seemed so far removed from the common experience. It was almost as if they weren't part of the “real” world.

This public perception of heroes was, in truth, the outgrowth of another revolutionary change that came into its own during the 1960's – a secretive shadow government that operated entirely outside the public eye. While the Cold War became hot in places like Korea and Vietnam, most of it was still being fought behind closed doors and in dark allies. The NATO and Warsaw Pact had a very uneasy public detente, but in secret they were tearing at each other's throats through espionage and covert operations. So the government let the people have their flashy, costume clad, pop heroes, while they secretly used super powered individuals of their own to fight their shadow war with the enemy.

In 1956, the United States had passed an abusive law known as the Might for Right Act. It allowed the government to secretly draft anyone possessing super powers into military service, which included working for the CIA and FBI. Other NATO countries followed suit, particularly Great Britain, which had had an equally invasive law on the books since World War II. These draftees didn't receive fancy costumes or inspiring code names. They were anonymous soldiers sacrificed as pawns in the great chess game of the cold war. They served as spies, assassins, and even rabble rousers, using their powers according to instructions from their handlers. Those who refused to cooperate were subjected to torture, hypnosis, and mother mind control techniques to ensure their loyalty. Minorities were particularly hard hit by the Might for Right Act, with hundreds of black heroes being pulled from their homes and forced to serve at the CIA's behest.

Most of these draftees worked under the aegis of the Titan Project, CIA's code name for its division of para-human operatives. The Titan Project's director and creator, Roger Vrabel, was an old-school intelligence community mandarin who had been around since World War II. He was one of the main architects of the Might for Right Act, although no one but a few key senators he had in his pocket new this to be the case. During the War he had worked closely with a number of super powered soldiers, and he saw immediately how useful they could be if they had proper direction and control. He also saw that World War II was only the beginning, and felt that the Soviet threat loomed as large as Hitler ever had. Vrabel was thus horrified when, after the war, all of the heroes were released from military service and sent home to lead their own lives. What a terrible waste of trained operatives!

Vrabel spent the next decade trying his best to recruit super powered individuals into the intelligence community, but he had very little luck. Being a hero meant public adoration and fighting crime on your own terms. Few people wanted to act out of the spotlight, and those that did weren't very interested in taking orders from the CIA or Army Intelligence. It was only through sheer force of personality and the efforts of a few dedicated super spies that Vrabel managed to maintain a respectable level of super powered intelligence assets. But with each passing year, recruiting became more and more difficult, and Vrabel grew more and more frustrated. Finally, he resolved that more drastic measures were needed. Thus, he used his influence (and the powers of some of his psychic agents) to ensure the passage of the Might for Right Act.

The next decade, from 1956 to 1967, was a golden time for Vrabel. He founded the Titan Project as an umbrella organization for drafting, training, and using super powered assets. The Project had jurisdiction over all super powered assets in the United States government, including those in the Justice Department, the Secret Service, and even the military. Any agency or branch of the military that wanted to use a super powered individual in its operations had to go through the Titan Project and, ultimately, Vrabel. The Project's scouts combed the country looking for possible draftees. They avoided high profile heroes, instead choosing to find subjects before they'd had a chance to make a name for themselves. Vrabel had several psychics on staff who could detect dormant super powers as well as a trained sorcerer who was terrific at sniffing out magical potential.

Likewise, the scouts tended to avoid anyone from middle-class or upper-class families – basically anyone who could afford to hire a lawyer. The Might for Right Act did have provisions for avoiding the draft, and any decent attorney could navigate said provisions to find an out for his or her client. Vrabel wanted to avoid anything resembling a public fight in the courts over his supers draft, so his scouts steered clear of troublesome targets. As a result, most of those recruited in the Titan Project were poor minorities who had no way of standing up to the process. The nation never knew about or missed most of the “heroes” that ended up getting drafted into service and Vrabel got his own private army.

The Titan Project's activities and operations focused almost entirely upon combating the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, along with, to a lesser degree, China. Like most cold warriors, Vrabel was obsessed with defeating the Soviet Union (not without cause). He used his super spies with care and finesse, because even with the Might for Right act's powers, the Communists still had more super powered resources to put into the field (since there were no private super powered heroes behind the iron curtain). Inevitably, the casualties were high, but so was Vrabel's success rate vs. the KGB. At the time, the CIA and the Titan Project only had a passing interest in domestic villains and out of control heroes. They pretty much left those kinds of problems to the “private sector” heroes as Vrabel called them.

That changed in 1966, just as Vrabel was increasing the size and scope of the draft to include even more heroes for the war in Vietnam. Among those drafted were three black heroes who had been operating in Paragon City as a team for over a year. Vrabel's scouts mistakenly assumed that no one would miss these three enough to put up a fuss if they were drafted. What they didn't count on was that the three would put up quite a fuss themselves. Already, elements in society were beginning to turn against the war and the impending draft. The mood of the nation was changing and black empowerment was on the rise. And so it was a tremendous surprise to Vrabel when Roger Washington, Georgia Reynolds, and Hakeem Muhammad not only refused to report as required under the Might for Right Act, but actually brought suit against the CIA.

The three heroes immediately jumped into the forefront of national media attention. They claimed, with some justification that the CIA was targeting blacks and minority heroes for recruitment. They challenged the legality of the Might for Right Act and began to publicly draw attention to some of the abuses Project Titan had been perpetrating in the last decade. Vrabel made the mistake of trying to strong-arm the three heroes by sending a team of his operatives to seize them and bring them into custody. The retrieval team found itself facing not only the three super powered heroes, but several dozen sympathetic heroes and a whole army of reporters. Luminaries from the Statesman to Martin Luther King spoke out on their behalf and brought pressure to bear on President Johnson. The case ended up being fast tracked through the courts and, in 1967, the Supreme Court declared the Might for Right act unconstitutional and ordered all those drafted under its auspices freed from service.

With that wave of the judicial wand, Vrabel's whole organization came crashing down around him. Within a few months he was down to one fifth the manpower he had possessed in 1966, even as the war in Vietnam escalated. Seeing their enemy weakened and vulnerable, the KGB took this moment to launch its own massive espionage offensive, rolling up CIA spy rings throughout Western Europe and assassinating hundreds of agency intelligence assets. Three "friendly" dictatorships in Africa went over to the Soviets and the CIA lost ground in two dozen other countries. Their West Berlin station house was literally gutted, with no survivors.

Meeting in Malta

Retreating on every front, Vrabel was not alone in his anger at what had happened. His counterpart in England at MI6 was also suffering similar setbacks and, without American support, was losing agents and operatives almost as quickly as the CIA was. The same was true for West German Intelligence and the Israeli Mossad. Vrabel called for an emergency meeting of the most influential and experienced men in the Western Intelligence agencies. This was not to be a meeting of the agency heads – appointed politicians who would come and go. No, this was a secret, off the books meeting amongst the career intelligence officers who had real expertise and real knowledge. They were all men like Vrabel, people who put the mission and the good of the service before all else.

Under the auspices of Vrabel's counterpart at MI6, Neal Macintosh, the meeting was held at a secret location in Malta. Each of the seventeen men who attended arrived in total secret and there were no records kept or recording made. Outside of those seventeen original Malta Group members, no one can say for sure what was discussed or, for that matter, who exactly was there. The men debated, plotted, and planned for 53 straight hours, during which time they managed to change the face of covert operations forever and launch a criminal conspiracy that still endures today, perhaps stronger than ever.

The Malta Group all agreed that super powered beings presented an enormous challenge to not only the intelligence community, but to the entire world. With the Warsaw Pact and China "nationalizing" their super powered assets in the most repressive way possible, the West had to come up with a solution to the so-called "hero-gap" problem. But the trend for hero involvement in government activities was moving the wrong way. Super powered beings wanted to be independent, to do their won thing and fight crime in their own way. Or, just as likely, they simply wanted to be criminals themselves. Either way, they weren't lining up to join the ranks of MI6 or the CIA.

The Group realized that they needed to find a way, no matter what the cost, to ensure a steady supply of super powered operatives if they wanted to have any hope of turning back the Communist menace. They also realized that, in the West, publicly employing heroes, even under the auspices of a top-secret government organization, was no longer feasible. The events of 1967 had shown that the courts would side with individual liberties and civil rights over security needs and the war on Communism. The Malta Group needed super powered assets that could not possibly go crying to the Supreme Court when they stubbed their toes. They needed assets like the Soviets had – totally under their own control.

The only way for the Group to get what it wanted was to step beyond the laws that governed their respective lands. None of the seventeen men had any super powers of their own, but they were all extremely good at what they did. They knew that their best asset was their ability to out think and out spy anyone else in the world, at least when it came to espionage. Certainly they could out think and manipulate a bunch of tight-wearing, overconfident super beings. While famous for many different things, few heroes were known for their incredible intelligence. It was just a matter of applying the right levers at the appropriate times.

The Group thus decided on a complex course of manipulation, blackmail, fraud, intimidation, and mind-control. They would use every tool in the spy's toolbox, and they would do so without any moral compunction. In their fear and frenzy over losing their most powerful assets, the Group members had managed to convince themselves that the super beings weren't really people. They were assets. Their powers were, by all rights, the property of their respective governments. Anyone who refused to help was unpatriotic and, at heart, a communist. And since any good patriot would agree to help if asked, there was no reason to ask for volunteers anymore. The "bad" heroes would be forced to comply in any event and telling the "good" heroes about the Group's existence would needlessly compromise security. Thus everyone would receive the same treatment, and everyone would play along or face the consequences.

But first things first. Being experts in the field, the Group knew that the first thing they had to do was set up a whole new network of agents to carry out their plan. The genius of their scheme was that it put reliable, normal humans at the heart of its operation. The Group members knew how to recruit and retain normal agents, and by making them the fulcrums of power, they could ensure stability and reliability. No longer would the Group's members have to rely on mercurial and egotistical super beings to behave like professional spies. The Group now just assumed that the super powered assets would be as uncooperative as possible but, thanks to the field operatives' expertise, they would have no choice but to do as they were told. Thus, upon leaving Malta, the Group's various members set about funding and creating its new network of spies.

Funding the Malta Group was the easy part. Each of the members had access to secret bank accounts, covert ops budgets, and a host of other secret money sources. The Group stretched its fundraising abilities to the limits and raked in millions of dollars within just a few months – more than enough money in 1968 for what they had planned. Recruiting reliable agents was more problematic, but nothing the Group's founders couldn't handle. For his part, Vrabel cherry picked his most trusted operatives in the CIA, detaching them from their current duties and encouraging each of them to "retire" from official government work. He then transferred them to "secret source" status, which allowed him to pay them out of the CIA's budget without anyone asking for detailed information on who they actually were. They were in turn told that they had become black ops contract workers tasked with finding disloyal and criminal super powered beings within the United States and the rest of the world.

Only a few hundred agents actually made it into the "inner circle" of the Malta Group. That is to say, only these most trusted operatives realized they were working for a new covert agency that was operating outside the boundaries of any specific government agency or, for that matter, any specific government. These were the analysts, operations planners, and other upper level personnel who helped manage the daily flow of information and who carried out the more delicate operations. Most of the day to day work was to be done in piecemeal by contract agents and operatives still working for the various intelligence agencies. Since all 17 Malta founders still held positions of power within their respective agencies, it was relatively simple for them to occasionally divert operations and resources in a manner beneficial to the Group's various schemes.

Modus Operandi

The basic strategy for the Malta Group was – and is – very simple. They use their tremendously effective ability to gather information on anyone, anywhere to gather intelligence on various super powered beings, whether they be “heroes” or “villains.” They then comb through that data looking for any way they can leverage that hero into doing their bidding. For some beings, it’s as simple as finding their price and then offering to pay it for them. Others will work in exchange for information or expertise that the Group can give them. But there are also plenty who won’t do the work unless they’re threatened in some way. The Group has no compunctions at all about making threats. By far the most common threat was revealing a hero’s secret identity. Very few beings wanted to live life in the public eye 24/7. Public disclosure meant the hero’s enemies and fans would not only know where he or she lived, but where their families and loved ones could be found as well. Few heroes were willing to take the risk, especially if what they were beings asked by the Group didn’t seem too egregious or wrong. Those he needed more convincing fell prey to more serious forms of blackmail and extortion, including false legal charges, physical threats against loved ones, and worse.

The Group’s first targets were those super powered beings they knew the most about – the former members of the Titan Project and other veterans of the cold war super spy game. Vrabel and the other members had no problem getting copies of their already extensive files on these subjects. Once their field agents were in place, providing more up to date data, it was a simple matter to apply the screws and get these former soldiers back on the “team” again. By late 1969, The Malta Group was up and running with a whole new cadre of effective – if unwilling – super powered assets.

Winning the Cold War

The next twenty years saw the Malta Group leading the charge against communism around the world, although very few people knew it at the time. The CIA and MI6 continued to use their own agents and handful of super powered assets, but they had very limited success compared to the Malta Group – largely because the Group was busy stealing away their best agents, their resources, and their opportunities. With all forms of restrictive oversight and bureaucracy removed from the covert operations process, the Malta Group could move fast and strike hard. They showed no compunction about killing their enemies, including people they thought just might be their enemies.

The new Malta offensive took the KGB by complete surprise. They had no idea where these new operatives were coming from or even what their goal was (aside from killing off their own agents). The Kremlin’s super spies had thoroughly penetrated the established Western Intelligence services, and even their moles within the CIA and MI6 had no idea that the Malta Group even existed. Thus, it was almost impossible for the KGB to strike back. Moreover, this mysterious new enemy’s tactics were far different from those formerly employed by Western intelligence. They seemed much more interested in killing off communists than in gathering intelligence.

Indeed, this was exactly the Malta Group’s new strategy. They no longer worked for any particular government and so were no longer particularly interested in gathering traditional intelligence about things like troop movements, nuclear secrets, and political maneuverings. The Malta Group had become entirely absorbed in the goal of winning the super powered spy game. Nothing else mattered to them, and since they had no other concerns, they became extremely good at.

Group controlled assassins picked off anyone and everyone they could find in the Warsaw Pact that possessed super powers. They were largely unable to directly attack established powerhouse groups like the Defenders of the Motherland, but they cut great swathes of death through the lesser heroes – particularly those involved in espionage. The Group employed many of the same techniques they used at home to “recruit” super powered agents. They used their spies on the ground to identify super beings and their weaknesses. Then, they would either use that information to force the subject to help them or, if the subject wasn’t useful or couldn’t be turned, they would kill him.

In several cases the Malta Group was able to wrap up entire networks and even military units comprised of super powered assets. Once the Group got its fingers into one individual, they could torture/blackmail/manipulate him or her into revealing information about every other super powered being they knew. Even in the closed society of the Soviet Union, super powered beings tended to congregate or at least keep tabs on each other. They then shared this information with the Group's agents – a fate much preferable to the other option. Usually, all the Group had to do was threaten to leak a false lead to the KGB claiming the person was a spy for the west in order to ensure cooperation.

The 1970's were a decade of tremendous success for the Malta Group. They rolled back Soviet bloc advances and liquidated or turned hundred of super powered beings. As a result, the Soviet Union's super powered arsenal was all but crippled, with the exception of a few high profile teams. Of course, the Malta Group's losses were also quite high. Few of their coerced operatives survived more than three missions, but such high casualty rates had always been part of the Group's plan. The important thing was that their intelligence gathering network remained largely unscathed, and so they were able to continuously replace lost assets through their strong-arm techniques. By the end of the decade, the super spy war had been all but won.

The 1980's began with the Cold War still a firm fixture in the world political scene, but for the Malta Group it was the beginning of some significant changes. Most significant of all was the death of Roger Vrabel in 1982, followed less than six months later by the passing of his counterpart Neal Macintosh at MI6. These two old cold warriors had been the driving force behind the Group's success and had been the de facto leaders since its inception. While both deaths were of natural causes, they still caused a firestorm of controversy and suspicion within the Group's ranks. There was no formal system for running operations – everyone had always just done whatever Vrabel and Macintosh told them to do. Now the different department heads and field officers began scrambling for influence and control within the Group, and cliques began to form almost over night.

The two main factions were those who believed that the Group should continue in its present course of fighting Communist super spies and those who argued for an expansion of the Group's brief to include other targets and operations. Even within the secretive and small bureaucracy of the Malta Group, inertia and momentum count for something, and the second, more radical faction was outvoted. A council of five Directors was established to run things and they in turn chose a Chief of Operations to oversee all operations. Although this new arrangement was more than sufficient to keep the Malta Group as a working organization, the group did lose much of its momentum. The number of new recruits and new operations steadily decreased over the decade, a process that was only hastened by the warming of relations between East and West.

New World Order

Even as their group atrophied around them, the so-called radicals within the Malta Group were busy secretly plotting a new future for the organization. When the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union fell, the old guard within the Group was at a loss as to what to do. They had geared their entire existence towards fighting an Armageddon-like battle with the Soviet Union, only to see it collapse from within in a relatively peaceful manner. They had no idea what to do next. There was even talk of disbanding the Group now that the war had been won. Not surprisingly, the radicals had other plans.

For the previous five years this secret group within a secret group had been diverting operational resources to its own pet projects. They'd gotten involved in everything from smuggling arms and drugs to freelance assassination and mercenary work. They hadn't quite lost all moral grounding – they still fought for causes they thought were right – but they had begun to go very far a field from the traditional war on communism. Indeed, most of these ultra-secret operations were aimed at helping "promote capitalism," or, in other words, aiding Western based multinational corporations in their efforts to expand business interests in the third world.

One of the biggest early clients for the radicals were European owned diamond dealers who controlled the African mines. The company had relied on mercenaries to defend its mines against local rebels, but when several dozen super powered beings started fighting for the rebel cause, they were forced to abandon their mines. No established hero team would go into the country to confront the native heroes, mostly because the heroes tended to agree with the rebels. The cabal within the Malta Group saw an opportunity here and offered to help the diamond dealers out. They used Group controlled heroes to attack and eventually kill all of the troublesome rebels, and within a few months control of the mines was restored to the diamond merchants. The Malta Group had just served its first private interests and picked up a healthy paycheck in the process. Of course the radicals kept the payment for themselves, and continued to perform other such jobs on the side, all the while being careful to avoid tipping off their more conservative fellow Group members.

Thus, when the Soviet Union collapsed and the Group's leaders had their crisis of faith, the radicals were well prepared to step in and seize the reins of command. The conservatives scarcely put up a fight. They didn't want to give up all the power they'd accumulated as being part of the Group, but they simply didn't have the vision to see where to go next. The radicals' revealed their recent activities and showed that the Group could still be an effective, powerful force in the world. After they got over their outrage at being duped, the conservatives were forced to agree, and they eventually adopted the radical plan. After all, they were only human and deep down the profits, power, and success that the radicals had accumulated in secret was tremendously appealing.

For only the second time in its history, the entire group met once again in Malta. They there restructured the entire organization from the ground up, moving resources from Europe and Russia to other nations, both in the third world and the first. America had always been a primary recruiting ground for the Group, so the organization in the States remained relatively the same, even increasing in power slightly. With the death of world-wide communism as a political force, the group agreed upon the need to focus their efforts towards a loftier goal – something that they felt would make the world a better place and secure their position in it. They came up with a list of priorities and goals, most of them centered around working closely with the military industrial complex and multinational corporations to ensure a world economic climate that was ideal for corporate capitalism's growth and prosperity. This goal would include protecting and serving those governments that were friendly to this ideological goal and destruction of those groups and governments who opposed it.

With their new goal firmly set, the Malta Group didn't need to change its methods very much. Although the enemy might be different (And more diverse) now, the key to victory was still the same – the judicious and forceful application of super powered individuals. Heroes were themselves starting to become global forces. The rise of the corporate Hero Corps proved a perfect example – it was possible to organize and utilize super powered beings for any purpose. The Malta Group selected itself as the secret police force of this new era of globalism, and controlling heroes who stepped out of line was their new beat.

Even as they continued to blackmail and recruit heroes from their traditional stomping grounds, they saw a whole new realm of options open up to them. With the opening up of the Eastern Bloc, the Malta Group was at the forefront of exploiting the new open markets. Not only did they want to encourage capitalism in the fledgling democracies, they wanted to snatch up as many of the unaligned super powered beings as possible. While two decades of covert assassinations had taken a serious chunk out of the Soviet super reserves, there were still plenty of low power or previously untouchable candidates for recruitment. Even better, many were willing to work for money or other favors, negating the necessity of the strong arm tactics the Group usually resorted to in the Western world. Of course the Group's operatives got all the information they needed to use such tactics anyway, just in case.

Hundreds of new recruits flowed into the Group's operational teams, although few of them knew who or what they were actually working for. Indeed, most were led to believe that they were working for a variety of different groups, many of which allegedly hated one another – just one more way to deflect suspicion away from the Malta Group's true nature. Among the many new recruits was a scientist who, while not super powered herself, had been part of the Soviet super soldier program. In exchange for a few hundred thousand dollars, she gave the group access to something almost priceless: the keys to a secret Soviet research facility that was virtually unknown outside of those who had worked there.

The group carefully and quietly moved in on the remote Siberian installation. Even with all their intelligence gathering about Soviet super being projects, they had never heard of this facility – not even a hint. What they found was effectively a cyborg factory, a fully functional assembly line with hundreds of complete and partially complete cyborgs all sitting in stasis waiting to be activated. This program had been the Soviet response to the series of setbacks they had experienced at the hands of the Malta Group (although they didn't know who was responsible at the time). Developed in absolute secrecy, the cyborgs were meant to turn the tide in the war of assassins that was being waged in the super spy community. But the program took much longer than expected to produce results and now, with the new government, funding had dried up. And so the Malta Group just bought its own private cyborg army.

Of course the units were not ready to be put into the field – they still needed extensive work and resources. Some within the Group thought they should be destroyed. The Malta Group's strength had always been that it had no permanent super soldiers or bases – there was no way for their enemies to strike back. Taking on these cyborgs would require a lot of time, money, expertise, and facilities that they didn't have right now. While these were all valid points, ultimately the leaders simply could not pass up the opportunity. They spent millions moving the entire facility and all the cyborgs out of Siberia and into a more secure location in Germany, where it remains to this day. It took another five years and tens of millions of dollars to get the cyborgs working again, but by the mid 1990's, the cyborgs, called Titans within the Group, were online and carrying out operations.

The Titans were not the only new addition to the Group's arsenal. The more they worked on the behalf of large corporations, the more access the Group received to high technology weapons and devices. For all their influence and espionage capability, the Malta Group had never been a particularly high-tech organization. Except for buying the latest and greatest surveillance gear every year, the Group didn't need much in the way of fancy weapons or powered armor. They worked their "recruits" using traditional, proven spy craft techniques. Vrabel himself had never been a proponent of high technology, preferring instead to rely on highly trained humans to make the right decisions and see the mission through to completion. But times were changing and the Group was growing. It was time to gear up.

The Group began to augment their Titans with more high tech weapons and supplement their offensive power with permanent teams of highly trained and well armed commandos. Although they still used coerced heroes and mercenary super beings for most of their ops, the Group found that more, and more, it needed its own standing army to ensure security and retain maximum flexibility. They also began constructing a series of more permanent bases across the globe, although they never created any central command center that could serve as a juicy target for their many enemies. The Group remained almost as amorphous and ghostly as ever, except that they maintained a few islands of permanency.

In the years leading up to the Rikti Invasion, the Malta Group continued on its dual path of fostering corporate capitalism and keeping radical and rogue super beings in check. To be fair, most of what they did was for the greater good, because most of the people they fought were not only a threat to their corporate interests, but to the general welfare of humanity as well. Terrorist groups, mad scientists, and secret cabals bent on world domination all fell prey to the Group's ruthless attacks. But "most" is not "all" and the Group certainly played a part in supporting numerous corrupt regimes and exploitative multinational corporations as well. They also took on more than a few radical or activist heroes who had done nothing wrong (besides getting in the Group's way). Within the super powered community, the Group began to earn a fearsome reputation, particularly for the bloodthirsty Titan cyborgs, which remained the only readily identifiable sign of the Group's involvement in a particular incident (and they seldom left many witnesses).

When the Rikti Invasion came, the Malta Group was as surprised and alarmed as anyone else. Unfortunately, there was little they could do about it. Eighty percent of the Group's offensive capability was in the form of coerced super beings who did their bidding out of fear or for money. With the whole world besieged by aliens, almost all of these individuals put aside personal concerns in order to fight the invaders. The Malta Group had no leverage when their operatives believed the whole world was coming to an end. Likewise, the Group's intelligence networks were of little value against an enemy that could teleport and didn't use any known form of communication. Nevertheless, the Group did what it could, using its Titans and special forces units to help fight off the Rikti as best they could.

By the war's end, the Group had suffered heavy casualties, just like everyone else. But, their disparate structure and traditional reliance on a disparate command and supply chain made them more resilient than most. Once the war was over they were able to pick up the pieces and start again where they had left off. For the first year or so after the war, the Group concentrated on rebuilding. Most of their former operatives had died during the war, so they needed to surveil and blackmail a whole new generation of heroes. They also needed to recruit more normals for their commando teams and Titan units. All of this took time and money, but eventually they returned to something approaching their former level of effectiveness. But it is only recently that the Group has begun setting new, post-invasion goals and preparing for a new century of operations.

7.12.2 Goals

For the first few decades of its existence, the Group wanted nothing more and nothing less than the complete and utter destruction of communism and the Soviet Union. Since that war was won, they have gravitated towards a more general posture of being pro-corporate capitalism and anti-radical and rogue super being. The leaders of the Malta Group imagine themselves as the protectors and heralds of "democracy" and "freedom." In reality, their ideals are at best autocratic and at worst despotic. Even worse, nearly all the Group's ideology is tinged with a Christian air; their "new world order" mysteriously omits the other religions.

Their part in the fall of the Soviet Union has infused the Group with a new enthusiasm: they can win. But, the Malta Group also knows that they alone cannot win the fight against "rogue" states, and they are more than willing to instigate the world's powers into action. As a result, the Malta Group does its best to force Western nations into action and even into full out wars with countries that the Malta Group has targeted.

7.12.2.1 Setting Priorities

Beyond this overarching goal of total domination, the Malta Group has a number of less obvious, but still vitally important ambitions that it hopes to realize in the next few years. Ever the pragmatists, the Malta Group fully realizes that there is no way they can ever truly control all the world's heroes (barring some bizarre and unexpected event). Therefore, they have broken super powered beings down into a number of different Priority Groups or, as they say around the office, simply Priorities. The Priorities are as follows:

Priority One (Red Threats): These are the super powered beings who present a clear and present danger to the United States and/or humanity as a whole. These are beings that the Malta Group has decided it cannot safely try to manipulate or deal with in any way. The only viable option is to destroy them. The vast majority of Priority One targets are readily recognized villains – people like Nemesis or Requiem that no one would disagree were menaces to society. Like the hero organizations of old, the Malta Group uses its influence and intelligence to try to eliminate these foes as quickly and with as much finality as possible. Of course, not all the Priority One targets are as powerful as Nemesis. Most are much lesser lights who are nevertheless deemed utterly irredeemable – psychopaths, some aliens, monsters, demons and other supernatural entities, and basically anything else the Group can't fully comprehend or deal with get thrown into Priority One. It is not unheard of for some non-villains or even heroes to get thrown into this Priority as well, especially if they're seen as a threat to the Group in some way.

Unlike the Hero Organizations of old, the Group deals with these so-called Red Threats with maximum force. They do take prisoners and they do not hold trials. As far as the Group is concerned, being put in Priority One is a death sentence. How adamantly the Group pursues executing that sentence depends on the vulnerability and imminent threat of the target. For example, Nemesis is perceived as a very dangerous threat, but he is also incredibly powerful. It would take all of the Group's resources to try and take Nemesis down, and even then they probably wouldn't be successful. Thus, the Group continues to gather intelligence and harass Nemesis when they can without exposing themselves too much. On the other hand, a lone super powered psychopath or some poor child possessed by a murderous demon are relatively easy targets to take out. In these cases, Malta Group hit teams will be on the way in moments to take out the Priority One target as quickly and quietly as possible.

Priority Two (Usurpers): Priority Two Targets, also known as Usurpers, are an interesting group. They are, for the most part, individuals who would not uniformly be classified as villains by an objective judge. They are, instead, radicals and activists who have utterly devoted themselves to a cause that the Malta Group doesn't agree with. This means that, more often than not, the Group would like to see them dead or disabled. However, it also means that they are not beyond intimidation, manipulation, and even "recruitment" to the Malta Group's uses. In short, they're not insane or unreachable.

Many of these Usurpers are in fact part of revolutionary or counter-revolutionary groups scattered around the world. Many are, in fact, known super-powered terrorists, making them legitimate targets for any kind of abuse the Group wants to heap on them (at least, that's the Group's assessment). However, The Group has been known to work with terrorist and revolutionary groups on many occasions, especially when doing so can help advance some greater cause. The terrorist's propensity for violence and radical devotion to a cause makes him or her relatively easy to manipulate. The Group loves to sick terrorists on one another or have them attack some other target that the Group wants eliminated. It seldom takes more than a few whispered lies and some false intelligence to set the super powered patsies into violent motion. As long as a Priority Two target remains useful to the Group, it will let them live. As soon as they can't control it any more or find no further use for it, they eliminate the target and move on to the next one.

Unfortunately, a large number of Priority Two targets are not terrorists at all. They are simply super powered activists of one type or another who use their powers and position to fight against causes that they believe are unjust. Environmentalists, anti-globalization activists, human rights workers, and others have all been thrown into Priority Two simply because they oppose one of the corporate or governmental interests that the Group represents. As far as the Malta Group is concerned, there is no difference between real terrorists and these activists. Both should be manipulated as long as it is practicable and useful and then they should be eliminated. Indeed, it has become a favorite tactic to pit true terrorists and activists against one another, ensuring a mutual destruction of both groups and deflecting any suspicion from the Group itself.

Priority Three (Unknowns): Unlike the first two Priorities, Unknowns being classified an Unknown is not necessarily a death sentence. Instead, it means that the subject merits increased observation and investigation to determine his or her actual status. Most of these Unknowns are super powered beings that either operate in areas of the world where the Group doesn't have many resource or those that have recently emerged onto the scene. As soon as the Group identifies an Unknown, it does everything it can to gather enough data to reprioritize the target. Sometimes a target can languish in Priority Three for months or even years, something that the Group Analysts find infinitely frustrating.

In order to fully reprioritize a target, the Group must have proof of the person's powers and intentions, as well as some firm grasp on his or her background. More often than not this information comes from passive surveillance and some behind the scenes investigation. The Group never has to actively interfere in the individuals life. However, for those particularly tough nuts to crack, the Malta Group does have procedures for what they euphemistically call a Litmus Test. They create a series of situations for the target and observe how he or she reacts. These can include attacks, attempted bribes, false information, and threats to the target's friends and families. The Litmus Test firmly identifies which priority the target belongs in, assuming it doesn't kill the person in the process (which is not as uncommon as one might hope).

Priority Four (Potentials): The Malta Group defines any super powered being that they can possibly control with safety and security as a Priority Four Target or, Potential. The vast majority of the world's heroes and villains (and non-aligned super beings) fall into Priority Four. Potentials do not present any immediate threat to the Group or to those institutions and individuals that the Group feels are important. Every Potential has a file in the Group's databases that records all the known information about his or her origins, powers, background, family, and friends. The Group accumulates this data over time, usually through carefully culling newspaper and media articles, police reports, and other public and confidential databases. The Group is tied into every information source on the globe and has hundreds of analysts working to sift through the data for informational gems on super beings. The Malta Group monitors every electronic transaction, every telephone call, every newspaper report or mention on a Web log that has anything to do with a Potential. Often their computers know more about the subject's life than their own family and friends.

Actual agents are seldom dispatched to surveil Potentials unless they show particular promise. After all, there are thousands upon thousands of these beings out there, and even the Group has limited resources. When a very promising Potential is identified, then the surveillance teams spring into action and start looking for some lever with which to manipulate and/or recruit the target. Or, if the Potential is showing signs of becoming dangerous, the surveillance teams come up with enough information to reclassify the target as Priority Two or One.

It should be noted that there are a great number of "petty" criminals that the Group leaves within the Potential prioritization. The Malta Group does not concern itself with local crimes unless they directly impact its interests. For them, there is little difference between a master thief and a vigilante hero. Both are potential assets until they prove themselves either useless or a direct threat. The never ending struggles between costume clad heroes and their masked nemeses do not concern the Group – unless of course they can be used to control and deceive an asset.

Priority Five (Assets): Assets are those individuals who have, by one means or another, been compromised and recruited into the Group. Some are paid mercenaries, others are unknowing dupes, but most of them are working under threat of blackmail or exposure of some secret. Priority Five targets live under constant surveillance by the Malta Group through both electronic and human intelligence gathering resources. The Group does not want any of its recruits to be able to make a single move without them knowing about it. After all, their intimidation and control techniques rely upon their ability to force others to cooperate and prevent them from seeking help out of fear for the consequences. As soon as the asset feels he or she has any freedom to act without consequence, they will rebel against the Group.

The Malta Group classifies an Asset as Operational when he or she is engaged in some mission or errand on the Group's behalf. The Group usually has several hundred active assets operational at any one time. While operational, a team of up to a dozen agents and analysts keep an eye on the operative and make sure he or she plays along. These handlers (as they are known) are fully empowered to terminate the Asset if necessary, although this is always an option of last resort. If additional threats/bribes/promises don't ensure cooperation, then deleting the Asset is the only option. The Group seldom takes prisoners, wanting to limit its direct exposure to targets as much as possible.

The majority of Assets remain in Reserve status until the Group needs their special talents for a specific operation. Reserve Assets are still subject to constant monitoring, usually by electronic means. These reserve Assets only have three or four handlers working them at a time. Each of these smaller handler teams is usually responsible for monitoring multiple assets (typically between five and ten). The Group never makes its presence felt when monitoring an Asset in reserve unless absolutely necessary. Many targets begin to think that their ordeal is over – that perhaps the Group has forgotten about them or decided to let them off the hook. They are always wrong in this assumption. The Group never forgets, and never lets anyone off the hook.

Priority Six (Untouchables): The final Priority Class are the Untouchables. These are super powered beings that the Group recognizes as being both not harmful to their goals and too powerful to directly manipulate or turn into assets. The prime example is, of course, Statesman. Before he disappeared he was the archetypical Untouchable. No one in the Ground wanted to get his attention or, worse yet, draw down his wrath. They steered clear of him and let him do his things. If he had ever learned of the Group (which he didn't) and decided to come after it, he would have been reprioritized as a Priority One Threat and the Group would have done what it could to neutralize him. These days there are very few Untouchables left. Most of the surviving seven great heroes fall into this category, as do some other powerful individuals scattered around the world. Likewise some villains fall into this category, like the Archonate. Others have alliances with the Malta Group or some influence within its ruling elite, like the Countess Crey.

The Group hates the fact that there are people that are beyond their power to corrupt or influence. As a result, they have decided to make it a goal not to allow anyone else to become so popular, powerful, and untouchable that they must be categorized as Priority Six. Any hero, no matter how noble her actions or how much good they've done for the is subject to what is known as Priority Six Sanction. Under these circumstances the group takes the necessary steps to halt the hero's (or villain's) rise to untouchable status. This is seldom something as crass and obvious as an assassination. More likely, they start a smear campaign against the hero's reputation, followed up by a staged incident where it's impossible for the hero to do the right thing. Sometimes all it takes is a tarnishing of the hero's image to stop his or her rise. The target continues to work as a hero, but doesn't have the influence and status they once possessed. Most commonly though, the hero is forced into retirement in disgrace, having been shown to be undesirable or reprehensible in some way. This often works especially well for the Group, since the hero now becomes a Potential or an Asset with relative ease.

7.12.2.2 Politics by Any Means

While the manipulation and control of super powered beings is the Malta Group's primary brief, they also have extensive expertise in the field of political maneuvering. After all, the Group's power stems not from any super abilities or special technology, but rather from their expertise as spies and politicians. For decades they have secretly siphoned off billions of dollars from Western governments, all the while ensuring that they had all the legal cover and political support necessary for their operations. It should come as no surprise then that they Group is as adept at working the halls of government as it is at making super beings do what they want. The only difference is, with politics, the Group tends to be a little subtler.

The United States and Western Europe remain the strongholds of Malta Group power, although the organization has extended its influence to every continent. While in Asia, South America, and Africa the Group often engages in bribery, chicanery, and even bullying to get what it wants from local governments, it does not have the deep seated political roots that it maintains in the NATO nations. The United States and Britain in particular hold special places in the Group's heart, and in these countries they have almost unrestricted access to the ruling elites.

Fortunately for the Malta Group, unlike heroes and villains, politicians are inherently for sale to the highest bidder. The Group does not need to resort to mind control techniques or even black mail to get its way as long as it has legal (or at least semi-legal) ways in which to influence key members of government. Through a number of shell corporations, think tanks, and political action committees, the Malta Group gives tens of millions of dollars to candidates during every election cycle in both the United States and the UK. Most of these go to a few particularly powerful and influential committee chairs or legislative leaders. In return, they almost always lend a friendly ear to whatever suggestion the Malta Group has to make.

Thus while the governments no longer directly fund the Malta Group out of their various military and intelligence budgets, the Group is usually able to make all of its money back and more by winning special funding or government contracts for its shell corporations. The Group also makes even more money by selling it's influence to others who don't have such access, such as client corporations or even other governments. But money is just a side benefit for the Group. The real purpose of buying political interest is their desire for political and legal cover for their activities.

First and foremost, the Malta Group has managed to secure for itself blanket immunity from investigation or prosecution by the Justice Department in the United States. There hasn't been an Attorney General in the past decade who wasn't either directly paid off by the Malta Group or part of an administration that the Group had bought and paid for. The FBI and other groups simply don't investigate the Malta Group, and all it takes is a few phone calls to wave them off a particular subject. The Group can even (and has) get away with murder, since the local cops are as likely to succumb to pressure from their political bosses as the FBI is.

But wait, there's more. Not only do the Justice Department and many local law enforcement agencies (including the Paragon City Police Department) turn a blind eye to the Malta Group's crimes, they also provide assistance when called upon to do so. The Group almost never uses government or police personnel (although they can if they have to in an emergency), but they do have open access to law enforcement's files, databases, and lab facilities. The Group can call upon expert forensic teams to provide them with analyses of a location, or they can simply have the cops cordon off a few city blocks while they carry out some sensitive operation. The law enforcement men and women drafted for such duty never have any idea who they're working for – they just no that someone very high up the chain of command told them to do as they were told.

The Malta Group's interests stretch beyond the immediate need for help on the ground or protection from investigation. The Group really wants to change society and how it works. They want to make the world safe for big business capitalism and they want to bring the world's super beings under iron clad control. Ultimately, doing this requires changing the laws of the land. And there is no law the Malta Group would like to see restored more than the now-defunct Might for Right Act.

Thus the Group is exerting tremendous pressure upon its political assets to slowly but surely revive the Might for Right Act and allow the government to unconditionally draft super beings into service. Although the Group has plenty of assets on its own, it would love to be able to cut out the rigmarole of blackmail and intimidation and just be able to order whoever they want to do whatever they want. Of course public opinion is opposed to the law's revival, and the Supreme Court has declared it utterly unconstitutional. Therefore, the Group has a long road ahead of it before it can revive the hated statute. But they can be patient, and they're experts at playing the long game. Already they've begun to groom a number of prominent federal judges who would be likely Supreme Court nominees. By their reckoning, they need to secure three more seats on the nation's highest court in order to overturn the Might for Right decision. All the pieces are almost in place, and it wouldn't be surprising to see justices start dying off under mysterious circumstances in the not to distant future.

7.12.3 Methodology

The Malta Group has dozens of different techniques for obtaining and controlling assets, each of which is worth a story or two in and of itself. The Group things nothing of shattering a person's life and putting him or her through hell if that means they can accomplish their mission successfully. No particular technique is unique to a particular kind of asset. That is to say, there isn't a one size fits all solution for recruiting heroes into the Group's service. Each individual require special attention that's appropriate to his or her own weaknesses and pressure points. In general though, there are several broad categories into which all the Group's methodologies fall:

Money: The simplest and least reliable form of control is money. There are thousands of mercenaries out there, many of them with super powers, who claim that they're willing to do anything for money. As it turns out, that's not quite true. They're willing to do anything for money as long as it doesn't sound too dangerous or go against their own personal best interests. Worst of all, more than a few of them are willing to sell out completely to another master if they get offered more money. The Malta Group doesn't like working with assets who they don't have some form of real leverage over. Thus they rarely ever employ mercenaries on anything but low priority operations. Often mercenaries are hired to attack some location or guard some facility purely as a distraction while other assets carry out the real operation elsewhere.

But money can be a great motivator if the asset is desperate enough. More than a few heroes and villains have gotten into serious debt through gambling, drug addictions, or just lousy financial sense. Loan sharks, dealers, and bookies banging at the door can make a man quite desperate, especially if he has a public image to maintain. In these instances the Group is more than happy to help a hero out and pay his debts – once he's performed a small favor of course. Unlike traditional loan sharks who buy a person's loan and continue to demand repayment, the Group likes to simply clear the debt for the asset (after the job is done of course). This makes the asset grateful and ensures that he feels like he got a fair deal. The Group feels that if someone was stupid enough to get in debt over their head once, they'll probably do it again. Especially if the Group uses some of its other agents to help seduce the asset into borrowing more money, thus creating a never ending cycle of debt and repayment through action on the Group's behalf.

Blackmail: Everyone has secrets of one sort or another. The real question is, what would you do to keep the world from knowing your secrets. For most people, the answer is not very much. Letting the world know that you secretly read romance novels is not the kind of thing that's going to make a person commit crimes in order to keep the truth hidden from the world. Plus, even if the secret got out, no one would care. But heroes are celebrities in this modern era, and lots and lots of people care about each and every little thing they do. Furthermore, many heroes fall into the "work hard, play hard" mentality. They risk their lives every day and sometimes, when it comes time to blow off some steam, they get carried away. This can lead to some embarrassing behavior.

But of course the biggest secret many heroes have is their true identity. Many heroes prefer to act pseudonymously so that they can maintain a private life outside of their business as heroes. Secrecy protects their family and friends from reprisals and helps ensure their security during downtime. The secret identity also offers some legal protection, insulating the hero from lawsuits and criminal prosecution on those occasions when he or she accidentally steps over the line. The public exposure of one's secret identity can be a life-changing catastrophe.

The Malta Group is, of course, expert at finding out secret identities, embarrassing details, and much darker, more dangerous secrets as well. But even so, there's only so much a hero will do to avoid revealing his identity or that a villain will undertake just to avoid having his secret base outed to the authorities. Most blackmail victims are called upon to do smaller tasks – things they probably would have done anyway. For example, the Group uses heroes to attack villains or unknown super beings, painting them as utterly evil (even if they're not) in order to assuage and guilt the blackmailed asset feels about doing something just to preserve his identity. Likewise, with villains, the Group has them steal things or attack locations they normally wouldn't mind taking on, and usually allows the asset some profit out of the deal as well.

But when the Malta Group comes up with some really nasty, incriminating information, then they can really put the screws to someone. A super being guilty of murder, treason, drug trafficking, or some other heinous crime is a dream find for the Group. After assembling incontrovertible proof of the asset's guilt, they lay it out nice and simple: do what we say or all this proof goes to the press and the police. Few people have the will to stand up to such a threat, and once they get going they Group never lets go. Invariably the asset is made to commit more and more crimes, making him or her that much more susceptible to blackmail. Sometimes the Group even send the asset on missions that serve no other purpose than to rack up more crimes on his or her conscience. Once an asset has fallen this low, there's no escape. They serve the Group until they die or are caught red handed by the authorities. Those few that try to make a run for it seldom succeed.

Threat: While blackmail is of course a kind of threat, it is not the only one in the Malta Group's arsenal. Sometimes, it is necessary to more directly threaten an asset's well being – or the well being of his or her family and friends. Threatening a subject into doing your bidding is a tricky business, and not everyone responds well to it. The most valiant and brave of heroes will stand up to the threat, making it ultimately useless (although the Group always carries out its threats, without exception). The Group has therefore become quite adept at identifying those assets who are most susceptible to threat and then latching onto them. Individuals with high levels of fear and overblown senses of self preservation make particularly tempting targets. The ideal candidate cares mostly for himself, and will do whatever he needs to do to survive. Eventually, such subjects become used to working under threat of death, and even become reliable in a certain way.

Threatening someone's loved ones is a trickier undertaking. In all threat based assets, there is a strong desire to somehow trick the Group and strike back at them. This desire is dramatically increased when someone feels a strong sense of duty or love for his friends and family. Since the Group is expert at spotting any attempts to strike back at them, they usually foil rebellious assets before they can act, but even so, it can distract from completing the mission objectives. Once the mission is over, the asset invariably does everything he or she can to find out who was behind the threat so that they can protect their loved ones from any future menacing. Therefore, assets brought into operational status via threats usually have some very specific power or access and are rarely used for more than one or two operations. After that, the safest course is usually to eliminate the asset entirely.

One of the more interesting and high-stakes threats that the Malta Group uses is the tried and tested time-release poison or bomb. Agents of the Group inject the asset or a loved one with a poison or explosive device that will cause certain death within a short period of time – usually between ten and twenty-four hours. The asset must follow orders or die. It's as simple as that. The Group has developed some very toxic and hard to cure substances that cannot be counteracted by any means known to modern medicine, including the hospitals in the emergency teleportation network. This technique works fairly well, and can even be used successfully against the same target on multiple occasions. However, like most threats, it is a short-term solution and is used to gain the abilities of an asset for a specific operation.

Trickery: The most effective short term solution for manipulating assets is trickery. While no one likes being blackmailed or threatened, everyone has their own motives that do induce immediate action. The Malta Group has become expert at manipulating such motives to their own advantage. The most common form of trickery is to simply find out what an asset cares about and then manufacture a situation where that particular issue or subject comes into play. Group operatives can easily fake 911 calls, provide false leads to the asset's contacts and associates, manufacture evidence, or even create a false situation the spurs the asset into action. The Group uses such techniques every day, but they do have a drawback. It's becomes increasingly difficult to keep tricking an asset in this way – eventually they grow suspicious and a new tactic must come into play. Unless of course the asset is unusually credulous. In that case, the Group can and will exploit his or her gullibility indefinitely.

A more effective but more time consuming tactic is to develop a false contact for the asset – someone the super being comes to know and trust and for whom he or she works whenever requested. Many freelance heroes rely on contacts of won sort or another to steer them towards crimes that need solving or good that needs doing. Likewise, many villains need tips about valuable loot or potential law enforcement trouble. Either way, if a Group operative can insert himself into that role, then manipulating the asset becomes much easier. An even more effective technique is to develop some sort of personal bond with the hero, usually through seduction. The Malta Group trains a number of its operatives in the finer points of using sex as a weapon. Once an asset falls in love with the operative, manipulation becomes incredibly easy.

A final form of trickery involves what the Group calls False Allegiances. The Group always takes an interest in any paramilitary or revolutionary groups they learn about, no matter where in the world they are operating. Likewise, anywhere with concentrations of political or social dissatisfaction also piques their interest. The Group then sends in its agents to help lead and ultimately redirect these groups' efforts. For example, in the United States there are a number of right-wing paramilitary militias that have formed in reaction to perceived faults in the government. More than a few of these include super powered beings in their ranks. The Group has infiltrated most of them and feeds them a constant stream of misinformation, usually "incriminating" targets that the Group has identified as threats. Thus they succeed on two fronts – they prevent the militias from successfully striking against government resources while at the same time focusing their ire on someone the Group feels deserves it. The Group has similar arrangements all over the world.

Mind Control: The ultimate form of asset manipulation, mind control takes a great deal of time, money, and effort to use effectively. It typically takes over a year for the Malta Group's scientists to complete their mind control regimen on a target, during which time the subject must be confined in a cell and subjected to large doses of drugs and a variety of mental stimuli. This time and resource commitment can be quite a risk, especially if the asset has friends who might come looking for him or her. Furthermore, the Malta Group is usually loathe to maintain many long-term facilities, and has only a few locations around the world suitable for such procedures (including on in Paragon City). Taken together, all these factors mean that mind controlled assets are relatively rare.

But when it does work, the brain washing process produces tremendous results. Subjects retain most of their basic personality and all of their memories and skill set. The Malta Group's scientists do not simply dig around in a subject's brain and cut out the disobedient bits. They carefully sculpt personality and memory, bringing the subject more in line with the Group's beliefs (or whatever beliefs they want the subject to have). By the time the subject is ready for full services, he or she not only obeys orders, they *want* to obey those orders. However, even after completion the mind control procedure require regular maintenance sessions with the Group scientists – usually at least once a month for a 48-hour period.

All told, the Malta Group has only a few dozen active mind-controlled assets, and it values them a great deal. Almost all of them are currently working as sleeper agents out in the field, pretending to be normal heroes or villains and providing the Group with the kind of insider intelligence that would otherwise be almost impossible to get. The Group has even managed to help two of its controlled assets become superstar heroes, with millions of fans and massive public appeal. For the moment they continue to work for the Group in secret, but they day might some day come when they'll be asked to take a much more public stance on an issue the Malta Group cares deeply about such as Might for Right or in support of an otherwise unsupportable war.

7.12.4 Relations with Others

The Malta Group firmly believes that it's one of the good guys. It feels that the ends justify the means and is willing to do whatever it takes to win the war against rogue heroes and threats to world capitalism. And while it might manipulate or use groups that are obviously evil, these are always just alliances of convenience. They eventually plan to take out everyone they believe to be evil.

The Rikti are obviously a threat to one and all. For the Group, they are the new Communists and there is no making deals with them. Given any opportunity, they will strike at the Rikti, although now that the war is over, they will not do so if it endangers their current security or operations.

The 5th Column is obviously an evil organization, but it is an occasionally useful one. The Group does what it can to curtail the fascist group's terrorist activities, but it is not above manipulating events so that the 5th Column attacks someone the Group sees as a more immediate threat. However, much more often than not, the Group acts against the 5th Column as best it can.

The Circle of Thorns is more of a mystery to the Malta Group. They have little experience or expertise with magic, although they've recently begun several programs to rectify this deficiency. The Circle is patently dangerous and is packed with super powered threats, so the Group has taken a relatively hard line against it.

The Archonate represents the Malta Group's worst nightmare – an organization of powerful super beings operating outside all the confines of law and morality. Thus far the Archonate is still largely a mystery to the Group, and their various attempts to infiltrate it have proven entirely unsuccessful. They want to gather as much intelligence as possible about this growing threat before making any moves.

Crey Industries on the other hand is not seen as a villain group at all. Indeed, the Malta Group thinks rather highly of Crey, as it represents what they view as an ideal manifestation of the capitalist ethic. While the two don't actively cooperate often, they do have a number of positive interactions.

Nemesis is also a recognized foe, but the Group has taken a surprisingly lax stance against him. The party line within the group is that it's possible to negotiate with Nemesis and perhaps make use of him. In fact, Nemesis is one of the few individuals out there who knows more about the Group than they know about him. In a rare turn of the table, he is playing them, manipulating them for his own purposes.

The Freakshow on the other hand is obviously an enemy of all that is good and decent in the world. The crazed cybernetic anarchists have their uses, but are ultimately a threat and need to be destroyed at some point.

The more monstrous and bizarre groups like the Banished Pantheon and the Devouring Earth are beyond the Malta Group's ken. They are seen as just as bad as the Rikti and in need of destruction at the earliest possible moment. Smaller groups and gangs like the Tsoo and Vahzilok are useful tools for the Group, and both have been sources of assets in the past. The Group doesn't view them as terribly threatening, at least in the short term.

7.12.5 Agents

7.12.5.1 Hercules Class Titans

- Rank: Lieutenant
- Levels: 41 - 50
- Powers:
 - Missile 8 Pack – different payloads
 - Fragmentation (small AOE around target)
 - Incendiary (a DoT attack)
 - Gas grenades (Hold)
 - Punch
 - Plasma Blast – blasts emit from either arm. Plasma Burns halt HP Regeneration
 - Merge – When a Hercules Titan reaches half HP, it will seek out another Hercules Titan to merge with and form a Zeus.
- AI:

Description: The fall of the Soviet Union was everything the original Malta Group had ever dreamed of. Not only was it the end of the Warsaw Pact, it saw the Russian government replaced with a ruthless oligarchic style of capitalism that was prone to corruption and manipulation at every turn. The Malta Group stole into the disintegrating Evil Empire like bandits and made off with everything they could get their hands. Aside from a few dozen nuclear warheads, the most dangerous and valuable prize they took had to be the cyborg technology that would become the Titans.

The Soviets never managed to bring the Titan units online, but they had made some startling breakthroughs in technology. Only a totalitarian regime with no moral code would perform the medical atrocities necessary to create these cyborg soldiers, which made them just about perfect for the Malta Groups and its brutal code of "victory by any means." To all intents and purposes, the Titans are really robots, except that they are controlled by a human brain and nervous system. They have certainly long ago lost any sense of humanity they might have once had, and don't even possess memories of their former lives. The Soviets had used dissidents and criminals for their initial experiments, and the current Malta Group does much the same – anyone they don't like who gets in their way has a chance of being turned into a Titan. Since the process is only successful one in three times, the casualty rate in the Titan manufacturing facilities is quite high.

7.12.5.2 Zeus Class Titans

- **Rank:** Boss
- **Levels:** 41 - 50
 - **Powers** Missile 16 Pack – different payloads
 - Fragmentation (small AOE around target)
 - Incendiary(a DoT attack)
 - Gas grenades (Hold)
 - Punch
 - Plasma Blast – Larger f/x than the Hercules Class, more damage than the smaller version (blasts emit from either arm. Plasma Burns halt HP Regeneration)
 - Quad Plasma Laser – all four at once (blasts emit from either arm. Plasma Burns halt HP Regeneration)
- **AI:**

Description: The Zeus class is made up of two Hercules titans combining together. Both titans bonded together are more powerful than each would be individually.

7.12.5.3 Kronos Class Titans

- **Rank:** Giant Monster
- **Levels:** 41 - 50
- **Powers**
 - Missile Pack (8 to 16) – different payloads
 - Fragmentation
 - Incendiary
 - Gas grenades (sleep)
 - Plasma Blast – Larger f/x than the Hercules Class, more damage than the smaller versions (blasts emit from either arm. Plasma Burns halt HP Regeneration)
 - Quad Plasma Laser – all four at once (blasts emit from either arm. Plasma Burns halt HP Regeneration)
 - Foot Stomp
- **AI:**

Description: The Kronos class is really just a bigger, better version of the existing line. The Group is keeping these metal beasts under tight raps for now, using them for base security and attacks in remote locations with few witnesses (against terrorist training camps for example). The Kronos class are huge – 40ft. tall.

7.12.5.4 Knives of Artemis

- **Ranks:** Minion, Lieutenant & Boss
- **Levels:** 41 - 50
- **Powers:**
 - Unique Long Knives/Swords (3 to 4 different swings)
 - Bolt On Crossbow
 - Sleep Dart – Minions, Lt, Boss
 - Poison Dart (DoT, -Regeneration) - Lt
 - Paralysis (Hold) - Boss Only
 - Shuriken
 - Caltrops
 - Cloaking Devices (hard to see, increased Defense)
 - Web Grenade (Lt)
 - Stun Grenade (Boss)

- Exploding Shuriken (Boss)
- **AI:**

Description: This all female mercenary group has a reputation as one of the deadliest and most efficient paramilitary groups in the world. It consists of roughly seventy women, two thirds of whom have super powers. The rest are no less deadly, being highly trained warriors with high tech weapons. The Knives are generally ready, willing, and able to take on any contract that comes their way, as long as it doesn't involve anything too obviously evil. They're happy to help defend corporate owned diamond mines from local agitators or take down heroes accused of consorting with terrorists, but they won't attack civilians or engage in ethnic cleansing. The Malta Group likes to use them for security operations and to take down rogue criminals that they don't have the time or resources to deal with themselves. The Knives wear matching uniforms, usually sleeveless black flack vests with purple trim and fatigue pants to match. The Knives also use a ceremonial "knife" that they earn once they join the organization. This large serrated knife is more like a sword than anything else.

The Knives of Artemis have a secret society within their organization. This group is called "**The Sisterhood of the Huntress**", and has a more arcane bent than the rest of the Knives. The Sisterhood is all about reconnecting with the primal hunter goddess, and have been known to ritually hunt and kill victims, consecrating them as sacrifices to the moon-goddess Artemis. Whether this group will play a larger part in the Knives future or not remains to be seen.

7.12.5.5 Tactical Ops Teams

- **Rank:** Minion, Lieutenant, Boss
- **Levels:** 41 - 50
- **Powers**
 - Kevlar Armor (Res Smash and Lethal)
 - Adv. Assault Rifle
 - Hand Grenades
 - 1.1.1.1 Fragmentation
 - 1.1.1.2 Flash Grenades
 - 1.1.1.3 Web Grenades (Lt and Boss only)
 - 1.1.1.4 Stun Grenade (Lt and Boss only)
 - Kevlar (resistant to lethal and smashing)
 - Taser (for melee)
 - Brawl
 - Turret ("engineer" minion only)
- **AI:**

Description: The Malta Group now has a small standing army of its own, made up of a few thousand trained soldiers recruited from all over the world. Like everything else within the group, this military force is divided into cells or Teams as they're known. Each Tactical Ops Team is always totally unaware of all of the other Teams, insulating the Group from exposure should one or more of them be captured by the enemy. Each Team consists of forty trained soldiers organized into squads of ten. The Group has Teams scattered all over the world, with large metropolitan areas like Paragon City having multiple Teams scattered around the region.

All Team members carry false identity documents identifying them as either police or military officers. The Group arranges a false cover for the Teams that will pass any normal investigation, although an in depth look usually reveals them as false. Such detailed inquiries are rare however, since the Teams usually only need a few minutes or hours of respect that a badge can buy them while they carry out their mission. Most of these missions involve bringing down Priority One targets or supporting other assets in the field. The Group often uses them to secure a city block or building from innocent bystanders while an operation is being carried out.

Tactical Ops Teams look very much like a modern soldier. They're armed with sub machineguns, assault rifles, and sniper rifles. They have not special powers, but are all highly trained soldiers.

Typically, Tactical Ops Teams surround their position with trip mines, and prefer to shoot at foes and lure them in. This means that at least a few Ops teams stay safely behind the mines. Special "engineers" erect small gun turrets to help defend their position.

7.12.5.6 Sapper

- **Rank:** Minions (limit 1 per spawn)
- **Levels:** 41 - 50
- **Powers:**
 - Tech Armor (Res Smash, Lethal, Energy and End Drain)
 - Sapper Gun – Endurance Drain
 - AOE
 - Direct
 - Bayonet lunge (Hold) – a shock hit
 - Flight
- **AI:**

Description: Despite their name, sappers do not dig in the ground or plant explosives. Instead they are trusted Malta Group agents equipped with one of the organizations newest and most potent weapons – The Bio-Energy Feedback Inducer. This weapon was designed specifically for hunting down and neutralizing super powered beings of all sorts. It creates a feedback loop within the target's nervous system that saps away most super powers, effectively weakening or even negating the target's abilities. In game terms, the Sappers drain an enormous amount of player Endurance. The device quickly earned the nickname "Power Sapper" and those agents who use them became known as Sappers.

There are still relatively few Sappers operating within the Malta Group, as the weapons they use are very expensive and difficult to manufacture. The Group only deploys Sappers on high priority missions – either when the threat is great or there's a potential asset they really want to bring in unharmed and neutered. They always works in teams with other agents who are equipped with more traditional – and deadly weaponry such as Gun Slingers or even Titans. It is rare to encounter more than one Sapper at a time unless it is a particularly vital operation.

The Sapper weapon itself is a large rifle attached by a tube to a weighty energy pack that the agent wears on his or her back. All Sappers also wear body armor on their chest, head, and legs to provide both protection from their enemies and shielding from occasional side effects and backlashes from the weapon. The Sapper itself has a wide area of effect and is used not unlike a fire hose. Anyone struck by the weapon suffers immediate ill effects.

7.12.5.7 Trip Mines

- **Rank:** Underling
- **Levels:** 41 - 50
- **Powers:**

- **AI:**

Description: Part of spawns; explode on proximity

7.12.5.8 Gunslingers

- **Rank:** Lieutenant & Boss

- **Levels:** 41 - 50

- **Powers**

- Quick pistol attacks (several attacks) – very large pistol Hellboy like
 - Hollow Round (A basic Round)
 - Incendiary Round
 - Liquid N2 Round (Hold)
 - Explosive rounds (AoE)
 - Rapid Fire (Cone)
 - Narcotic Dart (Sleep) (Boss Only)
- Teleport

- **AI:**

Description: The Malta Group does on occasion need to employ its own, loyal operatives directly in the field. While the Tactical Ops Teams are good for security or for full frontal assaults, sometimes a few lone, highly trained agents are a much more efficient and less attention grabbing way to deal with a problem. Thus the Malta Group regularly recruits and trains some of the world's most effective killers. Most are brought in young – usually in their late twenties – after having shown some promise in the military or police. The Malta Group then trains them for years, honing their weapons and fighting skills until they're able to single-handedly take on a super powered being – at least under the right circumstances. Those circumstances almost always involve the agent having a gun in his or her hand.

According to official Malta Group nomenclature, these operatives are called Special Qualification Marksmen, but everyone in the group calls them by their nickname: Gunslingers. This name came into common usage not only because the agents use firearms, but because they also tend to have the same kind of cocky attitude and cowboy mentality that one associates with gunslingers in the old west. Each and every gunslinger is trained to believe that they have a very real shot at taking down any kind of super being, as long as they know just where to put the bullet. In most cases, they're absolutely right. Gunslingers are highly effective, cold-blooded killers, and there are few in service today that don't have at least four or five kills to their names.

The key to a Gunslinger's deadly efficacy is not just the training – it's the equipment. All gunslingers use the very latest and most advanced firearms available. They use high power pistols that can be hidden on their person and drawn with lightning speed to gun down a target (although for more traditional assassinations, they do use sniper rifles). The real secret though is inside the gun. The Group has developed a whole range of specialized ammunition that it uses against super beings. From armor piercing rounds that can penetrate half an inch of solid steel to poisons, explosives, EMP, incendiary, and even sonic bullets, all designed to overcome some specific kind of super powered defense mechanism. Gunslingers typically carry several different types of ammunition on their person so that they can be ready for any eventuality.

Gunslingers tend to operate alone or in small teams. They occasionally are brought in to provide backup to a special ops team or other Malta Group assets, but they prefer to keep to themselves when they can. They are the Group's assassins of choice, targeting not only troublesome super beings, but other enemies of the Group as well. Although they have no special powers, they're phenomenal training and combat senses make them the equal to some of the toughest heroes and villains in the business.

Stature Level 8 Pools	
SL8_Malta_Compund1	Stop Crey from hiring Malta to destroy some damaging evidence. Retrieve the evidence and prevent an assassination.
SL8_Malta_Mission2	Arrest a Malta agent working undercover in the army of Nemesis
SL8_Malta_Mission3	Stop Malta Group from smearing a hero's name by creating an unwinnable situation for her
SL8_Malta_Mission4	Stop Knives of Artemis from taking out a law firm that specializes in meta-human rights
SL8_Malta_Mission5	Stop Knives from assassinating a reporter who knows too much
SL8_Malta_Mission6	The Malta Group has laid an ambush for you. Turn the tables on them.
SL8_Malta_Compund7	Rescue Freedom Corps trainer from Malta Group
SL8_Malta_Compund8	Stop a number of Malta operations to throw suspicion on one of their agents. Malta decries the agent as a traitor.
SL8_Malta_Mission9	Stop a sacrifice about to be performed by the Knives' cult of sisterhood.
SL8_Malta_Mission10	Destroy a shipment of parts for the Malta cyborgs.
SL8_Malta_KillTask11	Killtask to distract the Malta Group from another operation of Indigo's
SL8_Malta_KillTask12	Killtask to test Malta's reaction to you
SL8_Malta_KillTask13	General killtask

Stature Level 8 Story Arc: Missing Melvin and the Mysterious Malta Group
On the trail of a missing spy, you uncover much of the Malta Group's history.

Stature Level 2.5 Pools	
SL9_Malta_Compound1	Stop Malta's attempt to gain control of the Revenant Hero Project
SL9_Malta_Compound2	Trace a missing person who was turned into a Titan
SL9_Malta_Compound3	Stop assassination of Rikti peace negotiator
SL9_Malta_Compound4	Recover a CoT informant before the Malta Group can do away with him
SL9_Malta_Compound5	Stop Malta Group from abducting a young man who they grew as a clone of Roger Vrabel

Cryptic Studios

SL9_Malta_Compound6	Stop a takeover of the Malta Group
SL9_Malta_Compound7	Create a war between the Knives of Artemis and the Varnival of Shadows
SL9_Malta_Compound8	Stop Malta Group from taking over remnants of Nemesis' army.

Stature Level 9 Story Arc: Operation:World Wide Red

On the trail of a shape-shifter named Moment, you foil a Malta plot to use nanites to control the world and expose a CIA double agent

7.13 Nemesis

Nemesis is the badest bad guy there is. In a world filled with very evil and loathsome beings, Nemesis surpasses them all. He's not necessarily the most powerful (though he's quite powerful) and he's not necessarily the most evil (but he's very evil). He is without a doubt the smartest and most ambitious villain out there. Nemesis is famous for his schemes within schemes, his long term planning, and his seemingly infinite patience. Heroes should never quite know what to expect when they fight Nemesis and, as often as not, in fighting him they're actually helping him further some larger scheme. Any encounter with him or his minions should always strike fear and doubt into a good person's heart.

7.13.1 History

Like so many other great villains in history, Nemesis began life as a toy maker. Born Gerhardt Eisenstadt in 1804, he was the youngest son of won of central Europe's preeminent noble families. The Prussian Eisenstadt house had manufactured swords and armor since the middle ages and had expanded their product line with advances in technology, producing cannon, muskets, and other military hardware. During the Napoleonic Wars the family found its greatest fortune ever, supplying both the Prussian and Austrian and even Russian armies with arms throughout the 15 plus years of war. The family went from very rich to fabulously rich, and Gerhardt, born in the midst of the war, grew up in the lap of luxury.

Spoiled and pampered by overindulgent parents, Gerhardt could have lived the rest of his days in utter sloth and debauchery like so many of his siblings did, were it not for a special present his father bought him on his twelfth birthday. Designed by a famous Swiss clock maker, it was a child sized clockwork horse that could actually walk under its own power, carrying the young Gerhardt into many an imaginary battle. Gerhardt was fascinated and delighted with the mechanical horse, thinking it the most wonderful thing he had ever seen. More than anything he wanted to know how it worked, how it was possible for man to create something the mimicked life thus.

Throughout his teens Gerhardt devoted himself entirely to the study of clocks, gears, mechanics and metallurgy. His father hired the famed clock maker who had created the horse to come to the Eisenstadt estates and serve as his son's tutor. The boy's immense intelligence soon became obvious, and within less than a year he had learned everything his teacher knew and was making new innovations and improvements every day. In the workshop his father built him, Gerhardt created all manner of wonders for his young cousins, nieces, and nephews. He took great delight in the joy one of his pouncing mechanical kittens or flying songbirds gave to his relatives. For the adults he produced ingenious clocks that acted out different parts of family history at each hour and musical jewelry boxes that cleaned their contents automatically. For his favorite family chef he created an automatic potato peeler and dicer.

Gerhardt was understandably quite proud of his creations, as was the rest of his family. The sole exception was his brother Tobias. Now responsible for running the family business, Tobias constantly derided his brother's toys as "mere trifles" and urged him to focus his obvious talents on more useful inventions. Such a mind could revolutionize the arms business, creating weapons never before seen on the field of battle. Gerhardt had no interest in improving muskets or making cannon more accurate. These were simple, uninteresting tasks for which he could spare no time. Tobias continued to pester his youngest brother, urging him to help the family and Prussia with his talents. These remonstrations bothered Gerhardt more and more until finally he relented. He told Tobias that if he left him alone for one year, he would produce a new and wondrous weapon for him.

Gerhardt moved his workshop to one of the family's small country estates and forbade anyone to disturb him while he worked. A year passed and Tobias sent word that he wanted to see his weapon. Gerhardt said that, in one week, on Tobias' 40th birthday, he would present his brother with a present he would never forget. The year away from the rest of the world had given Gerhardt time to think, to plan, and to dream. He knew that in a certain way his brother was right; he did want more from life than making clever toys. He also knew that he didn't want anyone else controlling his life, especially his brother Tobias. How dare he? How dare he, little more than a glorified bean counter, dream that he might bend an intellect like Gerhardt's to his feeble will? These thoughts festered and grew in the genius inventor, feeding into his dreams.

And so Tobias' birthday came and Gerhardt returned home with a large wooden case resembling an oversized coffin. He sealed himself away in a drawing room to prepare his present for its unveiling. An hour later he invited brother Tobias and the rest of the family into the room. There stood a seven-foot tall metal man. Not a suit of armor, but a finely articulated metal man with its musculature wrought in silver and bronze, handsome steel and platinum facial features and a molded head of golden hair. The metal form recreated every human joint and point of articulation, a life sized clockwork man that moved with a disturbingly natural gait. The whole family was awestruck. All but Tobias, who simply pointed out that, as fine as the creation certainly was, it was no weapon. It was just another toy.

Gerhardt assured him that nothing was further from the truth, for no weapon was good without a soldier to wield it, and Gerhardt's mechanical soldier could outfight and out last any man in the world. Tobias scoffed, but Gerhardt ignored him, and pressed a sword into his creation's hand. He handed another blade to his brother and urged him to test the metal man's skill. Tobias, suddenly wary, tried to demure, but it was too late. Gerhardt had created the mechanical man to automatically attack whoever held the handle of the sword he had just put in his brother's hands. The metal thing lunged forward with superhuman speed, impaling the dumbstruck Tobias on its blade. With machine precision it withdrew the blade just as quickly and then swung it in a deadly arc that cut Tobias' head from his shoulders. "There is your weapon brother," said Gerhardt, who strode out of the room and the house, leaving his mechanical man standing like a statue, its clockwork muscles exhausted and now useless. It had performed its single task.

Gerhardt returned to his countryside workshop to continue his work in peace. Of course the murder of one of the richest men in Europe could not go unnoticed, and none of the family felt particularly safe with their young mad genius out on the loose, so troops were dispatched to bring the lad in. The unsuspecting cavalymen found Gerhardt's country estate to be a nightmare of mechanical booby traps and deadly automatons. The whole troop was lost, as were the next three squadrons of soldiers sent into the region. Finally an entire regiment descended upon the estate, burning and shelling everything in their path. When they finally breached the reinforced steel walls and fought their way past the murderous metal crocodiles, they found Gerhardt in the basement. He surrendered quietly and came along in their custody. Were it not for the extreme heat of the day and the oven like conditions of the carriage they chained him in, it might have been days before they realized they had captured a fake. As it was, the heat melted the wax skin, causing quite a fright before the soldiers figured out they had been duped.

The real Gerhardt had slipped into France long before the first soldiers arrived at his old workshop. He had already set up another workshop outside Paris before he murdered his brother, and it was here that he continued his research. The French authorities, not wanting to cause an international incident, agreed to allow the Prussians to try and capture Gerhardt themselves. Unfortunately for them, the events in Prussia all but repeated themselves, with the young inventor's contraptions laying waste to the Prussian mercenaries sent to kill him (all pretense of a trial having been abandoned at this point). And so began a ten-year period during which Gerhardt crisscrossed his way back and forth across Europe, becoming the most notorious criminal of the age.

The entire continent buzzed with stories of the notorious Gerhardt Eisenstadt and his devious machinations. Ever since he was thirteen Gerhardt had been stealing money and precious gems and objects from his family, and so was quite well funded for his adventures. Whenever he needed some ready cash he'd steal it, usually with the help of his automatons. Gerhardt dropped his given name and began calling himself the Prussian Prince of Automatons. Everywhere he went he left chaos in his wake, earning many admirers amongst the lower classes for his daring deeds and the panache with which he defied the authorities. The Prince always stole from government institutions and noble families, never harming the poor or even middle class. His reputation soared, and soon he could count on aid and comfort from the poor and petty thieves in any city in Europe. It was during this time that an English paper, reporting on a recent spate of crimes in London, declared him the Nemesis of the Nobility. And so the name stuck, with the poor and underprivileged calling him Prince and the rich and established calling him Nemesis.

The truth is, that Nemesis did not care one bit for the poor. Nor did he particularly hate the rich. For him the entire rigmarole was a kind of game. He viewed his fugitive status as a way to test his intellect against the greatest detectives and generals in Europe, all the while honing his machines in the crucible of battle. He never targeted the poor because, frankly, he never thought of them as worthwhile opponents. Even the brightest noble was not his equal, but at least they were in the same league. All the same, he immediately saw how useful his popularity with the little people could be and was happy to foster such support.

From 1825 to 1837 Nemesis ran roughshod over Europe. Nine times out of ten, the only reason the local authorities or military ever found him was because he sent them clues to his whereabouts. He always tried to make the conflicts as personal as possible, taking the time to get to know intimate secrets and details about the noblemen who faced off against him. Of course Nemesis' concept of a game was more like mass murder for the rest of the world. With machines his only constant companions, Nemesis had grown detached from human feelings. For him snuffing out a human life carried no more moral significance than stepping on an ant. In his dozen-year game of wits he was responsible for the deaths of over three thousand men and women, including several hundred titled nobles and one sitting monarch.

The reign of terror finally came to an end on the island of Malta in the winter of 1837. There, three warships from the British navy shelled Nemesis' island fortress of twelve straight hours before sending in marines. The soldiers fought their way through the rubble until they finally found Nemesis and his bodyguard of elite automatons equipped with rapid firing rifles. Only when two small cannon were brought to bear did the Prussian Prince of Automatons finally fall. Or so it seemed. In fact for the past two years the Prussian Prince of Automatons had been just that: an automaton. In 1835 Nemesis had finally created his greatest machine ever, a duplicate of himself. For two years the automaton played the part of Nemesis, faring almost as well as its creator, and fooling hundreds of humans who had aided or worked for it.

The real Nemesis was already in the Americas, pursuing a new strategy. He had grown tired of his game and wanted room to expand his horizons a bit. The Americas at this time were still in a state of flux, and Nemesis believed he had a chance to claim some unclaimed territory for himself. His time in Europe had taught him a valuable lesson: no nation would tolerate him, at least not if he wished to live a free man (Nemesis' definition of "free" being somewhat different than most people's). The only resort was to create a nation of his own. America appealed to him because it was mostly settled by those of European ancestry and he would thus be able to rule over civilized men. He had no desire to reign over savage tribes in Africa or debased Chinese in the Orient. No, for him it was a kingdom of educated white men or none at all.

Nemesis had no desire to enslave a nation, he merely wanted to rule one absolutely and without challenge. He had enjoyed the misplaced devotion of Europe's criminal underclass during his decade of gamesmanship, but he longed for a higher class of devotee. He wanted to create a country where his mechanical creations would serve man's every need, freeing them to create art, music, and poetry without having to concern themselves with manual labor or politics, or any thought of self governance. Indeed, in Nemesis' utopia – the very utopia he seeks to build still – the citizens are really little more than happy cogs in a great machine of his design, each producing some effect for the greater good and glory of their magnificent ruler.

He had originally planned to journey out west and seize some territory in the California region, but as it turned out he would not get past the Mississippi River for many decades to come. Nemesis first laid foot on American soil in the port city of Charleston, South Carolina. Although he had of course read about slavery, this was his first actual exposure to it, and he liked what he saw. For the moment his automatons lacked any lasting power source, requiring constant winding and setting of gears. Slaves on the other hand were nearly self-sustaining, provided you gave them some simple food for fuel. What's more, they could be taught a wide variety of tasks. They were just what he needed to perfect his technology.

Nemesis traveled around the South for several years, acquainting himself with the land and its resources. Finally he settled on the mountains of North Carolina as his new home, purchasing several hundred square miles of land for his own, along with several hundred slaves to do his bidding. The year was 1840, and Nemesis himself would not come down from his mountain until 1863. During those twenty-one years his slaves built him a castle fit for a king and burrowed miles upon miles of tunnels and mines through the mountains. Meanwhile, Nemesis began to attract devoted followers, men and women of good breeding and education who nevertheless fell under his charismatic sway. He created his dream kingdom in miniature, a cult-like environment where his word was law and machines and slaves provided for the privileged few.

Then came the Civil War. Nemesis was scarcely aware of the outside world at this time, busy as he was with his own researches and ruling over his small group of three score devotees and few hundred slaves. It was only when a shipment of rare metals he had ordered from Europe was seized by a Union blockade that the mad monarch of the mountain felt the need to investigate this war matter and see what he could do about it. Once it became clear that the invading Union armies threatened not just his shipments but his whole way of life, Nemesis stirred from his torpor and set about trying to help the south win the war.

By now it was late 1863, the war was going badly for the South, and Nemesis was an old man. Still, undaunted by his age, he dressed himself and his followers in suits of armor equipped with built in repeating rifles, musket proof armor, and strength enhancing servos. They rode upon mechanical steeds, powerful steel beasts that could outrace a locomotive, shrug off artillery shells, and fire small cannon balls from their chests. This was the first time Nemesis had been seen in public in close to thirty years, and few remembered reading of his exploits in Europe. It didn't take him long to make a name for himself once again, as he became the scourge of the battlefield in every engagement he and his iron clad soldiers participated in. His tiny cavalry troop seemed everywhere in the Eastern Theater of operations, intercepting Union Cavalry units, cutting rail roads and lines of supply, and generally putting to shame the exploits of J.E.B. Stuart. General Grant offered a staggering \$10,000 bounty for the metal monster's head.

But it was a war the South could not win, even with Nemesis' miraculous mechanical horsemen. They were after all just a few dozen men, and this was a war fought by millions. The North proved victorious, and when they were finished with the rebel army they came looking for Nemesis. By now his fame had carried back to Europe where many still remembered him. Bounty hunters, the scions of wronged noble houses, and adventure seekers from across the continent flocked across the Atlantic to help bring the mad Prussian to justice. General Grant sent his old friend General Sherman and an entire division to seize Nemesis' mountain plantation. Thanks to the advice of several of the European bounty hunters, Sherman knew better than to make a casual march up the mountain to arrest the Prussian. Instead he surrounded the mountain, fortified his positions, and began to shell Nemesis' compound from afar.

Nemesis had not expected this. Caught up in the romance of war and his own victories on the battlefield, he had expected an overconfident Sherman to march on his position. The sudden rain of artillery fire caught him unprepared and out of his armor. The red-hot shrapnel tore through his right leg, nearly cutting it off at the knee. He barely managed to fit himself into his armor, which had built in tourniquet and first aid mechanisms to help tend to his wounds. He then succeeded in rallying his troops, who mounted their automaton horses and, following their wounded leader, charged downhill into Sherman's lines.

For the second time that day, Nemesis was caught short by Sherman's preparations. Having seen in person just how unstoppable Nemesis and his raiders could be, the general had prepared a row of deep pits filled with mud and water and hidden under dry leaves. The iron clad horsemen rode straight into these pits, their heavy armor and mounts dragging them down into the muck. Only Nemesis and two of his soldiers managed to clamber out of the trap. The rest drowned, their previously impenetrable armor sealing their fates. Ever elusive, Nemesis did manage to escape, even with the hills swarming with thousands of soldiers. While his men provided a distraction he slipped into one of the many hidden tunnels that honeycombed his mountain.

This was the mad genius' first true defeat, and its taste was too bitter for words. He lay in hiding for a whole week while the soldiers swarmed over his property, carefully disarming booby traps and uncovering his secrets. Although the military never found most of his most secret vaults and workshops, they made them effectively inaccessible by dynamiting the entire mountain and collapsing most of the caves. Nemesis now had nothing but the armor on his back and his own mind. A despondent and defeated sixty-one year old man, he burned with a desire for vengeance so bright, it's a wonder the U.S. soldiers couldn't see him as he fled into the night.

Although beaten and mutilated, Nemesis was far from finished. Decades of living as a fugitive had taught him to always have at least two or three safe places to hide. He had established several safe houses throughout the south, one of which he holed up in for several months while he made himself a new leg. This limb of steel and gears proved to be his greatest invention yet and he was quite proud of the gold, steel, and platinum creation. He then set out for his last and greatest refuge: a defunct silver mine located in the Rocky Mountains.

Nemesis knew that his time left on earth was short and that he would die if he couldn't figure out a way to prevent old age from ravaging his body. The mountain retreat had a fully equipped workshop, which he soon supplemented with new materials and equipment of his own design. The mine itself was defunct by the standards of the day, but it only took Nemesis a few weeks to invent automated mining equipment that made the facility more productive than ever. He secretly laundered his ingots through a network of friendly bankers, making them very rich and providing him with funds for research and development.

In the next decade Nemesis did manage to come up with a way to avoid the reaper's call, although it was not as elegant as he might have liked. He decided that, if the organs could be replaced, then old age would not be a problem, just as his new mechanical leg more than replaced his flesh and bone limb. However, he had more difficulty replicating the human body's functions than he had thought he would. Biology was never his strongest subject and his mechanical solutions to the various problems he faced resulted in a body not nearly human at all. It didn't help that heart and liver disease in his own body accelerated the time table on him. He needed a solution now and so he reverted to the same device that had saved him once before: his armor.

Nemesis' miraculous clockwork armor soon evolved into a steam powered, walking life support unit that just happened to mimic all the functions of the human body. He still wears this same suit today, although each year brings new improvements and embellishments. There is very little man left inside beyond the brain and central nervous system. Even these have mechanical augmentations installed in the last few years. This mechanical body became his obsession. At first he was sorely disappointed that he could not find a more elegant solution, but he is not a man prone to dwelling on his failures. Instead he came to appreciate his body of gears and pistons for the true expression of genius that it was.

Now it was the dawn of a new century, and Nemesis had cheated death. Nothing seemed impossible to him. After thirty years of super-efficient mining, his mine now truly was stripped bare. It was time to move back east and take care of some unfinished business. With unlimited time on his hands, the villain new that he could and should play the long game. Take time to gather his forces and put together a plan that would leave him sole ruler over the nation that had once handed him his first defeat. He would be Emperor of the Americas one day, and then the world see what a true leader could do with such vast resources at his disposal.

He began slowly, gathering about him a group of young men who were suitably impressed with his genius and sympathetic to his autocratic philosophies. He used them as front men to apply for patents on some of his lesser inventions. These he then began to sell on the open market and thus fund his new corporation: Southern United Manufacturing. His timing was perfect, for the company was fully operational and had a reputation for fast, cost effective, and high quality machine parts when the Great War broke out in Europe.

Nemesis made a fortune selling arms and machine parts to every nation in the conflict. His submersible cargo ships avoided the blockades for the more clandestine runs and his super transport zeppelins made the Atlantic crossing in record time carrying surprisingly large cargos. Southern United Manufacturing made millions, and more than doubled its profits once the United States entered the war. The success also brought tremendous attention from the press, government, and business community. Nemesis' puppet corporate leaders took all the credit and handily deflected any investigations away from their leader.

The Roaring 20's were even more profitable, as Southern United Manufacturing expanded its shipping and sales network worldwide. Nemesis decided to move the corporate headquarters to Paragon City, allegedly because of its amazing port facilities and booming economy. In reality he had more nefarious plans. Paragon University was fast becoming one of the foremost research facilities in the world, and Nemesis wanted to know everything they did. His company became one of the largest patrons of the school, particularly in the sciences. For the next twenty years, Nemesis personally recruited the best and brightest of the world's scientific community, directing them towards his own research.

The twenties also saw Nemesis once again dipping into criminal activities. He saw the immense wealth to be made in bootlegging of course, but more importantly, he saw the value of making firm underworld connections he could exploit later. He funded innumerable gangs and crime syndicates throughout the country, giving them cash to run their rackets and supplying them with military grade hardware to defend their turf. Sometimes, just for the fun of it, he'd play one gangs off against the other in order to have his more inventive weapons tested in live combat situations.

Nemesis became quite enamored with organized crime. Some of the more flamboyant gangsters reminded him of his youth. He became more and more intrigued by this easy way to make money, especially in the early 30's, when gangsters pretty much controlled Paragon City. Maybe he had finally found the key to seizing control of his own fiefdom. He was contemplating his future as the crime kingpin when The Statesman made his first appearance. The time of the super powered hero had arrived, and Nemesis was not ready for it. He planned on a national and worldwide scale. He bought and sold whole police precincts and federal agencies. He didn't know what to do about lone vigilantes with super powers.

By the end of the 30's the heroes had managed to smash the syndicates to smithereens. Nemesis had insulated himself from his puppet crime lords well enough that the heroes never truly discovered his role (although they heard many rumors of an elusive crime boss named Nemesis). Nemesis continued to expand his legitimate business concerns, especially in the arms and munitions fields. With the coming of war to Europe, he once again started shipping war materiel to both sides of the conflict. All the while he was working on a plan to deal with these new costume clad avengers.

As it turned out, once America entered the war, most of the costumes went with the U.S. Army to fight in Europe and the Pacific. This gave Nemesis some breathing space but it also gave him cause for concern. He did not like the idea of the heroes acting in coordinated military operations. Singly he was now sure he could beat them, but ganged together and properly led, they would prove an altogether more challenging obstacle to his ambitions. And so, while America fought and his factories produced the weapons and ammunition they fought with, Nemesis quietly set about building his own army.

This first Nemesis Army was composed almost entirely of automatons, with a few loyal humans in key command roles. He had designed the army to carry out his precise plan: seizing control of Washington DC while the nation's heroes were still busy overseas fighting the war. He waited until he thought the moment was ripe – just as victory in Europe seemed assured. Then his army swooped down on the nation's capital, quickly overwhelming it and taking congress and the Supreme Court hostage, along with the majority of the city's population. President Truman was lucky enough to escape, thanks to some quick thinking heroes who spirited him away.

Nemesis followed up this bold strike with similar assaults all over the nation, seizing local government officials, state houses, governors, mayors, and anyone else in authority that he could get his hands on. He then released his final masterstroke, a deadly nerve agent that only he had the cure for. Everyone in those captive cities would soon die if he were not legally made Emperor of the Americas. Miraculously, America's heroes made it back from Europe in time to stop Nemesis, their combined powers and intelligence just barely proving a match for Nemesis' intricate scheme. One of the main reasons for his defeat was the inability of his automatons to adapt to any deviations from how Nemesis had envisioned events unfolding. For all their mechanical genius, they could not keep up with a real human brain.

Nemesis escaped capture, but in the wake of his defeat he lost nearly everything he had. His close links to Southern United Manufacturing came to light and the government seized the entire corporation and all of its assets. Moreover Nemesis himself came to be seen as an evil threat like unto Hitler or the Japanese. He would remain atop the FBI's most wanted list for the next six decades and became a kind of boogey man for the entire nation. He holed up in Paragon City, secreted away within a workshop he had prepared ahead of time for just such an eventuality.

He spent another twenty years in relative isolation, rethinking his reliance on automatons and researching new and better ways to integrate man and machine. He dramatically improved his own life sustaining armor during this time as well as making bold new discoveries in the field of cybernetics. When he finally began recruiting followers once again, he did so slowly. Nemesis did not want the world to yet know he was still active. So he began leaking out his technology to small time crooks and villains, creating a continuing stream of meddlesome super villains who plagued Paragon City throughout the sixties and seventies. All the while he was perfecting his creations and using the money these illicit activities brought in to rebuild his lost fortune.

The mad genius had new plans for his newest public appearance when, in 1988 Dr. Brian Webb smashed the dimension barrier and discovered how to travel to alternate realities. Nemesis became immediately obsessed with this new discovery, something he had never even dreamed possible. He turned all his resource and intellect on seizing the portal technology for himself, and in short order he succeeded. Indeed, he succeeded so well that no one in Dr. Webb's lab or the Portal Corp were even aware that their designs had been stolen. Nemesis built his own dimensional portal and began sending automaton probes into hundreds of different dimensions, gathering as much information as he could about each of them.

The way the portal technology works, it's much easier to travel to an alternate Earth that is widely divergent from our own than it is to find one that is very close. Nemesis spent several years looking for just that: a world just like our own, but with one key difference: where he had succeeded in his plans in taking over the United States in 1945. Nemesis did find an Earth where the South had won the Civil War and his counterpart had used his technology to turn the Confederacy into the most powerful nation on Earth, but his alternate had died of old age in the 1890's.

Finally he found a world where Nemesis ruled over a nightmarish North America as absolute tyrant. Surrounded by nothing but automatons and sycophants, he had turned the continent into a giant, mechanized police state where brave heroic revolutionaries fought to overthrow his rule and the entire population lived as slaves. This was not the benign utopia that Nemesis envisioned himself creating, and it shook him to the core. Worse yet, his autocratic counterpart discovered him and the two engaged in a deadly battle of wills that lasted for over a year before Nemesis managed to engineer a stalemate and seal off travel between the two dimensions.

In all his travels and extra-planar explorations, one world intrigued Nemesis much more than any other. When he first discovered it he was sure that he had found a way to travel not just to other Earths, but to other worlds as well. This was an Earth ruled entirely by alien looking beings, beings we now know as the Rikti. Nemesis approached this world with care and caution, spending several years covertly studying it. He soon discovered that it was indeed an alternate Earth, only one that had been inordinately influenced by some other worldly culture thousands of years in its past. The Rikti were in fact humans, although millennia of genetic modification had transformed them into monstrous creatures.

Nemesis to this day is the only native to Earth who understands Rikti communication, an insight that owes as much to luck as his own brilliance. He used this knowledge to eaves drop on various secret Rikti communications and to discover the lay of their complicated political scene. The Rikti were a technologically advanced people, but they were no more peace loving than humans on our world. They were in a state of heightened paranoia and war mongering not unlike Europe immediately prior to World War One. Nemesis saw immediately how he could use that to his greater advantage.

The made master of mechanics made a series of powerful automatons modeled after some of Earth's greatest heroes, including The Statesman. He then sent them through the dimensional portal to attack several key Rikti religious and cultural sites. The Rikti heretofore had no knowledge of extra-dimensional travel, although they had advanced teleportation technology. These strange alien attackers created a wave of panic and anger that circled the Rikti globe. Who were these aliens? Why had they killed thousands of innocents for no conceivable reason? Where had they come from? Nemesis left the Rikti just enough clues to help them figure out some of the details, including that they the attackers were some sort of warriors from another dimension.

For his final masterstroke, Nemesis lured the Freedom Phalanx into a sense of false confidence. He made several "mistakes" that led The Statesman and his comrades right to his "secret base." Nemesis then led them on a merry destructive chase through the city, allowing them time to gather a sizable squadron of heroes to help capture him. He then "let" them corner him in the headquarters of the Portal Corp (he didn't want them to discover he had his own inter-dimensional portal technology). There he narrowly escaped through an open portal that he had set for the Rikti home world.

When the band of heroes followed him through, they found themselves in the central plaza of one of Rikti Earth's greatest cities at the height of a military parade. Nemesis was nowhere to be seen. The Rikti assumed this was another sneak attack and immediately attacked the heroes. Several humans fell in battle, as did hundreds of Rikti before Statesman managed to fight his way to the portal and affect their escape. And so, without realizing it, the opening volley of the Rikti War had been fired. Three months later the Rikti invasion fleets started appearing over Paragon City.

Nemesis now had his earth shattering war that he had schemed for. He knew that Earth's heroes would find a way to repel the invaders, and that if they didn't he could step in and make them think that they had. It was merely the first step, paving the way for his future plans. Now it's time for phase two.

7.13.2 Goals

More than anything, Nemesis wants a nation of his own to rule. More exactly, he wants a piece of the United States to rule (perhaps all of the US). For the moment though, he'll be happy with Paragon City. He is very pleased with how well his Rikti gambit worked out for him, although things did get a little out of hand. Fortunately his role in the war remains a mystery. Otherwise he's confident that the Rikti would turn on him and agree to a lasting peace with humanity. However, for the time being matters are just as he wants them. Large portions of the city have been rendered uninhabitable and there are villains, monsters, and dangers lurking around every corner. The city is just barely holding together in the face of total chaos, and Nemesis hopes to push it over the edge.

His primary offensive right now is the use of his Macro Assembler technology (see Technology section below) to take over buildings and sometimes entire city blocks in the still inhabited neighborhoods of Paragon City. He is using this process primarily as a test bed for the technology and as a distraction for the city's heroes. He wants to find the weaknesses in the tech so he can release a new and much more insidious version of it in the near future.

Meanwhile he plans to use his more legitimate resources (such as front companies and corporate holdings) to purchase real estate throughout the city, particularly in and near the ruined areas. Outside these seem perfectly normal, if under utilized buildings. Just enough real business gets done there to allay any suspicions. Inside though, Nemesis is building a series of fortresses. He plans to ring the city with these hidden urban fastnesses and then unleash the entire network when the time is right. He guards these building incredibly well, both with soldiers and with his schemes of distraction. Any time a meddling hero or government official shows too much interest in one of the locations, he lets loose some horror on the city in a nearby location. As often as not he manages to manipulate one of the other villain groups into creating this distraction, making it all the harder to trace the devilry back to him.

Nemesis also continues to recruit new soldiers into his army. By the time the fortresses are complete he hopes to have ten thousand highly trained soldiers, all armed with his latest inventions. He is very careful who he brings into his fold. For the moment he is focusing all of his efforts on young men in the police and military who are disenchanted with their role in the world. These are men who feel that they should be the real heroes but instead they see all of the glory going to costume clad freaks. They yearn to be special and powerful as well, and Nemesis has the tools and technology to make them just that.

Nemesis knows that few men will fight for him if they think he's evil. Even more importantly, he knows that he cannot take control of the city and the nation if he does not have some popular support. The people will not subject themselves to the rule of an evil tyrant willingly. Theoretically he could subject them to his will through force, but that is not his plan. Instead he will make them see him not as an evil genius but as a benefactor and a bringer of the peace. He tells his soldiers that he alone (with their help of course) has the foresight, the technology, and the audacity to drive the aliens, monsters, and villains from the face of the Earth. His soldiers already believe they are members of a great crusade for the good of mankind. Nemesis aims to make the rest of the world think the same thing.

He plans to first turn the city against its heroes, making them appear as villains, or at best ineffectual. The first step in achieving this goal has already begun: the systematic replacement of high and mid ranking city officials with life-like remote controlled automatons. These doppelgangers have been introduced into the city government and are slowly altering policy to make life more and more difficult for the heroes. In some cases entire families have been replaced or even entire social circles so as to fend off any suspicion. The automatons are not independent robots. They each have an assigned team of pilots who control their every action from inside Nemesis' various secret fortresses. This ensures that they can respond in a lifelike manner to any situation.

Nemesis knows that he must start slowly since the city still loves its heroes. Thus far he is responsible for the new laws requiring all heroes to register themselves and their powers with a single city office. He has made this registration process relatively lengthy and onerous, and plans to add more red tape as time goes on. It also gives him access to a complete list of heroes at work in the city and what their capabilities and weaknesses are. He next plans to make Hero Organizations and Super Groups register their facilities, rosters, and give a regular accounting of their actions to an oversight board. Since they are deputized law enforcers, they have to be held accountable. Here again Nemesis is collecting valuable information for when the time comes to strike.

Cleverly, Nemesis is playing both sides of the ball on hero issues. Under the guise of a hero-friendly city government he is placing restrictions on their behavior and collecting information. He has also replaced a number of anti-hero or hero-control activists and is working through them and the courts to make life harder for heroes. He recently drove through a large, class action lawsuit against the Freedom Phalanx for damages attendant to failed efforts to protect the city. As a result laws requiring hero insurance have been passed and the cost of failure for a hero continues to rise at an exorbitant rate. He has also proposed a law that would make heroes criminally liable for any deaths that occur when they have taken responsibility for handling a dangerous situation. While unlikely to pass a city council vote yet, the law is a harbinger for Nemesis' plans in the future.

At some point the city's heroes will have to discover this far-reaching body-snatching plot and hopefully do something to expose it. Of course the automatons are not only cunningly crafted replacements, they are also deadly killing machines. As ever with Nemesis, his plot has multiple levels: the replacements give him influence in the government and they are also powerful weapons ready to be unleashed when he needs them.

The next logical step is of course the replacing of the city's most popular heroes with more advanced automatons. This is easier said than done, since killing a hero of any stature is quite difficult and all of the hero organizations have numerous measures designed to make sure that everyone is exactly who they say they are. Nevertheless, Nemesis is very pleased with the success of his replicants and is eager to reproduce the results on a larger scale.

Once the city's greatest heroes become its greatest shame, Nemesis plans to step in and begin to establish himself as the champion of the downtrodden people. He well remembers how helpful it was to have a good reputation in his early days on the run in Europe. His failed attempt to make himself Emperor of the Americas after world war two made him just about as popular as Hitler. His actions since then have done little to win the public over. But once their heroes are gone, Nemesis plans to use his Army to wipe away other threats to the city, starting with the lesser gangs and minor villain groups. He knows that this alone won't be enough, but it's a start.

The final masterstroke will be the returning of the Rikti. Nemesis has recently discovered the single greatest secret in the world right now: why the war ended. He knows how the heroes that went to the Rikti home dimension sealed it off from all portals. He also knows how to break that seal. Doing so will require all of the technology and energy he's amassing in his growing network of fortresses. When the time is right and the heroes are at their weakest, he will use the towers to secretly break the seal, letting the waiting Rikti invaders pour back into our world and start another invasion, this time localized in Paragon City. Then the tower fortresses will reveal themselves to the public and Nemesis will drive the invaders back, reseal the portal and set himself up as the hero of the hour.

With the city in ruins from a second invasion, he will then release his second generation Macro Assemblers to rebuild the metropolis in record time (and in his image). These second generation machines will be much more powerful than the current models, capable of transforming the most devastated and villain infested regions into safe, clean, beautiful neighborhoods. Neighborhoods that will, of course, be totally under Nemesis' control. He will have built his utopia from the ashes of the city he burned, and the people will thank him for it. Or that's the plan anyway.

7.13.3 Technology

Nemesis is one of the most brilliant scientific minds in the world. Indeed, in his current state, he little more than a brilliant mind inside a metal body. For over 180 years he has devoted much of his time to perfecting the science of mechanical engineering, from his early clockwork toys to his modern day marvels made from micro fibers and super powerful semi-conductors. One of the hallmarks of his creations is that they seldom, if ever fall in line with other technologies. Nemesis is too proud and too scornful to rely on the research of others. He does not read science journals or even use technologies designed by anyone else. Every single piece of equipment in his arsenal is based on his own research and designs.

Nemesis' studies have made him a master of materials and mechanics. He can work wonders in steel and has created innumerable mechanical devices. It is only in the last century that he has begun to branch out into electronics and biology, and while he has made some amazing discoveries, these areas still lag behind his mechanical innovations. For all his work with recreating life in metal, Nemesis has had a very hard time recreating the mind of a man. His original mechanical brains could fool an unknowing onlooker for a time, but only as long as a carefully planned set of circumstances prevailed. Even today, after a century of research, Nemesis' computers and micro-mechanical brains do not surpass the abilities of a powerful desktop home computer.

From the beginning the automaton has played a crucial role in all of Nemesis' activities, but he has never sought to replace mankind with machines. Rather he wants to alleviate mankind of every kind of base physical labor so that the best and wisest among us can focus our intellects on higher matters, like art, music, and poetry. The automatons then always serve very basic, labor-intensive functions for Nemesis. They manufacture weapons and materials. They dig mines and tend fields. They serve as guards and front line soldiers. They are always subservient to their human masters and generally quite expendable. The whole point of having automatons is to free himself from worries.

Nemesis developed his science in an age of steam and he has never abandoned it as his source of power. While his fuel is more often uranium than coal, he still generates power for his devices by boiling water under high pressure and using it to move his gears and pistons. Nemesis steam tech is literally centuries beyond anything ever developed in the rest of the world and is just as, if not sometimes more efficient than its battery and gasoline powered equivalents.

Much of Nemesis' technology revolves around heightening man's abilities and giving him new ones. Nemesis is a great admirer of the human form and the ideal human specimen, and he misses his own body very much. He still regrets that he never had the time or expertise to save the body he was born with, but he intends to do much better by his loyal followers. In the past hundred years he has never ceased experimenting with new and more lifelike limb replacements. Today he has developed a plastic compound that perfectly mimics human skin. He often lays this over metal mesh frame that provides extra protection for the bones and organs beneath. His artificial muscle fibers and bone enhancements also make replacing a damaged limb with a stronger, faster one a routine process. The result of all these enhancements are soldiers who look like men and have the brains of men, but who may well be artificial in every other respect.

Nemesis has not switched over from his archaic steam powered body to one of these newer models because he has already made so many alterations and special modifications to his suit of armor that he truly feels that it is a part of him. He does not wish to look like a normal man anymore. He's proud of his appearance and his prowess. Still, he understands and appreciates that most men want to look like men. Indeed, he wants his troops to look as human as possible, as it will make it easier for his future subjects to respect and even admire them.

Macro Assemblers

The most obvious form of technology that Nemesis has unleashed upon the world is his so-called Macro Assemblers. Indeed, for the past eighty years he has bent much of his intellect and will towards the realization of his dream that led to this literally world changing technology. The Macro Assembly technology is the result of his desire to build structures and even entire cities to match his exacting specifications. A supreme egoist, Nemesis feels that his own artistic, aesthetic, and architectural sensibilities far outstrip those of anyone else and he is such a perfectionist that he doesn't trust others to make his vision a reality. Therefore he decided to design buildings that would assemble themselves to his exact specifications.

The Macro Assemblers are designed to function totally independently of any human direction. They are, in effect, fire and forget construction workers. A single basic Macro Assembler is a automaton about the size of a semi-truck and trailer. It is mobile, intelligent and full of a dizzying array of automated tools and basic materials. Once set in motion, it proceeds to break down any and all local materials and resources and rebuild them into working drones, building materials, and defense mechanisms. Most significantly, the Assemblers are self-replicating and so can spread Nemesis' technology and vision over an entire city.

The machines usually begin by targeting a large high-rise building or other prominent structure. They then rebuild it from the inside out, totally devouring the existing structure and replacing it with the baroque techno-nightmare style that Nemesis is so proud of. The machines spread out like a virus, feeding on anyone and anything they come into contact with. Even biological materials (like people) can be broken down and used for fuel, turned into glue, or otherwise made useful.

Knowing full well that most people won't stand idly by while his machines reinvent their cities, Nemesis has equipped his Macro Assemblers with a wide array of defense mechanisms. Indeed, the first things any building receives during its makeover are automated guns along with weapons drones to patrol the perimeter. The buildings are smart enough to recognize Nemesis and his troops and allow them free access to the facilities. All other intruders will find the revamped building a deadly, sometimes nearly impregnable fortress.

Each individual part of the machine contains all the necessary knowledge and resources to rebuild the whole. There is never a central brain or command center that controls the Macro Assembler matrix. Thus it becomes very difficult to remove the mechanical infestation once it has begun. One must go through the entire building carefully, paying special attention to the interiors of walls and duct work – places the Macro Assemblers are especially fond of hiding in. Thus far the city's heroes and licensed contractors have been able to keep the infestation from running too rampant, but it is a tough struggle, and Nemesis is far from finished with exploring all the possibilities his Macro Assemblers have to offer.

7.13.4 Soldiers of Nemesis

These are desperate times, full of desperate men who lost everything they had during the war, including their faith in our government and our heroes. Nemesis has always known just how to touch such men, how to win them over to his cause. Ever since his defeat after the Civil War, Nemesis has known that machines were not quite enough. He needs the insuperable might of the human mind to truly bring out the full potential in his technology. Even more importantly, he needs people, live people, to look up to him and revere him as their leader. At the same time, Nemesis is really very picky about the kind of men he lets devote their lives to him. Only the truly talented and worthy can enter into his service, men who come from respectable backgrounds and show a degree of culture, intelligence, and education.

It's not necessarily easy to come by people who both meet his qualifications and are willing to fight for a mad inventor bent on world domination. Somehow, Nemesis always finds a way. He knows just when and how to reach young, well-bred men at the moment they're most susceptible to his offers. He promises them glory, riches, power, respect, and even immortality, all of which he fully intends to give them once their plans reach fruition.

Nemesis thinks experience is the best teacher, and loves to throw his troops into dangerous situations and see how they handle themselves. Despite their rigorous training, these live fire exercises (usually against heroes) result in numerous casualties and a high percentage of wounded. Fortunately for the soldiers, Nemesis employs a fast response medical emergency system almost as effective as the one that saves Paragon City's heroes from death. He can replace their destroyed and broken pieces with new, stronger synthetic ones.

Decades ago how much of your body was now mechanical was a good indicator of how long you had been in Nemesis service. Today that tradition has been formalized, so that now as one progresses through the ranks, one receives more and more artificial supplements and replacements. Of course wounded and maimed men still receive the medical attention they need, so occasionally a soldier receives an enhancement before his ranks would require it. By the time they reach the highest ranks, all that is left of a soldier is his brain and central nervous system, much like Nemesis himself.

Ranks, procedure, and etiquette are as strict in Nemesis' army as they are in any military force in the world. At the same time its traditions are somewhat old fashioned, harkening back to the 19th Century, when Nemesis' aesthetic first took shape. There is a great deal of formality and tradition but there is also a kind of gentlemen's club attitude, especially amongst the officers. These are not soldiers who feel themselves the servants and protectors of the nation. They are a warrior class who feel that they are better than the rest of the world, both because of their force of arms and because their culture is superior.

The soldiers of the Nemesis Army do not have the normal ranks one would find in any modern day army. Instead they are classified by their role on the field, which is in turn defined by the weapons they carry and the enhancements in their bodies. Harkening back to his youth, Nemesis has named each troop type after an early 19th century soldier type. He has always had a fondness for cavalry, although the days of mounted men riding into battle are long gone. Still, he honors the equestrian tradition and his own days astride mechanical horses, by classifying some of his troops according to archaic military terms usually associated with horsemen.

Each unit type has a coordinate officer type who oversees a squad of troops. Officers are men who have shown extraordinary ability and devotion to the cause, and they are promoted along a different track than the basic troops. Thus Lance Corporal, the lowest "officer" rank, commander of Chasseurs, gets promoted directly to Subaltern, not into the ranks of the Armigers (the next infantry rank). This dichotomy creates a class difference between the rank and file and the officers within the Nemesis Army, which is just how Nemesis wants it. He still very much believes that blood and breeding and even race count for something and likes to reward such good qualities by placing them in the officer corps. At the same time, he cannot afford to lose the support or the manpower available from the lower classes, and so he admits them into the soldier ranks, where they can rise quite far over time. It is, however, nearly impossible to break into the officer class if one does not have the right credentials.

Officers all carry ceremonial sabers, given to them personally by Nemesis (or possibly by one of his look alikes). These sabers are designed to be upgraded with new functionality as the officer moves up the ranks. To lose one's saber is a source of tremendous shame, and officers cling to them tenaciously. Should one ever fall into the hands of the enemy, the unlucky officer seeks to do everything in his power to retrieve it. The saber's blade is of course razor sharp, but it also has a number of micro channels and power conduits embedded in its surface and handle. The handle is hollow, allowing for the insertion of a number of different upgrade modules that can radically change the weapon's utility in battle. The specific saber types are described with each officer type below.

All officers also benefit from another perk. They have the same kind of emergency teleportation safety net that heroes in Paragon City do. When their life signs reach critical, they are automatically summoned back to a Nemesis medical facility for immediate treatment. Thus permanent casualties amongst the officer corps are quite unusual.

7.13.4.1 Line Troops

Line troops make up the bulk of any military force that Nemesis dispatches to do his dirty work. They are armed with some form of utilitarian, multi-purpose weapon reminiscent of an assault rifle. They are also usually relatively adept in hand-to-hand combat as well, since heroes have a tendency to get in close when they fight.

Chasseur (lvl. 1)

Chasseurs wear blue uniforms and have visors on their helmets. They have no implants or enhancements aside from a basic communications unit inserted behind the left ear. All troops have these radios that allow them to receive orders and talk with any other soldier within a two-mile radius.

Chasseurs carry the basic Nemesis **assault rifle**, which is an ornate weapon with a relatively standard bore barrel. These are much like the weapons any modern army uses and fire bursts of rounds with each pull of the trigger. Attached to the underside of the rifle is a large, serrated axe head that can be used to deadly effect in close combat.

Lance Corporal (lvl. 2)

Lance Corporals also wear blue and have visors on their helmets. Additionally they have an officer's crest atop their headgear and spike epaulets. They have basic implants that increase their strength and endurance to top normal human levels. Their sabers have no special abilities as of yet, but are still deadly in hand to hand combat. They also carry a standard issue pistol, which is an ornately decorated 12 shot **revolver** that fires explosive shells.

Armiger (lvl. 4)

Armigers wear red uniforms and have visors on their helmets. They have strength and toughness implants that make them much more difficult to defeat in combat than Chasseurs. Furthermore they have sub-dermal implants in their hands and forearms that make their punching and striking power significantly more deadly than a normal punch.

Armiger's carry heavy, blunderbuss looking **Storm Rifles** that fire single, large bore shells like a shotgun. These armor-piercing shells have depleted uranium tips and are designed to penetrate personal body armor or a hero's super tough skin with relative ease. They do not fire scattershot and actually have quite a long range and a semiautomatic rate of fire. They carry no additional hand-to-hand weapon since their hand implants fulfill that role.

Subaltern (lvl. 5)

Subalterns also wear red uniforms and visors, again with the officer's crest and shoulder spikes. They have the same strength and stamina upgrades as well as the fist and forearm implants. Additionally they have reflex boosts that make them much quicker in combat and more accurate with their ranged weaponry. Their sabers have an energy sheath upgrade, which surrounds the blade in a bright nimbus of power and causes additional damage to opponents. They carry the standard officer's pistol as well, again with explosive shells.

Lancers (lvl. 7)

Lancers wear black uniforms with visors. They are easily the most recognizable and feared line troops because of their unique weaponry. As their name suggests, they carry long spear like weapons that they refer to as **lances**. These are not ordinary spears. While they do have a wicked barbed blade at the end of them, the shaft is also a rifle barrel that fires incendiary shells. This makes for an especially deadly combination in close combat, since any time the lance point strikes something it automatically fires the weapon, creating a flaming burst of white phosphorous that causes severe damage.

The Lancers themselves have the strength, stamina, and dexterity upgrades of other troops. Their sub dermal plating extends far beyond the hands and forearms and covers the torso and legs as well, providing them with highly effective body armor. They also have leg muscle enhancements that allow them to run much faster than normal, making it easier for them to engage their enemies with the lances at close range.

Lance Sergeant (lvl. 8)

Cornets wear black uniforms, with visors, officer crests and shoulder spikes. They have all of the same enhancements as Lancers, plus a cybernetic eye that includes night vision and infrared imaging capabilities. These vision enhancements allow the Cornets to see invisible enemies as well as operate under low light conditions. Their sabers have a flame upgrade that causes their blades to be wreathed in fire and then eject a burst of napalm onto any target they strike, doing extra damage. They carry the same basic exploding shell revolver as other line troop officers.

7.13.4.2 Support

Support troops carry the heavy weapons and usually go into battle along side the line troops to, well, offer support. Their weapons are invariably quite deadly, and designed to take out either a large number of normal opponents or a single powerful being with super powers. They are seldom equipped for hand to hand combat and try to keep their distance from the enemy.

Carabiniers (lvl. 2)

Carabiniers wear blue uniforms with gas masks. They have standard strength and muscle enhancements to help carry their heavy weaponry. Their assigned weapon is a bulky, **multi barrel machinegun** that fires alternate rounds of explosive and armor piercing shells. The result is a weapon that can quickly tear through a steal wall or an entire company of enemy troops. Furthermore, the weapon also has a central barrel that is a short-range flamethrower, used when the enemy gets too close to comfortably use explosive rounds.

Cornet (lvl. 3)

The Lance sergeants also wear blue uniforms and gas masks, with the addition of officer's crest and shoulder spikes. In addition to the basic Carabineer upgrades, the Cornets have telescopic sight implants in their eyes and a laser range finder to accurately measure distances. They also have enhanced dexterity upgrades to improve their accuracy. Their sabers have a diamond-coated edge that allows them to more effectively pierce armor. They carry the same basic weaponry as other Carabiniers, a heavy machine-gun/flamer combination.

Fusilier (lvl. 6)

Fusiliers are the highly trained snipers of the Nemesis Army. They wear red uniforms with gas masks and have basic strength, stamina, and dexterity upgrades. Additionally they have a targeting upgrade in their eyes that makes them exceedingly deadly in ranged combat. Their innate accuracy is complimented by the Nemesis **Long Rifle**, which is actually a kind of rail gun, firing solid steal cylinders at super sonic speed and incredible accuracy. These rail guns ignore all but the toughest armor and can punch a whole through three feet of solid steel.

Color Sergeant (lvl.7)

Color Sergeants wear red uniforms with gas masks and officer's crest and shoulder spikes. They have the same upgrades as the Fusilier but they have one major addition: a camouflage web. This network of energy emitters covers their entire bodies and allows them to project a distortion field up to ten meters around them. Anyone within this field benefits from its camouflaging effects, becoming very difficult to hit in ranged combat. The color sergeants themselves use Long Rifles, like their troops. Their sabers shine with a dazzling brilliance when wielded in combat, blinding any foes in close proximity. Fusiliers and other support troops all have eye upgrades that immunize them from this blinding effect.

Grenadiers (lvl. 8)

The most powerful of the support troops, the Grenadiers wear black uniforms and gas masks. They have all the same upgrades as Fusiliers, but also possess a modified version of the distortion fields used by color sergeants. These fields can temporarily render them invisible, allowing them to creep into position or maneuver more effectively on the battlefield. Grenadiers are armed with **Cluster Cannons**. These are hand held, tri-barrel artillery pieces that fire clusters of shells at extremely long ranges. Each cluster of shells has three components. First it explodes in a burst of shrapnel while simultaneously releasing an overwhelming flash and noise that stun opponents (even those immune to the shrapnel. The final shell then releases a cloud of nerve toxin that paralyzes and eventually kills anyone that comes breathes it in or lets it touch exposed skin.

Sergeant Major (lvl. 9)

Sergeant Majors are the elite of the Support units and take pride in their lofty office. They wear black uniforms with gas masks and officer's crests and spikes. They have all the upgrades of the Grenadiers with one further addition. They can also project a force field around themselves to ward off any incoming attacks. They carry Cluster Cannons, like their troops. When drawn, their sabers shoot forth a poisonous gas much like the one given forth by the cannon shells. This surrounds the Sergeant Major in a nimbus of toxic fumes that makes close contact extremely dangerous.

7.13.4.3 Elite

The elite are soldiers who have been modified enough that they do not even necessarily need weapons (although many still do). They have super powers equivalent to a potent hero. Nemesis has settled on a few different power packages that he particularly likes and thus outfits each of his troop types accordingly.

Cuirassiers (lvl. 3)

The Cuirassiers wear blue uniforms and open-faced helmets. They no longer need the need as much protection because their entire body has been ramped up with enhancements. Their skin has been replaced by a life-like bullet proof plastic. Their bones and muscles have been augmented for greater strength, stamina, and resilience to damage. Each elite troop has a network of diodes implanted in their flesh and armor that releases a bright electric charge whenever they're attacked in close combat, causing feedback damage to anyone unlucky enough to be near them. Their enhanced legs allow them to move at superhuman speeds, easily out distancing anyone without similar superpowers (or a motorcycle). The Cuirassiers carry the same **basic assault rifles** as Chasseurs do. They are armed with special explosive shells that do extra damage and their axe attachments have energy field implants that surround them with destructive energy for increased damage.

Lieutenant (lvl. 4)

Lieutenants wear blue uniforms and gas masks, along with crested helmets and shoulder spikes. They have the same basic physical enhancements as Cuirassiers, along with improved sub dermal armor and foot speed increases. In addition to shock field they can actually project bolts of electricity from their hands, obviating the need for any ranged weapons. They do of course carry their sabers. In their case a field of electricity that causes both extra damage and saps a target's endurance surrounds it.

Hussar (lvl. 6)

Hussars are the fast, powerful strike force of the Nemesis Army. They wear red uniforms with open-faced helmets and have all of the strength, stamina, dexterity, and body armor upgrades that Chasseurs do. In addition to speed increases, they have also been given the ability to super leap, allowing them to close quickly with their foes, ignoring intervening terrain. Their armor and very flesh shine with a blinding brightness, making them difficult to face directly in combat. Their artificial skin, in addition to being quite tough, is self-sealing, which gives them the regeneration power. Hussars are meant to take a lot of punishment since they prefer to charge into battle and fight in close quarters. Their weapon of choice is a supped-up version of the **lance** used by Lancers. Their version however is a power lance that crackles with deadly energy. The lance's energy field makes it incredibly deadly, and the Hussars can also use the weapon at long range, firing burst of energy at distant foes.

Captain (lvl. 7)

Hussar Captains are much like the troops they lead, wearing red uniforms along with gasmasks and officers crests and spikes. They have all of the same upgrades as Hussars. Additionally they emit a kind of energy dampening radiation field from their armor that weakens and damages anyone who comes in close proximity to them. Their sabers have the same deadly radiation effect attached to them, and anyone struck by the weapon becomes covered in radioactive substance that damages them and anyone they come in close contact with. The troops of the Nemesis Army are of course immune to its effects. Captains also carry specially modified officer's pistols that fire radiation shells, allowing them to contaminate and weaken foes at a distance, softening them up for the Hussars' charge.

Dragoons (lvl. 9)

The Dragoons are the true elite of the elite and receive lavish attention from Nemesis. They wear black uniforms and open-faced helmets. They are the pinnacle of human-machine integration, with scarcely any original flesh, organs, or bones left in their bodies. Their artificial musculature and bones make them super strong – able to easily toss around cars and trade blows with potent heroes. Their diamond weave plastic skin is super tough and resistant to all kinds of damage. Their machine like reflexes and super enhanced senses make them quick, fast, and deadly accurate in combat. They are also the most mobile troops in the army, since anti-gravity devices and propulsion jets throughout their bodies allow them to fly at high speeds and with great maneuverability.

They do not use any hand weapons at all, since they are capable of projecting blasts of pure energy directly from their hands. Likewise, they can generate the energy without projecting it, giving them and even more powerful power punch for close quarters fighting. Finally they can surround their entire bodies in a sheath of energy and charge directly into an opponent at high speeds through with devastating results. The Dragoons prefer hit and run tactics, swarming in with their power charge and then retreating to finish the foe off with energy blasts from afar.

Colonel (lvl. 10)

Colonel is the highest rank achievable in the Nemesis Army. There are no generals but the master himself. There are only a few dozen trusted colonels in Nemesis' forces, and they are as deadly as can be. They wear black uniforms with gasmasks and shoulder spikes. They have all of the abilities that the Dragoons possess. Additionally, they have extensive gravity and kinetic energy control powers, based on the same technology that allows them to fly. They can use gravity control to pin opponents in place, make their actions sluggish, or repulse them from hardened positions. Their kinetic control powers allow them to not dull the effects of incoming attacks and strengthen the power of their own close combat blows. Finally, in addition to their flight powers, Colonels can teleport short distances, allowing them to move about the battlefield as needed and surprise their foes from any angle.

They carry the ultimate sabers. Theirs have a bright gold finish and has the power to project force fields. Typically they surround the blade with a sheath of force that has a molecule thick edge, making it the most deadly cutting weapon on earth. They can also project the force field out, creating a force ram effect or even imprisoning foes inside force fields to immobilize them. Of course the field can also be used to protect the user from damage. Colonels have no fear in combat, and often personally lead the charge into battle.

7.13.4.4 Jaegers

While the troops make up the heart of the Nemesis Army, they are actually outnumbered by the spherical automatons called Jaegers (or Hunters). Jaegers are craftily designed robots that serve as guards, scouts, skirmishers, and general nuisances. They have relatively simple artificial brains, but what they can do they do very well. Mostly what they do is try and kill any hostiles that come into their field of view. What qualifies as a hostile depends on their programming, but they generally do not attack civilians. They concentrate on heroes and occasionally police and military personnel.

These spherical, four legged machines operate under super-efficient steam power and can run for up to a week before they need to refuel. They can be outfitted with a number of different weapons, the mount for which is hidden inside their main body cavity. The sphere snaps open to reveal the weapon. The most common weapon is a pair of spinning scythe blades that turn the Jaeger into a scurrying whirlwind of death. Since these blades require no fuel or ammunition, they are the default choice, especially for Jaegers sent out for long patrol or scouting missions where the weapon is only for defense or terror purposes.

When more flexibility in combat is required, they can be equipped with versions of some of the firearms used by the troops. The most common firearm is a modified version of the Chasseur's assault rifle, but without the axe blade or stock. This versatile weapon has a long range, and the Jaeger's mechanized senses and range finder make it incredibly accurate. For a more heavily armed Jaeger with some serious stopping power, Nemesis arms some Jaegers with the Storm Rifles used by Armigers. The drones are too small to wield any of the heavier, larger weapons.

Every Macro Assembler facility has the capability to auto-generate hundreds of Jaegers, so they are never in short supply. Thus it is extremely uncommon to find a Jaeger alone unless it has somehow been separated from its unit. They are usually deployed in units of five to ten automatons. Half of these will have the standard scythe configuration and will scurry into battle, distracting and cutting down opponents while the rest of the drones, armed with assault and storm rifles, pick off targets from a distance.

There is one final, special Jaeger configuration that the Nemesis Army employs for special missions. They can fill the weapons compartment with either a high explosive or a nerve gas canister. The Jaeger then becomes a kind of smart bomb on legs, seeking out its target and detonating itself when the time is right. Nemesis and his troops will often release swarms of these bombs into an area in lieu of the traditional artillery barrage. They soften up the target, cause chaos and distraction, and lead the way for the real troops to charge in.

7.13.4.5 War Chassis

The ultimate weapons in the Nemesis Army's arsenal (aside from Nemesis himself) are the War Chassis. These are large, bipedal suits of armor that are almost automatons. They are built around large, artificial diamond life-tanks that contain the mortally wounded remains of fallen soldiers. These life-tanks are the only way to keep them alive, but they also give them a chance to continue serving their glorious leader. The War Chassis serve as ultra-heavy support units for the Nemesis Army and are relatively rare. Nemesis only uses them to guard especially important locations or to spearhead vital military operations.

The War Chassis has a standard weapons configuration, although it is possible to alter the weapons load if deemed necessary. The machine's right arm is a dual barrel cannon capable of two different firing modes. The top barrel is rapid-fire version of the Storm Rifle, firing large, explosive shells at the rate of a machine-gun. A sustained burst from this cannon could tear a main battle tank into pieces in just a couple of seconds. The lower barrel is a multi-canister weapon that can have several different types of gaseous and liquid ammunition types that it sprays at high velocity. The most common is a napalm like solution that turns the weapon into a flamethrower. The second is a poisonous gas designed to clear whole areas of the battlefield in short order. Less common are non-lethal options like sticky foam used to immobilize targets and tear or sleeping gas.

The left arm is usually a large, four-pincer claw that the War Chassis can use to either delicately pick up an object weighing up to 1 ton, or to crush steel, bone, and flesh in its grasp. Occasionally one encounters a War Chassis that has been detailed to do construction or heavy lifting instead of combat work, in which case it will have two such arms. This two-armed configuration is often used to plant the huge Macro Assembler seeds in place within a building so they can begin the transformation process. Likewise it is possible to outfit a War Chassis with two weapons arms, although this is usually redundant.

Having already escaped death once, the War Chassis pilots are trained to fight without fear. Their machine's armor is strong enough to resist an anti-tank missile, even the rather prominent liquid-filled chamber in which they sit. Artificial diamond glass in one of Nemesis many almost alchemical discoveries and makes the War Chassis much tougher than it might appear to some. The War Chassis always lead the way in combat, providing cover for the ground troops and wading into the thick of battle. Just one of these is enough to strike serious fear into the hearts of all but the toughest heroes, and encountering more than one is a very rare event that usually harbingers immediate death.

7.13.4.6 Nemesis and the False Nemeses

From his earliest days as a fugitive in Europe, Nemesis has known the value of misdirection. He has a long history of fooling his enemies with automaton versions of himself, a tradition that continues in grand style to this day. Since he has the capability to create perfectly life-like human replicants, creating copies of his armor with automatic brains offers no challenge at all. The only prohibitive factor is how incredibly expensive, complicated, and powerful is suit of armor has become over the past century. Mass producing the amazing machines would bankrupt even him, but he always has at least half a dozen of the fakes on hand, just in case. One of their great virtues is that they can also serve as emergency life preservation suits should his own, real set of armor become severely damaged.

Nemesis fakes are very nearly as dangerous as the real thing. Their armor is as tough as it comes, providing vast protection against kinetic and energy based attacks as well as near total invulnerability to cold, fire, light, and electricity based damage. The suit is also incredibly strong, capable of lifting several tons and delivering astoundingly powerful punches. It moves very fast when it runs or, if it prefers, it can fly at relatively high speeds. Internal radar and infrared sensors allow it to detect invisible targets and are unaffected by any lighting conditions that might normally decrease someone's effectiveness in combat.

The Nemesis Fake can have a number of different weapons suites installed, depending on the type of mission it is being used for. Almost all models have energy weapons built into the hands, providing a potent long-range strike capability. Others have force field generators that not only offer more protection to the automaton, but they can be used to pin down enemies. Another common installation is a Sonic Screech weapon designed to disorient and stun anyone in the vicinity. Finally, if things grow too dangerous or desperate, the suit can exude a cloud of choking or poisonous gas to clear the way for a tactical retreat.

Fakes serve many purposes in Nemesis' plans. He often uses them to lure heroes into a false sense of triumph or to bait them into traps. He also sends them to lead his soldiers in particularly crucial military operations. Nemesis can either leave the devices to follow their own programming or, more commonly, control them remotely from a secure location. All Fakes have a self-destruct mechanism built into them that reduces the entire suit of armor to a puddle of molten slag. Nemesis never wants these high level creations to fall into enemy hands, and so far, none of them ever have.

Nemesis himself is, not surprisingly, just like the fake versions of himself. The only way to tell the true one from the fakes is that sometimes Nemesis carries a special staff with a stylized gear head on it. He has never let his fakes employ the staff, although he does not always use it himself. The staff crackles with energy and is a powerful melee weapon. Nemesis rarely fights, but when he can, he does like to mix it up in close combat, reliving his adventurous cavalry days. Beyond the staff, the true Nemesis has all of the same weaponry and armor as the Fakes do. He also has an emergency teleportation beacon to carry him out of harms way when his life signs become critical (or whenever he desires).

7.13.5 Behavior Patterns

Nemesis' main bases of operations are the secret fortress skyscrapers he is building throughout the city. For the time being, these should mostly remain hidden from the players, and revealed at a later date. While the interiors of them resemble the buildings created by the Macro Assemblers, they are much more finished and ornate looking, as well as being much better defended. Nemesis goes to extraordinary lengths to ensure that these facilities remain a secret, and thus far no one has been able to uncover them.

The main reason Nemesis can keep his secrets so well is that he's so good at distracting heroes with much more pressing concerns. The Macro Assemblers have become a true plague on the city. They can infest any type of structure and it may be days before their presence is even noticed. Once they take over a building, troops move in to defend it against all comers. You would never know these were merely "training exercises" for the troops involved, since they fight as if they were defending their home territory.

Among the most dangerous byproducts of the Macro Assemblers are the Jaeger drones. All Assemblers have the ability to mass-produce these deadly spherical automatons. These not only guard the interior of the buildings, but are released out onto the streets to patrol the region and keep out trespassers. Even after a building has been cleared of the Macro Assemblers, the self-reliant Jaegers will continue to prowl the streets looking for trouble. They never attack civilians unless they try to enter the building that spawned them. However, they immediately assault any hero that comes within their sensor range. This is just a little present from Nemesis to help keep the city's costumed protectors on their toes.

Nemesis troops are also found in scouting and raiding parties aimed at finding locations to place new assemblers or striking against Nemesis' enemies. Nemesis is constantly making deals and alliances with other villain groups, corrupt businessmen and politicians, and even the occasional desperate hero. Often enough, Nemesis' half of the bargain involves sending in a squad of troops to murder some rival, steal something, or destroy something. Nemesis is happy to do these brute force tasks in exchange for valuable secret information or other favors down the line. Thus it is not uncommon for Nemesis strike teams to attack any number of different locations in force.

The soldiers themselves never just patrol the streets. They are seldom seen except when on a specific mission or when guarding a Nemesis facility. While he is not afraid to risk them in combat, Nemesis knows better than to waste them heedlessly. Thus he leaves the random public appearances to his Jaeger drones. When he wants to cause random terror on the streets, he usually manipulates some other villain group (like the Freakshow) into doing it for him.

7.13.6 Allies & Enemies

Nemesis is the most opportunistic of villains, and the least tied down to ideologies or moral stances that could impact his behavior. Since he views himself as the better man in all situations, he has no qualms about temporarily allying himself with any group or individual that suits his needs. As far as he is concerned they are all the same, doomed slugs destined to serve him or fall before his might. As a result he has, with a few exceptions, worked with, for, or through every villain group currently active in Paragon City. More often than not, these groups do not even realize that they're in cahoots with the Prussian Prince of Automatons. He is a master of manipulation and misdirection, tricking people into thinking what best serves him is actually the best course for them as well.

There are two groups that he does not deal with at all: Crey Industries and the Rikti. He views the Countess Crey as his only intellectual match on the playing field and so is keeping her at arms length. The two have actually met on several occasions, and truth be told, Nemesis is a bit smitten with her – although not in any way that actually affects his decision making process. His goals and those of the Countess are too similar and he knows some day they will come to blows. Still, he keeps tabs on her and her company, particularly since they are more advanced than he in the computer and biological sciences.

The Rikti he keeps his distance from because he wants no risk that they will ever discover his role in starting the war. Additionally, he knows that his only chance to be redeemed as a hero amongst the common people is when he fulfills his plan of defeating the aliens once and for all. He wants there to be no hint of any collaboration with the Rikti in his past so that nosy reporters can't tie him to the aliens in any negative way.

The Freakshow offers an interesting opportunity for Nemesis. Their nihilistic philosophy certainly doesn't mesh with his own, and he finds their general demeanor utterly distasteful, but he also has a strange affinity for them. Their grotesque cybernetically enhanced thugs in some ways mirror the elegant replacement parts he provides his own soldiers with. He has made contact with the group's leaders and found them cleverer than he expected, but still easy enough to bend to his will. He now employs the group fairly often, using them as a distraction or a blunt force instrument for violence. In return for their efforts he provides technical support for their cyberware enhancements, as well as the drugs and money to feed their various habits. He has even recruited a few of their more promising members into his own army, upgrading them with his own technology of course.

Nemesis also has a fondness for the Fifth Column, perhaps because of their German roots and their uncompromising "moral" stance. He also admires their discipline and drive. He has worked with Requiem on several occasions and the two maintain a veneer of friendship. Both realize that the other will one day stand in their way. Likewise, both hope to one day subsume the other's organization and resources into their own group. It will be interesting to see who ultimately prevails.

The Circle of Thorns remains largely an enigma to Nemesis, although he has had some contact with them. He knows little of magic, but may some day decide to change that view. Since their goals and methods seem so arcane to him, he does not view them as much of a threat. However, he's happy to work with them when it's to his advantage.

As for Hero Organizations, well, each and every one of them has cause to fear and hate the Prussian Prince. Over the years he has tangled with Statesman more than anyone, and the two have had a number of titanic battles (or at least Statesman and various Nemesis fakes and minions have had titanic battles – the man himself has no desire to face Statesman in person). Still, Nemesis is an equal opportunity offender and will happily catch up any heroes he can in the web of his machinations.

7.13.7 The Future

The future has many possibilities for Nemesis, as a careful reading of his goals will show. Of course its entirely conceivable that things won't go according to plan for him, but he is more than willing to improvise and adapt to new developments. What is certain is that he will continue to be a driving force for chaos and villainy within Paragon City until he is brought to justice (if that's even possible).

The future should being a city where life is harder for the heroes, especially the higher Fame ones. Nemesis erosion of the political system should lead to higher insurance fees, losing favors and fame for failing missions, and even losing things for no apparent reason (although with a mission to right the injustice). Other problems include fines for using powers in public spaces, flying too low through traffic, and other nuisances. Eventually the heroes should be able to unmask the false officials and have the laws repealed.

Nemesis also can make life harder for heroes in more immediately physical ways. He might start planting traps out in public spaces particularly designed for heroes. A prime example would be airborne mines that harass heroes as they fly about (but which they can disarm and bring in for a reward). Likewise, any building infested with Macro Assemblers could start producing Jaegers and automated weapons turrets on the outside that take pot shots at passing heroes.

Nemesis also plans to constantly evolve his army. He's particularly fond of his flying troops, but the flight implants are quite complicated and expensive. Taking a cue from the Sky Raiders, he plans to make jet packs of his own and equip a special contingent of flying troops. He also plans to enhance his ground troops in several ways. Most notably are armored personnel carriers designed along the same model as the walking Jaegers, only capable of transporting up to 20 soldiers at a time. Likewise larger walkers along the line of the War Chassis are in the design stage, these standing several stories in height and wielding heavy artillery in battle.

Even as he builds his illegal army, Nemesis plans to pursue more "legitimate" paths to influence and power. He plans to use a shell corporation to introduce a modified version of the Macro assemblers, ostensibly based on plans "stolen" from Nemesis. These will provide low cost housing for the poor and help rebuild the city, albeit in such a way that Nemesis will control both the occupants' lives and the buildings themselves. With his automatons in power, he will award city contracts to his shell corporation and new Nemesis made high rises will start popping up all over the city. Later, their true deadly nature will reveal itself.

Should all other avenues of conquest fail him, or even if they don't, Nemesis may at some point begin to express an interest in magical forces. He will begin to send probes down into Oranbega and pursue more lasting alliances with mystical groups. He hopes to eventually field soldiers with the best of both technological and magical powers at their disposal. Ultimately magic for him is just another means to an end, and he will leave no stone unturned nor any scheme untested until he achieves victory.

7.13.8 Missions and Story Arcs

Stature Level 6 Missions	
SL6_Nemesis_Mission1	<p>Freakshow have stem technology. Find that nemesis is their source.</p> <p>REVEALED: Nemesis introduced. Still unsure whether he's the real thing, or a copycat.</p>

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SL6_Nemesis_Mission2	<p>Stop Nemesis' drive to recruit ranking members of other villain groups</p> <p>REVEALED: Nemesis troops see themselves as heroes and you and your fellow players as hazards to the peace</p>
SL6_Nemesis_Mission3	<p>Save 5th Column base under attack by Nemesis. 5th Column files strongly suggest that it's the real Nemesis.</p>
SL6_Nemesis_Compound1	<p>Stop Nemesis from forging an alliance with the Circle of Thorns</p>
SL6_Nemesis_Compound2	<p>Portal Corp. is trying to figure out whether Nemesis is actually back. Too bad, their actions have them under fire from both Nemesis and the Rikti.</p> <p>REVEALED: There's a strong suggestion that Nemesis is back</p> <p>REVEALED: Nemesis was instrumental in causing the Rikti War. You don't yet know that this was deliberate.</p>
SL6_Nemesis_Errand1	General killtask
SL6_Nemesis_Errand2	General killtask
SL6_Nemesis_Errand3	General killtask
SL6_Nemesis_Compound2.1	<p>Portal Corp. is trying to figure out whether Nemesis is actually back. Too bad, their actions have them under fire from both Nemesis and the Rikti.</p> <p>REVEALED: There's a strong suggestion that Nemesis is back</p> <p>REVEALED: Nemesis was instrumental in causing the Rikti War. You don't yet know that this was deliberate.</p>

Stature Level 7 Missions

SL7_Nemesis_Mission1	<p>Deliver a report on your activities to a newly formed hero oversight committee. Learn that Nemesis has hand-picked this committee so he can replace them and get rid of some troublesome public figures.</p>
SL7_Nemesis_Mission2	<p>Stop a Macro Assembler</p> <p>REVEALED: Nemesis has machines that can change entire buildings</p>
SL7_Nemesis_Mission3	<p>Stop a battle between Rikti and 5th Column. Learn that nemesis was pulling the strings</p> <p>REVEALED: Nemesis pits his enemies against one another to test their strengths</p>

Cryptic Studios

SL7_Nemesis_Mission4	Nemesis kidnaps the Ladies' Aid Society and holds them ransom. His price? Stop plans for a new power plant that will eliminate some low-cost housing. You save the women, but Nemesis winds up looking like a hero to the city's poor.
SL7_Nemesis_Compound1	Find out that Nemesis has portal technology REVEALED: Nemesis has portal tech
SL7_Nemesis_Compound2	Nemesis tips you off to a magic coin in the Circle's possession. It turns out he wanted this coin for himself, to help him regain his original body. He wanted you to be his delivery boy! REVEALED: Nemesis is now more machine than man
SL7_Nemesis_Errand1	Killtask to prevent civilian harassment
SL7_Nemesis_Errand2	Killtask to prevent people from joining Nemesis
SL7_Nemesis_Errand3	Killtask to undermine Nemesis' image

Stature Level 7 Story Arc: Mass Duplicity

You track an illegal shipment of weapons technology, and find it's being picked up by Nemesis soldiers. As you try to track down the shipment, you find yourself in battles with lifelike automatons—they look like people, but they can sure hand out a beating. Track the weapons technology and learn that it's a Nemesis battle suit. Also get your hands on records that detail the public figures replaced by these lifelike automatons.

REVEALED: Nemesis has extremely lifelike automatons

REVEALED: The armies of Nemesis are truly controlled by the actual Nemesis

REVEALED: Nemesis uses duplicates of his armor both to aid his troops and confuse his enemies.

7.14 The Praetorians

Overview

For a very long time it was thought that Earth was the center of the universe. Then, in the 16th Century, Copernicus discovered that the Solar System was actually Heliocentric. Our earth is the center of a universe though, the center of a dimensional universe. Primal Earth, as it is called by the researchers at Portal Corporation is right in the center of a vast array of dimensions. Only a fraction of them have even been detected, let alone explored. One of those worlds is Praetorian Earth, ruled by a group that is the dark mirror of the Freedom Phalanx. In their world, they are the pinnacle of paranormal power. They have recruited and organized paranormals into a force that has conquered and enslaved almost everyone in their world. A resistance formed by a few paranormals who escaped the Praetorians grasp is fighting a losing battle. With their own world firmly under their thumb the Praetorians began to grow restless. Tyrant was having more and more insubordination, and then he received a gift. Statesman was on an exploratory mission for Portal Corporation and ran directly into Marauder, who he mistook for Back Alley Brawler. The ensuing battle drew the attention of several other members of the Praetorians. Statesman would almost certainly have been able to make his escape until the sight of his Sidekick Ms. Liberty, twisted into Dominatrix, critically distracted him. The Praetorians struck in that moment and were able to capture him. Even after a great deal of torture, including tremendous mental anguish inflicted by Dominatrix, after she realized his vulnerability to her, Statesman revealed little about Primal Earth. It was enough for Tyrant to set Neuron on a path to duplicate the Portal technology. Now Tyrant holds Statesman for the time he will be ready to strike against Primal Earth.

7.14.1 Organization

The Praetorians represent all the ideals of the Freedom Phalanx, twisted and corrupted. They value conquering and subjugation.

Tyrant (Arch-villain)

This power hungry version of Statesman believes firmly that Might Makes Right. He has conquered his world and like a modern day Alexander he is now turning his eye to ours. Tyrant rules with heavy hand, and it is only through the fanatical loyalty of Neuron and his creations that Tyrant retains his throne so easily.

Visuals: Statesman with darker colors. Perhaps a spikier, more ominous helmet

Powers: Leadership, Invulnerability, Super Strength, Flight, Regeneration

Infernal (Magic Arch-villain)

On Praetorian Earth Infernal never had Numina's guidance to temper his drive to control more and more demons. When he first arrived on Praetorian Earth, Diabolique encouraged him to bind more and more demons into his armor until they corrupted his spirit. With the darkness came power and soon Infernal had become stronger than his guide. He is extremely power hungry and is happy to cross over to Primal Earth, where there may be more demons for him to use.

Visuals: Infernal with no changes

Powers: Axe, Invulnerability, Fire attacks

Minions:

Demon (Minion, Lt.) – These vicious creatures serve Infernal only because he forces them too. By subverting their will through the use of ancient mystic rituals he creates permanent servants. If his control begins to wane over a particular demon, he performs another ceremony and binds it permanently into his weapons or armor to increase their strength.

Demon Lord (Boss) – Occasionally Infernal is able to find a more powerful demon to subjugate. It takes a much greater effort to control them so he cannot use them as frequently but he still has a significant number under his sway. One of the greatest dangers Infernal faces is losing control of one of his Demon Lords.

Diabolique (Magic Arch-Villain)

Tammy Arcanus was born with great Magical powers on Praetorian Earth, just like she was on Primal Earth. Unfortunately they manifested very differently. As she reached adolescence she began exploring her powers before she was trained. She used astral projection to cast her spirit forth. So intoxicated was she by the new wonders that she was discovering she returned to her body too late to link with it. She watched helplessly as it withered and died without a spirit. Tammy's father tried to save her but he was too late to manage anything other than keeping her spirit bound to earth. For his trouble Tammy blasted her father and turned him into her first spirit minion.

Visuals: Numina with dark purple. Insubstantial like Ancestor spirits if possible.

Powers: Mind control, Kinetic Boost/Force Field, Flight

Minions:

Ghost (Minion) - These incorporeal spirits have been caught before they could travel across the veil by Diabolique's dark magic. In binding them to this world she also forces them to do her bidding. They are tormented and distraught but are forced to serve the twisted mystic.

Wraith (Lt.) – After being in Diabolique's service for some time Ghosts are imbued with some of her potent mystical energy. Combined with their tortured existence this makes her Wraiths fearsome foes indeed.

Poltergeist (Boss) – Bound to the earth for so long and subjected to Diabolique's corrupt power, eventually each of her minions snap. When they do their powers increase proportionally. They no longer care if they can ever escape; they simply want to destroy the living.

Shadowhunter (Magic Arch-Villain)

Infused with the fury of the Wild Hunt, Shadowhunter roams with his Pack, cutting down everything in his path. He loathes humanity for the most part and his alliance with Tyrant is an uneasy one at best. It is held together by the fact that Tyrant cares nothing for the wilderness and is happy to give it over to Shadowhunter. If Tyrant ever begins to strip the land for resources, things will quickly unravel.

Visuals: The Woodsman with darker earthy colors. He should have a wild and primal feel

Powers: Earth Powers

Minions:

Omega (Minion) – These creatures are the bottom of the food chain in the Pack. They are humans that have been recently turned by the Pack and are not yet fully accepted. They are forced to prove themselves every day. If they are not accepted as Pack, then they are torn apart.

Beta (Lt.) – When the Pack has approved of an Omega, they are immediately protected and treated well. It is an instant transition with no going back. Once someone is Pack, death is the only thing that will break that.

Alpha (Boss) – These minions stand boldly at the pinnacle of the Pack. They are leaders by right of combat and dominance. They will fight to the last because they know defeat might mean a fall from the top.

Marauder (Natural Arch-villain)

Bred for battle, Marauder loves nothing more than fighting and destroying his enemies. Most perceive that he serves Tyrant like a vicious dog but he only follows the leader of the Praetorians for the slaughter.

Visuals: Back Alley Brawler with scars/tattoos.

Powers: Martial Arts, Invulnerability

Minions:

Rampager (Minion) – Marauder recruits only the most hungry and violent men into his ranks. He trains them hard enough to either turn them into rock or kill them. Those that graduate from this regimen are disciplined and deadly.

Wrecker (Lt.) – Marauder is extremely adept at spotting leadership potential and tactical aptitude. When he sees these qualities in one of his men he gives them the chance to lead small groups and operations as a test. There is only one price for failure.

Destroyer (Boss) – If a Wrecker shows a high success rate, Marauder gives them one final test: pick a Destroyer and defeat him in single combat. The fight is to the death. If the Wrecker wins, he has a new title and greater responsibilities. This test is typical of the Darwinian approach that Marauder is committed to.

Dominatrix (Arch-villain)

Being the daughter of a famous and universally loved super heroine never sat well with Dominatrix. She rebelled from a very young age and when she hit puberty and her powers kicked in she decided enough was enough. After killing her mother, the infamous Miss Liberty, she started making a name for herself. She caught Tyrant's attention and has been serving him loyally, in all capacities, ever since.

Visuals: Ms. Liberty in leather

Powers: Invulnerability, Regeneration, Hold, Immobilize

Minions:

Servant (Minion) – To be bound to Dominatrix is an honor that must be earned. Going without sleep and other trials of endurance are given to candidates to prove their worth. Passing means a term of servitude where complete obedience is expected.

Trainer (Lt.) - Trainers are very important to Dominatrix's organization. They teach the new Servants to fight effectively and work as a unit. They also fill the position of tactical leader in combat quite often.

Lady (Boss) - The Lady is the mistress of all she surveys. She is responsible for a number of Trainers and Servants. There is a strong bond of fealty that goes both ways in these relationships. With power comes responsibility.

Chimera (Arch-villain)

When his parents were killed by the villain Doppelganger, Chimera was given the opportunity of a lifetime. Doppelganger took the boy under his wing and trained him to be the worlds' premiere silent killer.

Visuals: Manticore

Powers: Stealth, Crossbow, Katana, Superleap

Minions:

Cockatrice (Minion) - These low rank servants of Chimera have only the most rudimentary skills with poison. They can create a toxin that will slowly damage their target but is almost never fatal unless combined with other attacks.

Basilisk (Lt.) - As Chimera's servants advance through the ranks they continue their mastery of weapons and poisons. The Basilisk coat their weapons with a poison that will dull their enemies reflexes and make them easier to finish off.

Gorgon (Boss) - These combatants are among the most feared that the Praetorians can field. Their weapons are coated with a poison that will paralyze their opponents. This allows them to easily capture or defeat them at their leisure.

Siege (Tech Arch-villain)

The masterpiece of Neuron, Bastion is the most advanced android ever created on Praetorian Earth. Neuron used Tyrants DNA patterns to create him, making him virtually indestructible and extremely loyal.

Visuals: Bastion with Tyrant's color scheme

Powers: Super Strength, Invulnerability, Flight

Minions:

RAM Series I (Minion) - This early prototype of the Robotic Attack Module was created very soon after Siege. It is fairly rudimentary and limited in its powers. It has none of Sieges intellect or creativity but can still pose a threat.

RAM Series II (Lt.) - The second series of Robotic Attack Modules was more successful than the first but still did not accomplish what Neuron had hoped. It became increasingly apparent that Siege was a once in a lifetime creation.

RAM Series III (Boss) - The most recent Robotic Attack Module poses the greatest threat. Neuron abandoned his old plans and concentrated on making these units powerful and durable. With that focus the Series III easily became the most successful of the RAM units.

Nightstar (Boss)

This android is the creation of Anti-Matter as a testament to his love for Dominatrix. Nightstar is patterned after her in the same way that Siege is patterned after Tyrant. Neuron considers it an inferior design but Anti-Matter knows that one day victory will be his.

Visuals: Luminary

Powers: Power Blast, Flight

Minions:

SPECTRA Series I (Minion) - Not to be out done by Neuron, Anti-matter created the SPECial Tactical Robot Army to serve Tyrant. The Series I was the prototype and is therefore the least efficient model.

SPECTRA Series II (Lt.) – When Neuron developed a new Robotic Attack Module series, Anti-matter did the same with the SPECTRA. Despite certain design differences the two models are comparable in practice.

SPECTRA Series III (Boss) – The SPECTRA Series III is the most advanced design that Anti-matter has created to date. Some of his other creations are more powerful but none have the efficiency of the Series III.

Battle Maiden (Arch-villain)

Drawn from War Earth, Battle Maiden uses high tech medieval weaponry.

Visuals: Valkyrie with more weapons

Powers: Medieval Weapons

Minions:

Champion of Mourning (Minion) - The first thing that is taught to the Champions of War Earth is that you must always respect those who fall in battle. It does not matter if they are your comrades or your enemy, all those who give their lives to combat must be remembered.

Champion of Battle (Lt.) – To defeat the enemy in front of you and take the battle is the second lesson of the Champions of War Earth. They believe that if you cannot hold your place in the line then not only will you fall, but so will your comrades around you.

Champion of War (Boss) – The final lesson of the Champions of War Earth is that you must consider each action in terms of the larger picture. If you sacrifice too much to win one battle then you may lose the war. The highest rank of the Champions is always filled with master strategists.

Neuron (Science Arch-villain)

Neuron is the creation of his own twisted scientific experiment. He gave himself complete control over his body's nervous system. Once he and Anti-Matter worked together as friends but of late a rift has formed between them. Neuron's creation of Siege and the favor that garnered him with Tyrant, is the primary cause of discord between them.

Visuals: Synapse with darker colors and possibly scars or a “stitched” look

Powers: Electrical Blast, Electrical Control, Superspeed

Minions:

Electrode (Minion) – The basic model of minion designed by Neuron was originally blueprinted to be a laboratory assistant. It is excellent at following simple commands and would have been well suited for tasks a scientist did not have the time or muscle for. Neuron quickly realized that the metallic minions could be used as attack drones and adapted his plans on the fly.

Circuit (Lt.) – A more powerful version of the Electrode unit, this minion can sometimes cause trouble for a single opponent. A group should be able to easily defeat it however due to its limited power supply. It has excellent offensive capabilities and should be dealt with carefully if more than one is present.

Inhibitor (Boss) – The Inhibitors are sometimes said to be the most difficult of Neurons creations to deal with. They are built to make it difficult for any opponent to do what they are good at. This ability to negate the strengths of their foe makes them a frustrating, and potentially deadly opponent.

Bobcat (Arch-villain)

Bobcat is a scientific hybrid between a woman and a feline predator. It took many painful operations to get her to the state she is now in, so her state of mind is violent and feral. Neuron is the only person she trusts, and her instincts even override that at times.

Visuals: Minx with more cat features

Powers: Claws, Super Reflexes

Minions:

Alley Cat (Minion) – The lowest rank of those who serve Bobcat is filled with strays. She searches the streets of the city for those who have nowhere else to go. She prefers those who have been injured in some way, mentally or physically and bear a grudge toward the ones that hurt them. Bobcat offers her Alley Cats something to fight for...and against.

Lynx (Lt.) - After an Alley Cat develops some skill he is moved to a leadership position. They have to be tough to attain this status but they must have compassion for their comrades as well. Bobcat will not tolerate cruelty among her group.

Ocelot (Boss) – The most important quality that Bobcat looks for when moving one of her people to the rank of Tiger is trustworthiness. If Bobcat cannot hold someone at their word, they will never succeed in her group. Woe to anyone who betrays her.

Anti-matter (Arch-villain)

Trapped within his powered armor, Anti-Matter used to be Tyrants primary scientific consultant. He and Neuron were once the best of friends and created the Clockwork of Praetorian Earth together. Of late his theories have been more and more radical causing Tyrant to lean on Neuron for research and analysis. Unbeknownst to anyone Anti-Matter had cracked the Portal tech. He is waiting to reveal his breakthrough in order to garner favor from Tyrant and his true love, Dominatrix.

Visuals: Positron with more black in his armor

Powers: Radiation Powers, Flight

Minions:

Nuon (Minion) – Anti-matter equipped his creations with the ability to generate energy and channel it into attacks. Although they appear somewhat similar to Neuron's minions and to the Clockwork of Primal Earth, they are mechanical constructs and obey only the master of radiation.

Meson (Lt.) – Anti-Matters constructs are designed to work together but occasionally there will be a specific task that he wants accomplished. The Meson unit is almost always assigned to these duties. They carry more logic circuits and can more easily follow complex instructions.

Baryon (Boss) – The Baryon are the most powerful of Anti-Matters constructs. They generate an intense amount of radiation and must be carefully contained when fighting in area with a civilian presence.

Mother Mayhem (Mutant Arch-villain)

This twisted psion is Tyrants closest advisor and possibly his biggest threat as well. She is organized and has large numbers of minions she has driven to her particular brand of insanity in her special asylums.

Visuals: Sister Psyche

Powers: Mental attack powers, Flight

Minions:

Child of Anger (Minion) – Mother Mayhem places promising patients in her special facilities and then stimulates their rage centers until they are primed killers. She then overlays clear and commands directly into their minds and turns them loose. They can't be bargained with, they can't be reasoned with and they absolutely will not stop...ever.

Child of Rage (Lt.) – Mother Mayhem continues to prod her minions, pushing them farther and farther down a very particular path of madness. Once they are to this level they no longer feel pity, or remorse, or fear...only rage.

Child of Hatred (Boss) – At this point Mother Mayhem has pushed her 'children' to the point that they can feel nothing but hatred for everything around them. They simply want everything around them to die.

Malaise (Arch-villain)

On Praetorian Earth the villain Malaise was never counseled by Sister Psyche, instead he was one of the 'patients' at one of Mother Mayhem's facilities. With the ability to control his madness and inflict it on others, he quickly rose to a position as her favorite.

Visuals: Malaise

Powers: Mind Control, Debuff, Slow, Sleep

Minions:

Crazy (Minion) – Malaise has the mutant ability to project his insanity into the minds of others. He has slowly adapted to his altered version of reality but the instantaneous placement of his skewed view upon others drives them mad.

Lunatic (Lt.) – Most of the people affected by Malaise never recover. They certainly don't without help. No one has been able to detect a pattern in those he infects, but once they enter the world that exists in his mind they are never the same.

Maniac (Boss) – Some of those affected by Malaise's insidious powers attain some modicum of control again. They also see the world the way he sees it. These poor creatures become his most trusted servants. Some believe that if enough of them are created the world might turn into the topsy-turvy madhouse that Malaise sees everyday.

Black Swan (Arch-villain)

Born with a connection to Shadow Earth in the Netherworld, Black Swan can channel energy from that dimension into attacks and defenses. She is served by minions that some say she draws from Shadow Earth and others say are created by stealing pieces from the shadows of her victims.

Visuals: Swan

Powers: Dark Melee, Dark Armor

Minions:

Minor Shadow (Minion) – These small shadowy beings serve Black Swan loyally. They seem to have no desires or motivations of their own. Some people say that after they encounter them they experience a chill for up to several weeks. They can channel dark energy into focused blasts.

Shadow (Lt.) - Although there are no clear visible differences between these minions and the Minor Shadows, it is obvious that they can draw on a greater reserve of power. Something about their essence makes them stronger. It is uncertain where that energy comes from but the most popular theory is that they are created with a more direct connection to Shadow Earth.

Master Shadow (Boss) – These servants, of Black Swan are obviously different in both size and power from their smaller counterparts. They have achieved a mastery of Shadow energy that can only be surpassed by the dark lady herself.

SL 8 StoryArc: Antimatter's war

Compound 1: Portal Corporation lets the hero know that there have been increased dimensional energies. While talking there are attacks on two Portal facilities. The player must stop Antimatter's minions from stealing tech. Portal tells the player that they will try to back trace the rupture.

Mission 2: While waiting for the data to be analyzed the hero is sent through a rift to explore a dimension causing temporal disturbances. This should be a unique outdoor map that goes from day to night to day very quickly. There the player will fight deranged thugs who have been driven mad by the speeding time shift. The player will be told by a local scientist, that a series of devices were planted here causing this time acceleration. The hero will be told the devices were planted by Clockwork. The hero must deactivate all the devices.

Cryptic Studios

Mission 3: Having analyzed the data from the first patrol, Portal Corporation sends the hero through to the place they believe the dimensional disturbance is originating from. This will send the hero to a tech map that represents Antimatter's orbital laboratory on Praetorian Earth. The hero will fight Antimatter style Clockwork again and discover a description of Antimatter which should sound disturbingly like Positron.

Mission 4: The hero is sent to Jane's known Clockwork World, thinking that might have a connection. No connection is found.

Mission 5: Outdoor Mission map in Paragon City where some of Antimatter's Clockwork have had one of their scouting missions interrupted by the Carnival of Shadow. The Clockwork attack them, mistaking them for the Carnival of Light.

Mission 6: The hero is sent to investigate the Carnival Involvement. It is a dead end but leads to a fight.

Mission 7: Return to Antimatter's base, fight him and drive him off. Discover that he is using the data provided by the hero to plan an invasion to please someone called Tyrant.

Mission 8: The player actually encounters Neuron's forces for the first time as they return to the timescaped world to stop the Silver Clockwork from restarting Neuron's device.

Mission 9: Portal traces Silver Clockwork energy signature back to Praetorian Earth. The player is sent to gather data from one of Neurons labs. Neuron's name is revealed.

Mission 10: The player is sent to an outdoor city map where they encounter Bobcat and her minions scouting for Neuron. He is trying to determine how far along Antimatters plans are.

Mission 11: The fact that Antimatter and Neuron are from the same world comes out. The player is sent to a remote outdoor map on Praetorian earth to plant a scanner. Shadowhunter's wolves are encountered there.

Mission 12: Fight Antimatter and his forces, as they attack Neurons lab. Fight Neuron and his forces as well. More details emerge about Praetorian Earth.

Praetorian SL 9 Pool

Mission 1: Portal has a scanner set up on Praetorian Earth. They have collected data on many of the Praetorians. They have discovered weaknesses or objects of power for each of them that need to be dealt with. The first is to destroy Infernal's summoning altar. This will involve fighting him and his minions in a CoT map.

Mission 2: Travel to a graveyard and interrupt Diabolique as she summons forth and takes control of spirits.

Mission 3: Shadowhunter and his wolves draw their power from the bones of their victims. Each pile that is consecrated weakens them. This mission should take place in an outdoor wilderness map.

Mission 4: Marauder is recruiting and needs to be stopped.

Mission 5: Dominatrix having a rave in an abandoned warehouse. Collect the Praetorian Superadine samples which could lead to a cure for the Trolls.

Mission 6: Chimera in the midst of training his Assassins.

Cryptic Studios

Mission 7: Shut down one of Siege's reproduction facilities. This involves destroying the power generators and assembly devices that create his minions. This could happen on the outdoor factory center map.

Mission 8: Combat Nightstar and her minions while they "commune" with the stars in the air under a night sky. Outdoor night map with air/roof encounters only.

Mission 9: This compound mission will lead you Praetorian Earth first where you learn that Battle Maiden is from Combat Earth (or some cooler name) and she is recruiting troops from there by providing them high tech weapons. Then portal sends you to Combat Earth to retrieve racks of weapons.

Mission 10: Mother Mayhem leads her minions on a rampage through the streets of King's Row. Outdoor run down map.

Mission 11: Malaise tries to return Rikti back to their lost state. Sewer map with Rikti.

Mission 12: Combat Black Swan and her shadows. Destroy portal to Shadow Earth.

SL 9 Praetorians SA

- The first part of the arc should lead up to discovering that Tyrant has Statesman.
- The players are sent to repair one of the sensors on Praetorian Earth. It is a trap set up by Chimera.
- Data from all the sensors stops being sent. The players are sent to find out why. Fighting Shadowhunter and his pack give leads to information that Siege carted the sensors off.
- Shut down a storage facility defended by Siege and Nightstar but the sensors were already transferred to Neuron's lab
- Fight Neuron and Bobcat in the lab. Retrieve the sensor tech and find out that they were adapting it to better scan Statesman. The player also receives a distress call from one of the clans on Battle Earth.
- Go to Battle Earth and aid the clan against Battle Maiden
- The player investigates peoples Shadows coming to life and attacking them.
- This leads to a mission involving Black Swan that possibly hints about the Shadow Shard.
- Portal has several possible locations for Statesman. Search for Statesman in one of Mother Mayhem's facilities. Malaise will be the front spawn.
- Search a mystical torture chamber and fight Infernal and Diabolique.
- Dominatrix and Marauder are trying to establish a beachhead at Portal and must be driven back
- Timed mission to defeat Tyrant and rescue Statesman. A special case Tyrant that flees at 25% health will be required. Freeing Statesman should probably not involve seeing him.

7.15 Rikti

7.15.1 History

In order to understand the Rikti and where they come from, you must first understand the nature of the universe. Bear with me a minute here. As is now known, thanks to the efforts of the Dr. Brian Webb, the universe itself is divided into countless alternate dimensions, each moving forward through time at roughly the same pace. Some of these alternate realities are nearly identical to our own, with differences that would be unnoticeable to even the most observant visitor. Others diverge significantly in certain areas (such as who won World War II) but remain recognizable as our own Earth. There also exist alternate Earths that went down a divergent path long, long ago, such that now they seem entirely alien to us. The Rikti Earth is one of these.

10,000 years ago, the so-called Rikti Earth (the residents would just call it Earth if they were to speak English) looked very much like our world did. It had even had its own versions of Oranbega and Mu, both of which had already disappeared from the face of the planet when first contact with an alien race took place. Travel between the stars is very, very rare, even across the vast multitude of alternate realities. The times and distances involved are so vast, that only the most technologically or magically advanced societies can even contemplate it. As it turns out, breaking the dimension barrier between realities is much easier (not that it's in any way easy or even very common). Thus, most of the "aliens" that have visited our Earth come from other dimensions, not other planets. However, on the Rikti Earth they received visitors from a genuine alien world. True extraterrestrials.

The residents of Rikti Earth in those days were human just like us, and equally primitive. Most of the world was in a stone or wood age culture of one sort or another, with a few city-states advancing into the realm of metal working. The great magics of Mu and Oranbega were gone, but religion and magic remained as powerful forces in the everyday lives of most people. Then the Progenitors came. The aliens arrived in a single starship that had just made a three thousand year journey through space at near-light speed. They were one of several hundred such ships that had fled their home world in the wake of an uncontrollable environmental disaster that rendered the entire world uninhabitable in just a few years. The aliens, already talented astronomers, had located a number of potentially habitable worlds but had never visited them because of the tremendous distances involved. Now they had no choice. They constructed space-worthy arks, each large enough to hold a few hundred passengers along with vast stores of food, technology, and complete DNA databases of their home world's flora and fauna.

The fate of the other arks remains a mystery, but the one that landed on the Rikti Earth found a new, and mostly habitable home. The ship had first made a series of orbits around the planet, carefully mapping it and studying its population centers. They chose a relatively remote, desert location in what we would call the Middle East as their landing point – somewhere well away from any sentient observers. The air was breathable but only just so. They took soil, air, and water samples, monitored themselves closely and, after a few months of undisturbed living, decided the place was safe to live in.

Their original plan had been to find a nice quiet corner of the globe, set up their own little settlement and start to slowly rebuild the world they had left behind, only this time learning from their mistakes. The Progenitors (as they would later be known) began to transform their environment, rejuvenating the desert landscape with soil and plants from their home world. They built a gleaming city of glass and crystal in which to live, set up a representative government to replace the militaristic system that had existed on board the ark, and generally settled in for the long haul. They knew that, eventually they would come into contact with the locals, but they meant them no ill will. The people were so primitive that, to be honest, the Progenitors scarcely gave them a thought. The spear-wielding natives were certainly no threat to the aliens, and the planet was largely empty. There was plenty of room for both species and would be for millennia to come.

Then disaster struck. More precisely, disaster had struck the moment they started breathing Earth air without filters, but they didn't realize it for many months afterwards. Something in the air – some radiation or bacteria or virus or just some nasty quirk of fate had rendered them all infertile. Their dream of repopulating this new world with their own kind had come suddenly crashing to Earth. Of course they tried with all their might and intellect to find some cure – some possible processes for undoing the damage. Cloning, artificial fertilization, and every other attempt to circumvent the problem proved futile. It seemed that they were doomed to be the last generation of their kind, possibly in the entire universe.

Despair set in, and for some it led to madness. There were desertions – colonists who took whatever they could carry in a small vehicle and then ran for the hills. There were suicides – males and females who couldn't bear to try and live a life when there was no future. There were murders – desperate Progenitors who let the stress get to them and lashed out in misplaced anger against their fellows. And then, finally, there was an answer – a ray of hope from, of all people, a philosopher. If ever anyone had doubted the utility of sending a philosopher along on the ark (and many had), all those doubts were laid to rest when The Philosopher had an inspiration that transformed Rikti Earth (and possibly our own world) forever.

The Philosopher realized that there was one other possible way that their heritage and society could persevere. Their great achievements in art, culture, science, literature, and every other aspect of sentient endeavor were their true legacy, not their genetic material. It is the collective memory that makes a culture persevere through the ages. What your ancestors accomplished defines their greatness, not how they gave birth to the next generation. While they could not pass this greatness onto their own, biological progeny, there were those on their new home world who *could* benefit from their millennia of experience and achievement – the humans.

There was much debate amongst the surviving Progenitors about the Philosopher's radical notion. They all viewed the humans as a decidedly lesser species, and most doubted that the primitive beings were capable of truly learning the way the Philosopher suggested. The Philosopher agreed. The humans, as they were at the time, were not capable of truly understanding the true glories and wonders of Progenitor culture and technology. Therefore the only logical path was to change the humans – alter them until they could fully take on the mantle of the Progenitor's legacy.

Progenitor bio-technology was quite advanced, especially in the area of biomorphic modification. For centuries they had manipulated their own bodies to increase brain capacity, improve physical strength and endurance, and even alter their forms for aesthetic purposes. Progenitor culture viewed the body not as sacred, but rather as clay for the artist's vision – a starting place from which to build better beings. As a result, the average Progenitor lifespan was hundreds of years, if treated properly with biomorphic procedures. It would hopefully be just enough time to adapt the technology to humans and bring them up to speed.

Teams were sent out to surreptitiously capture humans for experimentation. The hunters were quite careful not to reveal themselves or to leave any sign of their passing. They took specimens from around the globe, sampling the full range of human tribes and primitive cultures. Adapting the biomorphic technology proved more difficult than first anticipated. The human bodies were simply not as resilient as a Progenitor. The mutagenic gels and morphing chambers had to almost be redesigned from scratch in order to properly modify a human form. It took close to fifty years of hard work to finally perfect the system.

The end result was a series of relatively quick and painless procedures that could alter a human into something the very closely resembled a Progenitor. Some of the alterations were on a genetic level, but here they had to be careful, as they did not want to pass on the genetic defect that had rendered them all infertile upon arriving on Earth. Therefore the majority of the changes were instead structural. Implants of vat-grown musculature and skeletons. Warping of flesh and enhancement of brains and nervous systems. The process worked best on an adult human, but the Progenitors had also developed a modification regimen for transforming children and even infants as well (although these latter cases required several more treatments as the child grew into adulthood).

Early results proved quite encouraging. The modified humans were smarter, tougher, longer-lived, and more pleasing to look at than their apish origins would have suggested. The poor souls subjected to these experiments assumed the Progenitors were some kind of gods. It was only once their bodies had been modified enough to understand the kind radio-telepathy used by Progenitors for communication that they learned what was really happening. This first generation of the transformed consisted of about 300 individuals, the majority of whom became completely devoted to the Progenitors and their cause. The human mods were honored to have been chosen as the heirs to so great and noble a culture. They had enough genetic diversity that they could propagate the species for many millennia to come, ensuring the Progenitor legacy.

But not everyone went along with the plan. A few dozen malcontents managed to use their enhanced brains and abilities to slip away from their captors – a development that both delighted and horrified the Progenitors. They were pleased that their creations had proved so resourceful and intelligent. No human could have escaped thus. But of course they couldn't allow the escaped mods to run free through the world, exposing the Progenitors' existence to other human cultures. The results could be disastrous – probably for the humans.

Indeed, the results were disastrous, pretty much for everyone involved. Not surprisingly, the very alien looking escaped mods could not go back to their homes. When they tried, they were seen as demons and monsters. All of the runaways had gone their separate ways, each taking some Progenitor weaponry or other technology. Even a simple sidearm was more than enough to level an entire village. Unable to return home and unwilling to submit to the Progenitors, the mods tried to set themselves up as warlords or gods. They walked into towns and shot down anyone who didn't immediately fall to their knees. The Progenitors managed to hunt most of the escapees down, but not before events had spiraled far out of control.

This was still a time for gods on what we now call Rikti Earth. Just as the Banished Pantheon and other gods once walked the world openly, so to did the gods on the world the Progenitors had come to. Blind to all matters magical and spiritual, the aliens hadn't even realized such powerful beings existed. As for the gods, only a few knew of the Progenitors, and none of them cared to get involved with the unknown beings, at least as long as they pretty much kept to themselves. Now the escaped mods had made ignoring the visitors an impossibility. Their worshippers were crying out for protection from these horrible demons. The gods had to answer if they were going to preserve the source of their power – that being the faith humans put in them.

The Progenitors had managed to recapture or kill all but three of the escaped mods. This final trio had joined together, combining both intellect and resources to make a more formidable foe. They had also stolen some of the most powerful weapons in the aliens' arsenal, making a simple frontal assault undesirable. So far the Progenitors had managed to avoid losing any of their own, a trend they wanted very badly to see continue. Thus they were unwilling to take any great risks. The Trio meanwhile had succeeded in setting themselves up as "gods" in the Tigris and Euphrates river valley. Well, if not actual gods, then they had at least cowed the local population with a liberal use of plasma weaponry. But before the Progenitors could move to stop them, the original gods of the valley made their move and showed the Trio what true gods are really capable of.

Divine Jihad

Divine spirits, or gods, are supernatural beings that predate mankind and feed off the power of devotion and prayer. It's a very simple equation – the more people pray to a god, the more powerful that god becomes and the more it can in turn help its devotees. The people of the Tigris and Euphrates were praying awfully hard, and few of their actual prayers were directed at the cruel and alien Trio. Their gods heard their prayers from the beginning of course, but were afraid to act. The gods had little direct power over the Trio because the body modification process had transformed them into something no longer wholly of this Earth. A god of death who could normally strike down a mortal with a single thought held no sway over the aliens' mortal soul. At first the gods were willing to cede a bit of authority to these new gods, but it soon became clear that the Trio would not accept just a small piece. They wanted it all.

And thus the gods did finally march into war with the aliens. While they could not directly affect the aliens' emotions, thoughts, or fates, they still had mastery over the world around them. The Trio had built a shining steel ziggurat from which they planned to rule over the entire river valley. Thousands of humans had been herded together at its feet to offer praise and sacrifice to the alien "gods." Even while the other Progenitors prepared their response from a thousand miles away, the army of the gods struck. Bursts of Divine Lightning crashed down upon the steel ziggurat. Hurricane force winds drove desert sands to scour the metallic surface clean. The earth beneath its foundations shook with fury, bending and tearing the false temple. Meanwhile a rainbow of divine energies protected the gathered humans from the terrible tempest that raged about them.

For all their technology and advanced weaponry, the Trio had no chance against this array of natural disasters. Two of the three died from some combination of electrical damage and wounds sustained as the ziggurat was torn apart around them. The lone survivor was gravely wounded, but still alive. The warrior gods moved in to finish the attack, wielding spears of pure light and armored in clothing spun from prayers and devotion. As it turned out, prayers and devotion make great armor against the swords of men and other gods, but do little to stop a concentrated stream of plasma. The survivor killed three of the war gods before the others struck him down. The native deities had their victory, although it had not come without a price.

As the gods strode forth to receive the praise and adulation of their people, a flotilla of Progenitor Sky Sleds arrived with the intention of eliminating the Trio. They circled the scene of the fallen ziggurat several times, trying to understand what had happened and who these strange and apparently powerful entities were. With thousands of worshippers looking on and hearts full of rage that the Trio had killed three of their own, it didn't take long for the assembled pantheon to decide on a course of action. The winds began to pick up, the sky filled with thunder, and the warriors raised their spears to hurl them at these flying aliens.

Ever cautious and having seen what happened to the Trio's ziggurat, the Progenitor strike team decided that discretion was the better part of valor. They immediately fled the scene at supersonic speeds, not even giving the gods a chance to attack. In their wake they left several hundred micro-drones: robotic spy machines the size of insects that could feed them information, audio, and images from up to a thousand miles away. The Progenitors needed more data about these strange beings, and they needed it fast. For their part, the gods were happy to have scared the aliens off, but they knew the war was not over. It had just begun. They sent their own servant spirits and animal servants to trace the Progenitors back to their base of operations.

For a while both sides gathered information and readied themselves for battle. The Progenitors did not want a war. In fact they were pleased that the gods had taken care of the Trio on their own – that meant the Progenitors hadn't had to risk their own skins. They made several attempts to parley with the gods, but the gods rejected all attempts at peace talks out of hand. They felt that the aliens posed a threat that had to be dealt with fully and completely.

And so the war between aliens and gods began in earnest with the deities of the Tigris- Euphrates river valley marching en masse upon the Progenitors' base, accompanied by adventuresome and angry gods from other nearby cultures. They battered the base with lightning, wind, and hail. They sent plagues of stinging insects, tore the ground open with earthquakes and even rose a vent of hot lava up from the earth's core. But the aliens were ready. They had analyzed the Trio's destruction, and were prepared for such an attack, even on this unprecedented scale. Force fields protected them from much of the damage, and the rest they were able to repair with relative ease.

As the second wave of attack came – the gods themselves dressed for battle – the Progenitors let loose with their own defenses. They had armed their modified humans with advanced weaponry, sending them out to meet the gods in battle. Always fearful of their own mortality, the aliens decided to sacrifice all their heirs now and find more later. The battle raged for a three days and three nights, but in the end the aliens proved victorious. Although they lost all but a handful of their mods, the gods of the Tigris- Euphrates had been destroyed.

This first war with the gods set the pattern for everything that was to come. The gods would give no ground and brook no talk of peace with the aliens. The Progenitors could not maintain a secure environment as long as the gods were still gunning for them. And it was at this point that they realized that the gods would keep coming, maybe forever, as long as the people believed in them. While a plasma weapon can destroy a gods' physical form, its essence lingers on unless one of two things happens: another god consumes it (as the Banished Pantheon does on our own world) or people stop worshiping it. Already the gods that the Progenitors had just defeated were reforming in their temples back home. The micro-drones reported the divine resurgence to their masters, causing great alarm amongst the Progenitors. They needed time to make new human mods if this war truly was destined to continue, as seemed likely.

Once again, it was the Philosopher who provided the key to victory. He realized that once again it was the humans that would offer a solution. They just needed to change their methodology for transforming the people of Earth into mods. He pointed out that the best way to destroy a faith is to replace it with another faith. In a sense, the Trio had the right idea: the Progenitors would need to set themselves up as gods so the humans would stop worshipping (and therefore empowering) their enemies. He further proposed including the body modification and training program within the ritual tradition of this new religion they were creating. Thus transmutation would become an act of faith. The mods would not be devils but rather angels.

Although many of the more scientific and rationally minded Progenitors felt profound unease at this plan, they could not possibly argue against its strategic merits. And so the aliens moved their base of operations from the remote desert to the center of the Tigris-Euphrates valley, where they proceeded to build a great crystal and steel temple-city. They fought the gods once again, defeating them before they could recover their full strength. After that, it was a simple matter to become divine. Their advanced technology provided food, shelter, entertainment, learning, and safety. Within a few short years they had one over most of the population. The old gods began to fade away and tens of thousands of men and women underwent the transformation and training process.

It was a process that, once begun, could not be undone. As their power grew, the old gods of neighboring regions grew jealous and worried. They joined together in war against the alien gods. The Progenitors had no choice but to expand their sphere of influence. Within a generation their priest/generals had march upon and seized both the Indus and Nile river valleys and adjoining lands. In another generation they would take the Yangtze as well. A hundred years after that and the entire globe would worship the aliens and begin transforming themselves into likenesses of their new gods.

Heirs to the Throne of God

Even as their followers and future heirs spread out across the globe, the Progenitors themselves were finally dying. Before he died, the Philosopher had codified the process of initiation and revelation that modified humans must go through on their path to becoming heirs to the Progenitor legacy. None of the aliens had intended to set up a religion, and ultimately they wanted to replace ritual and worship with rational thought and individual achievement. But they knew that as long as the threat of other gods remained present in the world, then the new religion needed to stay in place for the safety of all.

Thus, the Path of Salvation that humans embarked upon when they were first modified consisted of thirty-three steps. The vast majority of these steps involve learning the basic tenets and philosophies of Progenitor society. These beliefs ennoble such ideas as a balance between individual achievement and honoring the greater good; a fundamental respect for art, poetry, and literature; and a obedience to laws and social contracts. The process also included a direct education experience, forgoing formal schooling and instead planting ideas and knowledge directly in the person's head. This teaching tool works differently depending on the individual, but even the most adaptable human takes years to process and assimilate all the knowledge. Thus it can take half a lifetime for an average human to complete the entirety of the Philosopher's Thirty-Three steps.

Only those who completed the entire process learned the truth about the Progenitors. By the time they learned the truth, mods were ready for it. They had been purged of most religious tendencies and now understood their true roles as heirs to a great culture and society. They also understood the importance of keeping up the religious façade. The best of the best amongst the thirty-three steppers were groomed to take their places as gods, fulfilling the duties and identities of the various Progenitors as they died off. The Philosopher himself was the last to go, hanging on tenaciously for several decades more than any of his fellows. During this time he made sure that the system was totally secure and free from problems.

The upper tier of world society now centered around fulfilling the roles and duties of the 97 gods that the original Progenitors had established (one for each surviving Progenitor who had helped pacify the planet). Each god had, as he or she died, established his or her own Lineage. These Lineages were comprised of thirty-third ranked mods who had received special knowledge and training relevant to that particular god's area of responsibilities. Each of the 97 had taken on a specific role in maintaining the world society/religion. Some controlled crops and food production, others manufacturing, others law enforcement and political affairs. They were really just bureaucrats dressed up in divine regalia, but this division of authority, power, and responsibility ensured continued prosperity and progress.

The Lineages produced both the successors to the 97 godheads and served as staff for the different deities and their duties. The Lineage system was so successful that there was a completely smooth transition from the original Progenitors to their heirs. They had realized their goal of passing down every last vestige of their knowledge and accomplishment, remaking Earth in their image. By the time the Philosopher finally died, he did so with a sense of relief and hope. His legacy was secure. All that was worthwhile and important in his culture would continue.

The Golden Age

It is not to an understatement to say that the world underwent a lasting and almost entirely peaceful golden age for thousands of years after the Lineages were established. The 97 godheads ruled according to their teachings – for it was almost impossible for them to think in any way besides the way that they had been taught. Their brains had actually been changed to accommodate the Progenitors' ideals. There was no war, and eventually the last of the gods and all of the world's magic were driven from the world forever. The earth became a technological paradise that knew nothing of disease, hunger, or war.

The body morphing process now began in early childhood. While still born physically human, society viewed this original body as but a crude, rough hewn, thing, waiting to be rebuilt in the image of the gods. All through infancy, childhood, and puberty, the bodies of every child on earth underwent a series of transformations, all the while receiving direct downloads of basic knowledge and social skills. There were no schools. All learning and socialization came through direct programming. They were brought up to believe in the 97 Gods and to eschew all other forms of religion and philosophy as nonsense. Until the age of around 30 when they completed the 33 steps of transformation and enlightenment, they were viewed as legally children, unable to make any but the simplest choices for themselves.

Thus did the strictures of religious orthodoxy and restrictive law keep the fires of youth in check until they could be tempered with wisdom and true knowledge. The young people performed all of the more menial tasks in society, from manufacturing and servant duties to tending the fields and maintaining machines. For them such work was a religious duty, part of their walk down the path to salvation. It was also a time for simple pleasures and learning, a time when expectations were low and children were allowed to have fun with their lives.

Once one reached adulthood (i.e., completed the 33rd step) then it was time to join one of the 97 Lineages and start working for the betterment of society as a whole. The Progenitors had placed a deep seated desire to improve and expand the knowledge base of their society. Each of the 97 Lineages was tasked with pushing forward development in a particular field of endeavor, such as physics, technology, art, literature, philosophy, or astronomy (to name but a few). The Philosopher knew that a society as ordered and controlled as the one he had helped create would have a tendency towards stagnation and stasis. Therefore he had been sure to inculcate his heirs with a need to do better and discover new things.

While discovery and creation might not have been as fast or free as they were on worlds that allowed for more diversity of ideas and methods (like our own), the millennia of peace and prosperity allowed the mods to make slow and steady progress. They managed to vastly improve upon the existing technologies, all the while adapting their training procedures to incorporate these new inventions. Standards of living grew higher and higher, until even the lowliest jobs for children were simple and pleasant tasks rather than grueling work.

By far the most important discovery came from the Lineage of Physics. A long-term goal had always been to return to the stars from which the Progenitors had come, possibly making contact with other explorers who had set down on other worlds thousands upon thousands of years ago. They of course knew where the other colony arks had journeyed to, but they had no efficient means of communicating with them. They had received several signals in the past thousand years concerning the arrival of other Progenitors on other worlds, but all of their news was still thousands of years old. The speed of light seemed an impossible barrier to break.

Instead of breaking the barrier, the Lineage of Physics had been working for several centuries on finding a way around it. Eventually this endeavor led to the discovery of teleportation, a powerful tool that revolutionized the entire world. The face of travel, commerce, and even how people lived changed forever. The teleportation technology was actually an outgrowth of the basic body morphing process, which broke down molecules to their atomic essence and then reformed them. Teleportation technology rapidly broke down the molecules completely and then transported them instantaneously through space and reformulated them upon arrival. Although it took quite a while to perfect, rapid and perfectly safe teleportation soon became commonplace throughout the world.

The problem of interstellar travel remained, since the teleportation process required compatible transmitters and receivers at both ends of the transport. Even the more advanced teleportation devices used today still require the establishment of a teleportation matrix that covers a whole city or even country (such as the hospital matrix used in Paragon City). But there was one hope. The Lineage of Physics built a massive teleportation receiver and then sent the plans for its construction to all of the other Progenitor colonies. Once the thousand year travel time for the transmission is complete (which should be soon now) then the other Progenitor worlds will be able to build their own transceivers and travel directly to and from Earth without the long wait.

The other great, world changing invention of the Golden Age came from the Lineage of Education. In addition to creating and updating the learning programs used to inject information into young people's heads, they also had the responsibility for improving the technology. One of their most significant advancements had been a network of small implants that they inserted directly into the brains of each living being. This simplified the info dump process, eliminating the need for some of the more bulky and expensive equipment that had been used previously. Then came a dramatic refinement on the implant network, a system that allowed the implants to act as both receivers and transmitters of data.

The result was instant, artificial telepathy. Anyone with the new implants could now choose to transmit words, images, and other data directly to anyone else with an implant. Although not nearly as efficient as the education downloads, this data transfer allowed a whole new kind of communication. Within a generation the sound of speech all but disappeared from the planet. Artificial telepathy became the sole form of discourse in the world. Even books and video images disappeared, replaced instead by transmitters that contained the stored memories of the thought and events. Art, theater, science, politics, and every other aspect of society changed forever.

Radical Elements

The Lineage System held society together for thousands of years, seeing it through its golden age and up to the present day. It is only recently that cracks have begun to form in the seams, and new intellectual and cultural forces have begun to challenge the established order of things. The mere fact that everyone receives the same exact education for the formative years of their life and the general attitude of reverence and awe that surrounds any concept that came from the original Progenitors meant that dissent was very rare and seldom very intense.

Some might find it surprising that the first great radical movement came not from the Lineage of Philosophy (which had long ago stopped coming up with new ideas and instead concentrated on defending and propagating the old ones). Instead it came from the Lineage of Journalists, an arm of the 97 that had slowly but surely grown more and more radical over the centuries. From the beginning the Journalists were as much watchdogs as reporters. Their job was to let everyone know what everyone else was doing. They had exclusive rights to poke their noses into the goings on in any of the other 96 Lineages.

Within the Lineage of Journalism was the Commentariate, a group whose job it was to opine upon events, synthesize information, and provide useful and detailed analysis of the news. For millennia the Commentariate had toed the party line and helped ensure that all the other Lineages did the same, but then a reform minded Commentator came to power. Widely recognized as a brilliant writer and incredibly persuasive thinker, the new Commentator seemed destined for eventual elevation to God of Journalism. But then he began producing commentaries and thought-articles that challenged some of the fundamental beliefs that held society together.

The Commentator began to argue that the 97 Lineages and the 33 Steps of Education were having a stultifying effect on thought and even evolution. He decried the lack of original thought in the world. These positions were unpopular, but not enough to lose him his job. It wasn't until he produced his final thought-article that the true extent of his revolutionary fervor came to light. The Commentator had dug deep into the Progenitor archives and uncovered a number of documents and studies from before the Divine Purging. These studies were made before the idea of modifying all of humanity had ever been imagined. Back then the Progenitors had planned to live in peace and harmony with the native humans. They had done a careful study of humanity's cognitive abilities and potential and found that it closely matched and possibly exceeded their own.

In other words, left to their own devices, humanity could have created just as great a civilization as that of the Progenitors, maybe even greater. Moreover, since it was now known the other Progenitor colonies had been established on at least half a dozen other planets, their culture did persevere, presumably without having had to resort to the radical tactic of remaking the local species' in their own image. The Commentator went on to conclude that the only logical conclusion was that the 33 Steps and 97 Lineages were accomplishing nothing more than the utter stifling of natural human achievement. He called for an immediate end to the False Religion and 33 Steps system of education. He called for a world of Free Thinkers, not slaves to alien knowledge.

As one might imagine, this call to arms did not go over very well. While the laws of the land protected free speech, particularly within the Lineage of Journalism and the Commentariate, they did not stop a wave of popular discontent. The Commentator's thought-article went out with the morning Media Transmission, so several billion people received it directly into their minds before the Lineage of Journalism had a chance to pull it from broadcast on the other side of the globe. As a result, it took less than half an hour for several hundred million death threats and calls for imprisonment to flood into the Commentariate's headquarters. The God of Journalism himself called the Commentator before her and demanded that the Commentator retract his thought-article and denounce it as a hoax. He of course refused. Since he had broken no law he could not be imprisoned, but that did not protect him from losing his job.

The Commentator was transferred to a meaningless bureaucratic position within the Lineage of Journalism (removing someone from a Lineage entirely is quite rare). There he languished, unheard but not forgotten. Out of the two billion individuals who had received his original thought-article, the vast majority hated him for it. Only a tiny fraction took his message to heart – which still amounted to several million individuals whose entire life outlook had changed forever. Slowly, carefully, they began to find one another. In secret they formed underground networks of would-be revolutionaries. They shared their thoughts and ideas on how to someday bring down the tyranny of the Progenitors' Lineages and free the true potential of their long suppressed humanity.

The burgeoning revolutionary movement called itself the Free Mind Coalition, and for the most part worked in secrecy. Every time they made any kind of public declaration of principals or intent, the popular backlash was so negative that they were forced to withdraw. The Lineages themselves took no direct legal action, but mounted a spirited propaganda campaign against the Free Minders. Not only did the Lineage of Journalism decry the group at every opportunity, but the Lineage of Education began to alter its thought transfer protocols to include teachings specifically designed and created to deaden the appeal of Free Mind Coalition ideals.

The Coalition was not without its own propaganda techniques. They had members with expertise from all of the 97 Lineages and so had all the expertise they needed to mount a truly effective counterculture offensive. They first inoculated themselves against thought-propaganda by developing a process to rewrite their educations and filter out unwanted thought processes. This reeducation was a radical step, something that had never been attempted before. Therefore there was no law against it. Slowly but surely the Free Minders were building their own society and culture hidden within the folds of the Lineage System. Each day brought new converts and worldwide their number swelled into the hundreds of millions. The Lineage Gods were growing nervous and began seeking any excuse to act more directly against the Free Minders.

Finally, bolstered with enthusiasm by their success, the Coalition went too far. They developed and began to use a subliminal thought-broadcast system designed to weaken and undermine the teachings of the Thirty-Three Steps. These devices broadcast thoughts designed very specifically to break down the education programming and bypass the filters against uninvited thoughts. This flagrantly violated a number of different thought-protection and mind-privacy laws. The Lineage of Law and Lineage of Justice had the perfect excuse to crack down on the Coalition.

The resulting crusade against the Free Minders succeeded in driving the group entirely underground and imprisoning most of its most influential thinkers and leaders. The standard penalty for any crime had long been re-education, a process whereby the criminals memories and inclinations were totally broken down and rebuilt from scratch, leaving them a productive member of society once more. To the Free Minders, such a fate was especially horrifying, as it went against everything they believed in. Many chose suicide over reeducation, becoming martyrs to the dying cause.

The revolutionary thought group did survive, but only as a shadow of its former self. Indeed, had it not been for the inter-dimensional war with Earth, the group might have disappeared forever. But there remained a fervent radical cadre that was prepared to take the Free Mind Coalition's beliefs to its logical conclusion and who operated in the strictest secrecy. They believed that not only was the Progenitors' education program a menace, they also revolted against the entire concept of body-morphing. They pooled their resources and, in hidden safe houses and underground facilities scattered across the globe began to do the unthinkable. They raised normal, unmodified human children.

They called themselves Body Purists. There have never been more than ten or twenty thousand of them on the entire planet, and until very recently the rest of the world – even other Free Minders – had no idea that they existed. Hidden away in their secret underground or undersea domiciles, they embarked on an ambitious plan to bring humanity back to what it once was. Children are raised the natural way, with no body modification or thought implants. They even communicate using a spoken language, something that hasn't been heard on the planet for hundreds of years.

The Body Purists had access to the same files and archival material that the Commentator had originally used to make his case for a restoration of human based thought. For the Purists, these files were like religious texts. They combed every inch of them for the minutest details about human life before the Progenitors had come. Among the gems they found were comprehensive descriptions of the ancient religions and the war against the gods. Having rejected the 97 false gods of the Lineages, they decided to revive worship of the old gods. With the help of sympathetic Free Minders (who had retained their morphed bodies), they collected artifacts and ancient tablets from the times before the war. Prayers, ceremonies, and sacrifices became commonplace within the secret society of Purists.

Slowly but surely, in largely unseen ways, this renewal of faith in the defeated gods began to bring magic back into the world. The long dead deities began to awake, making their presence felt in dreams and through signs and portents. It wasn't much, but it was enough to keep the fires of faith burning. Were it not for the Interdimensional War, such a small body of extremists might not ever have had any lasting impact on the world. As it turned out, they played a very large role indeed.

The Interloper

There had never been any exploration of other dimensions. Indeed, their entire existence remained firmly rooted in the realm of the hypothetical. There had been some discussion of them while the Lineage of Physics was working on teleportation, but since the group had moved on to cold fusion and nanotechnology, the topic was largely forgotten. Thus when Nemesis discovered the world in his interdimensional travels, they had no way of detecting his presence. The Prussian Prince of Automatons was fascinated by this strange alternate Earth inhabited by aliens. Having never encountered true extra-terrestrials, he saw a whole new world of possibilities opening up before him.

One of the things that both intrigued and vexed Nemesis the most was the method of communication these alien beings used. Or, more specifically, the lack of any kind of obvious speech or written language at all. His equipment could not detect any radio transmission or psychic energy because the thought transmitters used a process based on teleportation technology that is nearly impossible to detect without knowing what you're looking for. Of course the amazing teleportation technology that the aliens used also grabbed Nemesis' attention, and it was by pure chance that his investigations into the teleportation network clued him in to the artificial telepathy process.

Even after this discovery it took Nemesis several months to unravel the complex and multi-layered language of pure thought. A lesser mind would probably have been driven insane if exposed to the barrage of thought-transmissions that Nemesis subjected himself to. Eventually though he did crack the language and began to unlock the fascinating history of this alien world and its residents. First and foremost he was amazed to discover that they were actually human beings, although in their own language they called themselves Rikti (which was the Progenitors' word for their own, alien race). Nemesis had to learn more, so he began abducting individual Rikti and interrogating them, pumping their minds for every last piece of knowledge. He was careful to cover his tracks very well, taking only a few Rikti from widely disparate locations and Lineages.

From his “studies” Nemesis came to several key conclusions. First of all it was obvious that the Rikti were much more advanced, technologically speaking, than the humans of his own home dimension. Second, their world spanning, monolithic government and society meant that once he found the right level to move them, he could manipulate an entire planet’s prodigious resources at once. All he needed to do is find the right lever. He found the key deep in the Rikti’s history, dating back to the time of the Progenitors when there was a great war with “gods.” Nemesis presumed these gods were super powered beings of some sort, much like the ones that plagued him so back on his home world. The war with the gods was the last major war the Rikti had known and it had happened thousands of years ago. By this time the enemy gods had become bogeymen – the stuff of legends, stories, and primal nightmares. If Nemesis could tap into the power of that fear, he would have his lever.

The Rikti had a very small standing army, whose role was mostly that of a deterrent against any kind of radical terrorist or revolutionary attack that might conceivably arise. Such threats had only manifested a handful of times in the past few thousand years, but since the Lineage of War existed, so to did the army. Still, it was amongst the smallest and least influential godheads in the world when Nemesis began to weave his deadly web. The Lineage of Justice had responsibility for enforcing the laws and maintaining the peace. The average enforcement officer did not carry lethal weapons, since most crime was non-violent or involved fist fights and simple brawls. Since only members of the Lineage of War could carry lethal weaponry, violent crime was all but non-existent on Rikti Earth.

Thus the Rikti were ill-prepared when Nemesis launched his attack. He had spent over a year creating perfect automaton reconstructions of some of the most notorious gods from the Rikti’s ancient war. In addition he had created some equally impressive replicas of Paragon City’s greatest heroes, including the Statesman. Thus he had an automaton force consisting of a fearsome mélange of his greatest enemies and the mythical threats to the Rikti way of life. All told there were some 50 automatons, each with the capacity to deal massive damage in a very short period of time. Nemesis sent his creations through a portal into one of the more densely populated regions of Rikti Earth. The automatons carried out a lightning strike, taking care to be seen and remembered by as many Rikti as possible. They destroyed a few buildings – killing hundreds in the process – and then had a short, deadly, one-sided encounter with local law enforcement. With thirty dead law enforcement personnel in their wake, they returned to the dimension from whence they came.

Thought-transfers and memory downloads of the attacks spread across the planet in mere hours. The whole world was stunned. The Lineage of history quickly confirmed that some of the attackers were identical to the most fearsome of the old gods that the Progenitors had fought. The Lineage of Governance called an emergency meeting of the 97 Godheads, something that usually only happened once every ten years. They needed answers and they needed a plan.

Meanwhile, deep within their hidden caves and secret lairs, the Body Purists also heard stories of the old gods attacking. No one was more amazed than they were that their prayers had been answered in so dramatic and public a manner. The attack spurred on their faith to new heights. For the first time they actually believed with all their hearts that the old gods really were out there. And so their belief began to make it so, and the old gods’ power grew more and more. So to did the Body Purist movement. They found a number of new recruits in the weeks and months after the attack, people who’d had their core beliefs shaken and were looking for answers. While 99.999% of the Rikti population responded to the attacks by rallying behind their government and their civilization, that small percentage lost their faith entirely. The Body Purists were, in some cases, there to give them a new one.

The long-dormant Lineage of War immediately took the lead. They called upon the Lineages of Engineering, Manufacturing, and Education to help ramp up a massive weapons manufacturing and military training program. They also set the Lineage of Physics on the task of finding where these gods had come from and how they had hidden themselves. Nemesis had expected as much from the Rikti and had left enough clues and residual energy signatures that he knew the Rikti scientists would begin to piece together the puzzle.

Meanwhile, back on our own world, Nemesis was busy setting the second stage of his plan in motion. He undertook a series of high-profile missions designed to gather Paragon City's greatest heroes together in an effort to capture him. He then led them on a merry chase through the city that ended in the headquarters of the Portal Corp. He had already prepared the scene and had, an hour or so before, sent a pulse of energy through the portal that he knew would alert the Rikti to its location. Nemesis seemed to flee through the portal – although in fact he used another doorway to a much safer locale, tricking the pursuing heroes into thinking he'd gone to the Rikti Earth. Determined not to let their quarry escape, the heroes followed him through, only to have the portal snap shut behind them.

Three months to the day, on the anniversary of the Trio's destruction at the hands of Rikti Earth's old gods, a band of a dozen human heroes stepped out onto Rikti Earth in a plaza smack dab in the middle of one of the world's largest cities. Immediately the locals began to flee in terror while the human heroes looked on in confusion. While they tried desperately to re-open the portal home, the Rikti military began to descend on the plaza, using teleportation devices. Nemesis had added one extra flourish to his trap. He had set up a hidden thought transmitter beneath the surface of the plaza where the portal had opened. It began broadcasting thoughts and images of war, death, and religious fervor for the old gods. The Rikti of course thought it was Statesman and company stating their intentions. They immediately opened fire.

The resulting conflict between Rikti and heroes lasted for over an hour and raged throughout the city. Three of the heroes died in the battle along with close to 1000 Rikti soldiers and civilians. Still inexperienced at war and decidedly out matched by the powerful heroes, the Rikti armed forces had a tough time of it. For their part, the heroes wanted no part of this fight and were doing the best they could to simply find their way home again. Eventually that's exactly what they did, re-opening the portal and fleeing back to the safety of their own Earth. They shut the portal behind them and began to mourn for those they had lost. For the heroes it was just another wild, albeit tragic adventure. They had been through equally challenging encounters scores of times.

For the Rikti it was another, even more Earth-shattering moment. The gods were back, and apparently they were more powerful than the histories said. It was their worst fears writ large in the devastation on the city streets. Now all of society bent itself towards the fight against the returning gods. The Lineage of War's number swelled, as over 50% of the newly educated children were funneled into War's ranks as they finished their 33rd Step. This unprecedented step swelled the ranks of the Lineage into the tens of millions, all of whom began to receive new and special training.

Meanwhile, the research minded Lineages turned all their efforts to creating new weapons to fight these old gods. They developed battle armor to protect their soldiers and more powerful plasma and energy weapons designed to pierce the toughest god-skin. They also began to weaponize the various drones and robots that played such an important role Rikti society, creating scouts and cannon fodder for the impending war. The Lineage of Morphology developed new body modification techniques to increase the strength, endurance, and reflexes of the soldiers as they went into battle.

But one problem remained? Where were these gods? How could they find them? Fortunately for them, Nemesis had left enough clues for them to figure out the truth. These gods had come from some sort of parallel dimension, a theoretical concept that now proved to be absolutely true. With the entire Lineage of Physics working on the problem, it only took six months for them to discover the secret of interdimensional travel. In truth, the research behind the teleportation system had already done most of the work. It was simply a matter of looking at old data from a new perspective and a different set of assumptions. The Rikti created their first dimensional portal 8 months after the evil gods had last attacked them.

The Lineage of War dispatched spy drones through the portal to our world in an effort to learn more about the enemy and where they came from. The truth of the matter was readily apparent. These were not the same old gods they had fought before. No, this was something much worse. This was an alternate Earth where the Progenitors had never come with enlightenment. It was a place where the gods paraded about in gaudy costumes and meted out justice or death as they saw fit (the Rikti had a hard time telling hero from villain). It was a savage, warlike place where humans were barbaric enough to still wear their birth-bodies without modification. Their intent was now obvious – the humans and their gods wanted to invade the Rikti so they could spread their backwards and disturbing faith.

The Rikti only knew one way to react to a threat like this. In all their great and glorious history there had been but one true war – Progenitors vs. Gods. The Progenitors had won by destroying every last god and every vestige of their faith. The Rikti would have to do the same to this other world if they ever wanted to be 100% safe and secure. And so plans were laid for the invasion of Earth.

Invasion: Earth

The Rikti planned well for their invasion. They spent months using robotic drones to scout the entire globe. They learned the world's major languages, discovered out to monitor and decode their public and private transmissions, and made a rather detailed catalog of their military capabilities. They also spent as great deal of energy trying to learn all they could about the Earth's gods, or "heroes" as the natives called them. While they did achieve a greater understanding of these heroes, compiling a detailed catalogue or threat analysis proved difficult. Many heroes keep secret identities and have private lives despite their rather public antics. As such, the Rikti had no clear estimation of just how tough fighting the world's super powered heroes might be.

The Lineage of Economics began to press for some kind of forward movement on the invasion plan. The Rikti economy was beginning to stagnate and faced a possible depression due to the radical shifts away from a service/luxury oriented economy to a military/industrial focus. The Lineage of War, after much debate, finally agreed. They had learned all they could about the foe. Their plans were solid, their goals clear. The time for war had come.

The Rikti attack plan's success centered upon fully exploiting the element of surprise. Therefore, they wanted to attack as many key targets at once, before the humans could mount an organized defense. While their teleportation and dimensional portal technology would allow for quick assaults on relatively unprotected targets, the troops would have no support once they got to the other side. Therefore, before the big invasion that everyone on Earth remembers, there was a series of much smaller, but equally important incursions. The Rikti sent through advance teams to set up bases of operation beneath their target cities. Hidden deep beneath the ground, these secret fortresses would serve as command and control centers once the true invasion force arrived. Together the bases would also form a teleportation matrix, allowing the soldiers to use their teleporters to move in and out of combat while on Earth. Without such an established matrix, their teleportation equipment would have been useful.

The most important role for these bases though was to serve as fortified gateways back to the home dimension. Maintaining a sizable and permanent dimensional portal requires a great deal of energy and technical expertise, so rather than have multiple portals spread all over the planet, they decided to establish one main entry/exit point in the largest base – the one located beneath Paragon City. The teleportation matrix would then link the other bases to the portal. Of course, in an emergency, the other bases had the equipment to open up their own doorways home, but the God of War did not want 28 different established entrances to the relatively undefended home world.

The fact that the Rikti managed to establish their bases in almost complete secrecy (a few people did notice, but no one believed them) in just a few weeks is a tribute to their ingenuity and drive. With the bases established and their supply lines secure, it was time for the true invasion. Back on Rikti Earth, one of the greatest logistical efforts in history was undertaken – the establishment of tens of thousands of portals all around the globe, each corresponding to a different, precisely chosen location on Earth. There were a few technical problems and snags that caused a delay before the entire network of doors was established. During this delay people on Earth had a chance to react to the strange portals opening up in their skies. While this partially reduced the effectiveness of the surprise attack, the War God would not divert from the plan – the troops would go in only once all the portals were active.

When they were ready, about an hour later, the Rikti simultaneously attacked the world's 28 largest cities, spread out around the globe, committing their entire strike force at once. The effects of this first strike were absolutely devastating, destroying power grids, jamming communication networks, blowing up fuel depots, and striking hard and fast at military bases, government buildings, police stations, and super powered hero organizations. Then the heroes started fighting back, especially in places like Paragon City where there were large numbers of them.

The general progress of the war is well known – massive casualties on both sides, a slow but steady grinding away of the heroes as wave after wave of heavily armed Rikti and their drones attacked human held positions. Paragon City was lucky enough to have heroes strong enough to preserve at least some of the neighborhoods. Other places like London and Mexico City were much less fortunate – they were both basically burned to the ground, utterly destroyed in those first few days by the massive Rikti battleships and other heavy weaponry.

The Rikti had put a lot of faith in their super-sized battle craft. Although nothing like them had ever existed in Rikti history, the researchers at the Lineage of Innovation had manage to develop near perfect battle platforms. Armed with banks of plasma cannons and protected by powerful force fields, just one of the flying ships could take out an entire city. Conventional human weapons were totally ineffective. Only a large nuclear blast could have taken one down. But because the craft came through the dimensional barrier directly above their target cities, the humans could not safely use nuclear weapons without also destroying the city they were trying to protect. Even worse, the huge ships teleported directly from one target to the next, ensuring that they were never out of proximity to heavily populated areas (at least until they were done depopulating them).

What the designers of the battle craft could never have anticipated was that a single, ultra powerful hero could do more damage than a nuclear weapon. Especially if that hero was the Statesman. Although the huge war ships did trillions of dollars of damage and killed tens of thousands of human soldiers, heroes, and civilians, not a single one of them was still in the air after the third day of the war. The world's heroes concentrated all their efforts on taking out the flying behemoths. Some of the most powerful, like Statesman, could simply tear into them with their bare hands. Others used more subtle means – including magic, teleportation, and other powers the Rikti hadn't been able to prepare for. The loss of these incredibly advanced and expensive weapons systems so early in the war was a huge blow to the Rikti. Right away they knew that this would not go as planned.

The war settled down into a more conventional battle, with the significant difference that instead of one or two fronts, it was now being fought on more than 50 fronts as the Rikti spread out to other targets. Their ability to teleport meant that the Rikti could attack virtually anywhere at any time, giving them a huge tactical advantage. Any time the Rikti learned of a concentration of supplies or the location of any kind of command center, they would attack it – either with soldiers or just by teleporting high explosives to the location. It took three months for Earth's greatest scientist, Dr. Steven Sinclair, to come up with a way to block the teleporters, and even this was only effective within a relatively short radius of the jamming device. Still, it allowed humanity to secure at least some especially vital locations from Rikti teleporters.

The War Comes Home

Meanwhile, the humans were desperately searching for some clue as to where these aliens came from. Statesman was one of the few surviving heroes who remembered humanity's single previous voyage the Rikti home world. The others had already died in the war at that point. He directed Dr. Sinclair to go through Portal Corps' old records and see if there was any more data available about the aliens. Surprisingly, the Doctor found a fairly extensive file on the Rikti, who had apparently been visited once before by Portal Corp employees. The file said that they were an advanced, aggressive race and that communications had been established. The beings even learned to speak English. The report also suggested that the Rikti version of Earth was running dangerously low on natural resources and could either be a potential trading partner or a dangerous enemy. Dr. Sinclair presented his fellow heroes with the bad news – the Rikti could talk but apparently they didn't want to. They were desperate and ruthless and there would be no talk of peace.

Of course the entire file was false, planted in the Portal Corp records by Nemesis in an effort to fan the flames of war. Nemesis knew the Rikti well enough to realize that a peace agreement was indeed possible. Fortunately, the Rikti method of artificial-telepathy was so alien that it didn't show up as either psychic or radio communication. As long as Nemesis could keep a wall of ignorance between the two sides, the war would continue and the world would grow weaker. Then, in its most desperate hour, Nemesis would ride to the rescue, drive back the alien hordes, and be hailed as the new Emperor of Earth.

The one mistake Nemesis made was not altering the Portal Corp records of exactly where the Rikti dimension was. With this knowledge, Dr. Sinclair was able to reverse engineer a device that could detect energy signals emanating from that specific other dimension. It was through this device that the heroes learned just how the Rikti were sending reinforcements to their armies here on Earth. Beneath Paragon City, deep within Rikti held territory, was a huge portal – the sole permanent gateway to Rikti Earth. If they could shut that portal, hopefully permanently, then the heroes would have a chance at stemming the tide and reversing the course of the war.

Back on Rikti Earth the war effort was taking its toll on the public psyche. At first there had been regular thought transmissions from Earth, showcasing the victories over the humans and their barbaric gods. The Rikti had a long tradition of freedom of knowledge and the press, so the Lineage of Journalism pulled no punches when it came to broadcasting thought-pieces about the war. But the Rikti had never in their whole history been exposed to such large scale and ongoing violence. War was utterly alien to their experience. Public support for the invasion began to wane quickly as the casualties began to mount into the tens of thousands. The promised "quick, decisive war" was proving to be a much bloodier and longer lasting affair. Eventually the God of War took the unprecedented step of asking the Lineage of Journalism to tone down its thought broadcasts and focus on more positive war news.

But amongst the Body Purists hidden away beneath the earth's surface, all the news was good. Their human brothers and the ancient gods were resisting the alien hegemony. They kept telling themselves that soon, very soon, the gods would return to their world and rescue them from the false gods of the Lineages. The Purists began studying the news from Earth very carefully, learning all they could about these pure humans and their brightly colored gods. When the moment of salvation came, they were determined to be ready.

Although the war had stabilized somewhat, the Rikti were still clearly winning. The entire world economy had been devastated in just a few short months. Food and fuel became incredibly scarce as international shipping and commerce ground to a halt. The humans needed to end the war, and end it quickly. And so was born the so-called Alpha and Omega plan, wherein a mass of heroes would frontally assault Rikti positions (the Alpha team) while a small group of 50 heroes would use magic to infiltrate the Rikti base and pass through the Portal to their home world (the Omega team).

The Omega Team consisted largely of mystic powered heroes, since it was now well known that Rikti technology was particularly vulnerable to magic. Among these magicians was the reincarnation of an ancient Middle Eastern god, now lost to history. He went by the name Enkidu, but this was only one of his later manifestations as hero and demi-god. As it happened, Enkidu's inclusion in the Omega Team turned out to be particularly fortuitous. Omega made its way into the Rikti base and remained undetected until they approached the chamber containing the dimensional portal. At that point they could proceed no further without breaking their veil of invisibility, and a furious battle ensued. Several members of the team were captured, including Ajax, and several more died in the fighting. All told, 43 members of Omega Team made it through the portal.

What happened next is common knowledge on the Rikti Earth, but a complete mystery to everyone in our own world. The portal led directly into the heart of a Rikti Military complex that spanned hundreds of square miles. As expected, the other side of the gateway was just as strongly guarded as the base they had come through. But that was all according to plan. Omega team had brought along a powerful mystic artifact, the Heart of Shiva, which they intended to unleash upon the Rikti military base and then retreat back through the dimensional doorway. Unfortunately, as soon as they entered the Rikti earth, the doorway's failsafe system kicked in, locking out any travel through between the dimensions – in case there were any more invaders following behind. The doorway's emergency shutdown caused an energy feedback that blasted back through the portal, causing a massive fireball to erupt back on Earth. This unexpected side-effect of the emergency shutdown procedure (which had never been fully tested) caused extensive damage to the Rikti facility beneath Paragon City, effectively eliminating its usefulness as a base of operations.

Caught in a deadly crossfire, the heroes of Omega Team decided that self-sacrifice was their only remaining course. They would detonate the Heart of Shiva, destroying the gate, the city around it, and themselves in the process. Then Enkidu received some kind of strange telepathic message, in a voice not unlike his own. The voice told him to save the device's power and instead fight their way to a specific location just outside the military base. Overcome with a divine certainty that this was indeed the correct course to follow, Enkidu urged his fellow heroes to hold off on detonating the Heart and to come with him. With no time to debate and no desire to commit suicide, the others agreed. The two score heroes fought their way through the military base, killing or maiming hundreds of Rikti soldiers and losing eleven of their own number in the process. Then, with a last great effort they burst through the outer wall of the facility and into the open air. In that moment they were teleported away.

The voice Enkidu had heard was not his own, but it was the next best thing. It was the voice of the original Enkidu diety that had once existed on Rikti Earth. Known as Inliki, the god was among the dozen or so deities that the Body Purists had begun to worship in the past few decades. He had been growing more and more powerful ever since the war began and the Purist's faith increased. When his counterpart from Earth entered the Rikti dimension, Inliki immediately felt his presence. He reached out to his alternate self and discovered the Omega Team's entire plan. While he saw the merits of it, he also sensed the tremendous power within the Heart of Shiva, and he knew he had a much better use for such energies.

The disoriented heroes were more than a little surprised to suddenly find themselves in an underground chamber surrounded by somewhat strange looking humans. Communication would have been a real problem had Enkidu and Inliki not shared an immediate telepathic link. As it was, this link made it easy to overcome issues of confusion and mistrust. Inliki learned from Enkidu that the war on Earth was going very badly, and that if the Rikti weren't stopped, humanity would probably lose. The Omega team's goal had been to put at least a temporary, hopefully a permanent stop to reinforcements so that maybe the rest of humanity could turn the tide of the war. While the main doorway between the worlds had been destroyed, it would be a simple matter for the Rikti to open up another one. Inliki doubted that it would take them more than a few hours.

The earthling heroes grew despondent at this news. They had felt sure that the Rikti would take month to recover from their attack. Maybe if they'd been allowed to detonate the Heart of Shiva, they could've really made a difference. Some in the group wanted to go back and do just that. But Inliki had a better idea. He wanted to use the Heart's power to cut off the Rikti from Earth forever. By combining the faith of the Purists with the magical knowledge and skills of the surviving members of Omega Team, he felt sure that they could device a way to tap into the Heart of Shiva and cut of all inter-dimensional ties between the Rikti and Earth. If successful, they would have won the war for humanity and struck a powerful blow for faith and Puritanism on the Rikti world.

And so it came to pass that Inliki, Enkidu, the other heroes, and the Body Purists conceived of a grand ritual to surround the entire world in a shatterproof shield of faith. As an especially galling touch, Inliki included an element in the ritual that would let everyone on the planet know exactly what had just happened. The gods had returned and they had a message of peace. They had harmed no one, but merely ended a war that would destroy both worlds. They called upon the Rikti to put aside their arms and look into their hearts as human beings. Knowing full well that the Rikti had no knowledge or even ability to perform magic or deal with mystic threats, the conspirators could safely announce their methods and intentions. They hoped that, by doing so, they would incite larger numbers of Rikti to join their side and oppose the war. At the very least, they hoped it would convince the Lineages to open up some sort of peace process in the hopes of getting back their lost soldiers, although how such peace talks could be conducted with the link between worlds severed was left unclear in the hurried planning.

Not surprisingly, the Purists' announcement did little to foster peace and understanding. Instead, it only added fuel to the fire of panic and anger that was sweeping across the globe. Every family had at least one member serving in the Earth invasion force, and they were unwilling to here any talk of peace as long as the soldiers were still in harm's way. The Lineages also began to panic, because it was now clear that the viral contamination of worshiping gods had broken out on their own world, thanks in no small part to the Earth heroes who had invaded their planet. The strong negative reaction certainly didn't surprise the Purists – they had expected as much. But the announcement also had its intended effect. It made the whole world aware of both the Purists and the return of the gods. Recruitment and conversion became much, much easier

In the months following the “coming out” of the Purists and the return of the old gods, the Lineages cracked down hard on any kind of dissent and launched a worldwide manhunt for the terrorists. Despite this effort, new worshippers began to pore into the Purist’s ranks, swelling their numbers into the hundred of thousands. They had been preparing for such a day for decades and had more than enough room in their hidden bases for the converts. Of course a number of these were spies sent by the government to try and crack the Purist secret. Unfortunately for them, the team of Earth heroes included several powerful and talented magicians who had woven powerful enchantments that could detect any lies or false converts. The Rikti government failed to infiltrate the Purists, even as their influence began to spread. A new war was brewing.

Cut Off

Back on Earth, the Rikti invasion force immediately felt the effects of being shut off from their home dimension. Once the main portal beneath Paragon City went down, Rikti bases all around the globe began to set up their emergency portals and try to establish contact with the home dimension. News traveled very fast – the way home was blocked, and no one knew why. The assumption was that the humans had, as part of their recent assault on the Paragon portal, used some new weapon or technique to cut off transportation between the two dimensions.

This was even more of a devastating blow to the Rikti than the humans could have hoped for. The invasion force still numbered hundred of thousands of soldiers, all of whom had high tech equipment that required a constant stream of new parts, recharging, and servicing. Centuries of using teleportation as the primary means of transport had ingrained a “just in time” philosophy of supply and resource management. The invasion force on Earth did not maintain any large supply caches, hospitals, repair facilities, or any of the other behind the scenes resources needed to keep an ultra-modern army fighting. They relied on the home dimension for all of these things, teleporting what they needed back and forth through the portals.

For the first time since the war began, the fighting stopped. The humans were catching their breath, reeling from the loss of so many heroes in such a short period of time. The Rikti desperately attempted to reestablish contact with their home world, but everything they tried, failed. Without regular supplies from home, they simply did not have the resources they needed to continue fighting a full on war. The War Demi-Gods (equivalent to generals) decided that it was time to switch tactics. They would consolidate their resources, fortify any bases that remained a secret, and bend all their efforts to finding a way back home.

The Rikti began to withdraw from front line positions, scorching the earth as they went. In dozens of cities around the globe the Rikti set fire to anything they could and then disappeared underground. As the human forces moved in to retake the alien occupied territory, they were forced to deal with the fires and other disasters rather than actually confronting the Rikti as they retreated. Even so, the Rikti still suffered significant casualties during the withdrawal, chiefly in the five cities where the local heroes managed to trace them back to the bases and catch them there. In the following weeks, heroes and the surviving members of the Vanguard managed to root out eleven more Rikti bases, killing or capturing thousands more.

But after about a month, the trails went cold. The Rikti had succeeded in pretty much disappearing from the face of the Earth. The world’s heroes could find no more bases – although they were sure some still remained active. As the Rikti had hoped, after a period of peace, the humans gave up the hunt and turned to the much more pressing job of repairing all the damage that the war had wrought. The Earth had never seen such devastation. It was estimated that there were currently close to 1 Billion people made homeless as a result of the war. Few major cities had power, water, or much of an economy to speak of. The whole world had to pull together to find a way out of these dire straits.

Desperate Times

The Rikti Invasion force had included not just soldiers from the Lineage of War, but also scientists, researchers, intelligence agents, and support personnel drawn from a wide spectrum of Rikti society. This turned out to be a lucky thing indeed, since the over-specialization of the Lineages meant that most Rikti knew very little about disciplines beyond their own area of expertise. Having scientists trapped on Earth ultimately saved the stranded Rikti from utter annihilation.

Once it became clear that there was nothing they could do to reestablish contact with the home dimension, the Rikti concentrated their efforts on fortifying their remaining secret bases and securing the supplies they needed to survive. Since they were biologically still mostly human (despite outward appearances), they could survive well enough on human food. When it came to more advanced items, like parts for weapons or teleporters, they were in real trouble. Although sturdily built and reliable, eventually they would need new pieces for their equipment. A certain amount of repairs, short cuts, and jury-rigging would help see them through for six months or a year, but these were complex devices that required factory made, machine parts.

A forward thinking scientist from the Lineage of Engineers devised a rather extreme plan to meet their needs. Already the humans were reverse engineering captured Rikti technology and building their own force field generators. Intelligence sources also estimated that the humans would have their own working teleportation matrix within the year, possibly sooner. The scientist identified a set of fifty or so core pieces of technology that the stranded Rikti couldn't manufacture themselves. If they could get access to these parts, the Rikti could do the rest on their own. Since the humans already possessed much of the knowledge necessary to make the devices and would soon figure out the rest, why not point them in the right direction a little sooner.

While many argued that giving the humans technology was dangerous and would have terrible long term consequence, the supporters pointed out that the humans were smart enough to figure all of this out on their own. They certainly had more than enough captured technology to work from. Better to control the flow of knowledge and direct it in a manner that could help the Rikti. Without those parts, the force fields, teleporters, and energy weapons that the Rikti depended on to survive would soon fail them. And so a bold and admittedly bizarre plan began to form.

The Rikti needed to leak detailed schematics to private corporations who would quickly develop them and introduce them into the market as quickly as possible. In government hands the technology might be held in secret for months or, more likely, years, and the Rikti would gain no benefit. But in private hands there would be pressure to bring products to market, especially if the Rikti gave different pieces of technology to different corporations. The competitive capitalist environment would ensure a quick turn around time on the parts the Rikti needed.

There was also a very good long-term reason for developing ties with human corporations. The Rikti had pretty much exhausted their own resources when it came to figuring out why they couldn't travel back home anymore. Odds were, that since it was the humans who seemed to have closed the doorway, they probably had a good idea about how to open it up again. Since a great deal of the innovation and cutting edge science on Earth came from the private sector, establishing inroads with prominent tech companies might help them uncover the truth about what had happened.

But for either of these goals to be realized, the Rikti needed to find a way to safely and secretly interact directly with the humans. Throughout the war they had run passive tests on human captives, scanning their brains and attaching artificial telepathy devices to help in communication. While these processes had worked for interrogating POW's, they would not serve the Rikti purposes in their newest endeavor. The biological manipulations that every Rikti went through from birth to maturity warped their vocal cords. Even if the Rikti soldiers knew the Earth languages, they didn't have the physical equipment needed to speak.

Desperate times call for desperate measures. The Lineage of War had made some preliminary studies on how to reverse biomorph a Rikti, transforming him or her back into a human phenotype. The original plan had been to use such morphs as spies and forward observers, but it was decided that the psychological impact on the soldier would far outweigh the usefulness of having such undercover operatives. More simple put, in the minds of the Rikti, it was just too horrible a thing to ask of anyone. Well, now that matters had grown much more desperate, the standard for what might be too horrible to contemplate had also changed.

The Rikti only had a few dozen working biomorph chambers, all of which had been outfitted for medical purposes. Biomorph technology can heal a wound hundreds of times faster than conventional surgery. It proved difficult to modify and reprogram the machine to actually change Rikti morphology back to that of Earth's humans. Several of the early experiments failed miserably, causing death or insanity. But finally the project proved successful, or at least successful enough to make Rikti-humans that could pass as human under casual inspection.

They Are Among Us

The second step of the process proved much easier – learning the language. The Rikti had several working telepathy-based teaching systems they had brought along to help train soldiers on new technologies, tactics, and weapons. English and a half dozen other human languages had already been programmed into the machines before the war, based on pre-invasion intelligence work. It took only a few weeks to give the newly transformed spies perfect American accents. The harder part proved getting used to talking at all, which still seemed very clumsy and inefficient to the Rikti. Indeed, although over a hundred Rikti spies underwent the transformation into “humans,” only nine of that first class proved proficient enough at verbal communication to go out on the streets and interact with humans without raising suspicions. The rest underwent months of learning and speech therapy before they were ready.

Meanwhile, the first wave of infiltrators headed out into a world that had, until recently, been one giant war zone. The Rikti Demi-Gods of Intelligence had come up with a relatively ingenious plan. The U.S. government had already begun to put restrictions on Rikti technology – only licensed government approved research problems were allowed and all items had to go through government inspectors before being passed on to private research firms. Not surprisingly, there were a number of companies that did not relish these restrictions. As far as they were concerned, the bounty of alien technology was worth billions or even trillions of dollars in patents and products. Every missed opportunity or delayed research could cost a fortune in profits.

The Rikti infiltrators posed as scavengers, men and women who searched the ruins and war zones for Rikti devices and brought them directly to interested companies, bypassing the government inspectors. Of course the Department of Homeland Security had personnel assigned to stop exactly this type of behavior, but it was easy for the Rikti to use their teleportation technology and other assets to avoid the inspectors. The beauty of this plan was that the kind of companies that would buy illegally obtained Rikti technology were probably the same kinds of companies that would make other illegal and secret deals that the Rikti had planned.

Not surprisingly, Crey Industries and a number of its subsidiaries and partners were more than happy to deal with these “scavengers.” The Rikti ended up learning quite a bit about how to circumvent government regulations and inspectors. Within just a few weeks they had found nine different buyers for their “finds” (four of which were Crey owned or controlled). The Engineers had come up with a number of different innovative techniques for passing on the information they wanted to have the humans understand. Each company received a set of technology samples that at first seemed largely unrelated, but when puzzled together revealed greater truths and more fundamental technological principles and designs.

The Rikti’s main goal learning more about what had happened to the connection with their home dimension also met with success. One of the companies they sold technology to was the newly reconstituted Portal Corp Revival Group, a company that had been benefiting greatly from reverse engineering Rikti teleportation devices. The Rikti sold them several key pieces that helped them unlock the secrets of fast, safe, and energy efficient teleportation. In return, the Rikti not only had access to the specs and details of the new emergency transport teleport system, they also managed to get copies of the company’s top secret report on the inability to travel between Earth and the Rikti home dimension.

When they discovered that the humans were apparently as clueless as they were as to how and why access to the dimension had been cut off, there was a wave of anxiety. Their hope of finding the human key to returning home now seemed a fool’s quest. There would be no going home anytime soon. The Rikti were going to have fight their war on their own, although this seemed like a decidedly losing proposition.

Lost and Found

Now that it was clear that they were on their own for the foreseeable future, the Rikti had to reevaluate all of their plans. Obviously the infiltration had been more forward looking than they imagined, since they would have to be living off the humans for a long, long time. Less well thought out was the technology sharing program. The Demi-Gods of War had justified the decision by pointing out that once contact with the home world was reestablished, the war could begin again in earnest. After all, the Rikti had been decisively winning the war. Another six months and humanity would have been lost forever. Now however, it looked like the humans would have an indefinite amount of time to rebuild their defenses, only now they could use Rikti based technology to make them even stronger.

Obviously the only morally defensible decision was for the Rikti on Earth to do everything in their power to retard or reverse humanity’s progress. That meant fighting a guerilla war, something they had little experience with. They did however know that in any martial endeavor, the learning curve can be very steep, and its best not to pay the price with the lives of your own men if you can help it. Thus the Rikti looked way back into their own history for their inspiration on how to best fight the humans. The answer was of course, other humans.

Like the ancient Progenitors of old, the Rikti started kidnapping humans or using POW’s to experiment on. They wanted to transform them into soldiers for the Rikti cause, but it quickly became clear that this was not a tenable long-term solution. They only had a dozen or so working biomorph chambers left, and those were being used overtime to turn Rikti soldiers into human-looking infiltrators. They needed a much easier to use method of recruiting humans to their cause. The biggest obstacle being that they were Rikti, probably the most hated and feared beings in the history of humanity. It seemed unlikely that many humans would knowingly ally themselves with the alien agenda.

One of the members of the Lineage of Biology who had been attached to the medics corps had noticed that the very hazardous byproduct from the biomorph chambers retained some of its soma-mutagenic properties. Normally the biomorph runoff was stored in sealed containers and then rendered inert through a long and relatively costly process. Centuries ago, when the biomorphing process had just begun, the Rikti had failed to take adequate precautions with the biomorphic waste, causing one of the biggest environmental disasters in their history. Ever since then, the substance had been viewed as too dangerous to deal with in any way but safe storage and long-term neutralization.

But this one visionary technician decided to break that trend and see if he could find some use for the material. After all, these were desperate times and they needed any edge they could get. Furthermore, they didn't have the equipment or facilities to properly deal with the waste material. They had to do something with it – although the general consensus was to just let it loose on Earth and cause what damage it might. After a series of simple tests, the technician discovered that, when properly applied, the biomorphic waste could still modify a living subject. Moreover, it retained some of the programming and patterns that it had originally held in the biomorph chamber. In other words, it had the capacity to remember a certain form and gradually morph subject to that form with prolonged exposure. Now of course the down side was that, unlike the bio morphing chambers, the waste product also caused severe genetic damage, rendering subjects infertile and decreasing their lifespan by decades. But since humans, not Rikti, were the targets, this hardly seemed a significant drawback.

As a new generation of heroes stepped to the forefront to help rebuild the shattered Earth, the Rikti noticed that more and more normal humans were seeking something – anything to catapult them into the ranks of the elite. At the same time the economy had collapsed into ruin, leaving millions unemployed and homeless. Paragon City was clogged with hopeless humans looking for some glimmer of hope in their otherwise desperate lives. Already various villain groups were taking advantage of the weakness and despair, recruiting volunteers into their criminal cabals. The Rikti, never slow to take advantage of an opportunity, decided to do the same, only they would do it indirectly, through the help of the biomorphic waste ooze.

Rikti agents began to release quantities of the ooze into various underground and back-alley locales frequented by the homeless. They also seeded scraps of food, drinking water supplies, and even cheap liquor and moonshine with the substance. Only a very few select locations got this treatment. The plan was to keep exposure small at first, just enough so that word would spread of special areas where miracles happened to those who came there, but not enough to attract the attention of the authorities.

The Rikti had modified the biomorphic ooze so that it heightened strength and physique first and then made more dramatic physical changes. Exposure was also chemically addictive, giving anyone who came in contact a mild euphoria and a desire for more.

The changes took less than a month to start showing up within the homeless population. This first group was stronger and faster and smarter than anyone else. Not only could they protect themselves from thugs and villains, they could actually exert their own will on the world as well – taking what they needed or wanted rather than begging for it. Word spread, and more and more people began to flock to the mysterious sources of these miraculous transformations.

And then the sources dried up. The changed began to go through withdraw. It was only then that the first of The Lost stepped forward to provide them with more of what they craved. The original Lost were Rikti agents transformed into powerful, muscular, yet almost monstrous men. They claimed to have been normal homeless humans who found the true source of the miracles. Now they controlled it, but we freely allow access to the Source to any and all that wanted it. The Rikti had prepared a series of underground tunnels connected to the sewer networks where "The Source" would be available to human addicts. It didn't take long for the humans to come running.

Instead of small quantities of otherwise invisible waste ooze that they had previously exposed the humans to, here in their Source Chamber, the Rikti gave the homeless addicts pure biomorphic ooze to consume, dramatically increasing both the speed of the changes and the power of the addictions. Once someone had partaken of the ooze they would never look back – they belonged to the Lost now. The longer they consumed the substance, the more powerful they would become. The more powerful they became, the more the biomorphic waste twisted their bodies into monstrous forms.

The Scavenger Races

The Rikti's new army of human monsters grew quickly, and it didn't take long before they started putting them into action. The Rikti controlled The Lost from afar. Only a few transformed Rikti still masqueraded as the leaders of the growing drug cult, but even they began to recede into the background as the first addicts became fully transformed creatures – vaguely Rikti looking things – they took over leadership positions within the group. The original founders (the Rikti) became like gods, the benevolent Source of the transforming ooze who seldom asked much beyond an occasional assault on a specific location or the theft of a particular item.

The Rikti had developed a simple but powerful ideology for the Lost to follow. The Source was allegedly the Earth itself, offering up a miraculous substance that was meant to help cleanse the world of all the pain, suffering, and evil. Those who partook of the Source became the chosen warriors of the Earth, sent by God to overturn the old order – to raise up the meek and throw down the proud. Basically, it was every homeless person and downtrodden individual's dream. Take the power from those that have it and give it to those that don't. This simple philosophy resonated deeply with the Source addled brains of the Lost. They literally ate it up, and in the process became soldiers devoted to a cause.

The first duty of the Lost is always to expand its own numbers. Every human that becomes Lost is one Rikti have to worry about fighting. Now granted, only a small percentage of the population is going to want to crawl down into a cave and eat glowing mutagenic slime just to get superpowers, but the Rikti want the Lost to make sure they do get everyone who falls into that category. Second of all, the Lost are meant to be a force for terror and confusion in the world. The Rikti want them to make people feel unsafe, to divert heroes, police, and military away from other matters. Thus the Lost are encouraged to attack and steal anything and everything they might desire. There is no obvious pattern to the Lost's strikes, other than the fact that they seldom attack hardened targets head on. The Rikti encourage the Lost to be careful and not wasteful with their lives. The longer they live, the more damage they can cause over time.

And of course the third duty is to serve as a cover for the Rikti's other activities. Whenever the Rikti want something done that can't possibly be traced back to them, they use plan to use the Lost. This especially true when it comes to gathering materials, technology, and research subjects for their various experiments and undertakings. Indeed, although Rikti agents buy some of the technology they need from companies they do business with, they also send the Lost to steal almost as much. Their knowledge of the sewers makes it easy for the Lost to move about the city undetected while their seemingly random choice of targets for theft disguises any significance that law enforcement or heroes might attach to the theft.

The success of the Lost program gave the Rikti another idea. While humans homeless were certainly a very obvious sign of the city's decayed state, there were other wandering beings out there as well – particularly packs of feral dogs that had been separated from their owners during the war. Many of the early experiments with the biomorphic waste had been performed on these animals. The results had been quite fascinating, and resulted in the creation of ferocious, monkey-like creatures that hunted based on scent and sound. The creatures were almost impossible to control, and so at first the Rikti saw little value in making more of them once they'd perfected the Lost formula.

One interesting anomaly was that the dog-things bred true. They would mate and produce more such creatures and they did so at a remarkably fast rate. Once the Lost started to show real signs of success in their various endeavors, the Rikti decided to revisit the animal program. While these mutated beasts couldn't be controlled, it occurred to the Rikti that there were plenty of places in the city where they didn't want anyone to have control. They could simply release hordes of these vicious beasts into the city and add to the chaos. Yet one more distraction to keep the humans from focusing on what was important.

A few modifications to the formula perfected the scavenger beasts. The Rikti also implanted a simple device that shocked the scavengers whenever they tried to attack a Rikti. The beasts quickly learned who to stay away from, and soon enough everyone and everything else was fair game. The creatures were released into the wilds of Paragon City and they continue to plague residents to this day.

With both the Lost and the Scavengers operating effectively, the Rikti bio-techs have recently decided to see if they can find other uses for the biomorphic waste ooze. Indeed, they have actually had to find ways to produce extra waste material beyond what would emanate from normal use of their existing body morphing chambers because they have so much demand for it. Plans are currently in development to create an airborne or water borne version of the ooze that could be used to dose large swaths of the city at once.

Spare Parts

Meanwhile, as their biological machinations unfolded, the Rikti's plans for leaking technology to compliant human corporations were also succeeding better than anticipated. The companies all rushed the Rikti-based products into production, creating a sudden influx of power sources, computer processors, communications equipment, energy arrays, and high-strength ceramics that are all crucial elements of Rikti technology. The Rikti front companies that supplied the original technology had shares in the patents, providing the aliens with a source of income with which they could legitimately purchase the equipment and parts they needed to renew their war effort.

First and foremost, the Rikti set about reestablishing their own manufacturing base. Rikti factories are complicated, delicate systems, but when all the parts are in place they work with amazing efficiency. The factories are also very adaptable, capable of being switched over easily for the production of a wide variety of different products, from weapons and battle armor to medical equipment and teleportation gear. Once just a few secret factories were up and running, the Rikti soon had the ability to manufacture everything they needed, as long as the flow of raw materials and specialized parts kept coming from the humans.

With their confidence returning, the Rikti decided it was time to once again go on the offensive. For a long while they had remained hidden, fearful of being found out while their resources were so depleted. Now it was time to take the fight back to the humans and to wage a guerilla war that would terrify the whole world once again. The Lost had been the first wave of that attack, but they were crude weapons – a cudgel. Now the Rikti needed an army that was more precise.

Rather than risking large numbers of Rikti soldiers in battle, the aliens began to manufacture robotic drones to act as front line troops. Drones had previously played a role as spies and intelligence gathering devices, but had only limited use in actual combat situations. On the Rikti home world, robots performed a number of simple functions, particularly in manufacturing, resource gathering, and food production, but the Lineage of War had always resisted relying on them for combat purposes. Once again, the dire straits of the Earth-bound Rikti caused a shift from tradition, and as soon as the factories were up and running, they began producing military grade drones.

The first model, and by far the most common, were simply a modification on the standard intelligence gathering drones. Capable of flight, these ovoid drones were equipped with powerful camera lenses and electronic eavesdropping equipment as well as energy weapons. More than one human observer has noted that the drones look like satellites, which is in truth not far from the truth. The original drones were sent up into orbit around the planet, their lenses being more than strong enough to spy on activity on the ground. It is only in recent months that the Earth's heroes have finally cleared the skies of these prying alien eyes. The Rikti simply adapted to original pattern, adding weaponry to make them formidable foes in their own right.

The primary goal of these drones originally was to engage the enemy directly and learn as much as they could about them. In effect, the drones were sent out on "suicide" missions to do battle with any heroes they could find. They of course recorded and scanned the heroes in detail, transmitting the data back to the Rikti in real time. If the drones managed to kill a hero, all the better, but even if the heroes won, the true purpose of the drones was still fulfilled.

In the course of about three weeks, the Rikti flooded the skies above Paragon City with the drones. Each drone would then identify a hero and move to engage its target. Other drones made sure not to attack the same target, but rather fanned out and looked for other options. From the heroes' viewpoint, suddenly it seemed as if the skies were alive with malevolent robots. No one could even be sure where they came from at first, although scientists eventually identified them as being of Rikti design. This was the first large scale Rikti resurgence in some time, and it got everyone on the planet more than a little worried. But then, just as suddenly as they had started, they stopped – or almost stopped.

The Rikti continued to send out occasional flights of drones either to harass specific heroes or to gather intelligence about a certain subject. But the huge waves of attacks stopped after the drones stopped returning new results. The Rikti had managed to get video and detailed scans of roughly 95% of the heroes then active in Paragon City, along with police and military resources active in the city. This provided them with an extensive and detailed database about their foes, allowing them to plan their coming offensive much more effectively. Once they'd identified the heroes they saw as the greatest threats, they sent much smaller spy drones, like the ones used before the war, to follow potential targets, learning their routines and even their secret identities. The Rikti planned to use this knowledge to launch a series of pinpoint strikes when their enemies were at their most vulnerable.

Meanwhile, the Rikti engineers continued to work on more advanced and tougher combat drones. They came up with a variety of different designs, field-testing all of them against weaker and less well known heroes. Only a few of the designs proved effective, but the Rikti have since gone into production on these new model killing machines and hope to see them in action and in force very soon.

7.15.2 Goals

The Rikti have a huge number of goals, all of which are steps towards their two great objectives: get home or remake Earth in their own image. They fully realize that both projects could take lifetimes to accomplish and are more than willing to put in whatever time it takes. The strategists have broken their overall scheme down into a number of individual goals, each of which represents a different front in the war against humanity.

Contact with Home

With all the conventional means of returning home exhausted, the Rikti have still not quite given up hope that they might some day find a way back to their native dimension. One of the first things they discovered when they started looking for methods to re-open the portals was that only their world seemed off-limits. They could still travel to other dimensions, although none of them had Rikti living on them as far as they could tell. Portal exploration is a dangerous, time consuming business, and it is only recently that the Rikti have felt comfortable expending time and resources on it. They have begun to send explorers (mostly drones) to other dimensions, hoping to find one either close to their own home or at least one that still has access to the Rikti home world. Although finding such a shortcut around the spell that cuts Rikti Earth off from the rest of the multiverse will prove impossible, the Rikti might well find some new allies in their ongoing war against humanity.

As part of their exploration effort, the Rikti have taken a serious interest in both the history of Portal Corp and any new efforts on the part of humanity to once again start visiting other dimensions. With their influence over the spread of Rikti-based technology into human hands, they want to make sure they have a stake or at least a spy in every laboratory that's doing extra-dimensional research. If anyone, anywhere learns something that might help the Rikti get home, they want to know about it.

Finally, the Rikti believe that they have one other, very wild hope for winning the war. It's a long shot, but one worth pursuing. It is not known precisely why the Progenitors never came to Earth in this reality, but the Rikti have managed to establish that other Progenitor ships did reach other worlds. Just like the other Progenitor worlds back in the Rikti dimension, the Progenitors in our universe have broadcast signals out into space alerting the other space arks of their locations. The broadcasts currently reaching Earth are between 800 and 1500 years old, depending on their point of origin, but they prove that the Progenitors are indeed out there.

The Rikti hope to find some way to breach the communication gap – to sidestep the speed limit on interstellar communication. They've already leaked what relevant information they have to their unwitting human allies in the technology fields. If they can find some way to transmit plans, frequencies, and settings for a teleportation set-up on another Progenitor world, then they can establish a link between the two star systems. The assumption is that any Progenitor created world would come down on the side of the Rikti in a war against humanity. Whether or not this is true remains to be seen.

Guerilla War

The ongoing guerilla war is just about to enter stage two. Since the end of the initial invasion and the closing of the portals, the Rikti have kept a low profile. Now that they've had a chance to rebuild their weapons caches and drones, they're ready to start attacking on a regular basis once again. If contacting other worlds and finding a way home are long term goals, the guerilla war is a short term endeavor. The war is being fought under the assumption that it will be possible to reestablish contact with the home world sometime in the next few years. If that's the case, the Rikti want the humans to be as weak and unprepared as possible when the second invasion force comes through the portals.

The first order of business is to kill or incapacitate as many heroes as possible without taking heavy casualties. The drone reconnaissance missions laid the groundwork for this effort. Now that the Rikti have detailed files about most of the world's heroes, they can properly plan for their attacks. The Rikti soldiers themselves try to avoid open fights in the streets – they leave such things to the drones, the scavengers, and the Lost. Instead they prefer to set up complex and clever ambushes or assassinate their targets from afar. They try to strike at heroes when they are most vulnerable and when the Rikti can attack from a position of overwhelming strength. The increasing numbers of heroes active in Rikti contested cities makes their job harder and harder, but the heroes were the key to Earth's first victory, so the Rikti plan to do everything they can to eliminate humanity's most powerful weapon.

Of course heroes alone are not the only part of humanity's defense. Indeed, with the rapid growth in weapons technology that resulted from the study of captured Rikti equipment, the conventional soldiers will soon be better equipped than ever. If the trend continues, it will only be a matter of time before human soldiers are a match for the Rikti, at least in terms of firepower. Obviously this would be a disaster for the Rikti war effort, since they owe much of their initial success to their overwhelming technological superiority. Therefore, the Rikti continue to make deadly attacks against military targets, particularly weapons development and training facilities. They are actually having some success as well. More and more, people and governments are coming to rely on their super powered heroes rather than their military for protection. Recruitment is down and in the economic disaster following the war, the defense budget was cut just like everything else.

The second most important target is the Earth's defense infrastructure. From the Rikti point of view, one of the most frustrating aspects of losing the first invasion was that their advanced force field technology fell into the hands of the humans. Paragon City is home to a particularly infuriating use of the technology – the force field walls that divide the city into neighborhoods and secure areas make it difficult for the Rikti to move with ease. The force fields do interfere with Rikti teleportation matrices, forcing the Rikti to travel underground when they want to move between regions. Therefore the Rikti plan to do everything they can to destroy the force field network in Paragon City and other major metropolitan areas.

Of course the human's own teleportation network is another source of consternation. Casualty rates amongst heroes have declined dramatically since the emergency medical transport system was put into place. Thus far most of the Rikti's efforts to jam or disable the teleportation network have been unsuccessful, but it remains a high priority for them. Thus hospitals and other emergency medical institutions are new favorite targets for the Rikti soldiers, a chance for them to often kill two birds with one stone – striking a hero while he's weak and disrupting the infrastructure that helps make him better.

The fact that the Rikti are themselves somewhat responsible for helping the humans learn the ins and outs of their technology is not lost on them. The humans provide valuable resources for the Rikti, although the aliens often need more than they can afford or are willing to buy with the money earned from their secretly held patents. Therefore, a large portion of the guerilla war's focus remains squarely on stealing manufactured parts and raw materials for their own factories. Their ultimate goal is to siphon off as much of the production of parts as they possibly can while still leaving the human companies with enough money to stay in business and keep producing more.

Finally, there is the infiltration aspect of the guerilla war. The Rikti continue to body-morph more and more of their soldiers to look like humans. Although this puts them under severe emotional and physical stress, their value as undercover assets more than makes up for the costs. It was only very recently that human authorities discovered that the Rikti could make themselves look human, a revelation that incited a wave of panic throughout human society. Now that the humans realized that the Rikti could be anywhere among them, there was nowhere on Earth that felt safe.

At first the Rikti were quite upset when their secret was revealed. The ability to act human without any possible suspicions being aroused had allowed them to carry out their technology leaking scheme with relative ease. Now everyone is suspicious. The Rikti have decided to use the paranoid zeitgeist to their advantage, making lemons out of lemonade if you will. Human impersonators have now become very adept at shifting suspicion onto completely innocent people. A whole cadre of infiltrators now focuses exclusively on framing normal people as Rikti spies or impersonators. The object is to drive the planet into a frenzy of fear that effectively paralyzes the people with paranoia.

The cadre's operations range from relatively simple things like planting Rikti made communicators and simple weapons in people's homes and then calling the police to much more elaborate ruse's. Recently the Department of Homeland Security has developed a complicated and expensive testing process that can detect whether or not a subject has ever been modified by Rikti body-morphing technology. In response to this test, the Rikti have taken to kidnapping innocents, rendering them unconscious and then altering their bodies in subtle ways – not enough for even the person to notice, but enough to render a false positive on the government test. The poor victim goes to sleep a human and wakes up a "Rikti," and doesn't even realize what's been done to him. At the same time, the Rikti themselves are already well on their way to developing a body morphing process that the test won't be able to detect.

Other infiltrators have more traditional duties. The Rikti have gone to great lengths to get their agents into government, military, and law enforcement agencies. Since the war devastated all of these groups, there has been a great deal of new personnel hired in the last six months. With records destroyed and identities lost during the invasion, performing an accurate background check is very difficult. The Rikti infiltrators use all these loopholes to their advantage and have managed to get close to 100 agents set up in various sensitive government positions. For now they are deep sleeper spies, not even passing on intelligence on a regular basis unless it's particularly vital. When the time comes, they will be ready to strike – probably crippling their various employers in the process.

But of all the Rikti imposters, the most devious and dangerous are the false heroes. The Rikti have always seen the god-like super powered heroes as their most dangerous foe. Unlike the military or police, the heroes don't have any central command system for the Rikti to infiltrate. Instead heroes work through a network of friendships, acquaintances, and contacts. Penetrating that network has proven a significant challenge, but not an insuperable one. There are currently seven false heroes working in Paragon City right now. Three of them have earned quite a bit of renown as agents of Hero Corps, while the rest are freelance agents and heroes who have developed substantial webs of contacts. All of the Rikti false heroes appear totally human and use technology as the source of their powers. This allows them to both blend in and be easily replaced by another body-morphed Rikti should some tragedy befall them.

Swelling the Ranks

The Lost represent the largest growing aspect of the Rikti offensive, even more so than the ever-increasing drone arsenal. The Rikti want to push recruiting even more, expanding the ranks of the Lost beyond just the homeless and hopeless to anyone and everyone they can get their hands on. While there are various initiatives aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the humans (see below), the fact remains that the easiest way to turn a human from an enemy to an ally is to turn him into a Rikti. Thus, the Lost and their Rikti masters are both in the process of testing new ways to deliver the biomorphic ooze to larger numbers of humans, especially military and police personnel as well as heroes.

The most obvious method has proven the most successful – the Lost have begun to package the ooze in syringes or vials and sell them as street drugs. The ooze's effects aren't nearly as euphoric as some of the hard street drugs, but they make up for this lack of false joy with a good dose of increased strength and toughness. The drug, known on the streets as ooze, is becoming more and more popular, especially among gang members. The Tsou have already forbidden their members to use the drug, or even to sell it. Ooze is just beginning to have its transformative effects on the early-adopters. The Lost watch their customers closely, and as soon as they begin to exhibit signs of monsterism, they snatch the poor addict off the street and bring him into the Lost's ranks. Now the monster-addict has a home and a never ending supply of his new drug of choice. It really is the perfect strategy.

Right now the Rikti can't manufacture enough of the substance to make a large impact on the illicit drug market, and so they've begun to look for human partners in their endeavor even as they ramp up their own production facilities. A weakened variant of the ooze formula has been given to a less than above-board pharmaceutical company called IJP Inc. IJP specializes in sports related drugs, particularly various kinds of steroids. The modified ooze represents the best new strength-building drug to come along in quite some time and is not detectable by current drug tests. As a result it has become quite popular amongst amateur and professional athletes. The reduced dosage means that it will take longer for the drug's body morphing properties to manifest themselves, which is just as the Rikti planned. In a year there will be tens of thousands more addicts across the United States, none of whom know that they are turning into monsters. By the time they do it will be too late – their addiction will be full blown and the only refuge they'll be able to find is in the arms of the Lost.

Hearts and Minds

The Rikti know that as long as the human will to fight remains strong, they will always have an uphill battle. Of course, popular opinion could not be more against the Rikti and their cause. After all, the invaders nearly destroyed all of modern civilization with their attack. Nevertheless, the Rikti hope to, over time, win some support from the human population. Already with the Lost they are bringing humans to their cause, albeit through trickery and addiction. But there are also more subtle methods in play. For instance, music has begun to play an unexpectedly important role in the battle for human hearts and minds.

In their home world, the Rikti prison system uses a sound based therapy combined with telepathic projections to calm and reform prisoners. The sound pattern is keyed to certain base instincts and brain functions and ends up having an effect not dissimilar to a mild narcotic. This aural bombardment results in serene, easily influenced prisoners who become much more susceptible to rehabilitation. When the Rikti started taking prisoners during the war, they decided to use the same process to pacify the humans. While they could not transmit the telepathic messages, the sound therapy did have a pacifying effect.

After the war, several recordings of this sound regimen made by prisoners got released on the Internet. The sounds soon got mixed into dance tracks by various cutting edge DJ's and have since become a popular form of music in their own right. The euphoric effects remain intact, making the music actually addictive to those who listen to it. Through pure chance, one of the Rikti infiltrators heard the music playing on a subway passenger's headphones and recognized it for what it was. She reported the finding and soon Rikti researchers had a complete picture of what was going on. A sizable group of human youths were becoming addicted to Rikti prison music.

The Rikti have not been slow to capitalize on this hot new trend. They have been doing everything they can to fuel the fever for music with a Rikti beat. Their researchers have been experimenting with other tonal arrangements and then releasing them as bootleg recording over the Internet. The plan is to create a whole range of emotional and psychological triggers – music that inspires happiness or sadness, panic or calm. In and of itself it's a relatively weak lever with which to manipulate the humans, but the Rikti plan to combine it with other strategies for greater results – such as swaying elections, paving the way for other hearts and minds operations, and so on.

Musical mind control is but one aspect of Rikti technology that has begun to have a profound effect on human society. There is also a widespread craving to own and use Rikti technology. Although there have been several laws passed that require that any and all Rikti artifacts be turned over to the authorities, there is still a great amount of social cache attached to owning your own piece of the alien invasion. Indeed, there are numerous informal clubs and secret gatherings devoted to finding and swapping Rikti devices. One might think that most of the items would have been snatched up by now, and indeed that's true – at least as far as actual items lost by the Rikti during the war. Now it is the Rikti themselves who are keeping the black-market awash with new product.

The Rikti have begun to manufacture and release large numbers of small, relatively harmless items into the black-market through their infiltrators. Just as they seeded the high-tech companies with samples of their basic technology, now they're giving finished goods to collectors who will take them home and hide them away. Some of the more common items include nano-edged knives that cut through steel, life-sign scanners that detect all the biomass within 50 feet, listening devices for spying on your neighbors, signal jammers that keep your neighbors from listening in on you, small hand guns that can stun a human at 100 yards, and so on. They're also releasing some rarer and more powerful weapons and equipment as well.

The income gained from these sales is a purely secondary benefit. In fact, all of these items have secret tracking devices and hidden explosives built into them. Many also include monitoring equipment that allow the Rikti to see and hear everything going on in the room. Finally, about 1 in 10 of the black-market items contain low frequency broadcasting devices that send out inaudible but very effective mind altering pulses that subtly shift the owner's behavior and psyche. Taken together, the various modifications comprise a phalanx of secret levers that the Rikti are introducing into society at large. It's estimated that as many as 50,000 people in Paragon City alone have at least one Rikti artifact hidden away somewhere. For now the rigged items give the Rikti more eyes in the world of humanity and a way to subtly influence the people. In the event of an all out war, that's roughly 50,000 hidden bombs that can be detonated on command.

The Brotherhood of Our Other Selves

Strangely, one of the most successful movements to win human support for the Rikti didn't come from the aliens at all. Humans have long had a fascination with aliens, and even after a deadly and terrifying war, there were still some who believed that the people of Earth should make friends with the Rikti, not fight them. The largest group of such individuals is the much-maligned Brotherhood of Our Other Selves. The group's original leader, a man named Kevin Simpson, had bounced around the UFO enthusiast scene for two decades, writing various books about aliens from the Pleiades and how they contact us through dreams. Then, during the war, he managed to stumble on a real truth about the Rikti. Really, it was there for anyone to see, but most people couldn't look past the Rikti's appearance to put the pieces together. The Rikti came not from space but from an alternate Earth. Therefore they must be highly evolved humans. Therefore, they were our brothers, not our enemies. The war was just a big misunderstanding.

The fact that Kevin Simpson was absolutely right has been largely lost in the controversy over his flamboyant personality, cult-leader status, and general reputation as a nutcase. Thus few people paid much attention to his wild theories. Even those who knew he was right – top clearance government officials and heroes, refused to give him any recognition or acknowledge his claims. Simpson's new Brotherhood of Our Other Selves languished in relative obscurity with less than 1000 members worldwide. Then, one day a world-class hero named Terrence Jackson, better known as Commander Conqueror, heard Simpson on a call-in radio show. Jackson had served with distinction as a hero for over a dozen years and had fought bravely during the war where he had been severely wounded. No longer in the hero business, Jackson still had plenty of fans and pulled a lot of weight in the world.

The retired hero had already come to many of the same conclusions that Simpson had, although he'd yet to put all of the pieces together. The war had not only crippled him physically, it had also touched him deep down inside. He believed with all his heart that it had been a misunderstanding – that something very wrong had happened to both sides of the conflict. He thought the only way to finally put an end to the conflict was to try and make peace with the Rikti and find out what it was they truly wanted. Simpson's on-air interview hit all the right buttons for Jackson. The next day he tracked Simpson down and joined the Brotherhood of Our Other Selves.

Jackson's alliance with the Brotherhood was international news. Although many derided him for the decision and hundred of thousands quit his fan club and sent hate mail, tens of thousands listened to what he had to say and joined the Brotherhood's ranks. Within a few months it became the leading proponent for peace with the Rikti and launched a series of initiatives to make contact with the aliens. Once it became public knowledge that there were Rikti infiltrators posing as humans, the Brotherhood was thrilled – that meant there must be some way to talk with the aliens. Eventually, they go their wish.

The only problem is, the Rikti don't want peace. Not even a little bit. But they are happy to use these peace-loving activists for their own purposes. Despite the fact that the Brotherhood is correct about the war being the result of a misunderstanding, the Rikti don't believe this fact any more than most humans do. They've all heard the human side of the story – that the Rikti invaded without warning, but the aliens assume this to be propaganda. They know what happened when the heroes attacked their city and they know what needs to be done.

Several Rikti infiltrators have made contact with the Brotherhood, pretending to want to open peace talks. However, the infiltrators refuse to meet with anyone but members of the brotherhood – they claim they just don't trust the human governments. In fact, the Rikti want to keep any unfriendlies at arms length from their infiltrators and so don't want to knowingly expose an operative to hostile forces. The Rikti are slowly but surely leading the Brotherhood on – giving them just enough to go on and continue to build their membership. The more humans who look upon the Rikti with hope and friendship instead of fear and loathing, the better.

The Rikti have begun feeding the Brotherhood talking points and pretty much telling them anything they want to hear while making no promises to stop fighting. Already a good percentage of the Brotherhood has been funneled into The Lost, swelling that group's ranks. At the same time, the Rikti have begun using infiltrators to give money to the Brotherhood's political lobbyists in hopes of influencing government decisions in their favor. While they don't expect the U.S. government to declare an end to hostile relations, they do want the restrictions on ownership of Rikti technology and the listening to Rikti music to be lifted. That way they can get more of their trick technology and mind altering tunes into the public sphere.

The one intriguing thing about the Brotherhood is that they seem as interested in reestablishing contact with the Rikti dimension as the aliens themselves are. The Rikti of course support this endeavor fully, and have given the Brotherhood some key advice and technological support. Although the aliens doubt that the humans will have any more luck than they have, there's no harm in letting others carry on the research. Perhaps the human perspective will catch something the Rikti scientists have missed.

Living Space

Based on the very real possibility that the Rikti are stuck on earth for a long time to come, they have begun to make plans for a prolonged stay. That means, first and foremost, having secure and secret bases of operation where they can retreat and live in relative peace. There are of course very few, if any places above ground that would be suitable for such a base, especially in this day of advance spy satellites and increased states of heightened alert. In a move that, not surprisingly, mirrors the same decisions made by the Body Purists on their home world, the Rikti have taken to building their facilities underground and on the ocean floor.

The underground bases fall into two broad locations – those located near or under population areas and those in the wilderness. The urban bases are the most common and the smallest in terms of square footage. All of these bases are purely military in function and are really more supply depots and staging areas than actual bases of operation. Most of these were built before or during the war, although the Rikti continue to add new bases and modify existing ones. Up until recently, most of the Rikti on Earth lived in facilities like these – cramped and overflowing with machinery and defense systems. Originally they were all linked to the home world by a teleportation network, but since the portals closed they've been cut off from their normal supply bases. Recently, non-combat personnel have finally been able to move out of the urban bases to the newer wilderness facilities.

The wilderness bases are set deep underground far away from any lost cities, subway tunnels, or sewer pipes. There are currently five large and twenty-seven small bases of this type scattered around the globe. One of the large ones is deep beneath the Appalachian mountains, not to many hundred of miles from Paragon City. All research, manufacturing, and medical activity takes place in these isolated bases. The only way to access them is through either teleportation or burrowing through at least two miles of rock. The Rikti even teleport in their air and water supplies, so there is never any link to the outside world. Thus far, no humans have become aware of these bases, which is just how the Rikti want matters to remain. As far as the rest of the world is concerned, all the Rikti on the planet live in their forward deployment facilities beneath the cities.

The wilderness bases serve as refuges for the Rikti, serving not only as manufacturing and research centers, but also as a place for rest and recuperation. They include underground parks with plants and animals from the home world (recreated from DNA samples or by bio-morphing terrestrial life forms), restaurants, and entertainment centers. The Rikti do their best to provide all the comforts of home, although right now the amenities are pretty bare bones. Nevertheless, a furlough to a wilderness base is always appreciated by the front line troops.

The establishment of these secure areas has allowed for the inception of a new, long-term program: breeding. If the Rikti are going to be on Earth for decades (or even forever), then they need to perpetuate their species, or rather, their traditions, because of course at birth they are still human. Although it's hard for humans to tell the difference at first glance (or even on closer inspection), the Rikti do have both male and females on Earth in roughly equal proportions. The Rikti long ago did away with any kind of gender discrimination once bio-morphing made it impossible for anyone to claim that one gender was physically or intellectually superior to another. Males and females serve together in all the 97 Lineages as equals.

Normally procreation during a war violates the credos of the Lineage of War, but as with so many other things, desperate times have called for desperate measures. Now the Demi-Gods are actively encouraging their followers to breed. Once a pregnancy happens, the fetus is removed and brought up in a secure machine environment in one of the large wilderness bases where it is brought to term. After that, the parents do retain parental rights, although most children will be brought up by care facilities while the biological parents perform their duties in the war effort. Thus far there have been several thousand pregnancies, but the program is less than four months old, so there have been no births. The Rikti hope to have as many as 5,000 births within the next year and another 10,000 the year after that. Obviously this is a long term project that will require decades to see benefits, so the bases where these children are being brought up (and morphed from humans into Rikti) must be kept secure and secret at all costs.

The newest initiative is the establishment of underwater bases on the ocean's floor. Only one small base has been built thus far, in the Atlantic Ocean about 500 miles East of Paragon City. It is an exploratory facility that serves as a launching pad for various drones that are searching the sea floor for natural resources and potential allies. There are several civilizations beneath the waves that even the humans don't know about. The Rikti hope to establish diplomatic relations with these other societies and bring them into the war against the humans. They have already begun experimenting with bio-morph procedures to create Rikti capable of living and breathing underwater and a great pressures.

One of the more controversial proposed programs has yet to go into full effect, but it is in the test phase. The Rikti are exploring the idea of creating Infiltrator Communities – entire neighborhoods or small towns composed of nothing but bio-morphed Rikti posing as humans. These communities would allow for more detailed cover stories and provide safe havens for infiltrators and soldiers alike. The controversial aspect of the program is to allow the infiltrators to breed true – to have children and retain their human appearance but bring them up in the Rikti way. This concept flies in the face of every Rikti tradition and has not yet been approved, but some feel that it is the only way to ensure that the Rikti legacy survives, no matter who wins the war.

Magic and Mysticism

The one area where the Rikti remain most blind is the area of magic and religion. Ever since the war with the gods thousands of years ago, the Rikti have eschewed anything that smacked of the supernatural. When they arrived on Earth, they found that the supernatural is everywhere and it can be most deadly. Even though they don't realize what's happened on their home world (if they did, they would fear magic all the more), they got a taste of its power when they accidentally revealed the underground city of Oranbega and thus roused the anger – and armies – of the Circle of Thorns.

As much as the Demi-Gods of War might wish it otherwise, the Rikti realize that they must come to terms with these powerful forces, and so one of their latest initiatives centers around finding out more about magic. The Rikti are not even sure where to begin. Their most logical potential ally, the Circle of Thorns, wants nothing to do with them. After all, it was the Rikti who uncovered their secret city and inadvertently shattered the protective spells that kept it hidden and safe. Every contact between the two groups results in fighting, and the Circle seems capable of even sniffing out the Rikti infiltrators.

Therefore the Rikti have resorted to cruder means – kidnapping magicians and interrogating them for what they want to know. As it turns out, a lot of self proclaimed mystics don't know nearly as much as they pretend to, and don't stand up well to torture and invasive mind control techniques. The Rikti have learned a lot, but most of it is nonsense that contradicts other things they've learned. The few real mystics they've gotten their hands on tend to be less forthcoming and much harder to keep in custody. Still, they have managed to learn a thing or two and their magical knowledge base is slowly expanding.

The Rikti investigators toyed with the idea of dealing with demons, but soon enough figured out that this was a bad idea after just one negative experience with the creatures. The Rikti don't like anything they can't control, and demons and spirits make them very nervous. Thus they're of two minds about a recent proposal by members of the Banished Pantheon. The followers of those malevolent gods would like nothing more than to work with the Rikti. After all, the alien invaders have been the greatest cause of chaos and suffering in human history – the first to really devastate the entire world at once. The Pantheon are pleased to offer the Rikti anything they want, but so far the Demi-God of Diplomacy on Earth remains torn – she doesn't trust the demonic creatures but sees a great opportunity.

Efforts by the Rikti themselves to practice magic on their own have thus far proved not only unsuccessful, but counterproductive. Much as on their own home world where the Body Purists have awoken long-dead gods, a few of the would-be Rikti magician have aroused similar religious feeling within their own hearts. Two of these even went so far as to start worshipping human gods and, although they protested their continued loyalty, were judged unfit for duty. The Demi-God of War ordered their minds completely wiped and rebuilt from scratch in an attempt to scourge the viral meme of religion from Rikti society. Since then direct magical experimentation by Rikti researchers has been strictly off-limits, although a few continue on in secrecy. What will become of their occult investigations remains to be seen.

7.15.3 Behavior Patterns and Culture

7.15.3.1 Culture Shock

Being isolated from their home world and their native culture has had a profound effect upon the Rikti on Earth. All told there are probably 100,000 of the aliens hidden away in various underground bases, and fully three quarters of them are trained soldiers. This last point is particularly important, because it's indicative of a greater truth: of the 97 Lineages that make up Rikti society, only 14 have representatives on Earth. All of these are in the military, medical, or science fields, with no representatives from the arts, culture, philosophy, education, justice, or other non-military Lineages. This lack of diversity has had a profound effect on the stranded soldiers, since all of them are used to having those other parts of society active in their lives. Not only is it a morale problem, but the lack of diversity is actually beginning to change the way the Rikti on Earth think.

All Rikti receive the same basic education, which includes beginner level knowledge of and appreciation for all 97 of the Lineages. They know enough to understand each Lineage's basic tenets and functions and have the core philosophies down. What they lack are the various skills necessary to fully perform the duties of the Lineages. None of them know how to act or play instruments or write legislation or organize an urban renewal plan, but they know what all of those things should look like when they're done properly. The Rikti refer to this level of knowledge as "Evaluatory," meaning that everyone knows what everyone else's job should look like when done right. This ability to evaluate is crucial to Rikti society since it keeps the various Lineages honest – they can't shirk their duties or radically change their responsibilities because everyone will notice that the Lineage isn't doing the job it's supposed to do.

Now the Rikti on Earth are being forced to, in effect, reverse engineer the duties of all the other Lineages. They know what laws are supposed to accomplish, so when they write new codes of conduct for their military personnel operating undercover they have a general sense of what to do. The same goes for composing music or running the business side of their technology trading program with the humans or anything else. The Rikti are finding this shift in thinking a challenge, but certainly not an insuperable one. Indeed, the most amazing thing about the whole issue is that Rikti are beginning, for the first time in millennia, to think outside of their own Lineages. This is almost unprecedented in Rikti culture, but it is an unavoidable consequence of the current situation.

The result is basically a total breakdown of the Lineage system. Because there are so few Rikti and so much to do, everyone has to wear at least three or four different hats. Whoever's best at or most enthusiastic about something is usually the one who ends up doing it. As the Lineages break down, chains of command and areas of responsibility have also become muddled. For instance, there was no one from the Lineage of Manufacturing on Earth when the portals sealed, but manufacturing has become an important part of the current Rikti strategy on Earth. Setting up the new factories fell upon the shoulders of members of the Lineages of Engineering, Physics, and War, all of whom thought that they should be in charge. Ultimately it was someone from War that took command (as is often the case), but in the process he had begun to think of himself not just as a soldier of War but also as a new Demi-God of Manufacturing. He was not the first or last Rikti to see the wide-open situation as an opportunity for personal advancement.

Two factions have formed within the Rikti society. On the one hand there are the so-called Restructurists, who believe that the Lineage system should be entirely abandoned while on Earth and that either a new system developed or the whole undertaking put under the authority of the Lineage of War. Since the majority of Rikti on Earth are soldiers, it should come as no surprise that this is the more populous faction. Then there are the Traditionalists who believe that the Rikti on Earth should try and recreate the system that has worked so well on their own world for countless generations. They want to re-establish all 97 Lineages by transferring members from War into other areas of responsibility.

The Traditionalist program seems needlessly disruptive and over ambitious at first glance. After all, the Rikti are fighting a war, not running a society. But many now believe that they will never be able to return home and that their only hope for peace is to remake this Earth as the Progenitors once remade their own home world. Furthermore, a number of Rikti see great advantage for themselves if they were allowed to be founding members of one of the other Lineages. Once the war is over and the humans conquered, they will be able to become Gods and Demi-Gods in their own rights, an honor few would be able to achieve back home. Even if contact with their native dimension gets reestablished, the war on Earth will continue until victory is complete. When that happens, the Earth will need its own gods too. Either way, the Traditionalists feel that they have much to gain, both personally and as a people, from establishing the Lineages now.

So far, the Restructurists rule the day, but as the war lingers on and time passes, it becomes more and more clear that the Rikti might never be going home. Thus the Traditionalist movement receives more and more support. Already some Rikti have begun training themselves for roles in the different, currently unrepresentative Lineages. The leaders of the faction have begun to form their own Shadow Lineages, unofficial groups that study and train for the day when they will assume their new duties. The Demi-God of War in charge of all affairs on Earth has decided to let these Rikti do as they please – as long as they perform their normal duties as expected. He fears (rightly) that any attempt to crack down on the Traditionalists might cause a severe breach in morale and possibly even split the Rikti on Earth permanently.

7.15.4 Relations With Other Villains

Let's face it, no one likes the Rikti. After all, they nearly destroyed the entire planet, which wouldn't have good for any of the various villainous agendas out there. Even the Banished Pantheon needs fear to feed on. Nemesis himself was surprised at how devastatingly effective the Rikti invasion force was. He lucked out – the invasion was stopped, and even he's not sure why – and his plans continue forward as anticipated, in spite of events, not because of them.

That having been said, there are other villains who work with the Rikti, although many of them don't even realize it. The Rikti know exactly how hated they are, and have gone to great lengths to secure other means of finding and then exploiting new allies. Their human-looking infiltrators are their greatest asset in this effort, and they have used them effectively, even since their existence became public knowledge.

The Rikti allies fall into several categories, the first of which are those that don't realize (or won't even admit to themselves) that they're working with the alien invaders. First among these is Crey Industries, which has benefited more from Rikti technology leaks than any other company. Crey provides many of the manufactured parts the Rikti need to make their weapons, armor, and other equipment and it sells them under the table and in violation of several laws. In return, Crey has made billions upon billions of dollars from Rikti based products and patents. It's fair to say that Rikti technology leaks accounted for at least a third of the company's profits in the last six months. With numbers like that, the Countess is unwilling to look too closely at her new best friends. In return, the Rikti avoid attacking any Crey owned or operated facilities, and even the Lost holds back on fighting Crey. The close economic alliance between the two is too vital for the Rikti to risk disrupting it.

Another unknowing ally is Vahzilok, who has also benefited from Rikti tech leaks. In return he has provided corpses and live bodies that the Rikti use in their biomorphing experiments. Vahzilok has also provided many new members for the Lost. While he knows he's working with the Lost, he has no idea that the Rikti are actually behind the monstrous vagabonds. If he did, he would pull out of the alliance completely, but for now the two groups help each other in the pursuit of their individual goals.

The Banished Pantheon is a willing ally, although one the Rikti don't trust. Luckily, the Pantheon doesn't ask much in return. They want the misery and pain and desperation that the Rikti cause. Therefore, they're happy to do whatever they can to help the invaders fight their war. They are a constant source of information for the Rikti, although sometimes they like to play both sides against the middle. On more than one occasion they've tipped the Rikti off about some choice target and then given the same information to some heroes, ensuring a titanic battle that spills over into the streets and causes chaos. The Rikti don't trust the Pantheon, but often times their information or assistance is too valuable to be ignored.

As he has been from the beginning, Nemesis is still takes a secret role in influencing Rikti affairs. While the aliens are aware of Nemesis and his followers, the two groups rarely clash. The Rikti certainly have no problems or qualms about fighting Nemesis, but the mad genius usually manipulates matters so that it makes more sense for the aliens to avoid a fight rather than seek one out. In the meantime, Nemesis watches the aliens closely. He desperately wants to know why contact with the home world was cut off, but he also wants to know what the Rikti are up to. He plans to keep the fires of war stoked so that the Rikti can eliminate as many heroes and governmental authority figures as possible. Then, at the last moment, he will sweep in and save humanity from the aliens when their heroes could not. At least that's the plan.

The rest of the groups pretty much universally despise the Rikti. The 5th Column thinks they're a huge threat to humanity and pure Aryan living. The Devouring Earth has it on strict authority from Gaia that the Rikti are no good for the planet under any circumstances. The Clockwork King doesn't much care for them, but is honestly too wrapped up in his own delusions to get involved. The Freakshow see them as just another set of potential oppressors, probably worse than the status quo. The Sky Raiders are largely veterans of the war against the Rikti, and their feelings haven't changed. The Circle of Thorns fears them and still hates them for shattering Oranbega's shield. The Tsoo hate them as well, because they're bad for business.

To sum up, the Rikti don't have many friends. They also don't need very many. Even cut off from home, they are the most powerful single force on the planet right now. It is only their own caution and the devotion of a world full of heroes and allied armies that keep them at bay. Like the British of old, the Rikti have no permanent allies, only permanent interests. Their most abiding interest is getting home. Failing that, they will rule this planet and remake it in the image of their own land, just as the Progenitors did.

7.15.5 Villains: The Lost

The Lost are human converts to the Rikti cause. Players learn of this connection through gameplay.

7.15.5.1 Scrounger Brawler

- Rank Minion
- Description Despite their bedraggled appearance, Scroungers are actually very dangerous opponents. As part of The Lost, they are organized much like a street gang or organized crime syndicate, although surprisingly they sometimes have better weapons than more stylishly dressed gang members.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Melee
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	The Lost brawling attacks
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.

7.15.5.2 Scrounger Slicer

- Rank Minion
- Description Despite their bedraggled appearance, Scroungers are actually very dangerous opponents. As part of The Lost, they are organized much like a street gang or organized crime syndicate, although surprisingly they sometimes have better weapons than more stylishly dressed gang members.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Melee
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Knife</i>	Basic stabbing and cutting blade.
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.

7.15.5.3 Scrounger Chopper

- Rank Minion
- Description Despite their bedraggled appearance, Scroungers are actually very dangerous opponents. As part of The Lost, they are organized much like a street gang or organized crime syndicate, although surprisingly they sometimes have better weapons than more stylishly dressed gang members.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Melee
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Fireman_Axe</i>	The Fireman Axe deals medium damage and can decrease a targets defense when it hits.
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.

7.15.5.4 Scrounger Slugger

- Rank Minion
- Description Despite their bedraggled appearance, Scroungers are actually very dangerous opponents. As part of The Lost, they are organized much like a street gang or organized crime syndicate, although surprisingly they sometimes have better weapons than more stylishly dressed gang members.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Melee
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Baseball_Bat</i>	There is nothing like slugging someone in the head with this baseball bat.
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.

7.15.5.5 Scrounger Slammer

- Rank Minion

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- Description Despite their bedraggled appearance, Scroungers are actually very dangerous opponents. As part of The Lost, they are organized much like a street gang or organized crime syndicate, although surprisingly they sometimes have better weapons than more stylishly dressed gang members.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Melee
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Sledgehammer</i>	There is nothing like slugging someone in the head with this baseball bat.
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.

7.15.5.6 Scrounger Buckshot

- Rank Minion
- Description Despite their bedraggled appearance, Scroungers are actually very dangerous opponents. As part of The Lost, they are organized much like a street gang or organized crime syndicate, although surprisingly they sometimes have better weapons than more stylishly dressed gang members.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Ranged
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
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7.15.5.7 Scrounger Gunner

- Rank Minion
- Description Despite their bedraggled appearance, Scroungers are actually very dangerous opponents. As part of The Lost, they are organized much like a street gang or organized crime syndicate, although surprisingly they sometimes have better weapons than more stylishly dressed gang members.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Ranged
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Submachine_Gun</i>	Rapid fire rifle. Can reduce targets defense.
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7.15.5.8 Mutate Brawler

- Rank Minion
- Description After a few months in the service of the Lost, members begin to mutate, becoming distorted, diseased looking men. Although they still fight with human weapons, their mutations give them increased strength and resilience, making them much more dangerous.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Melee
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	The Lost brawling attacks
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<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.
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7.15.5.9 Mutate Slicer

- Rank Minion
- Description After a few months in the service of the Lost, members begin to mutate, becoming distorted, diseased looking men. Although they still fight with human weapons, their mutations give them increased strength and resilience, making them much more dangerous.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Melee
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Knife</i>	Basic stabbing and cutting blade.
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.

7.15.5.10 Mutate Slugger

- Rank Minion
- Description After a few months in the service of the Lost, members begin to mutate, becoming distorted, diseased looking men. Although they still fight with human weapons, their mutations give them increased strength and resilience, making them much more dangerous.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Melee
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Baseball_Bat</i>	There is nothing like slugging someone in the head with this baseball bat.
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.

7.15.5.11 Mutate Slammer

- Rank Minion
- Description After a few months in the service of the Lost, members begin to mutate, becoming distorted, diseased looking men. Although they still fight with human weapons, their mutations give them increased strength and resilience, making them much more dangerous.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Melee
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Sledgehammer</i>	There is nothing like slugging someone in the head with this baseball bat.
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.

7.15.5.12 Mutate Chopper

- Rank Minion
- Description After a few months in the service of the Lost, members begin to mutate, becoming distorted, diseased looking men. Although they still fight with human weapons, their mutations give them increased strength and resilience, making them much more dangerous.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Melee

Cryptic Studios

- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Fireman_Axe</i>	The Fireman Axe deals medium damage and can decrease a targets defense when it hits.
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.

7.15.5.13 Mutate Buckshot

- Rank Minion
- Description After a few months in the service of the Lost, members begin to mutate, becoming distorted, diseased looking men. Although they still fight with human weapons, their mutations give them increased strength and resilience, making them much more dangerous.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Ranged
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
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7.15.5.14 Mutate Gunner

- Rank Minion
- Description After a few months in the service of the Lost, members begin to mutate, becoming distorted, diseased looking men. Although they still fight with human weapons, their mutations give them increased strength and resilience, making them much more dangerous.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Ranged
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Submachine_Gun</i>	Rapid fire rifle. Can reduce targets defense.
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7.15.5.15 Headman Swordsman

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description Mutates are fearsome, dedicated fighters, and their leaders prefer to by in the thick of the fighting. With their mutations more advanced than normal mutates, they are not afraid to charge into hand-to-hand combat with anyone that stands in their path.
- AI Default_Melee
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Rikti_Sword</i>	This Energy Sword is the preferred melee weapon of the Rikti.
<i>Revolver</i>	Small caliber side arm. Not very accurate.

7.15.5.16 Headman Blaster

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description Mutates are fearsome, dedicated fighters, and their leaders prefer to by in the thick of the fighting. With their mutations more advanced than normal mutates, they are not afraid to charge into hand-to-hand combat with anyone that stands in their path.

Cryptic Studios

- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Ranged
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Rikti_Pistol</i>	The Rikti Pistol deal nominal damage, but can Disorient it target.
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7.15.5.17 Headman Rifleman

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description Mutates are fearsome, dedicated fighters, and their leaders prefer to by in the thick of the fighting. With their mutations more advanced than normal mutates, they are not afraid to charge into hand-to-hand combat with anyone that stands in their path.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- AI Default_Ranged
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Rikti_Rifle</i>	The Rikti Rifle takes a while to recharge, but deals a lot of damage and can Knockdown and Disorient foes.
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7.15.5.18Anathema

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description The Anathema are members of the Lost who have undergone substantial mutation - becoming huge, only vaguely human looking creatures. They engage their foes with a combination of their own unnatural brutality and whatever weaponry they can find.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	The Lost brawling attacks
<i>Rikti_Sword</i>	This Energy Sword is the preferred melee weapon of the Rikti.
<i>Telekinetic_blast</i>	Blasts a targeted foe, tossing him like a rag doll.
<i>Psychic_Scream</i>	This howl of psionic energy resonates in the mind of all foes within its conical area of effect.
<i>Will_Domination</i>	This powerful attack is so painful, it usually renders its target unconscious. The victim is asleep, but will awake if disturbed.
<i>Subdue</i>	Subdue deals moderate damage and may leave the targeted foe Immobilized for a brief time. Immobilized foes can not move but can still attack.
<i>Mental_Blast</i>	This basic psionic attack does moderate damage, and can slightly reduce a targets attack speed.
<i>Resistance</i>	Anathema and Pariah are resistant to Sleep, Disorient, Hold, and Knockback.

7.15.5.19Aberrant Rector

- Rank Boss
- Description The leaders of the Anathema have fully developed mutated minds that allow them to project their indomitable will onto others. They can use these powers to immobilize, hypnotize, or even dominate lesser wills. The Rectors are the masters of one on one conversions; their persuasive abilities work best on a single target.

Cryptic Studios

- GroupDescription The Lost
- SpawnLimit 2
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	The Lost brawling attacks
<i>Rikti_Sword</i>	This Energy Sword is the preferred melee weapon of the Rikti.
<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Mental_Blast</i>	This basic psionic attack does moderate damage, and can slightly reduce a targets attack speed.
<i>Dominate</i>	Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
<i>Resistance</i>	Anathema and Pariah are resistant to Sleep, Disorient, Hold, and Knockback.

7.15.5.20Aberrant Eremite

- Rank Boss
- Description The leaders of the Anathema have fully developed mutated minds that allow them to project their indomitable will onto others. They can use these powers to immobilize, hypnotize, or even dominate lesser wills. The Eremites are the preachers of the Lost. Their psychic abilities allow them to entrance crowds of possible converts.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- SpawnLimit 2
- Levels 5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	The Lost brawling attacks
<i>Rikti_Sword</i>	This Energy Sword is the preferred melee weapon of the Rikti.
<i>Mass_Hypnosis</i>	Hypnotizes a group of foes at a distance and puts them to Sleep. The targets will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked. This power deal no damage, but if done discretely, the targets wont even be aware of your presence.
<i>Mental_Blast</i>	This basic psionic attack does moderate damage, and can slightly reduce a targets attack speed.
<i>Total_Domination</i>	Tear at the mind of a group of foes around one targeted foe. Total Domination renders its victims helpless, lost in their own mind and unable to defend themselves
<i>Resistance</i>	Anathema and Pariah are resistant to Sleep, Disorient, Hold, and Knockback.

7.15.5.21Pariah Prelate

- Rank Boss
- Description The ultimate mutated form, the Pariah's no longer bear any resemblance to the humans they once were. They've become true monsters, although it's not their claws you should fear - it's their prodigious psychic powers, which can rend an opponent's mind faster than any claw can tear flesh.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- SpawnLimit 2
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29

Cryptic Studios

- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	The Lost brawling attacks
<i>Rikti_Sword</i>	This Energy Sword is the preferred melee weapon of the Rikti.
<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Mental_Blast</i>	This basic psionic attack does moderate damage, and can slightly reduce a targets attack speed.
<i>Dominate</i>	Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
<i>Resistance</i>	Anathema and Pariah are resistant to Sleep, Disorient, Hold, and Knockback.

7.15.5.22 Pariah Anchorite

- Rank Boss
- Description The ultimate mutated form, the Pariah's no longer bear any resemblance to the humans they once were. They've become true monsters, although it's not their claws you should fear - it's their prodigious psychic powers, which can rend an opponent's mind faster than any claw can tear flesh.
- GroupDescription The Lost
- SpawnLimit 2
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	The Lost brawling attacks
<i>Rikti_Sword</i>	This Energy Sword is the preferred melee weapon of the Rikti.
<i>Mass_Hypnosis</i>	Hypnotizes a group of foes at a distance and puts them to Sleep. The targets will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked. This power deal no damage, but if done discretely, the targets wont even be aware of your presence.
<i>Mental_Blast</i>	This basic psionic attack does moderate damage, and can slightly reduce a targets attack speed.
<i>Total_Domination</i>	Tear at the mind of a group of foes around one targeted foe. Total Domination renders its victims helpless, lost in their own mind and unable to defend themselves
<i>Resistance</i>	Anathema and Pariah are resistant to Sleep, Disorient, Hold, and Knockback.

7.15.6 Villains: The Rikti

The players encounter the Rikti themselves at level 30 and beyond.

7.15.6.1 Monkey

- Rank Small
- Description Also referred to as ruin monkeys, these horrible creatures are created by the Rikti and let loose in the wilder parts of the city to wreak havoc. They rove in packs and pounce with tremendous speed and ferocity and the Rikti seem to have a never ending supply of them.
- AI Default_Melee
- Levels 30, 31, 32, 33 (Rikti Monkey), 34, 35, 36, 37 (Wild Rikti Monkey), 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50 (Vicious Rikti Monkey)

Cryptic Studios

- Powers

<i>Monkey_Jumping</i>	Rikti Monkeys can inherently jump real high and travel very fast.
<i>Gas</i>	When Rikti Monkeys die, their bodies emits a noxious gas that can harm enemies and friends alike.
<i>Monkey_Brawl</i>	Rikti Monkey brawling attacks

7.15.6.2 Drone

- Rank Minion
- Description During the Rikti War these flying Drones swarmed all over the city's skies. Today these machines still sweep through the air with some frequency. Their quick evasive maneuvering and powerful energy cannon make them a constant menace.
- AI Default_Ranged
- Levels 30,31,32,33, (Drone), 34,35,36,37 (Improved Drone), 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50 (Advanced Drone)
- Powers

<i>Drone_Blast</i>	The Rikti Drones Blasts deal a lot of damage and can Knockdown foes.
<i>Fly</i>	Rikti Drones can Fly.
<i>Resistance</i>	The Drones maneuverability make it very hard to hit, and they have good defense to melee and ranged attacks, but they are relatively fragile otherwise. Since they are machines, they are immune to Sleep and Fear powers and are resistant to psionic damage.

7.15.6.3 Headman

- Rank Lieutenant
- Levels 31,32,33,34,35, 36,37,38,39,40
- Powers

<i>Rikti_Sword</i>	This Energy Sword is the preferred melee weapon of the Rikti.
<i>Rikti_Rifle</i>	The Rikti Rifle takes a while to recharge, but deals a lot of damage and can Knockdown and Disorient foes.

7.15.6.4 Infantry

- Rank Minion
- Description The Rikti have come to stand for everything humans hate and fear in the universe. Their seemingly unprovoked invasion of Earth has left much of the planet traumatized and angry. Even out of their battle armor, their high-tech weaponry makes Rikti dangerous opponents.
- Levels 30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39
- Powers

<i>Rikti_Sword</i>	This Energy Sword is the preferred melee weapon of the Rikti.
<i>Rikti_Pistol</i>	The Rikti Pistol deal nominal damage, but can Disorient it target.

7.15.6.5 Conscript

- Rank Minion

Cryptic Studios

- **Description** The Rikti have come to stand for everything humans hate and fear in the universe. Their seemingly unprovoked invasion of Earth has left much of the planet traumatized and angry. Even out of their battle armor, their high-tech weaponry makes Rikti dangerous opponents.
- **Levels** 40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- **Powers**

<i>Rikti_Sword</i>	This Energy Sword is the preferred melee weapon of the Rikti.
<i>Rikti_Rifle</i>	The Rikti Rifle takes a while to recharge, but deals a lot of damage and can Knockdown and Disorient foes.

7.15.6.6 Guardian

- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** The Rikti have come to stand for everything humans hate and fear in the universe. Their seemingly unprovoked invasion of Earth has left much of the planet traumatized and angry. Even out of their battle armor, their high-tech weaponry makes Rikti dangerous opponents.
- **Levels** 30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- **Powers**

<i>Rikti_Pistol</i>	The Rikti Pistol deal nominal damage, but can Disorient it target.
<i>Protection_Shield</i>	The Protection Shield protects others from smashing, lethal, fire, cold, energy and negative energy attacks for a limited time. The magnetic nature of the shield makes attacks less likely to land and affect your ally. Multiple Shields can be stacked on one target to improve the defense.
<i>Accelerate_Metabolism</i>	Activating this power emits radiation that increases the running speed, attack speed, Endurance Recovery and Damage potential of all nearby allies. Affected Rikkt Metabolism is increased so much that they become resistant to effects such as Sleep, Hold, Disorient and Immobilization. The Riktis are not protected from such effects, they just ware off faster.
<i>Radiation_Emission</i>	The Radiation Emission power utilizes the healing properties of radiation to re-energize your allies. This power radiates out from the Rikti and restores some health to all nearby allies.

7.15.6.7 Communications Officer

- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** The Rikti have come to stand for everything humans hate and fear in the universe. Their seemingly unprovoked invasion of Earth has left much of the planet traumatized and angry. Even out of their battle armor, their high-tech weaponry makes Rikti dangerous opponents.
- **Levels** 30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- **Powers**

<i>Rikti_Pistol</i>	The Rikti Pistol deal nominal damage, but can Disorient it target.
<i>Transponder</i>	The Rikti Communications Officer can create an inter-dimensional Transponder. Other Rikti soldiers can teleport in through this Transponder to join their allies. The Transponder can be destroyed. See Portal below for details.

7.15.6.8 Headman Gunman

- **Rank** Lieutenant

Cryptic Studios

- **Description** The Rikti battle armor is more advanced than anything found on Earth and offers the alien invaders protection from most normal kinds of physical attack. Armed with powerful energy weapons, these alien soldiers continue to pose a deadly threat to humans everywhere.
- **Levels** 30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39
- **Powers**

<i>Rikti_Rifle</i>	The Rikti Gunman has a powerful cannon built into his armor. This weapon takes a while to recharge, but deals a lot of damage and can Knockdown and Disorient foes.
<i>Resistance</i>	Rikti Boss armor makes them are resistant to Lethal, Smashing, and Energy damage. They are also resistant to Sleep.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	The Rikti Gunman can Leap to building tops without problem.
<i>Teleport</i>	The Rikti Gunman can Teleport long distances

7.15.6.9 Chief Soldier

- **Rank** Boss
- **Description** The Rikti battle armor is more advanced than anything found on Earth and offers the alien invaders protection from most normal kinds of physical attack. Armed with powerful energy weapons, these alien soldiers continue to pose a deadly threat to humans everywhere.
- **Levels** 30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42, 43,44,45,46, 47,48,49,50
- **Powers**

<i>Greater_Rikti_Sword</i>	Larger and more deadly than the standard Rikti Sword, this weapon deals serious damage, although it is much slower.
<i>Rikti_Rifle</i>	The Rikti Rifle takes a while to recharge, but deals a lot of damage and can Knockdown and Disorient foes.
<i>Resistance</i>	Rikti Boss armor makes them are resistant to Lethal, Smashing, and Energy damage. They are also resistant to Sleep.

7.15.6.10Chief Soldier

- **Rank** Boss
- **Description** The Rikti battle armor is more advanced than anything found on Earth and offers the alien invaders protection from most normal kinds of physical attack. Armed with powerful energy weapons, these alien soldiers continue to pose a deadly threat to humans everywhere.
- **Levels** 30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42 ,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- **Powers**

<i>Greater_Rikti_Sword</i>	Larger and more deadly than the standard Rikti Sword, this weapon deals serious damage, although it is much slower.
<i>Rikti_Rifle</i>	The Rikti Rifle takes a while to recharge, but deals a lot of damage and can Knockdown and Disorient foes.
<i>Resistance</i>	Rikti Boss armor makes them are resistant to Lethal, Smashing, and Energy damage. They are also resistant to Sleep.

7.15.6.11Chief Mentalist

- **Rank** Boss

Cryptic Studios

- Description The Rikti battle armor is more advanced than anything found on Earth and offers the alien invaders protection from most normal kinds of physical attack. Armed with powerful energy weapons, these alien soldiers continue to pose a deadly threat to humans everywhere.
- SpawnLimit 2
- Levels 30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39
- Powers

<i>Greater_Rikti_Sword</i>	Larger and more deadly than the standard Rikti Sword, this weapon deals serious damage, although it is much slower.
<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Mental_Blast</i>	This basic psionic attack does moderate damage, and can slightly reduce a targets attack speed.
<i>Dominate</i>	Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
<i>Resistance</i>	Rikti Mentalist armor makes them are resistant to Lethal, Smashing, and Energy damage. Their enhanced mental powers also make them resistant to Sleep, Confuse, Fear and Psionic damage.

7.15.6.12 Chief Mentalist

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description The Rikti battle armor is more advanced than anything found on Earth and offers the alien invaders protection from most normal kinds of physical attack. Armed with powerful energy weapons, these alien soldiers continue to pose a deadly threat to humans everywhere.
- SpawnLimit 2
- Levels 40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- Powers

<i>Greater_Rikti_Sword</i>	Larger and more deadly than the standard Rikti Sword, this weapon deals serious damage, although it is much slower.
<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Mental_Blast</i>	This basic psionic attack does moderate damage, and can slightly reduce a targets attack speed.
<i>Dominate</i>	Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
<i>Resistance</i>	Rikti Mentalist armor makes them are resistant to Lethal, Smashing, and Energy damage. Their enhanced mental powers also make them resistant to Sleep, Confuse, Fear and Psionic damage.

7.15.6.13 Chief Mesmerist

- Rank Boss

Cryptic Studios

- **Description** The Rikti battle armor is more advanced than anything found on Earth and offers the alien invaders protection from most normal kinds of physical attack. Armed with powerful energy weapons, these alien soldiers continue to pose a deadly threat to humans everywhere.
- **SpawnLimit** 2
- **Levels** 40,41,42,43,44,45,46,47,48,49,50
- **Powers**

<i>Rikti_Sword</i>	This Energy Sword is the preferred melee weapon of the Rikti.
<i>Mass_Hypnosis</i>	Hypnotizes a group of foes at a distance and puts them to Sleep. The targets will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked. This power deal no damage, but if done discretely, the targets wont even be aware of your presence.
<i>Mental_Blast</i>	This basic psionic attack does moderate damage, and can slightly reduce a targets attack speed.
<i>Total_Domination</i>	Tear at the mind of a group of foes around one targeted foe. Total Domination renders its victims helpless, lost in their own mind and unable to defend themselves
<i>Resistance</i>	Rikti Mentalist armor makes them are resistant to Lethal, Smashing, and Energy damage. Their enhanced mental powers also make them resistant to Sleep, Confuse, Fear and Psionic damage.

7.15.6.14Portal

- **Rank** Pet
- **Description** The Rikti Communications Officer cas open a Portal that is bringing in more Rikti! Destroy it.
- **AI Pets_Base**
- **NoAutoSpawn**
- **Levels** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50
- **Powers**

<i>Expel</i>	Riktis quickly leave the portal as they teleport in.
<i>Resistance</i>	The Portal is resistant to physical damage, but vulnerable to Energy, Negative Energy and Psionic attacks.
<i>Transport</i>	Rikti soldiers can teleport in through this Transponder to join their allies. The Transponder can be destroyed.

7.15.7 Future Villains

7.15.7.1 Holo-Armor

Rikti infiltrators have the demanding task of trying to blend in with humans for days, weeks, or even months at a time. They are spies and covert operatives and try to avoid engaging in direct combat. At the other end of the spectrum are the battle armor clad Rikti, who teleport or fly into battle and strike with a precision and power that is effective but definitely not subtle. The Rikti decided that they needed a middle alternative – a front line combat soldier who could move through the humans for short periods of time without being detected but still packed a formidable punch when the fighting started. The result was Holo-Armor.

Unlike the smooth lines of traditional Rikti battle armor, the Holo-Armor suit is made up of numerous flat panels, giving the soldier a kind of crystalline appearance, as if he were carved from flat white gemstones. These flat panels that make up every surface of the Rikti's body are hologram projectors that allow the Rikti soldier to project a very convincing false image to the rest of the world. The suits are smaller than normal Rikti armor and the soldiers who wear them must be body-morphed to fit into them. The result is a suit of armor about the same size as a normal human. When activated, the suit projects a hologram that can make the wearer appear like any other average Joe walking down the street. The hologram includes force field technology that makes it solid, mimicking human flesh and clothing. This advanced form of camouflage means the Rikti can walk unnoticed into public or even secure areas where teleporting or less subtle means might draw unwanted attention.

In combat, the hologram is turned off, revealing the Rikti's true form. The energy needed for the illusory appearance is re-routed for defensive purposes. The disguise aspect disappears and the force field generators turned up to full power, making the Holo-Soldiers very tough to defeat. The suits themselves are considered a weapon and can project force beams and emit bright flashes of light that blind and disorient opponents. The Rikti also can carry heavier hand held weapons if they need to pack more punch for a given operation.

As of now the Holo-Armor is relatively rare – it's taking time to manufacture the suits and biomorph the soldiers to fit into it. At first the Holo-Suits will be used mostly for special missions that involve infiltrating secure areas that are otherwise secured against teleportation. With a detailed reference scan, it's possible for the suits to be programmed to mimic any average or larger size human, including heroes. Since the Rikti have gathered an immense amount of intelligence about the world's heroes (including detailed scans) disguising themselves as heroes for temporary missions will soon become an oft-used tactic by the Rikti.

In game terms, ideally what would happen is that the Rikti in Holo-Armor would appear just like a normal NPC walking the street, or maybe even a player character hero. It would then, in a slash of light, be replaced by the crystalline Holo-Armor Rikti and surprise the unsuspecting hero. Alternately – or in addition – they could just be invisible instead of in disguise, but that's not nearly as interesting.

7.15.7.2 Lone Gunmen

Not every operation requires hordes of drones or entire squads of heavily armed and armored battle soldiers. Often one highly trained and well-armed soldier can be more effective (and less notable) than a large group. The Rikti have a special suit of armor designed for just these kind of missions. The Rikti refer to the suits as Scout Armor, but the poor heroes and police officers forced to contend with these deadly assassins have taken to calling them Lone Gunmen.

The Lone Gunmen wear one of the more advanced suits of battle armor in the Rikti arsenal. Since they usually operate at night, the suits are jet black and have heat dampeners that prevent them from showing up on infrared cameras and viewing devices. The helmet does not closely fit the face like a normal warrior's armor. Instead it's more like an angular motorcycle helmet comprised of two black Plexiglas sheets that form the faceplate. From the inside, the soldier has access to a heads up display that provides targeting data, light enhancement vision, and other combat-related amenities.

Overall, the armor looks more insectoid than normal Rikti armor, since it's made up of several overlapping plates that both provide extra protection and help vent the heat. The boots are somewhat larger as they have jump-jets built into them to allow the wearer to leap great distances at high speeds.

The largest difference is of course the right arm, which is a menacing weapon instead of a hand, consisting of various barrels of different shapes and lengths. This is the Lone Gunman's multi-weapon, a device capable of firing with deadly accuracy over long ranges (when sniping is called for), spraying an entire area with a hail of energy blasts (not unlike a machinegun), or emitting a spray of plasma for close-in work (like a flamethrower). The weapon also has a stun function that's used to capture prisoners when necessary.

Lone Gunmen are the toughest soldiers in the Rikti military force. They operate alone and are a match for almost anything in the city. Their solitary mission profile means they must be ready for anything, so the armor includes several healing features. As a result, they heal their own wounds very quickly and their armor is self-repairing as well. Thus it takes a lot of damage dealt in a short period of time to take just one of these deadly soldiers out of commission.

7.15.7.3 Mauler

One of the things that surprised the Rikti most about fighting the humans was how often combat came down to hand to hand fighting, especially when heroes are involved. The Lineage of War based all of its tactics and training on using ranged weaponry, with just scant attention paid to melee techniques. While distance fighting still predominates (and remains quite effective) the Rikti have modified their strategy and equipment to help deal with enemies – especially heroes – who like to fight up close and personal.

The best answer of all is the so-called Mauler, a new form of battle armor designed specifically to dish out major hand-to-hand damage. The Mauler armor is much larger than the normal Rikti battle suit. In fact it is more like a humanoid shaped vehicle instead of an actual suit of armor. The Rikti pilot sits in the torso and head area, while the limbs are purely mechanical. As such, the Mauler does not conform to the normal Rikti body type. Instead it is a gargantuan 12 foot tall behemoth.

For all it's size however it retains the sleek lines and curves that are common in all Rikti technology. It's more in the mode of a fighter jet than a tank. The arms have long, curved nano-sharp blades that run along the length of the forearms. Similar curved blades run along the back and curve up over the shoulders. The armor's fists have spiked knuckles and the right arm has a long, flat leaf shaped blade that projects from the back of the wrist out four and a half feet. The left arm is a large, grasping claw with a hole in the palm that houses a variable weapon mount. The Mauler can fire plasma bolts over longer distances or project an area of effect plasma blast at short range.

The Maulers are quite agile and quick, and can be teleported into combat just like any other Rikti soldier. They usually operate in groups of between 2 and 5 units so that they always have a "wingman" to cover their rear. They cannot fly, but some of the more advanced versions have limited range jump jets that increase their maneuverability. The Maulers are not subtle, and so the Rikti primarily use them for base defense and for large scale attacks on hardened targets.

7.15.7.4 Micro-Drone Cloud

The Rikti have been employing micro-drones since before the initial invasion. Originally they were designed purely as intelligence gathering tools, and had no offensive capability whatsoever. The basic drone is really not much different in design than the full-sized flyer drone, except it's only two centimeters long. Furthermore its surface has an active camouflage coating that helps it blend into the surrounding environment. Alone these micro-drones are perfect spies, capable of recording both image and sound while remaining undetected.

When the stranded Rikti began looking for simple, effective weapons systems to augment their now meager force, someone had the bright idea of arming the micro-drones. A single micro-drone doesn't have the capacity to carry anything more lethal than a poison tipped dart, and several such devices have been used to carry out assassinations. However, attempts to put energy weapons or gas cartridges were ineffective. They just didn't do much damage by themselves. Then a research hit upon the idea of using multiple drones to attack the target at once.

The result was the Micro-Drone Cloud – a swarm of several hundred drones packed very tightly together which can release a short range electrical burst or poison cloud against nearby enemy targets. The drones must actually be in very close proximity in order to combine their energy reserves to create an energy blast powerful enough to do damage. When they do so they become an mostly opaque cloud of small machines, whirling in circles like a miniature tornado. They can stay in this formation and move along the ground or through the air. The fact that they're made of disparate parts means that that it's very difficult to attack them with non-area of effect weaponry, since there are no vital parts to disable. A single bullet will only hit a few of the drones, a loss that's virtually meaningless to the larger cloud.

Micro-Drone Clouds are certainly not the most dangerous weapon in the Rikti Arsenal, but they can be a nuisance. They're particularly useful when stealth is needed, as the members of the cloud can all travel separately, allowing them to slip through tiny openings and remain unnoticed as they advance on their target. Then they quickly coalesce and strike. Once the job is done, or they've taken losses heavy enough to prevent forming an effective cloud, the drones disperse once more and retreat from the scene.

7.15.7.5 Point Defense Drone

The Rikti strategy, like that of most guerilla armies, calls for a series of rapid strikes followed by quick disappearances. Except for their hidden bases, the Rikti rarely want to stay in one place for too long. When they do, they only encourage their enemies to attack them with overwhelming force, a battle they can't win. However, sometimes they do need to secure an area for a longer period of time, whether it be a technology facility that they need prolonged access to or a hidden staging area for some impending mission. In these cases, the Rikti employ Point Defense Drones, tough, tank like robots that can hold a position against enemy assault and deal out massive damage.

The Point Defense Drone is a hover vehicle with a sleek, diamond shaped cross section. When not in combat mode the drone moves quickly along the surface, looking somewhat like an F-117 stealth fighter without the cockpit. In battle mode, four weapons towers rise from each of the four corners, while a defense array rises from the center. Each of the weapons towers is about four feet high and is topped with a powerful ranged weapon of some sort, usually a heavy plasma gun that can lay down suppressive fire like a machinegun. The central tower stands several feet higher and has the drone's sensor array and force field projector. This force field is the drone's main protection and it is very strong, providing defense against most conventional weapons and many super powers.

Once in combat mode, the Point Defense Drones don't do a lot of moving around (although they are still mobile). Instead they tend to dominate a location. Since each of their four weapons towers has a 360-degree arc of fire both horizontally and vertically, they're able to engage targets coming from any direction. The sensor suite can detect invisible targets and see perfectly well in low light. Point Defense Drones are central to any Rikti static defense strategy and are quite common inside bases and other established areas. They also provide a potent support role in assaults, laying down covering fire and securing "beachheads" for the attack. The Rikti even occasionally use them as pure distractions, plopping one down in the middle of a park and drawing every hero in the area away from other areas.

7.15.7.6 Teleportation Drone

The Rikti ability to teleport with ease and accuracy is their greatest weapon in the ongoing guerilla war. While humanity has discovered ways to shield important areas from teleportation, this kind of protection is very expensive and complex to set up. Most of the city remains open to the Rikti transport system. Teleportation is a disorienting process, even for trained soldiers, so its utility once combat has started is limited. It takes a few moment to orient oneself upon arrival. A drone however, especially one specially designed for the acclimation process, doesn't have such problems.

The Rikti Teleportation Drones not only teleport into combat, they teleport during combat, often with great frequency. These trashcan sized offensive powerhouses have no other means of movement besides teleportation. The drone resembles the standard flyer, except that it sits on a flat base, flush with the ground and the top is a turret that contains a single weapons mount. The drone teleports into battle and immediately begins firing. Meanwhile, its sensors are making a detailed analysis of the terrain. Then, as soon as it is attacked by an enemy, it teleports again to another nearby location and keeps up the attack. The process repeats itself until the drone is destroyed or the battle is won.

Fighting Teleportation Drones is a disorienting and frustrating experience. The machines pop in and out of existence so quickly that it's difficult to get one attack off, let alone two. They can be equipped with a wide variety of weaponry, but always use ranged attacks of some sort. After all, they're ideally suited to keeping melee specialists from closing in. The only bright side is that the teleportation drones are not very tough so once you get a few solid shots in, they're disabled. The hard part is getting those shots in.

A slight variation on the Teleportation Drone is the so-called Kamikaze Drone, which is exactly what it sounds like. The drone is teleported into an area and then set to wait for a hero or some other enemy target to approach. It then teleports adjacent to the enemy target and detonates, causing a massive explosion. These are particularly useful for terror type attacks against military, hero, and police facilities as well as targeted assassination attempts.

7.15.8 Missions and Story Arcs

Stature Level 1 Missions

SL2_TheLost_Mission1	Find missing homeless people. Learn that some mysterious people were trying to alter them in some way. REVEALED: Lost introduced. In some way, these people have been altered.
SL2_TheLost_Errand1	Killtask to collect blood samples from Lost
SL2_TheLost_Errand2	General killtask

Stature Level 2.5 Missions

SL2_TheLost_Mission2.1	Investigate warehouse where people are being changed in some way.
SL2_TheLost_Errand4	Killtask to collect tissue samples from Lost
SL2_TheLost_Errand3.1	General killtask

Stature Level 3 Missions

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SL3_TheLost_Mission1	Rescue an officer who double-crossed the Lost after they paid him to ignore an assault on a munitions factory REVEALED: Despite apparent randomness, it seems that there is some method to the Lost's madness. They target specific sites.
SL3_TheLost_Errand1	Killtask to learn about Lost plans REVEALED: The Lost do indeed target specific sites, many of which deal with the military or the city infrastructure. Why?
SL3_TheLost_Errand2	Killtask to discourage homeless from joining the Lost
SL3_TheLost_Errand3	Killtask to take Lost into custody. Perhaps they can be helped.

Stature Level 4 Missions

SL4_TheLost_Mission1	Go to Lost base in search of records of companies they've sold scavenged Rikti tech to. REVEALED: The Lost frequently scavenge Rikti tech.
SL4_TheLost_Errand1	Killtask to test Genetic Restabilizer on the Lost
SL4_TheLost_Errand2	Killtask to protect Terra Volta reactor
SL4_TheLost_Errand3	General killtask

Stature Level 5 Missions

SL5_Rikti_Mission1	Stop the sale of a drug called 'Shift,' developed from the Lost's mutagen. REVEALED: The Lost are indeed altered by use of a mutagen
SL5_Rikti_Mission2	Portal Corp. has stumbled onto a "quantum flux" caused by Rikti telepathy. Now the Lost are after them. REVEALED: Hinted that this quantum flux is communication, but not confirmed that it is indeed Rikti.
SL5_Rikti_Compound1	Save a Crey lab from the Lost, then track down the stolen tech. Find a Rikti boss giving orders to the Lost. REVEALED: The Lost are being transformed by the Rikti!
SL5_Rikti_Errand1	Killtask to prevent Lost from forcing mutagen on others
SL5_Rikti_Errand2	General killtask
SL5_Rikti_Errand3	Killtask to protect Terra Volta reactor

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Stature Level 6 Missions

SL6_Rikti_Mission1	Investigate Lost's recent attacks. Find Lost in a Rikti cave and confirm their connection. REVEALED: The Rikti are behind the Lost.
SL6_Rikti_Mission2	5 th Column has been compiling a list of Super Groups, their members, and their weaknesses. What's worse, the Rikti found out about it. Stop the battle and recover the files.
SL6_Rikti_Mission3	Prevent the Rikti from destroying the force fields between zones. Deprecated.
SL6_Rikti_Compound1	Investigate illegal sale of Rikti tech. Find that Crey is buying this tech directly from the Rikti. REVEALED: Crey buys technology from Rikti
SL6_Rikti_Compound2	Rescue some POWs REVEALED: Sometimes recovered POWs are Rikti in disguise REVEALED: Rikti experiment on humans, try to change them REVEALED: Rikti physiology shockingly similar to humans
SL6_Rikti_Errand1	General killtask
SL6_Rikti_Errand2	General killtask
SL6_Rikti_Errand3	Killtask to prevent Rikti from stealing human tech
SL6_Rikti_Mission3.1	Prevent Rikti from bringing down force fields between city zones.

Stature Level 7 Missions

SL7_Rikti_Mission1	Your contact has been accused of being a Rikti spy! Go to the lab that processed his blood and test the techs. It's under attack by a Rikti factions that is warring with the faction the spy belongs to. REVEALED: There are two factions within Rikti society. One wants to makeover the world as the Progenitors originally did to Rikti Earth. The other wants to continue the war until humanity is but a memory.
SL7_Rikti_Mission2	Stop Rikti from eliminating Circle. They were trying to wipe out the Circle's god, since they fear deities so much. REVEALED: The Rikti destroyed the gods on their own world.
SL7_Rikti_Mission3	You're ambushed by the Brotherhood of Our Other Selves, a human group devoted to peace w/ the Rikti. The aliens were just using them to lure you there. REVEALED: There's a human activist group that's devoted to peace.

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	They are occasionally the Rikti's pawns.
SL7_Rikti_Mission4	Confiscate Rikti CD's. Discover that they're labeled with emotions they are supposed to invoke REVEALED: The Rikti produce mind-altering music
SL7_Rikti_Compound1	The Rikti are kidnapping doctors. Why? They have the chicken pox! Trade a vaccine for the hostages. REVEALED: The Rikti are having children. Hints that this is because they're cut off from their own world.
SL7_Rikti_Compound2	Stop battle between Rikti factions. One group is trying to mutate a bunch of people, the other group is trying to stop them. REVEALED: There are two factions within Rikti society. One wants to makeover the world as the Progenitors originally did to Rikti Earth. The other wants to continue the war until humanity is but a memory.
SL7_Rikti_Errand1	Killtask to make civilians feel more secure
SL7_Rikti_Errand2	Killtask to stop tech thefts
SL7_Rikti_Errand3	General killtask

Stature Level 7 Story Arc: The Organ Grinders

Thefts of human organs and blood have you tracking down the Rikti. It turns out the Rikti soldiers' organs decay rapidly. You save a secret SERAPH lab and are rewarded with Omega level clearance: which entitles you to know that the Rikti are actually human! Stop the Rikti from taking human organs.

REVEALED: The Rikti are human! Their organs decay rapidly, more so for powerful Rikti.

7.16 Rularuu the Ravager

7.16.1 Background: On Cosmology

Before one can understand the threat that Rularuu the Ravager poses to all existence, one must first understand a bit about cosmology. As the Rikti Invasion so dramatically showed us, ours is not the only dimension out there. In fact, it is just one of many untold millions of such places. Each of these dimensions is like a reflection cast off from the original universe – a sort of Platonic Ideal where all existence began billions of years ago when time began. Ever since that time, the Origin Point has been casting reflections, each of which have in turn been casting their own reflections, until there is a seemingly infinite supply of dimensions.

But in truth, the dimensions only seem infinite. In fact, many of the reflections have such slight differences from one another that they collapse in upon each other and rejoin, or just fade away. While every moment births or destroys a new dimension, most of existence never notices these subtle shifts. What defines a dimension, and allows it to maintain its own stability in the multi-verse, is its uniqueness. The more radically the universe differs from the Origin Point and from the other universes around it, the more permanency it achieves. While there are potentially an infinite number of such places, in fact only a few million such places are known to exist. While this is still a staggering number of universes when you consider that each one is as seemingly limitless as our own, it is not in fact an infinite number.

This multitude of dimensions are all connected to one another through a plane of non-being called the Aether. One way to picture the geography of the multi-verse is to imagine a lake with thousands of tiny islands in it. Each island is in turn vibrating just enough to send out a constant flow of ripples from its shores. The islands are of course the various permanent dimensions, while the ripples are their reflections – existing for a short while before collapsing back into the Aether or merging with some other reality. In the common parlance of inter-dimensional cosmologists, these are called Shards. By traveling underneath the surface of the lake, one can reach any island without having to pass through any other dimensions. The same is true with inter-dimensional travel – a quick jaunt through the Aether brings you to some other reality.

Earth is relatively new to inter-dimensional travel, and so is just learning the lay of the land. The Portal Corp has mapped close to a hundred other dimensions, only about a quarter of which are Permanent Dimensions, while the others are mostly Shards. Travelers from other realities have been searching the multi-verse for much longer, and amongst them one dimension has become particularly legendary – the Origin Point. This is the world that started it all – the universe which has cast all of the other reflections in existence. No one knows exactly where it is (or even if it really still exists), but many have hunted for it. The theory goes that events that transpire at the Origin Point have consequences that ripple through the entire multi-verse. If one were to seize control of the Origin Point, one could theoretically hold all of existence hostage to his or her whims.

7.16.2 Birth of The Ravager

Ultimately, it was this legend – that whoever controlled the Origin could dominate all the realities – that inspired Rularuu to begin his campaign of terror and reality destruction, but that is a development that came later in his mortal life. Before he earned his title Ravager, Rularuu was just another priest in a temple to The God of Gateways. He came from an alternate reality very different from our own Earth. On his world, religion and magic had been systematized and spread to all humans very early in the history of civilization (as opposed to on our world, where the secrets of magic were jealously guarded by a few priests and sages). The whole world practiced magic in some small way or another.

It is not surprising then that the people of Rularuu's world had discovered the existence of alternate realities and had been opening up passages to them for centuries before he was born. With the help of their gods, they had managed to explore and even colonize several dozen other Earths. Some they conquered, others they peacefully assimilated into their own inter-dimensional community. The key to this expansion was the God of Gateways, a deity who held sway over all manner of magical portals. It was he who allowed Rularuu's people to use inter-dimensional travel as a means to actually teleport around on their own world as well as traveling to other realities.

Intra-dimensional teleportation is simple in theory, but very hard to master in practice. Instead of using the Aether to travel to another dimension, you use it to skitter around the exterior of your own and then come back in at a different point. Because travel through the Aether is nearly instantaneous, it's very easy to miss your mark and end up reappearing in space or on another planet rather than somewhere else convenient on the surface of your own world. On Rularuu's world, only the God of Gateways had the computational power and inclination in his divine being to make the appropriate calculations. Thus he was a very powerful and important deity, especially once teleportation became the main method of travel between places and dimensions.

As one of the god's priests, Rularuu acted as a combination gatekeeper and travel agent. Using the appropriate prayers and incantations, he would arrange for supplicants (i.e. customers) to reach their final destinations. Although this duty required significant training and expertise, it was far from the exciting life that Rularuu wanted for himself. He wanted to explore the multi-verse and unlock its secrets. But exploring new realities was a dangerous and honorable duty, reserved for only the most experienced and proven of the God of Gateways' priests.

On his thirtieth birthday, Rularuu came to the realization that he still had another fifteen years of service as a "travel agent" to do before he would even get a chance to join the exploration cadre within the church – and even then his admittance into their elite ranks was by no means assured. The thought of waiting that long was simply beyond toleration for the ambitious young man. And so he did the unthinkable – he began to search for a way to travel to new dimensions on his own without the god's help. He transferred from his home universe to a frontier church on one of the colony worlds where his experiments would attract less attention. There he began to develop a series of mystical rituals that would hopefully allow him complete freedom to travel as he pleased across the multi-verse.

It took close to a decade, but Rularuu finally made the breakthrough he'd been striving so hard for, although it wasn't exactly what he had expected. Normally, when a gateway between two realities comes into being, it connects the origin universe to a similar, or linked, point in the other universe. For example, traveling to another Earth much like our own, you would arrive in a very similar location on that other world. Arriving somewhere else requires the kind of calculations only a god or super computer are capable of (which is what the Portal Corp and Rikti do). Rularuu didn't have that kind of power at his disposal. But he found another shortcut – he could link himself to himself – or at least to the soul in another dimension who most closely approximated his own being. He could then use that link to transfer himself into another universe, appearing at the exact location of his other "self."

The only down side to this was if you happened to be on the other end of Rularuu's linkage, you got destroyed in the process. In short, to travel to another dimension, Rularuu had to destroy one of his other selves. He had no idea that this is what would happen when he first tried the spell, but once he did, he never looked back. In the process of destroying his first alternate self he actually consumed the other being, and in the process took in all of his knowledge, memories, and life force. He'd never felt better in his entire life – plus he instantly had all the knowledge he needed to survive in the strange new dimension he'd teleported himself in to.

Of course, the big problem was, Rularuu had no way of returning to his home dimension. In fact, he had very little control over where he was going on any given linkage. Unlike the God of Gateways or Portal Corp, Rularuu had no sensors or divine insight that would allow him to ascertain his destination before he traveled there. Thus it was impossible for him to effectively direct his travels. And even if he could find his home dimension, he couldn't go there because there was not "him" there to link with – he was traveling the multi-verse. Ultimately though, the inability to return home didn't bother Rularuu very much. He'd spent his whole life trying to escape from home, and now he had the freedom he'd so fervently hoped and worked for.

Rularuu tore across the multi-verse for several centuries. He found that each self that he consumed revived him – in effect giving him eternal youth as long as he still had worlds to visit. Most of his other selves were very much like him – incredibly intelligent, curious about how the universe worked, and ambitious. Thus Rularuu managed to absorb the combined knowledge of hundreds of geniuses, scientists, wizards, writers, artists, and politicians in his travels. With their accumulated knowledge, combined with the data he acquired during his own explorations of the realities he visited, Rularuu came to have a fuller understanding of the multi-verse and its underlying principals than anyone else in all of existence – including beings like the God of Gateways in his home dimension.

Eventually Rularuu's ever expanding knowledge base overcame those original deficiencies in his mode of travel. His multi-faceted mind became capable of the awareness and computational power necessary to discern pathways through the Aether to specific dimensions. Likewise, he mastered the magic forces necessary to directly open a link to other realities, obviating the need for him to link with other selves and destroy them in order to travel. He could now slip from one reality to another with ease. But of course, that didn't stop him from continuing to fold his other selves into the greater-than-human beings known as Rularuu. He'd become addicted to the power, the knowledge, and of course the fountain of youth aspect. He kept right on devouring his reflections, becoming more powerful with each new acquisition.

And then, after close to five hundred years of such traveling, Rularuu decided to return to his home dimension for a little visit. His own Earth had not changed very much during his absence. The empire had expanded to include a few more dimensions, and the trade federation now spanned close to a hundred realities. In all his travels, this was one of the few multi-dimensional political entities that Rularuu had ever seen, so he decided to sit and wait a while. Rather than taking the time to learn all the ins and outs of this society, he chose to visit a few of the member dimensions and find his selves there. Their knowledge and life force would see him through for quite a while.

But Rularuu found something unexpected. He had become quite an anomaly in the multi-verse. He was a being composed of many parts, all joined into one cross-dimensional entity. Such a thing was, if not unique, then extremely rare. As a result, Rularuu himself had begun to cast reflections through the reality web. His alternate selves were becoming more powerful and more like him. Some had even discovered his secret and were busy devouring other selves on their own. Thus, when Rularuu sought out to link with one of his counterpoints to begin the devouring process, he found that his other self had set up magical wards that blocked the linkage (which Rularuu immediately recognized since he himself had such wards protecting him). Finding a self with such power made Rularuu all the hungrier to devour him.

Using less invasive means of interdimensional travel, Rularuu shifted to the other's world, and confronted the mage. The fight lasted but a few seconds, since for all his power, the other self was no match for Rularuu. What took longer was figuring out a way to consume the other's soul and memories without using a dimension spanning link. Rularuu held the self imprisoned for several years while he worked on a solution to the puzzle, and eventually he devised a magic ritual that should have accomplished the same result. It worked, but it worked far, far better than Rularuu had originally planned. He had spent a lot of time formulating the scope of the spell in an effort to ensure that he would get everything from his prisoner that he would have gotten if he'd devoured him through his normal process. His ritual defined one of the parameters as "the full contents of his life and experience." When he cast the spell, Rularuu consumed not only the other self, but everything and everyone that the other self had ever come into contact with. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, children, animals, and even buildings and streets and forests were torn from reality and condensed down into some form of pure energy and knowledge that Rularuu could absorb.

This cataclysmic event was disastrous to the reality that he'd torn asunder. The planet began to tear itself apart now that tremendous sections of it had just vanished. Dazed by the sudden influx of extraordinary power and new sensations, Rularuu only just had the wherewithal to shift realities before the disintegrating world caught him up in its death throes. Safely ensconced in a remote location in his home universe, Rularuu spent some time just absorbing all the new knowledge. He had never really dreamed that he could actually consume a world, or even just a piece of one. The experience was the most intoxicating thing he'd ever felt. He knew that his days of taking in just one person at a time were now behind him. Whole realities would be his fodder.

But his other self had also given him an idea, once his memories had been integrated into Rularuu's own. The other had learned what Rularuu had been doing and thus protected himself. But the other knew that he would never be able to match Rularuu's power unless he found some new way to augment his own. That was when he conceived of his own brilliant plan. He would find the semi-mythical Origin Point – the reality from which all other universes were first reflected. If he could find and control that realm, he would have the power to influence the entire multi-verse and could, in effect, edit Rularuu out of it. Of course finding a single needle in an infinite haystack was a tall order, but the other saw it as his only hope. Now the idea belonged to Rularuu and he had a new twist to add to the plan. Sure controlling the Origin Point would give one tremendous power. But what if one consumed the Origin? Rularuu planned to do just that – find the Origin reality and devour it. Then he would embody the Origin and would thus every reality in existence would become a reflection of him.

7.16.3 The Ravager Comes

Rularuu perfected his ritual, expanding its scope to include an entire world, and then an entire reality. Once he completed it, he felt the perfect place to test his new scheme was on his own home world. As he expected, the gods and priests divined his intent and sallied forth to try and halt their reality's destruction. Their combined power should have proven more than sufficient, but Rularuu was prepared for them. He distracted the divine army with a host of false reflection – each made from a tiny fraction of his own being. In effect, he was spinning off pieces of himself that he had devoured over the past five centuries. As these lesser reflections delayed the gods (each was still a powerful magician in its own right), Rularuu completed his ritual and consumed the entire reality in one fell swoop.

The infinite meal that a universe makes left Rularuu in a kind of intoxicated daze as he struggled to absorb the knowledge, experience, and power of an entire reality. As it turned out, a lot of knowledge got lost in the translation – individual thoughts and memories from the untold trillions he'd slain all got lost in the shuffle, and distinct personalities merged into aggregate wholes. Nevertheless, the amount of data and power was staggering. Short of God himself, Rularuu had become the most powerful being ever to exist. And he was just getting started.

Even with all that knowledge and power, Rularuu still could not pinpoint the Origin Point. However, he did have the ability to distinguish lesser realities from greater, more permanent ones. The varied dimensions of the multi-verse shown like stars in the sky – and he chose to start devouring the brightest ones first. Rularuu had truly come into the title Ravager as he cut a swath of destruction through the Aether. And then, one day in 1968, our reality, and our world, caught his attention.

Earth's dimension shone particularly bright in the multi-verse at that time. 1968 was a year that saw sweeping change and discord across the globe. A new breed of hero was developing, society was falling down and rebuilding itself every month, and the times, they were a changing. Normally even such sweeping events on a single planet in a whole universe would not have attracted much attention, but there were two factors in play. One, Rularuu had come to believe that the Origin Point was indeed on a planet that was analogous to Earth in the multi-verse. Two, Rularuu's other self on Earth was heavily involved in the events taking place there.

Here, the other Rularuu was more popularly known as Gerard McNaughton, AKA Gerard the Green, famous comedian and stage magician by day, crime-fighting sorcerer by night. Gerard was also secretly a member of the Midnight Squad, a group of mystic minded heroes in Paragon City who fought to keep the world safe from supernatural threats. Gerard the Green had been using his notoriety and public fan base to help promote some of the more controversial causes of the day, including protests against the Vietnam War and fighting for African-American Civil Rights. He used his nature-based magical powers to great effect in some of the best known pranks and protests of the era and was even featured on the cover of Time magazine on one occasion.

For all his affable personality and pointed political humor, Gerard was actually a very powerful magician. He had become aware of what Rularuu was doing by using his own existential link to the Ravager to secretly monitor his crimes. Unfortunately, as Rularuu searched the Aether for bright worlds that might be the Origin Point, he espied the trans-dimensional tether and followed it back to Earth. Thinking it as likely a place as any for the Origin Point, he decided to devour it and his other self.

Gerard the Green immediately saw what was happening and prepared the Midnight Squad for the Ravager's arrival. Although he knew what Rularuu was capable of, he still felt that there must be some way to stop him before he destroyed the Earth. Rularuu arrived in Paragon City in the form of a hurricane force storm that covered the entire Eastern seaboard, driving people away from the coasts and into shelters or their homes. He then materialized a physical avatar and proceeded to begin the three-day ritual of consumption from the top of a tower located precisely at the storm's eye. The Midnight Squad and the city's other heroes threw everything they had at Rularuu, but he either swatted them aside like flies or shut them out with impenetrable force fields.

After two days of futile fighting, the Midnight Squad met to discuss one final plan. Gerard the Green had developed a strategy, all be it a very dangerous one. He suggested using the power locked within an ancient artifact known as the Dagger of Jocas to trick Rularuu into consuming the wrong world. The dagger had the ability to actually sever reality, and the Midnight Squad kept it locked in an extra-dimensional vault for safe keeping. None of the members felt comfortable using the artifact, but they realized that they had no choice. With the dagger's power and their own magic, they would simultaneously cut away a tiny sliver from the reality of every person, animal, and thing in Paragon City and then use their magic to weave them together into a shadow version of the great metropolis. If they did this at the exact moment of Rularuu's ritual, they could trick him into consuming the shadow shard instead of the real thing. They theorized that this would cause the ritual to actually backfire, forcing Rularuu to consume himself instead of Earth's reality and hopefully destroying him forever.

The Midnight Squad made its preparations while Rularuu finished the last stages of his ritual. All across the city residents felt a simultaneous tingling in the back of their necks as the Dagger of Jocas cut away a part of their existence. The shadow city came together just as Rularuu's incantations ceased and then – POOF! – it was over. The storm immediately cleared up and Rularuu was gone from his tower. It wasn't quite what the Midnight Squad had expected, but they were definitely pleased with the results. Only Gerard The Green had any reservations. He still had his connection to Rularuu and he knew that somewhere, out there, the Ravager still existed.

7.16.4 The Shadow Shard

Gerard was right of course. Rularuu did live on, although he was none too happy about his current situation. The nanosecond before his ritual fired off he realized what the Midnight Squad had done. He sensed that the shadow Paragon City had been substituted for the real universe, but it was too late to stop the ritual. Yet if the ritual went off as planned, he would devour nothingness and, as predicted, destroy himself. In the short sliver of time, the several universes that comprised Rularuu's mind made a quick calculation and acted. Rularuu sacrificed a great portion of his own power to immediately infuse the illusory city with true energy and form. Where the Midnight Squad had originally anticipated that the false reality would exist for only a moment, Rularuu's infusion gave the new universe true form. It swirled up out of the Aether and formed a pocket universe, known as a shard, that was an exact replica of the Paragon City that Gerald and company had copied using the Dagger of Jocas.

Rularuu realized almost immediately that he was trapped – and the fact that it had taken him more than just a moment to fully comprehend his situation worried him more than anything. At his full power, such realizations should have come instantaneously. He had truly become but a shadow of his former self. He looked around this false city and found it full of very real people, including copies of the very Midnight Squad that had tricked him. He unleashed his full fury on the assembled – and startled – heroes. They fought back as best they could, but even in his weakened state Rularuu had more than enough power to tear them each limb from limb, along with most of the other copied heroes in the false city.

Not satisfied with slaying just the shadows of those who had defeated him, Rularuu's madness drove him even further. He had brought his hurricane with him into the Shadow Shard and now he increased its intensity to the point where it actually started to tear the reality of the place apart. Huge chunks of the city went flying off into space or shattered into millions of pieces. Hundreds of thousands of shadow people died – although to call them shadow people is to unfairly diminish them. Rularuu had given them all full life – they had all the feelings, memories, and emotions of the originals from which the Midnight Squad had copied them.

Rularuu's rage lasted for almost a year as he systematically searched every atom of the Shadow Shard in his quest to find a way out. But he was literally trapped within himself. He'd given up so much power to give the realm permanency that he no longer even had the ability to peer out into the Aether or into other realms. He couldn't even use his most basic ritual and link with another one of his selves (something he dearly wanted to do to Gerald the Green). Finally, he resolved himself to his fate, or at least to the fact that he was going to have to find a long term solution to his problem.

As the Ravager, Rularuu had not spent a whole lot of time building anything. He hadn't even really had a home or base of operations for centuries. Although he had the knowledge of several dozen universes stored away in his brain, the Shadow Shard's creation had scattered and jumbled his thoughts. It took him a while to start to piece together a plan for how he would shape his own little personal kingdom. He made an early, vain attempt to simply rebuild the city as it once was, but soon grew bored with the results. He let his imagination run wild a little bit, and constructed his new home to more closely suit his own special needs.

While Rularuu retains just a small fraction of his former power, by Earth standards he's still amazingly powerful. His preferred modes of transportation are flight and teleportation (his feet haven't touched the ground in years), so he saw no reason to retain the basically two-dimensional arrangement that had once governed the city's design. He also found that he could easily bend and reshape such basic elements as the laws of physics. Thus he could create low or high gravity areas to suit his needs, pipes and rivers that flowed up instead of down, and his own multi-hued, ever shifting sky in place of a sun and stars (which didn't exist in the Shadow Shard as real celestial bodies anyway).

Of course this radical new construction left the hundreds of thousands of surviving humans in a state of shock and confusion – but nothing worse than what they'd already experienced when Rularuu fist tore the shard apart. Ninety percent of Paragon City's shadow residents had died during that time, and many of those who did survive only did so because they either had super powers or were rescued by someone who did. All the major heroes had died fighting Rularuu in those first few hours, but hundreds of lesser powers had survived. They were smart enough to know that they couldn't do anything against Rularuu's god-like puissance and so had hidden themselves from his wrath as best they could.

Rularuu had paid little attention to the survivors. He simply didn't care what happened to them. Having devoured whole realities, the fate of a few shadow humans who wouldn't even exist were it not for his sacrifice of power didn't even register on his radar screen. But soon Rularuu began to experience two emotions he had not felt for quite some time – loneliness and boredom. He'd had no need for companionship or entertainment when he was busy sucking in other people's knowledge and experience. But now he needed some sort of distraction, some kind of companionship. Furthermore, he could use any help he could get when it came to finding a way to escape his current predicament.

And so Rularuu sought out the survivors and brought them all together in a great, many-tiered public plaza that he'd constructed out of different pieces of roadway and parking lots. Although he has keen, supernatural senses and some clairvoyance, Rularuu is not omniscient within the shadow shard. A few hundred managed to stay hidden away, but the vast majority – about a hundred thousand – gathered together out of fear or curiosity to see what Rularuu had to say. The Ravager appeared before the assembled masses as a hundred foot tall floating figure in purple and yellow robes. His head had long ago left any pretensions to being human and instead appeared utterly demonic. His hands burned with green fire and he stood atop a column of smoke and multi-hued lightning.

Rularuu spoke for many, many hours. Once he started talking it was like he couldn't stop or, at the very least, he didn't want to stop. He quite frankly and openly told them about his past and how he came to be a ravager of realities. Naturally he left out the embarrassing bits and focused on his great accomplishments, his limitless knowledge, and his world shattering power. He didn't mention how he'd gotten himself into his current situation at all, but rather implied that he'd chosen to create the Shadow Shard for his own mysterious purposes. Then he gave them all a choice – serve him or be broken down into their constituent atoms and rebuilt into something useful. Everyone assembled agreed to do as he commanded, although really, what else could they say? Of course, in their hearts, most of them pledged allegiance out of fear, not devotion, and secretly hoped to one day find away back to their home (since of course, none of them realized that they were copies of the originals and therefore already were home).

7.16.5 Reign of Rularuu

Rularuu the Ravager became Lord Rularuu in 1970. He set up his little kingdom with several important goals in mind, some short term, and one long term. The overriding goal remained finding a way out of this prison. He now knew for certain that he couldn't do that on his own, so he had decided to try and find some other way. He'd consumed realities where science had created portals for passing through from one reality to another and he retained a basic knowledge of how such things functioned. He hoped to harness the creative and intellectual abilities of his new subjects to the task of helping him rediscover the entire technology – or a magical equivalent – to break through the dimension barrier.

In the meantime, the society as a whole needed to be organized and the use of resources tightly controlled. Rularuu retained tremendous mystic power. He could transform matter at the atomic level with a fair amount of effort or simply reshape and reform basic materials with ease. His control over things like gravity and even time and space within his dimension gave him great flexibility in defining reality. But one thing Rularuu could not escape was the fact that there was a very finite amount of matter and energy within the Shadow Shard. With no access to even a sun for light and energy for plants to photosynthesize, the realms resources needed to be very carefully conserved. Just making sure there's enough food and power for everyone (including his own needs) takes up much of his time. For more information on the food chain in the Shadow Shard, see that document.

Rularuu has tinkered with nearly everything in the Shadow Shard to one degree or another, including the denizens. He has tweaked the way their brains work, expanding their minds and mental capacity to help him focus on finding a way out of this prison he accidentally created for himself. The vast majority of the denizens were, for the past thirty years or so, entirely engaged in scientific or magical research of one sort or another. Those who weren't were busy working to support those who were. This vast commitment to research is quite an accomplishment given that none of the individuals involved had any training in the appropriate fields. Everything they've learned they either got from Rularuu's own fragmentary memories or from their own discoveries. It has been a slow going process and, even given the access to mutable laws of physics and whatever equipment they need, not much progress has been made. Up until recently, they'd managed only to create a device capable of sending out a signal into other, nearby dimensions and scanning them for basic facts. This turned out to be an achievement whose consequences they couldn't have foreseen.

Of course not everyone went along with Rularuu's game plan. Those initial few hundred survivors who had hidden themselves from the Ravager remained hidden as best they could. They had the sympathetic help of many of those who had pledged allegiance to the lord of the Shadow Shard. Many of the realms remaining super powered beings were among the hidden, and they became the nucleus of a resistance group. But their form of resistance was very passive. They feared any attempt to directly – or even indirectly confront Rularuu. Instead they focused on stealing away resources from him and working on their own efforts to escape the Shadow Shard and return home. Occasionally Rularuu would find one or more of them and then his anger was terrible to behold. He'd publicly execute the rebels and lash out against any loyalists who happened to be nearby. Resisting Rularuu proved a deadly vocation, but those who did so felt they had no choice.

7.16.6 The First Rikti Invasion

The first Rikti to invade Paragon City came not to Earth, but to the Shadow Shard, albeit, they came in much smaller numbers. While preparing for their invasion, the Rikti spent a great deal of time surveying our own dimension. During this time, they picked up the scanning signal sent out from the Shadow Shard. Without that signal, the Rikti would never have noticed the tiny pocket universe since it was so small that it was lost in the noise and chaos of the Aether. The Rikti's own, much more advanced scans determined that this shadow shard seemed to be attached to and created from the very dimension they planned to invade.

Imagining that perhaps this was some kind of secret military installation or other target of military interest, the Rikti sent several drones and scouting teams into Rularuu's realm to ascertain if the place was a threat. They quickly determined that, yes indeed, it could be a threat since the ruler possessed god-like power levels. However, they also determined that the realm had no contact whatsoever with Earth. They decided to withdraw from the realm without engaging the residents in battle and to keep a watchful eye on it. If Rularuu's realm became involved in the war at any stage then the Rikti would act against it, but until then, they decided to leave it be.

Rularuu and his subjects lived through the Rikti War without ever realizing it was going on just next-door. Indeed, it might have been centuries before the original Earth and the Shadow Shard came into contact were it not for a captured Rikti database. During and after the war, any data recovered from the Rikti about inter-dimensional travel immediately got transferred to the Portal Corp for analysis. The analysts had tons of data to sift through after the war, and it was only recently that they finally decoded and evaluated some information about the Rikti's scouting of the Shadow Shard. All the Portal Corp analysts could determine was that the Rikti had visited the realm shortly before the war and that it seemed to be connected directly to Paragon City in some way. Obviously, this bore some investigation.

Unlike the Rikti, who were experts at covertly scouting other dimensions, the Portal Corp team that first went through the barrier into the Shadow Shard did not take enough pains to secure their secrecy. They had opened a portal into an area of the realm that still looked somewhat like the original Paragon City that they had expected from a dimension so closely situated to our own. It didn't take Rularuu long to discover them, and when he did, he sprang into action. He immediately seized all but two of the ten-person exploration team. Those last two had been left behind to guard the portal location where a group of resistance fighters found and captured them. Thus, almost simultaneously, Rularuu and the resistance both learned about the existence of Portal Corp, our world, and a possible means to escape.

Fortunately for Earth, the Portal Corp techs back home automatically shut down the portal when they didn't hear back from the exploration team. But something strange had happened. While the portal was closed, the connection between the two realities was not entirely severed. Because the Shadow Shard was, in reality, a part of our own dimension rather than a unique plane unto itself, it yearned to be reconnected with its "parent." The Portal Corp could thus not fully close the path between the two worlds. Not only would it now be much easier for people to travel to and from the Portal Corp facility to the Shadow Shard, but the possibility of random portals opening up between the two dimensions became very real.

Back in the Shadow Shard, Rularuu easily picked apart his captives through a combination of torture and mental powers. Within a day he knew a great deal about the true Earth, the Rikti invasion, and Portal Corp. He had of course immediately investigated the site where the explorers entered the Shadow Shard and found traces of the connection to Earth. He immediately set his scientists to investigating the area with all the equipment they had available. Meanwhile, the resistance fighters were also learning from their "captives." They told the explorers everything they knew about Rularuu and described what had happened to them. The Portal Corp explorers agreed to help them escape back to Earth if they could get back to the portal location and open a doorway home.

The two Earthlings and a group of about forty resistance fighters mounted a lightning raid against Rularuu's scientists. Rularuu had never had much need for soldiers, guards, or police of any kind. His own power had always been more the sufficient to ensure law and order. The attackers quickly overwhelmed the scientists guarding the location and the explorers sent their emergency retrieval signal. Rularuu rushed to the scene in time to see several dozen of his subjects rushing through an inter-dimensional gateway. He of course followed them. But Portal Corp was ready to repel any such unwanted guests. Applying a combination of force fields and energy weapons, the quickly drove Rularuu back through the portal before he even realized what was happening. Even so, his own defenses managed to kill fifteen people in the Portal Corp facility and cause substantial damage. But the portal was closed once again, and Rularuu was trapped. Not only was he trapped, he was injured – something that hadn't happened to him since he was human.

Rularuu was actually a little bit frightened. He could taste his victory, but he could also taste his death. On the other side of the barrier he had been much, much weaker than he expected. So much of his power was wrapped up in creating and maintaining the Shadow Shard reality, that Rularuu at home and Rularuu anywhere else were two vastly different beings. As long as the Portal Corp continued to effectively guard their portal facility, he didn't think he could get back through there without an army. Which obviously meant it was time to start building just that.

Portal Corp was all for just sealing off the Shadow Shard and never looking back, but unfortunately they couldn't do that. After extensive debriefings with the explorers and the new refugees, they began to get some idea of what the Shadow Shard really was. Although none of the Midnight Squad who'd fought Rularuu was still alive, they were able to go through the hero group's archives and pull out some salient details about Rularuu. They surmised what had happened, and eventually came to the conclusion that the realm could not be ignored. At the urging of the refugee resistance fighters they also had to admit that they owed it to Rularuu's subjects to try and rescue them from his tyrannical reign. After all, they were actually citizens of Paragon City too, in a weird way.

And so the battle lines were drawn and the time for a war between the Shadow Shard and Earth had come. Rularuu was intent on fighting his way through the portal (which his scientists would soon figure out how to open) and the Portal Corp and its allies needed to overthrow Rularuu and rescue the Shadow Shard's human population from slavery. A month after their first incursion into the Shadow Shard, The Portal Corp started sending in strike teams to secure a foothold in the realm. What they found surprised them tremendously – Rularuu's newly minted army had taken the field. The resulting battle was tremendously bloody and costly, but the humans eventually prevailed. They left the portal permanently open and used as a conduit to place a force field around the beachhead. Thus far, Rularuu has been unable to break through, although his power grows daily.

The Portal Corp knows that humanity is on a ticking clock. They must defeat Rularuu before he finds his own way out of the Shadow Shard. Otherwise he will be free to once again start devouring whole realities, and there's little question as to where he will start first. And the next time, it probably won't be so easy to trick him.

7.16.7 The Army of Rularuu

Rularuu had never made an army before. Indeed, he'd scarcely ever made anything at all in his long existence. He'd been so busy destroying things, he'd never had the time or inclination to build anything. His thirty-five years in Shadow Shard have taught him a lot about creation and modification. He's fashioned a funhouse reality from his own imagination and altered his human subjects to make them into better scientists. When it came time to quickly create an army to fight for the portal, he first turned to the humans once again. But he also drew upon the fragmented but still extensive database of knowledge in his head about the scores of universes and billions of inhabited worlds that he'd devoured in his time. He culled through these memories for the deadliest warriors he could recall and used them as models for his new soldiers. The result is a mixed bag of styles and influences from across time and space, but which together have formed a decidedly dangerous and effective fighting force.

Rularuu wants to keep as many humans as possible still working at trying to make their own portals. Since the battle with Earth began, Rularuu has been using captive soldiers and heroes as raw materials for his army-building program in addition to his own subjects. Still conscious of the finite resources available to him in the Shadow Shard, he uses everything at his disposal, from dead enemy soldiers to spent shell casings and discarded cigarette butts. Any bit of matter or energy that the Earthlings bring into the Shadow Shard is more fodder for his mills. Even the energy put out by the Portal Corp force fields has proven a valuable new resource.

7.16.7.1 Field Marshals

The only soldiers not created from humans or spare bits of matter and energy are the few dozen generals who oversee Rularuu's growing army – the Field Marshals. Rularuu doesn't really trust any of his subjects. He's smart enough to know that they'd all run given half a chance. Even though he heavily indoctrinates his soldiers with mind control and memory wiping magic, he still won't risk putting command in one of their hands. Therefore, he had no choice but to lead the armies himself. Of course, he can't be everywhere at once, but part of him can. The Field Marshals are just that – parts of Rularuu himself that he has broken off from his core being and given lives of their own. Each of them is a fully formed personality from one of the many selves that Rularuu has devoured over the ages. These personae are all still loyal to the greater Rularuu whole. They've been around long enough to come to appreciate and enjoy the power that being Rularuu gives. Thus they're totally loyal to the Ravager. They do not, however, continue to share thoughts or memories. Each Field Marshal is a complete individual once again, with a small (but significant) fraction of Rularuu's power. Under other circumstances the Ravager would never have made such a sacrifice, but in this instance he felt that he had no choice.

Each Field Marshal resembles Rularuu himself, although their looks vary slightly, as they're all individuals and tend to choose colors and accoutrements that best suit their personalities. However, the overall look is consistent, since it serves as their badge of office and authority. Dressed in deep purple robes, the Field Marshal stands twelve feet in height. There are no feet visible since, like the Ravager himself they travel by floating, flying, or teleportation. The robes have intricate designs and patterns in colors that vary depending on the Marshal's tastes. Their hands are more claw like than human and are constantly surrounded by a halo of blue or green flames. Their heads are demonic, almost dragon like snouts with different arrangements of horns and spikes depending on the individual Field Marshal's tastes.

Field Marshals are powerful foes in their own right, but their true terror comes from their ability to lead Rularuu's armies. They each have several thousand soldiers assigned to them, which they can instantly teleport to their side in times of need (effectively summoning more minions). They can also reshape energy and matter like their master, allowing them to heal themselves and their soldiers during the course of battle.

7.16.7.2 Ruladak the Strong: Field Marshal of Brutes

- **Rank:** Arch-Villain
- **Levels:** 41-50
- **Powers:** Super Strength, Proximity damage field, KB Resistance, Energy Blast, Crystal Shattering attacks: Red for AOE Damage Buff, Purple for AOE Endurance Drain, White for AOE Healing, Heals from energy attacks for short bursts
- **AI:**

Description: Ruladak is an extremely war-like and aggressive version of Rularuu from the Tlilian Empire, a place where might makes right. Ruladak wears a bluish-purple robe that is standard for Field Marshals but it is decorated with the red, white and purple gems from Brutes that have displeased him in some way. This of course results in the death and permanent dishonor of the brute in question.

Ruladak has been given control of the Archipelagos and uses his Brutes to carefully watch over the Kora fruit. No one can harvest it without permission...or a fight. The Brutes are also maintaining a constant assault on the Chantry based out of the Archipelagos.

Ruladak's primary tactic is straightforward, win through attrition. He is a powerful leader but has no hesitation in sending his brutes to their defeat or even death. He can always request more from Rularuu. This stubborn and egocentric attitude is beginning to trouble Rularuu, but so far Ruladak has gotten the job done.

7.16.7.3 Chularn the Slave Lord: Field Marshal of Wisps

- Rank: Arch-Villain
- Levels: 41-50
- Powers: Psychic Blast, Slow, Subdue with psychic energy effect, Force Field, Always Hover, Heals from Psychic attacks for a short time
- AI:

Description: Chularn is an extremely cruel and twisted version of Rularuu. He uses enslaved beings to run the Factory Cubes for Rularuu. His Wisps operate and improve the Cubes continuously. They travel back and forth between the Cubes and the Repository, taking the choice pieces that the Natterlings collect and using them in the refinement process. Uularns robe is purple with circuitry the orange color of the Wisps running through it.

There are five Cubes surrounding the Palace. They contain the power generators for the palace. Anyone seeking entry to the Palace will have to shut them all down.

7.16.7.4 Kuularth the Scavenger: Field Marshal of Natterlings

- Rank: Arch-Villain
- Levels: 41-50
- Powers: Scattershot(Crystal and metal splinter attack, like quills. It can be based off the Brute attacks with additional effects), Spike Shard(Hand grows into a Crystal/metal spike for a melee attack), Crystal Hold(Pieces of crystal and metal shoot out from the hand and surround the player.), Auto-Summon Natterlings, Heals from Earth and Lethal attacks for a short time.
- AI:

Description: Kuularth makes his nest in the Repository that feeds parts to the Factory Cubes. His Natterlings roam the Shadow Shard collecting anything and everything that could be useful. They are always accompanied by a Wisp, who Kuularth calls consultants and Uularn calls supervisors.

Kuularth rarely leaves his nest deep within the repository. His Field Marshals cloak has crystal, flesh and bits of metal sown into it. It looks most like a robe made from the flesh of Natterlings.

7.16.7.5 Aloore the Watcher: Field Marshal of Sentries

- Rank: Arch-Villain
- Levels: 41-50
- Powers: 360 Degree Perception, Increased Perception, AOE Accuracy Buffing, Hold, Quill Attacks, Auto-summon Sentries, Heals from bashing damage for a short time
- *DN: Software: Is it possible to give villains a resist Stealth attribute?*
- AI:

Description: Aloore is Rularuu's most trusted Field General. He guards the Palace and uses his Sentries to watch all of the Shadow Shard for signs of betrayal or threat. His robe is covered with eyes resembling the Sentries. By touching any of them he can see through the Sentries connected to that spot through magic.

The interesting thing about Aloore is that he is most similar to Rularuu. This makes him skilled and useful. This also makes him dangerous, because Rularuu is not built for servitude.

Aloore is entrenched on the lowest level of the Palace. He will never be taken by surprise and will fight hard to defend the Palace. It is possible that he could be bargained with if someone could make an offer where he would end up running the Shard.

7.16.7.6 Uuralur the Mirror: Field Marshal of Reflections

- Rank: Arch-Villain

- Levels: 41-50
- Powers: Cloak, Summon Duplicates, Auto-summon Reflections, Gravity Powers, Heals from negative energy damage for a short time

DN: Software: Is it possible to make a villain untargetable when Cloaked?

- AI:

Description:Uuralur presides over the Garden of Memories. The beings that reside there are reflections of the worlds that Rularuu has conquered. One might encounter anything walking through the Garden. Uuralur has organized many of these reflections into a guard force that patrols the area and keeps the others in check.

Uuralur's robe is silvery-grey and reflects the area around him. He wanders all of the areas, seeking something. No one is certain what he is looking for, but his quest never ceases.

7.16.7.7 Faathim the Kind: Field Marshal of the Chantry (NPC)

- Rank: NPC

7.16.7.8 Faathim Imprisoned

- Rank: Boss
- Levels 47-50
- Powers: Summon on defeat: Summons Faathim the Kind (Friendly Arch-Villain)
- AI: Immobile. Does not attack. Is Attackable. When destroyed, plays an animation of the crystal shattering and Faathim being freed from the crystal prison

7.16.7.9 Faathim the Kind: Field Marshal of the Chantry (Friendly Arch-villain)

- Rank: Arch-Villain
- Levels: 47-50
- Powers: Heal other, Healing Aura, Fortitude, Siphon Power, Fulcrum Shift, Dispersion bubble, Protection Shield (Deflection Shield)
- AI: Faathim begins imprisoned in a crystal. The crystal is attackable and immobile and has boss level hit-points. When the crystal is destroyed, it summons Faathim. Faathim remains immobile, and casts buffs and heals on the players and debuffs the villains.
 - Alternate: If there is not time to build the crystal prison, then we can place Faathim inside a large CoT ritual, and free him once players interrupt the spawn. At that point, his Priority List changes, and he behaves as above

Description:Faathim is one of Rularuu's rare mistakes. He is a version of Rularuu that was split off to oversee healing for the troops. He attained a level of independence much earlier than any of the other Marshals. He defied Rularuu, closed off the Chantry, and has been able to hold out against Ruladak's assaults so far. He is a potential ally for anyone going after Rularuu, if he can truly be trusted. Rularuu is desperate to re-absorb him.

His robe is pure white and he can provide healing and other aid to those in need. Getting to him is never easy, however.

7.16.7.10 Lanaru the Crazed

- Rank: Arch-Villain
- Levels: 41-50

- Powers: Proximity damage field, Thunderstorm, Snowstorm, Tornado, Freezing Rain, Blizzard, Ice Storm, Steamy Mist, Hurricane, Thunderclap, Auto-Summon Storm Elementals, Heals from Fire and Ice damage for a short time, Auto-Lightning attack

DN: Software: Is it possible to summon creatures in mid-air?

- AI:

Description: Lanaru is someone that Rularuu would just as soon forget or ignore. He is a splinter of the Ravager that could not handle being brought to life again. It snapped him and turned him into a raging beast. His psychic instability has manifested into a permanent storm all around his castle.

Rularuu is afraid to re-absorb Lanaru because he cannot afford an internal struggle, but he also does not want to permanently destroy a piece of himself.

Lanaru's robe is dark grey and streaked with purple lightning. He controls wild versions of the Wisps and Sentries who fly erratically around his castle looking for something to

7.16.7.11 Rularuu the Ravager

- Rank: Arch-Villain
- Levels: 50
- Powers: Proximity damage field, KB Resist, Gravity Powers, Fire AOE attacks, Cold AOE attacks, Sonic AOE Attacks, Mez Powers, Auto-Summon all minions, Consume Minions for Health/Endurance, Multi-attack – Hold then multiple objects slam into the player then the player is slammed to the ground

DN: Software: Is it possible to transmute objective objects into Minions/Turrets?

DN: Software Is it possible to have multiple lock targets on a single villain?

- AI:

Description: Dressed in deep purple robes, Rularuu stands one hundred feet in height. There are no feet visible since, like the Ravager himself they travel by floating, flying, or teleportation. The robes have intricate designs and patterns. His hands are more claw-like than human and are constantly surrounded by a halo of bluish green flames. His head is demonic with an almost dragon like snouts and two large horns.

7.16.7.12 Brutes

- Rank: Minion, Lt., Boss
- Levels: 41-50
- Powers: Club Hand, Energy Blasts, KB Resistance, Crystals are an interruptible power that are used at 50% and 25% Health: Red for AOE Damage Buff, Purple for AOE Endurance Drain, White for AOE Healing,

DN: Software: Is it possible to have a power that grants a temporary power?

DN: Software: Is it possible to have a power be interrupted by a specific case?

- AI:

Description: The main shock troops in Rularuu's army are the Brutes. Based upon soldiers from a pan-galactic mystic empire in one of the universes that he devoured, the Brutes represent the epitome of combined arms, all in one fearsome package. Although Rularuu couldn't faithfully recreate the storm troopers of the Tlilan Empire, he's come pretty close. Rularuu creates his Brutes working from a human body as a base and then adding more found mass which he transforms into the muscle, iron-hard skin, and innate weapons systems that make Brutes so deadly in combat. Despite their size and name, the Brutes retain much of the original body's intelligence and should not be underestimated as being stupid. They have pretty solid tactical training and work well in teams – both with each other and with other members of Rularuu's army.

The basic Brute is a huge, hulking humanoid form standing roughly seven feet in height. Their bodies sexless, golem-like masses of muscle and bone, usually dark red or blue in color. The powerful legs end feet resembling those of an elephant or rhino. Their arms ripple with muscles and end in long, sharp claws. Their head is only vaguely human – instead of a nose and mouth they have a kind of bony, vent that’s reminiscent of the baleen filter on a whale. They have but one large, bug-like, multi-faceted eye. A row of spines runs down their back, ending in a short tail capped with a spiked club-like tip. The most distinctive and important feature on the Brute, however is the large crystal in its forehead. These crystals come in several different shapes and colors, each representing a different kind of primary attack mode for the soldier. The brute’s eye color and the color of the spines on its back always match the crystal’s color.

The colored crystal is the focus of each Brute’s power. While Rularuu has made a full spectrum of different colors and powers, three different types predominate amongst the ranks. Red Crystals produce a variety of powerful ranged energy attacks, from simple blasts for lesser Brutes to dramatic area of effect attacks for the more powerful specimens. Purple Crystals allow for enervating assaults on the soldier’s foes, reducing their strength, speed, health, and endurance – softening them up for the killing blow. White Crystals provide protection and healing, creating both force fields and emergency repairs to other Brutes. The force fields can also be used to push foes around or knock them back.

Brutes do not fly like many denizens of the Shadow Shard, but they can leap very great distances, something that helps them move about the jumbled and bizarre landscape that Rularuu has created for himself. They’re hulking size belies their quick speed and their nearly endless endurance makes them implacable hunters. Rularuu daily sends waves of Brutes to challenge to Portal Corp cordons and defenses, only to rebuild them again once they’ve fallen to the human defenses. Eventually, he hopes the tide of battle will shift and his shock troops will break through into Earth itself.

7.16.7.13 Wisps

- Rank: Minion, Lt., Boss
- Levels: 41-50
- Powers: Subdue, Force Field, Psychic Slow, Psychic Blast, Hover
- AI:

Description: When searching his shattered memory for inspiration, one of the entities that stood out strongest in Rularuu’s mind were the Slave Lords of Epethoriil, a race of cruel creatures that held sway over billions of subjects for thousands of years before Rularuu consumed their reality. The Slave Lords were highly evolved humanoids whose advanced technology had allowed them to reign unchallenged for millennia – just the kind of helpers Rularuu could use in his war to reach Earth. He created his own version of the dread Slave Lords, although he calls them by the rather diminutive name Wisps, since their bodies do indeed look quite frail and they float about with ease and agility.

Wisps are very tall, very thin creatures, almost like living stick-men. Their arms are also quite long – nearly as long as their bodies, and end in three-fingered hands. Their legs are mostly vestigial, drooping down from their torsos like two long tails. The Wisps are always in flight, floating about from one place to another with surprising speed. Their torsos are also thin and gaunt – almost skeletal in appearance. Their heads are smooth and featureless save for two red slits for eyes and a wide circular mouth filled with razor sharp teeth. Their skin is usually a burnt orange color. One observer described them as a stereotypical “gray” alien that had been stretched out on a rack.

Wisps also have devices that give them access to a wide variety of attack and defense options, from paralyzing energy nets and psychic blasts to force fields.

Aside from the Field Marshals, the Wisps are the most intelligent and capable leaders within Rularuu's army. Many of them also continue to serve as research scientists working on the portal technology. When in the field, they're always looking for any information or technology that they might be able to recover about Earth and how to get there. In combat they're evasive and frustrating opponents. They use their maneuverability to put as much space as possible between them and their opponents. Despite their frail appearance, they're quite tough and resilient to physical attacks, although they hate to feel the physical touch of another living being against their flesh.

7.16.7.14 Sentries

- Rank: Minion, Lt., Boss
- Levels: 41-50
- Powers: 360 Degree Perception, High Perception, Quill attacks, Summon Sentries, Accuracy Buff, Resist Stealth if possible, Hold
- AI:

Description: Rularuu had always pretty much assumed his rule over the Shadow Shard to be absolute. Thus it came as a bit of a surprise when he learned that an organized group of rebels had helped extra-dimensional invaders to escape the pocket dimension. It was even more shocking to learn from his captives that some beings called the Rikti had apparently at one time trespassed in his dimension and he never knew about it. Obviously, he needed to keep a closer eye on his subjects and his realm. Then he thought back to a world he'd never actually devoured, but which one of his consumed selves had lived on. There worried parents conjured up floating eyeballs to serve as baby sitters for their children as they played in the verdant Wyrms Fields of Kresh. He thought he could do the parents one better.

Thus were born the Sentries, each formed from whatever spare parts Rularuu could find along with a tiny sliver of his own essence. The creatures are six-foot round orbs – dominated on one side by a giant, lidless eye with star shaped pupils. The rest of the orb is protected by a hard, spiked exterior. The Sentries can launch these spikes as weapons or cast a number of different Holding spells through their huge eye. The Sentries can, of course, fly, although not particularly fast. They make up for their lack of speed with pure numbers.

Since each of the Sentries has a tiny piece of Rularuu within it, the Ravager can, with but a moment's concentration, see through the eyes of any of his Sentries. He can easily concentrate on roughly a hundred different Sentries at any one time. He continually flips through the thousands of eyes in the Shadow Shard, like a security guard scanning his cameras. If Rularuu wishes, he can cease all other activity and concentrate solely on his Sentries. When he does this, he can take in all of their input at once.

7.16.7.15 Natterlings

- Rank: Minion, Lt.
- Levels: 41-50
- Powers: Scattershot (see Kuularth), Spike Shard (see Kuularth), Junk Hold (see Kuularth), Flee when injured, Natterlings fuse together when injured and form Lieutenants
- AI:

Description: Rularuu uses everything available to him in the Shadow Shard to create his army, including the detritus and biological goo that normally wouldn't have any practical application at all. While it usually requires a human mind to create an effective soldier (like the Brutes or Wisps), Rularuu can make a passable servant using just raw materials with no attendant consciousness or even brain. With the approximate intelligence of a dog or monkey, these creatures still serve a valuable role in his Army. They act as guards, scouts, skirmishers, and distractions and help Rularuu maintain his hold over the entire Shadow Shard. The key to these creatures is the addition of the shards from the broken crystals of Brutes. After Rularuu shatters them the Natterlings gather up the remnants and they are combined with other matter to form more of their own kind. The residual power from the crystals is the breath of life for Natterlings.

The basic Natterling design is a creature with short, stubby wings. The limbs are spindly and crystalline. They stand about four feet high and usually come in large swarms. The Natterlings' flesh is a mixture of remnants from the Brute's crystals, dirt, flesh, and bits of metal.

Natterlings travel in large packs, hopping about the floating islands and mystic causeways of the Shadow Shard looking for intruders and rebels. They're very good scavengers, and any piece of technology or any living thing they find they'll scoop up and bring back to their masters. In combat they primarily employ various hand held weapons – usually a gun of some sort or a sharp blade for close in work. It's not uncommon to find a single Brute or Wisp accompanying a pack of Natterlings in order to keep them in line and focused on the task at hand. On their own, they have a tendency to become distracted.

7.16.7.16 Reflections

- Rank: Minion, Lt., Boss
- Levels: 41-50
- Powers: 5th Column, Circle of Thorns, Tsou, Sky Raiders
- AI:

Description: The newest and most insidious members of Rularuu's army are the Reflections. These formless, nearly mindless creatures are composed almost entirely from energy and harnessed possibility. They take advantage of a localized time distortion field effect that Rularuu can create due to his control over the laws of physics in his realm. The basic concept is that the energy form has the possibility of becoming almost anything in the next instant, although some things are much more likely than others if events were to follow their normal course. Rularuu's power changes that equation, making the almost impossible a foregone conclusion.

The result are quantum beings that have the ability to draw their form and power from whoever they're fighting. The Reflections assume their enemy's form and general powers, although they are not by any means an exact duplicate. They're still mostly energy and resemble a cloud of purple and black lightning that's been molded into a human (or whatever) form. These Reflections have access to the same basic powers and weapons as those of the person their reflecting. They also have a rather single minded desire to destroy that person.

Of course, the Reflections are just pale imitations of the original, and don't have nearly the power level of those it copies. They therefore make up for their lack of punch with large numbers. It's fairly common for three or four Reflections to appear simultaneously to bedevil a foe and his or her friends.

Use ghosted figures of current villains.....

7.16.7.17 Storm Elementals

- Rank: Minion, Lt., Boss
- Levels: 41-50

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- Powers: Storm blast(Endurance/Health Drain), Storm Burst (AOE Endurance/Health Drain), Storm Embrace (Hold/END Drain)
- AI:
Description: Storm Elementals are phantasmal manifestations of Lanaru's mind that are composed of the dark energies that abound in the Storm Palace. They fire attacks comprised of pieces of themselves.

***DN:** The Storm Elementals should be created using the FX found in the Storm Palace.*

7.17 Sky Raiders

7.17.1 History

Colonel Virgil Duray served his country with distinction for close to two decades. First as an Army Ranger and then in the elite Meta Force anti-super villain unit, Col. Duray led his men into countless dangerous situations and always came out victorious. A fervent traditionalist and devout believer in codes military honor and traditional American values, Virgil Duray is that last person you'd expect to go rogue. But then again, it's often the zealous traditionalists who are among the first to crack when the world takes an unexpected turn.

The Joint Command Special Threat Response Battalion (JCSTRB), nicknamed Meta Force by its members, was the U.S. military's most recent response to the threat posed by super powered villains and other so-called high power-concentration threats. They received special training, the latest advanced equipment, and worked along side some of the most powerful super powered heroes in the military. From its inception in 1995, Col. Duray was a part of the unit and personally led troops into battle on over 100 missions from 1995 up until the Rikti Invasion. During the Rikti war the Meta Force was at the forefront of the fight, and consequently it suffered terrible losses. Its 85% casualty rate was the highest in the armed forces during the war, including 100% of the team's super powered members.

After the war the survivors, including Col. Duray, were weary and depressed, but ready to fight on. Their unit received upgraded equipment, including newly designed jump packs that would help them fight the Rikti in the air. They were re-imagined as a rapid response force to counter remaining Rikti forces. The unit was now much smaller than it once was, but all the members were combat tested veterans who had fought together throughout the war and were all fanatically loyal to Col. Duray. As for the Colonel himself, he accepted his new assignment stoically, but he was growing uncomfortable. He resented the fact that the world had to rely on heroes, not the military to win the war against the Rikti. He also despised the idea that non-U.S. agencies like the Vanguard and other foreign influences. The Colonel was very uncomfortable trusting so much to foreign nationals and civilian heroes with no chain of command or discipline.

The night before Duray's new squad was set to deploy he received a knock at his door. He woke up to find a package of files, photos, and computer disks on his front stoop. He spent the next six hours pouring through every document, horrified at what he saw. The package contained seemingly incontrovertible proof that the Freedom Phalanx had been responsible for starting the Rikti War and that they had done so as a conscious grab for power. Over the next two weeks Duray followed up every lead he could, and always the package's information proved accurate, even about the most top-secret information. Duray had no choice but to believe it was true. Finally, he shared his findings with his top officers and NCO's. They all agreed, their country and the entire world had been betrayed, sold out to the super powered men and women who had now set themselves up as the ultimate power in the country. When, a day later, the order came down that Duray's unit was to be transferred under the direct command of the hero controlled Vanguard, that was the final straw.

Duray and his men never reported to their new duty station. When the commanding officer of the base sent someone around to find the colonel, she discovered that the entire unit had disappeared, along with all of their equipment. Duray and his men had gone AWOL, taking several billion dollars of experimental high tech weapons systems with them. Thus the Sky Raiders were born, and soon made their presence felt in the city.

Duray retained a network of both retired and active military contacts, many of them sympathetic to his new situation. Duray and company picked pseudonyms and took to calling themselves the Sky Raiders. Through Duray's contacts they began hiring themselves out as mercenaries, specializing in working for conservative and corporate interests around the country. These mercenary activities funded their continued existence and allowed them to pursue their more personal goals: the elimination of any foreign military or super powered presence in America and the cowing of the costumed heroes who did not work directly for the government of the United States, particularly the vigilante heroes that plagued the skies over America's great cities.

The Sky Raiders' first few raids on heroes were deadly affairs. The strike teams used their jet packs and sky skiffs to tremendous effect, shooting down a number of flying heroes before they knew what had hit them. For several days no one knew for sure what was going on, but the skies were certainly no longer safe. At this point Col. Duray made a rare mistake and overextended his forces. When a large group of flying heroes banded together to "take back the sky" they managed to catch the Sky Raiders spread across the city and defeated large number of them piecemeal. This disaster probably would've ended the Sky Raiders then and there. Without any capacity to train, and more importantly, equip new soldiers, they were doomed to die out. But of course there was no way for them to make their own jump packs, sky skiffs, and other ultra-modern weapons systems. To do that they needed help.

It was then that a backer stepped forward, a man named Tyrone Lockhart. Mr. Lockhart came to the Sky Raiders through one of Col. Duray's less savory military contacts. He said that he had used intermediaries to hire the Sky Raiders as mercenaries on several operations and was greatly impressed with their performance. He also hinted that he had read some of the same documents that Col. Duray had read about the Freedom Phalanx's involvement in starting the Rikti War. Most importantly however, Tyrone Lockhart owned Lockhart AeroTech, one of the largest and most important defense contractors in the United States. He offered to covertly supply the Sky Raiders with replacements and spare parts for their equipment as well as access to new technologies he was developing. In return they would help him to continue the fight against the corruptive foreign forces that were so intent upon tearing America apart.

Col. Duray and his men were very impressed and fought on with renewed commitment to their cause now that they had such a powerful and firm base of support. They have since grown into a significant threat to Paragon City, which they still consider to be their home base and primary target zone. It has the highest concentration of heroes and Rikti, the two things they hate most in the world. It has also proven very easy for Mr. Lockhart to supply them with new weaponry and recruits as long as they operate out of Paragon City, since he apparently has many ties there. The Sky Raiders do still perform mercenary missions all over the world, usually on the behalf of some corporation or small government that is having a super powered problem of some sort. They always return home though, and continue to haunt the skies over Paragon City, looking for prey.

When Lockhart first approached him, Duray was obviously wary, and did an extensive investigation of the man and his history. Everything checked out and now the two have become good friends. What his research did not reveal is that Lockhart is in every way a servant of Nemesis. The villainous mastermind planned the entire thing from the beginning. Nemesis keeps a close eye on all military and political leaders and marks those who are discontent or who have strong scruples that can be easily manipulated. He saw great potential in Col. Duray, and engineered both his unit's transfer to Vanguard direction and provided him with the package of information about the Freedom Phalanx starting the Rikti war. After all, it was Nemesis himself who set the invasion in motion, so he was ideally placed to frame another.

Nemesis has had control over Lockhart AeroTech since World War II and has always maintained an iron hold over the entire Lockhart family. Tyrone Lockhart, the current owner, is devoted body and soul to serving his master and will do anything asked of him. He provides Nemesis with the perfect lever for controlling the Sky Raiders. For now he lets the group do what it wants – because what it wants is what Nemesis wants. He wants the heroes diminished in power and stature. He wants a renewed vigor for the government and the military industrial complex because he feels he can control them. And when the time comes for his big move, he will fold the Sky Raiders into his own ranks for the final strike on the heroes of Paragon City.

7.17.2 Goals and Beliefs

The Sky Raiders have one overarching principal: loyalty to each other and to True American Values. True American Values are of course defined by Duray and company and comprise a disturbing mishmash of right wing beliefs and patriotic prattle. They feel that the government has betrayed the people and that the United States has divested itself of its authority and handed the reins over to foreigners and unruly costumed avengers. To them this is a betrayal over everything the American Flag stands for.

The group's main goal then is to eliminate all these evil influences upon America, and as far as they're concerned, the ends justify almost any conceivable means. They are willing to lie to anyone, including themselves, if it helps get the job done. They live in their own little world of conspiracy theories where logic has no place and where only those who agree with them deserve to live.

First among the many targets that they have chosen for themselves are the heroes with super powers. While there might well be some justification to worrying about super powered individuals who answer to no authority when exercising duties commonly regarded as police work, the Sky Raiders have blown these concerns well out of proportion. They think all heroes are bad for America unless they specifically work for the United State Military. But since the whole government and military have been corrupted by foreign influences, even those heroes are now fair game as far as the Sky Raiders are concerned.

Second on the hit list are foreigners. Anyone not born in America to American parents is considered a foreign influence and therefore fair game. The rabid, xenophobic streak in the Sky Raiders' rhetoric is a relatively new development, but it has become an important part of the group's ideology. This belief has been fostered to a certain degree by the group's operations overseas, where they earn a great deal of money by killing peasants and revolutionaries at the behest of dictators and multi-national corporations. The Sky Raiders have had all their prejudices reinforced about the third world and many have taken the horrifying stance that non-Americans are little better than animals.

Third on the hit list are of course liberals. Anyone who is even vaguely left of center is liable to come under direct and deadly attack from the Sky Raiders. They have in the past assassinated several journalists and at least one politician. They are also notoriously loose in their definitions of "liberal" and have attacked individuals that mainstream society would consider very conservative, but who the Sky Raiders see as still too liberal based on their fanatic standards. The Sky Raiders have been particularly vehement in their attacks on anyone proposing peace treaties with the Rikti or any other enemy of foreign origin.

Fourth comes anyone else that they get paid to kill. The Sky Raiders are mercenaries and they have expensive needs. They will, in fact do just about anything to make an easy buck, throwing their principals aside and lying to themselves about the ends justifying the means once again. Their mercenary work mainly involves political assassinations, large scale industrial sabotage, and the suppression of disruptive forces in other countries.

One of the most disturbing recent developments is the strengthening of ties between the Sky Raiders and certain radical elements within the US armed forces. Col. Duray still has many friends in the military, some of which hold similar political views and others who are more concerned about results than politics or morals. The unscrupulous generals find money in their black ops budgets to hire the Sky Raiders to do all the dirty little missions they'd love to do but can't. With each success, the rogue military leaders grow bolder, using the Sky Raiders to not only carry out military ops on American soil, but sometimes even against civilian targets. Duray is especially happy at this development, since he sees it as the first step in a military coup that will some day take back the nation from the liberal traitors who have sold it out.

7.17.3 Behavior Patterns

The Sky Raiders are at their best in the out doors, where there's plenty of space for them to maneuver around in. But of course the down side to being outside is that everyone can see you if you're not careful. So the Sky Raiders make their bases of operations within tall buildings and sometimes even warehouses with easy access to the air. They avoid underground regions as much as possible, both because of the enclosed spaces and because so many hostile groups are active in the subterranean regions of Paragon City.

As their name suggests, the Sky Raiders are masters of the quick strike raid. They are not interested in holding territory for long periods of time or establishing permanent bases of operation. Their tremendous mobility, recently augmented by long-range teleportation capabilities within Paragon City, allows them to move in and out of the urban environment with relative ease. Even the radar systems built into the war walls have a hard time tracing their stealth equipped aircraft and jet packs.

Whenever possible, the Sky Raiders opt to catch their targets out of doors, where they can use their flight and maneuverability to the greatest advantage. When operating indoors, they usually shed their jetpacks and rely on their teleportation troops and new jump bots to give them the element of surprise. Although they're certainly not cowards, they are not brave to the point of foolishness and will always make a tactical withdrawal when it's appropriate.

When carrying out missions for a paycheck, the Sky Raiders are much more, well, mercenary. They only fight when the odds are in their favor if at all possible. They seldom wish to risk their lives for another's cause. This seldom gets them in trouble, since they rarely take on jobs where they think they might have real difficulties. After all, they're one of the most advanced fighting forces in the world and unless their enemy is alien or has super powers, there's not much they can't defeat.

7.17.4 Friends and Enemies

The Sky Raiders have very strong feelings about some of the other villain groups operating in Paragon City. They of course hate the Rikti with an burning passion, but they know all too well that they're not strong enough to challenge the aliens unless they catch them in a strategically viable situation. They reluctantly steer clear of the aliens unless an opportunity presents itself. They're unaware, like most people, that the Lost are in fact part of the Rikti hierarchy and so have not brought their animus to bear against the vagrant monsters (although they certainly have no love for them).

The Sky Raiders also hold a special hatred for the Freakshow, which they see as one of the most dangerous and disruptive forces in the city. Their anti-social, often ultra-liberal politics clash violently with the Sky Raiders' own belief system. The two tangle fairly often, although their behavior patterns seldom lead them to cross one another directly.

Criminal groups in general, like gangs and particularly the Tsoo are also seen as a plague by the Sky Raiders, but they are not above working with the syndicates when it suits their purposes. They of course distrust the Tsoo's foreign background and large immigrant membership, and the two clash more often than not.

The Banished Pantheon and the Devouring Earth are viewed as utterly alien and horrifying. They're monster and pests and should be destroyed, but the Sky Raiders are not going to go out of their way to involve themselves in such matters. Far better to let the traitorous heroes spill their own life's blood fighting such monstrosities. Let the two groups kill each other off.

The 5th Column offers an interesting conundrum for the Sky Raiders. Their history of anti-American activities makes them a logical enemy for the Sky Raiders, but these days the two groups seem to have a lot more in common than not. The Sky Raiders have begun to come around to the idea of working with their fellow right-wingers.

Crey Industries probably has the closest ties with the group, although they seldom use them in Paragon City. They do however hire the Sky Raiders for numerous missions abroad, especially in Africa and Asia where Crey has many developing interests. The Sky Raiders respect Crey and are always happy to work for the mega-corporation. As for Nemesis, well, the Sky Raiders have little contact with him, at least as far as they know. Of course he's the one who's really pulling all of the strings, but the Sky Raiders don't realize it. Nemesis' tremendous influence over the group allows him to ensure that their interests never seem to conflict.

The Circle of Thorns is a total mystery to the Freakshow and is, frankly, something they don't think about. Being at their best under an open sky, they have no interest in going down into the depths of some mysterious underground city.

7.17.5 Future Developments

In the future, once teleportation devices become more commonplace in teams of heroes, the Sky Raiders will come to play a more significant role in the ongoing war to control the teleportation slipstream. They will also develop a new type of unit from accidents that take place in the teleportation process – mutant like creatures who were once soldiers but who have been warped by the imperfect teleportation mechanisms used by the Sky Raiders.

Also at some point in the future the Sky Raiders' close ties to Nemesis will be revealed. This will no doubt cause extreme turmoil within the group, but it should end up with the group being rolled up into Nemesis' organization, much as the Lost are part of the Rikti.

7.17.6 Villains

7.17.6.1 Assault Raider

- Rank Minion
- Description The basic Sky Raider infantryman, he is usually found inside bases or target locations where flight packs wouldn't be an asset. They are typically armed with submachine guns, flamethrowers or other weapons suitable for fighting indoors and in confined spaces.
- AI Default_Ranged
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	SkyRaiders brawling attacks
<i>Machete</i>	Wounds from this nasty weapon can slow a targets movement speed.
<i>Adv_Sub_Machine_Gun</i>	Rapid fire rifle. Slightly more accurate than a standard Sub Machine Gun. Can reduce targets defense.

7.17.6.2 Inferno Raider

- Rank Minion

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- **Description** The basic Sky Raider infantryman, he is usually found inside bases or target locations where flight packs wouldn't be an asset. They are typically armed with submachine guns, flamethrowers or other weapons suitable for fighting indoors and in confined spaces.
- **AI Default_Ranged**
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24,25
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	SkyRaiders brawling attacks
<i>Machete</i>	Wounds from this nasty weapon can slow a targets movement speed.
<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.

7.17.6.3 Raider Engineer

- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** The Sky Raider Engineer can deploy a hovering force field generator to protect nearby troops. They are typically armed with submachine guns, flamethrowers or other weapons suitable for fighting indoors and in confined spaces.
- **AI Engineers erect portable force field generators that boost the defenses of nearby Sky Raider troops.**
- **SpawnLimit** 2
- **Levels** 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	SkyRaiders brawling attacks
<i>Machete</i>	Wounds from this nasty weapon can slow a targets movement speed.
<i>Adv_Sub_Machine_Gun</i>	Rapid fire rifle. Slightly more accurate than a standard Sub Machine Gun. Can reduce targets defense.
<i>Force_Field_Generator</i>	Sky Raiders Ground troops can place a Force Field Generator that can protect all nearby allies.

7.17.6.3.1 Force Field Generator

- **Rank** Pet
- **Description** The Sky Raiders have created effective Force Field generators to protect their fast moving troops.
- **AI SkyRaiders_ForceGenerator**
- **NoAutoSpawn**
- **Levels** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50
- **Powers**

<i>Generator</i>	Creates a large bubble which protects all allies inside. While active, the Force Field Generator gives all allies within increase defense to all attacks except psionic. The Force Field Generator also protects allies inside from Immobilization, Disorient and Hold effects.
<i>Resistance</i>	Force Field Generator will stay by the side of the Engineer that created it. It is resistant to Sleep, Fear and Taunt.
<i>Fly</i>	SkyRaiders can Fly!

Explode

When Jumpbots are destroyed, they tend to explode.

7.17.6.4 Captain

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description The Sky Raiders officer corps consists of combat veterans who fought both before and during the Rikti War. They've become disenchanted with both the government and its reliance on super powered heroes for protection, but they haven't lost any of their military ability or discipline.
- AI Default_Ranged
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	SkyRaiders brawling attacks
<i>Machete</i>	Wounds from this nasty weapon can slow a targets movement speed.
<i>Adv_Assault_Rifle</i>	Fires a large slug at a single target at very long range. This very accurate weapon hits hard, and can knock down foes.
<i>Force_Field_Generator</i>	Sky Raiders Ground troops can place a Force Field Generator that can protect all nearby allies.

7.17.6.5 Jump Bots

The Jump Bots are the newest addition to the Sky Raiders arsenal – a much needed augmentation to the group's dwindling numbers. Built in secret by Lockhart AeroTech, the Jump bots are amongst the most sophisticated robots ever produced for military use. It would no doubt surprise everyone that they are actually designed and produced by Nemesis, a secret that only Tyrone Lockhart knows. He supplies the Sky Raiders with a steady supply of Jump Bots and all the equipment necessary to maintain them.

The Jump Bots themselves are human sized ceramic and plastic creations that resemble a soldier in full body armor, except their arms, legs, and torso are much thinner than a normal humans. They have large, boot-like feet that contain small but powerful jets that allow the robots to jump or fall great distances. They are often deployed into combat from Sky Skiffs. They hang onto the skiff and then drop down from the sky, using their boot jets to break their fall. Their right arms comprise a versatile hard point for mounting weaponry of various sorts.

The Jump Bots have become the front line troops for the Sky Raiders, going in first and soaking up damage while the live troops maneuver for position. Lockhart seems able to supply them with a constant stream of the robots, so they never worry about using them too recklessly.

7.17.6.6 Jump Bot Incinerator

- Rank Boss
- Description The Jump Bots are a recent addition to the mercenary Sky Raiders' arsenal, and their effectiveness in combat have allowed the Raiders to greatly expand operations. Well armed and armored, the bots earned their name from their leaping ability, which allows them tremendous maneuverability.
- AI Default_Ranged
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	JumpBot brawling attacks
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<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	The SkyRaiders can Leap to building tops without problem.
<i>Explode</i>	When Jumpbots are destroyed, they tend to explode.
<i>Resistance</i>	JumpBots are resistant to Sleep, Fear, and Disorient powers and resistant to psionic damage.

7.17.6.7 Assault Jump Bot

- Rank Boss
- Description The Jump Bots are a recent addition to the mercenary Sky Raiders' arsenal, and their effectiveness in combat have allowed the Raiders to greatly expand operations. Well armed and armored, the bots earned their name from their leaping ability, which allows them tremendous maneuverability.
- AI Default_Ranged
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	JumpBot brawling attacks
<i>Adv_Sub_Machine_Gun</i>	Rapid fire rifle. Slightly more accurate than a standard Sub Machine Gun. Can reduce targets defense.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	The SkyRaiders can Leap to building tops without problem.
<i>Explode</i>	When Jumpbots are destroyed, they tend to explode.
<i>Resistance</i>	JumpBots are resistant to Sleep, Fear, and Disorient powers and resistant to psionic damage.

7.17.6.8 Sky Raiders

The eponymous Sky Raiders represent the backbone of the mercenary army. They wear advanced jet packs that allow them to streak through the sky with tremendous speed and maneuverability. They are armed with advanced weaponry and are superbly trained in its use. When in the open they take full advantage of their ability to fly and like to engage targets from a distance. However, floating in the middle of an empty sky leaves one quite exposed to counter fire and the jet packs do not offer the most secure of firing platforms. Therefore, most Raiders choose rooftops and other well-protected perches for engaging the enemy. They then bounce from location to location as the battle unfolds. When forced to fight indoors, the Sky Raiders are at a bit of a disadvantage, however they still are still heavily armed, well trained soldiers who are a match for any fighting men on the planet.

7.17.6.9 Wing Raider

- Rank Minion
- Description The iconic soldiers of this mercenary outfit, the Raiders wear advanced flight packs that allow them to soar through the air with the speed and grace of a fighter plane. They're armed with advanced infantry weapons and know how to use them with a professional soldier's effectiveness.
- Levels 23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- AI Default Ranged; if they attack with a melee attack, they'll hit and then run back to Ranged
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	SkyRaiders brawling attacks
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Cryptic Studios

<i>Machete</i>	Wounds from this nasty weapon can slow a targets movement speed.
<i>Adv_Assault_Rifle</i>	Fires a large slug at a single target at very long range. This very accurate weapon hits hard, and can knock down foes.
<i>Fly</i>	SkyRaiders can Fly!

7.17.6.10Wing Raider Officer

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description The Sky Raiders officer corps consists of combat veterans who fought both before and during the Rikti War. They've become disenchanted with both the government and its reliance on super powered heroes for protection, but they haven't lost any of their military ability or discipline.
- Levels 23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- AI Default Ranged; if they attack with a melee attack, they'll hit and then run back to Ranged
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	SkyRaiders brawling attacks
<i>Machete</i>	Wounds from this nasty weapon can slow a targets movement speed.
<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.
<i>Fly</i>	SkyRaiders can Fly!

7.17.6.11Porters

The Sky Raiders have begun to expand their arsenal and combat methodology since they became actively involved in Paragon City. Their jet packs and sky skiffs provide them with an edge in the sky and make them very valued as mercenaries around the world, but in the city streets and buildings of Paragon City, they found they needed more flexibility. Then Tyrone Lockhart came up with the answer: the city's brand new emergency life support teleportation system. As a highly placed government contractor he was able to gain access to the classified details of its operation and construction. He then put his researchers to work on fabricating a weapons system that could piggyback on the existing infrastructure.

The result was the Teleportation Troops, or 'Porters (short for teleporters) as the other Sky Raiders call them. 'Porters wear a suit of advanced ceramic body armor that is covered with a glowing network of energy conduits. Over this they wear an x-shaped harness with the teleportation controls built into their gauntlets (which look much like the standard Sky Raider gloves). When wearing this suit, a 'Porter can tap into the energy matrix of the city teleportation net and pretty much teleport at will, as long as he has the exact coordinates of where he's going. The suits are very expensive to produce and occasionally dangerous to use. Accidents with the suit are almost invariably fatal, so soldiers seldom use their teleportation ability frivolously.

The suit itself is a weapon and doesn't require the soldier to carry any other firearms or weaponry. The suit is quite sophisticated and can be upgraded in a number of different ways once the user becomes proficient enough in its use. Most of its powers and offensive capability stem from the suits ability to channel and manipulate the energies used in teleportation. They allow the suit to partially phase out of existence, fire bolts of disruptive energy, make short range teleport attacks, and other interesting effects. The suits most limiting factor is that it can only be used in Paragon City or somewhere with an identical teleportation matrix. Thus the Sky Raiders can never use these powerful soldiers on missions outside the city limits.

7.17.6.12Porter

- Rank Minion
- Description Because they have a relatively small number of men, the Sky Raiders rely on speed and maneuverability to win battles. No one is faster than the Porters, special forces trained soldiers who can teleport directly into or out of battle, allowing them to strike where the enemy's weakest and retreat from dire situations.
- Levels 23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- AI Default Melee; when they attack with a melee attack, they'll hit and then run back to Ranged
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	SkyRaiders brawling attacks
<i>Machete</i>	Wounds from this nasty weapon can slow a targets movement speed.
<i>Adv_Sub_Machine_Gun</i>	Rapid fire rifle. Slightly more accurate than a standard Sub Machine Gun. Can reduce targets defense.
<i>Teleport</i>	The SkyRaiders can Teleport long distances

7.17.6.13Porter

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description Because they have a relatively small number of men, the Sky Raiders rely on speed and maneuverability to win battles. No one is faster than the Porters, special forces trained soldiers who can teleport directly into or out of battle, allowing them to strike where the enemy's weakest and retreat from dire situations.
- AI Default Melee; when they attack with a melee attack, they'll hit and then run back to Ranged
- Levels 23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	SkyRaiders brawling attacks
<i>Machete</i>	Wounds from this nasty weapon can slow a targets movement speed.
<i>Adv_Assault_Rifle</i>	Fires a large slug at a single target at very long range. This very accurate weapon hits hard, and can knock down foes.
<i>Teleport</i>	The SkyRaiders can Teleport long distances

7.17.6.14Special Units

7.17.6.15Sky Skiff

- Rank Boss
- Description The Sky Skiff is a light aircraft whose size belies it impact on the battlefield. One of the most advanced flyers ever made, these vehicles are armed with banks of long range, powerful missiles that allow the Sky Raiders to maintain air superiority from a great distance.
- AI Default_Ranged
- Levels 20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Missile_Launcher</i>	This devastating weapon has extreme range capabilities. Its slow recharge and high endurance cost is compensated by its massive explosion and Knockback.
<i>Fly</i>	Sky Skiffs Fly.

Cryptic Studios

Background: The Sky Skiffs were originally built by Lockhart AeroTech for the U.S. military, but they never saw service beyond Duray's unit, and he took all of his with him. Designed as a heavy support unit for the jet pack wearing air-infantry, the Sky Skiff is a very fast, heavily armed aircraft. It is made from a lightweight, diamond hard alloy that makes it surprisingly tough despite its fragile appearance. It mounts two powerful jet engines capable of great speed, maneuverability and VTOL capability. It also has two gun pods capable of being fitted with a number of different weapons systems. Lockhart AeroTech continues to secretly supply upgrades, new skiffs, and spare parts to the Sky Raiders.

7.17.6.16Duray

- Rank ArchVillain
- AI Default_Ranged
- Levels 25
- Powers

<i>Personal_Force_Field</i>	The Force Field is virtually impenetrable to all attacks. The impact of some powerful attacks may occasionally rattle Duray, however the Force Field will hold, and Duray will not suffer any damage or effects from the attacks. The Force Field works both ways, and while active, Duray can only affect himself with other powers.
<i>Resistance</i>	Duray is resistant to Knockback, Disorient, Sleep, Confuse, Fear and Teleport.
<i>Flamethrower</i>	Spews forth a cone of flames and sets foes on fire. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.
<i>Punch</i>	A Super Strength Punch is a powerful pummeling attack, and it may knocks foes off their feet.
<i>Fly</i>	SkyRaiders can Fly!

7.17.7 Missions and Story Arcs

Stature Level 4 Pools

SL4_SkyRaiders_Mission1	Stop Sky Raiders from tampering with city teleportation grid
SL4_SkyRaiders_Mission2	Retrieve stolen weapons from Sky Raiders REVEALED: Sky Raiders hire themselves out as mercenaries
SL4_SkyRaiders_Errand1	Use Antigravity Matrix in killtask
SL4_SkyRaiders_Errand2	Killtask to stop thefts
SL4_SkyRaiders_Errand3	Killtask to protect Terra Volta reactor

Stature Level 4 Story Arc: The Sky Raider Secret

You save a group of mysterious gentlemen from the Sky Raiders, then follow their investigation. It turns out these men are looking into the disappearance of Col. Virgil Duray, his men, and a truckload of military supplies. The conclusion? Duray and his men have become the Sky Raiders!

REVEALED: Duray is the leader of the Sky Raiders. He's an ex-military man who used to head up the Vigilance program, a military unit dedicated to stopping super-powered threats.

Stature Level 5 Pools

Cryptic Studios

SL5_SkyRaiders_Mission1	Prevent Family from hiring Sky Raiders as mercenaries
SL5_SkyRaiders_Mission2	Stop Raiders from sending Portal Corp. lab into another dimension, in order to cover up a crime
SL5_SkyRaiders_Compound1.1	Stop Raiders from stealing recovered Rikti tech, then track them back to their base and break up a battle between them and the Lost REVEALED: Lightly underscores Lost/Rikti relationship.
SL5_SkyRaiders_Errand1	General killtask
SL5_SkyRaiders_Errand2	Killtask to protect Terra Volta reactor
SL5_SkyRaiders_Errand3	General killtask

Stature Level 5 Story Arc: The Mysterious General Z

A mysterious informant leads you on a merry chase after the Sky Raider's secrets. You uncover a deep vein of corruption within the military. It seems plans were in place to hire the mercenary Sky Raiders to perform illegal military actions! Your informant turns out to be none other than General Aarons, the man who first formed the Vigilance unit that went rogue and became the Sky Raiders.

REVEALED: The Sky Raiders continue to have deep ties to the military and military contractors.

7.18 Tsoo

7.18.1 Overview

The Tsoo replace the Yakuza from the original design. They are still an Asian gang and they should be able to use many of the existing models without too much tweaking. Their defining characteristic is their tattoos, which all follow the same pattern but which are applied in a modular fashion and in three different colors. This should make for easy to see and implement differences between the different types of Tsoo minions. They are a relatively low power group, comprised entirely of humans with weapons and some super powers. They can use both low level technological and magical items.

7.18.2 History

Ever since The Statesman and his fellow heroes started their war on organized crime in the 1930's, Paragon City has been a tough place to be a gangster. Few gangs have the wherewithal to fight off super powered heroes for long, and even those that do often find themselves confronted by super powered villains trying to muscle in on their territory from the other side. Nevertheless, gangs continue to spring up every year – the unfortunate and inevitable result of repressed social groups whose youth find themselves without any other hope for a better life. These social groups tend to be ethnic minorities, whether it be Italian and Irish mafias that date back to the 19th century or black, Hispanic, and Asian syndicates that have come onto the scene in more recent times. As long as these groups stick to small time crime they tend to avoid drawing heroic attention, but inevitably they make a play for the big time and end up getting beat back down in a hail of costumed fists.

One of the more successful gangs in the last decade was a splinter group from a Hong Kong based triad. The triads confined their activities to the Asian communities in Paragon City and inculcated a culture of silence that kept all but a few local heroes unaware of just how expansive their syndicate was becoming. The triad ran protection rackets and dominated the drug trade in their neighborhoods, and was especially harsh on non-Chinese immigrants. They held the entire community in a fear, and even the local heroes couldn't crack their wall of silence. When they came close they soon found that the triad had a few super powered enforcers on it staff as well. Perhaps the gang would have eventually drawn the ire of some big time heroes, but as it happened the triad came into contact with what turned out to be a much more dangerous foe.

Paragon City has had one of the larger and more active Hmong communities in America since the late 1970's. The Hmong are ethnically Chinese people who immigrated to Southeast Asia thousands of years ago, settling in places like Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. During the Vietnam War, many Hmong allied themselves with the United States, serving as local guides and guerilla fighters from the early 60's on through to the end of the war. When North Vietnam won the decades long conflict, they were brutally repressive towards the Hmong, as was the hellish regime in Cambodia. Tens of thousands of Hmong fled their homes, many of them eventually ending up here in the United States and Paragon City.

The Hmong community in Paragon City is more famous for its tight knit social circles and annual dance productions at the Asian Cultural Festival than for its gang activity. Still, almost all of the immigrant Hmong grew up in and around war and soldiers. Many of the men and some of the women have been fighting since they were strong enough to hold a gun or a knife. Like the rest of the Asian community, they originally submitted to the triad's abuses, because it was easier to go along than to fight. But as the Chinese gang became more and more nasty towards non-Chinese Asians, the Hmong, especially the younger men and women born in America, grew restless and resentful. All they needed was a leader to catalyze them.

Tang Tub Ci was born in Laos in 1960. From the age of ten to the end of the Vietnam war he served as a scout and sometimes a demolitions expert and even assassin for the U.S. special forces operating in Laos and Vietnam. The name Tub Ci means, roughly, Bright Son, but the soldiers took to calling him Tubby because he was so incredibly thin. Tubby quickly became one of the US Army's favorite local operatives. He was utterly fearless and a very quick study. He learned English quickly and by the end of the war was trusted to call in air strikes, carry out assassinations of Viet Cong officers, and even allowed to lead missions. By the time the US withdrew in 1975 he was an astoundingly accomplished soldier. Tub Ci's parents both died during the war, but the 16-year-old Tub Ci managed to make it over to America on his own, lying about his age.

Once here he ended up in Paragon City, where he tried to find other ways to use his talents. He worked a number of menial jobs before the boredom got to him and he started running with some of the local gangs. At the time there were no Asian gangs, so Tub Ci hooked up with an African American gang. His years of working with American soldiers, many of them black, helped him bridge the cultural gap, and his skill with knife and gun made him an undeniable asset. It was during this period, in the mid-to late 80's that the Tubby nickname resurfaced, although it transformed into his current moniker: Tub E Tang. Tub E saw one gang after another fall to pieces once it got big enough to attract costume clad attention. Eventually even the wily Tub E fell into the hands of a do-gooder hero and ended up sentenced to ten years in prison.

The Paragon City Correctional Center is a dangerous place, and not just for the criminals. It is a vast melting pot of crime and evil, housing not only your typical lawbreakers, but your super powered ones as well. While the prison is well equipped to handle such prisoners, it can do little to stop their influence and knowledge from passing out into the rest of the population. For the whip smart Tub E, being in prison was like going to graduate school. He learned from the best and picked up more than a few tricks along the way. More importantly he found the time to delve into his own cultural roots, and thanks to a few other, older Hmong inmates found out the true potential that lay within him.

One of those fellow Hmong prisoners was Pha Xiong, another Vietnam War vet who had also fought with the French in the 50's. Pha Xiong proved to be a great mentor for Tub E, teaching him the hidden truths behind the Hmong's traditional animistic religion. Tub E learned to communicate with the spirits of his dead ancestors and to call upon them for strength and guidance. He also learned the deadly, untraditional unarmed combat style that Pha Xiong had pieced together from years of study and practical experience. Tub E and his fellow Hmong learned a great from Pha Xiong, but Tub E himself was always a multiculturalist. He also learned a thing or two from dozens of other experienced inmates, picking up what proved to be a deadly combination of magic, tattoo artistry, money laundering techniques, and tips on fighting costumed heroes.

When Tub E stepped out of prison on parole in 1995 he changed his name back to Tub Ci and set about perfecting the skills he had acquired in prison. As more and more of his jailhouse comrades also got paroled, Tub Ci formed a small coterie of followers. They weren't quite a gang – not yet. They worked together, they trained together, and they learned together, but they knew better than to cross swords with the justice system before they were ready. Tub Ci taught them what he had learned and the group focused on three very special and deadly skills. One they perfected the hand-to-hand combat style Pha Xiong taught them as well as the guerilla warfare and firearms skills Tub Ci had picked up in Vietnam. Two they learned the Hmong traditions of ancestor worship, learning to tap into the ancient resources that flowed through their blood. Three they each received tattoos.

The tattoo process Tub Ci developed in prison incorporates several different traditions and is a testament to the man's rather eclectic education. The tattoos incorporate a special ink composed of rare Chinese herbs and medicines as well as the blood of the wearer's enemies. The style is an eclectic Asian-Celtic fusion incorporating magical symbols from a number of different traditions. The needles used are prepared and blessed using magical techniques from the West Indies. The result is a mystic mélange of melanin enhancing designs that give the wearers special powers and abilities. Preparing the tattoo materials takes many months and even then only allows for the inking of a small area. Thus over time the group slowly built up their tattoos and thus their preternatural power. By the time the Chinese Triads started muscling in on the local Hmong community, Tub Ci and his friends were ready.

Just as the Triad pressure was becoming unbearable, Tub and company presented themselves to the community as The Tsoo (roughly translated as the Destroyers). They broke up a well known Triad gambling house in a most public and spectacular manner, leaving just enough survivors to make sure word got back to the Triad bosses about who was responsible. Naturally a vicious gang war ensued, with the Triads immediately coming after Tub Ci and the gang with all guns blazing. The Tsoo were ready, having set up a classic ambush for the bull headed triad mooks. The Chinese hit squad died to a man, some without ever knowing what hit them. Word of these two, quick victories quickly got out and new recruits came pouring in from the disaffected Hmong youth. In the war-ravaged economy of modern day Paragon City, many of them were jobless and disaffected. The Tsoo offered them a chance to strike back at the harsh world around them.

The gang war with the Triads ended up being a tougher business than Tub E had originally anticipated. The Chinese were relentless, better armed, and had more men. Their super powered enforcers proved every bit as tough and resilient as the Tsoo's tattooed soldiers. As the Triads called for reinforcements from outside Paragon City, things began to look dire for the Tsoo. Then a miracle happened. Tub Ci insisted that his followers always begin any undertaking with prayers to the ancestors. It was during one of these prayer meetings that they discovered that the tattoos have an additional mystic property – they act as conduits to the spirit world and the Tsoo's ancestors. Ancient warriors and leaders from generations of Hmong crossed over from the spirit world to empower the Tsoo in their hour of need. This was the final boost that pushed the gang over the edge and allowed them to smash the Triads for good.

Tub E and his gang immediately set about taking over all of the rackets and illegal operations the Triads had run for years. The Asian underworld had a new ruling class, and it was the minority Hmong. Like his Chinese predecessors, Tub Ci enforced a strict code of silence on the community so as not to attract unwanted hero attention. Unlike the Chinese, Tub Ci did not discriminate or unduly persecute other ethnic groups. It was only by drawing on both his own cultural traditions and the best teachings of other groups that the Tsoo had managed to become so successful. Tub Ci was not about to change tactics now. He began recruiting non-Hmong members into the gang almost immediately.

Anyone was welcome as long as they obeyed the gang's rules and followed its basic beliefs. For all its ancient teachings and animistic trappings, the gang is still a very modern, very youth oriented group. The members wear the latest fashions, listen to the coolest music, and carry the deadliest firearms they can get their hands on. It's members walk the streets with arrogant swaggers and pistols tucked under their shirts. While there was some groundswell of support when the group first ousted the Triads, most of the city's Asian community now sees them as nothing more than another horde of lawless thugs. The majority of Hmong and other ethnic groups love the law and look forward to a day when all these gangs are gone for good. But Tub Ci and his crew have bigger plans for Paragon City, and they have no intention of disappearing anytime soon.

7.18.3 Goals

The Tsoo want nothing less than to control all of the drug trade and protection rackets in Paragon City. Tub Ci dreams of starting a Hmong criminal dynasty with all the other gangs and crime syndicates united under the Tsoo's banner. But Tub Ci is nothing if not a realist, and he knows that he might never achieve this goal. Still, there is value in setting one's sight on the highest peak and he means to do everything in his power to get there. It also means that he's in no rush, and is willing to take the time to do it right.

What Tsoo doesn't want is to challenge any of the powerhouse villain groups. He knows better than to fight an enemy he can't possibly beat. Fortunately for Tub Ci, most of the major players have their own twisted agendas that don't necessarily have any impact on the more traditional criminal enterprises that the Tsoo is involved in. Indeed, as often as not the schemes of groups like the Rikti, Nemesis, and the Fifth Column are as detrimental to Tub Ci's operation as they are for the rest of the city. If it wasn't so dangerous, the Tsoo would have no qualms about taking out any of these more dangerous groups.

This doesn't mean that the Tsoo are scared, just prudent. In fact, they're one of the most proactive gangs Paragon City has seen in a long time. The Tsoo's first goal is to wipe out or absorb all of the competition. Anyone selling drugs, running a card game, or working a protection racket had better be paying tax to the Tsoo or they go up on the target list. The Tsoo have totally consolidated several neighborhoods and are working on spreading their iron fist out across the city. They've already begun to send raiding parties into other regions in an effort to expand their holdings.

Among the many challenges that the Tsoo faces in achieving its goals is the fact that they need good soldiers and lots of them. Tub Ci has widely cast his recruiting net wide, but he plans to extend its range even further. Most of the city's disaffected youth have managed to find some outlet for their thuggish instincts by now. With so many seductive villain groups, there's always a door open for someone with hate or anger in their heart. Tub Ci is looking beyond the hopeless and into the homes of the middle class. He has planned a number of different recruiting initiatives designed to bring suburban blood into the gang and extend its reach into hitherto unreachable regions.

In order to draw people into something as dangerous and deadly as the Tsoo, Tub Ci knows that he has to offer them something they both can't get anywhere else and want very badly indeed. The traditional answers have been money and drugs, both of which the Tsoo offers by the handful. Drugs have always been a particularly insidious means of reaching the middle class, but seldom enough to draw large numbers of them into the gangster lifestyle. While the Tsoo continues to do a brisk business in the old favorites (cocaine, heroin, crystal meth, marijuana), Tub Ci has been getting inspiration from his ancestors about some less well-known narcotics.

This new drug is based on an ancient herbal medicine used to give warrior's strength and courage on the eve of battle. Tub Ci's ancestors spoke to him in his dreams, giving him the formula for the potent potion. Tub Ci then took the recipe to his drug chemists and asked them to synthesize it, giving it a little kick in the process. The result is a new street drug called Huam Cheej, which roughly translates from Hmong as Death Rattle or Dying Breath. The drug has been on the streets for a few months now and already has a following. Users know it by a variety of names: HC, Cheej, Cheese, and Rage. This last describes the effects pretty accurately: users get a speed like sense of increased energy and euphoria coupled with a large dose of very aggressive, very angry emotions. The desire to hurt, maim, and kill become very heightened. The drug does not usually cause a loss of control or induce a berserker state, but simply increases aggressiveness ten or twenty fold.

With only the Tsoo able to provide Cheej, more and more addicts are coming into Tub Ci's territory from around the city. The dealers are targeting mainly middle class kids and young people, focusing especially on athletes, club kids, and anyone else engaged in regular physical activity. Once they've been lured into Tsoo territory, Tub Ci's pushers not only sell the drugs, they also seduce them with various entertainments designed to compliment the way an user feels when their on Cheej. Loud, raucous parties are a nightly event in Tsoo territory, usually held in abandoned warehouses or empty lots in bad neighborhoods. These parties offer a heady mix of drugs, flesh, and violence, all tailor made for the Cheej head.

The most popular events are the nightly no-holds-barred fights. Men and women participate, squaring off against one another and fighting with a Cheej induced fury. The Tsoo's soldiers take bets on the action and keep an eye out for the best fighters. In addition to the fights there are the Hide and Hunt nights every week. Here anyone can pay to participate in a kind of foxhunt, although instead of foxes the hunters track down human prey wired on Cheej. Weirdly enough, Cheej addled youths actually volunteer to play the "fox." Most of the time they merely receive a fierce beating, but if someone manages to elude capture for the whole night without going to the cops or a hero, they earn tremendous respect in the community. Most of the time they receive an immediate invitation to join the Tsoo as a soldier. Likewise those hunters most adept at catching "foxes" also earn praise from their fellow druggies.

These recruiting techniques are proving quite effective. By making membership in the gang a symbol of physical prowess and status as well as a reliable source of future drugs, Tub Ci has made "Tsoo Clubbing" the new hot trend among the city's youth. The best of these misguided middle class men and women end up serving in the Tsoo while the rest simply provide more fun and funds for the gang. Although recently the local papers have done several pieced on the Tsoo parties, so far the police and heroes view them as mostly harmless. Certainly a bunch of kids getting a little crazy does not compare to the threat posed by alien invaders or super villains. This reaction is just as Tub Ci planned. He keeps the darkest and most dangerous aspects of the parties a secret while he lets less damaging stories of drugs and sex leak out to the press.

Once he's gathered enough trained gangsters under his wing, Tub Ci plans to make the next big move in organized crime. He wants to start gathering political influence by bribing or blackmailing the city's ruling class. Already he has several sons and daughters of influential families in his gang. Unfortunately for him, his recent successes have earned him the attention of the Regulators and so his hero related problems are starting to become more and more serious. Only time will tell if the city's heroes can put a stop to his ruthless expansion.

7.18.4 Behavior Patterns

The Tsoo follow pretty typical crime syndicate behavior patterns. Their Soldiers are pretty much out on the streets night and day. They like to hang out on corners and in parks or empty lots. From here they sell drugs, watch over the block, and hold court for those paying them protection money. For the most part they won't harass a hero who comes by, as they're seldom looking for trouble. At the same time, the Cheej in their system means they're liable to go off at the drop of a hat, and don't need much of an excuse to start a fight. Rival gangs and other criminals are not welcome under any circumstances and come under immediate fire. Gangs of soldiers usually have a few low ranking Ink Men in their midst, just to watch over them and make sure they behave. The nightly parties, street fights, and hunts draw large crowds of both gang members and civilians. These are wild affairs and not for the faint of heart. All ranks of Tsoo attend the parties and watch over the fights and hunts. Heroes are definitely not welcome, and Ink Men guards are usually stationed around the perimeter to keep outsiders at bay.

The Tsoo also engage in many more proactive undertakings. They seldom trust soldiers to participate in a robbery or other job, so most of the individuals involved are either Ink Men or Enforcers. The Tsoo usually choose quick, smash and grab targets like jewelry and electronics stores as well as banks and check cashing places. Their crimes tend to be pretty straight forward, with obvious goals: get money or take revenge on some rival gang. When not on a job or at a party, the higher ranking Tsoo members spend their time in one of the gang's many hideouts. Most of these are in warehouses and apartment buildings that the gang has either seized or legally purchased. These hideouts are seldom actually very secret, but they always have heavily armed and alert guards. They serve as palaces, courts, and barracks all in one. Local citizens who live under the Tsoo's thumb come to the hideouts to pay protection money, ask for favors, and otherwise pay homage to Tub Ci and his gang.

7.18.5 Enemies and Allies

The Tsoo do not have many allies in the world, nor do they want them. They've declared open war on all of the other crime syndicates, and they're doing a pretty handy job of winning that war. They obviously need no allies there. Amongst the larger villain groups, they are either regarded as too small time to matter or direct competition to be crushed. The Freakshow in particular view the Tsoo as a threat, and the two gangs clash whenever they come into contact with one another. Since the Freakshow tend to be tougher and more dangerous than the Tsoo, Tub Ci and his gang avoid the cyberpunk thugs, at least for the time being.

The Circle of Thorns took a brief look at their magical tattoos and then dismissed the gang as insignificant. They leave the Tsoo be. The Fifth Column on the other hand despises the gang, as it despises all threats to authority and their fascist ideals. At the same time they see the value such gangs have in destabilizing the corrupt American regime. Thus they let the Tsoo be as long as they don't get in the terrorist group's way. Crey Industries, Nemesis, and the Rikti all ignore the gang, with the occasional exception that Crey has been known to sell them weaponry from time to time, when they can afford it.

7.18.6 Villains

The Tsoo organizes itself along vaguely hierarchical lines, although it does not have the formal military structure of a true army. Members don't have true ranks. Instead they have duties and privileges that they have earned. The most obvious sign of a member's position is how many tattoos he has. The Tsoo tattoos give their wearers enhanced physical and even magical powers. Since creating the tattoos requires a significant investment of time and energy, the Tsoo leaders only give them out as rewards for good service to the gang.

Although the gang is now open to all ethnicities, the founding members were all of Hmong descent, and thus they have the most experience, the most respect, and the most tattoos. There is a tendency for the leadership to promote ethnic Hmong members a little faster than other ethnic groups, so the higher up the ladder you go, the more homogenous the membership becomes. While this favoritism does engender some dissatisfaction in the lower ranks, most of them realize that the Tsoo is the best game in town and still offers them more opportunities than any other gang would.

7.18.6.1 Enforcers

These are footsoldiers of the gang, men and women who have proved their abilities to Tub Ci.

Tub Ci knows that the last thing young gang bangers want to hear is that they have to do anything related to church or worship or religion in general. They want to have fun, make money, and be violent without consequences. At the lower echelons of the gang Tub Ci lets them do just that. But once Tub Ci begins trusting the member with real responsibilities, it's time to introduce them to their ancestors. The Ancestors themselves choose who's worthy enough to be promoted to the rank of Pha. They come to the chosen ones in dreams, revealing the truth behind the Tsoo and promising more power and wealth should the individual give them proper respect and worship. No one has ever refused such an invitation.

7.18.6.2 Eagle Enforcer Kama_Pha_Enforcers

- Rank Minion
- Description The Pha (which means Enforcer) are the foot soldiers of the Tsoo - they have yet to receive magical tattoos and so must rely on their own strength and arsenal of weaponry. They train constantly and are especially deadly in close combat situations.
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22
- Powers

<i>Kama</i>	This deadly weapon has a curved blade that can reduce a targets accuracy.
<i>Shuriken</i>	Small throwing weapon.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.3 Tiger Enforcer Claws_Pha_Enforcers

- Rank Minion
- Description The Pha (which means Enforcer) are the foot soldiers of the Tsoo - they have yet to receive magical tattoos and so must rely on their own strength and arsenal of weaponry. They train constantly and are especially deadly in close combat situations.
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22
- Powers

<i>Claws</i>	Claw Strike is a standard claw attack against a targeted foe.
<i>Shuriken</i>	Small throwing weapon.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.4 Serpent Enforcer Sai_Pha_Enforcers

- Rank Minion
- Description The Pha (which means Enforcer) are the foot soldiers of the Tsoo - they have yet to receive magical tattoos and so must rely on their own strength and arsenal of weaponry. They train constantly and are especially deadly in close combat situations.
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22
- Powers

<i>Sai</i>	Successful hits with this elegant weapon can increase your own defense to melee attacks.
<i>Shuriken</i>	Small throwing weapon.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.5 Dragon Enforcer Katana

- Rank Minion

- **Description** The Pha (which means Enforcer) are the foot soldiers of the Tsoo - they have yet to receive magical tattoos and so must rely on their own strength and arsenal of weaponry. They train constantly and are especially deadly in close combat situations.
- **Levels** 15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22
- **Powers**

<i>Katana</i>	Deals massive amounts of damage for its speed, but at a high endurance cost. Has a chance to deal double damage. A very deadly weapon.
<i>Shuriken</i>	Small throwing weapon.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.6 Crane Enforcer Bow

- **Rank** Minion
- **Description** The Pha (which means Enforcer) are the foot soldiers of the Tsoo - they have yet to receive magical tattoos and so must rely on their own strength and arsenal of weaponry. They train constantly and are especially deadly in close combat situations.
- **Levels** 15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22
- **Powers**

<i>Brawl</i>	When all else fails, use your own 2 fists.
<i>Bow</i>	Typical Long Bow. Long range and deadly.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.7 Ink Men

The Enforcers are the expendable cannon fodder. Scores of them come into the gang every week and many of them don't last a few months before they're killed or arrested. Those who persevere for at least six months have the potential to become a *Kua Mem Neeg*, or Ink Man. Promotion is contingent upon an initiation ritual. The prospective Ink must declare some outsider an enemy to the gang. If the gang agrees, the prospect must hunt that enemy down and kill him, taking a pint of his blood in the process. That blood is then mixed with other ingredients to make the magical tattoo ink used to give Tsoo supernatural powers.

At this point that the Ink Man must join a Color. There are three different Ink colors in the Tsoo: Yellow, Red, and Green. The Color refers to their rank in the mastery of their mystical abilities (the order of those ranks are as listed previously) Each of the three colors represents not only a higher rank but also a different class of supernatural powers that the tattoos give to the gangster. Different colors have different duties and roles within the gang. The Reds have heightened powers of agility and perception and often develop ranged attack powers. They, naturally enough, are the firearm specialists within the Tsoo, providing heavy support and working as long distance assassins. The Greens have heightened strength, toughness, and physical fighting ability. They are the toughs and the front line fighters and often assume leadership roles within the gang. The Yellows have more spiritual powers and deal with the business and recruiting aspects of the gang.

The overall tattoo design is the same for all members. It is not representational art, but rather a seemingly abstract design that, when complete, offers a map of the spirit world and the human soul. It appears as a network of lines, circles, and arcs that crisscross the back, chest, and limbs .

The Tattoos themselves are quite striking. They are not simply ink on skin. When the Tsoo are at rest the ink appears normal, although much brighter and more vibrant than most tattooing.

Ink Men take great pride in their tattoos and love to show them off. Ink Men tend to go shirtless in order to reveal their tattoos.

7.18.6.8 Yellow Ink Men

The Daj are the weakest of the ink men, but they are definitely key to the entire operation. They are men and women who have devoted to themselves to other, equally important aspects of the gang's business. The Daj handle all the business and interpersonal relationships with outsiders. They are the dealers and accountants, the con artists and legal advisors, the drug chemists and the mechanics. Daj also have responsibility for recruitment. They approach prospective members at parties, fights, or hunts and start introducing the idea of joining the Tsoo into their minds. They are master manipulators and their tattoos give them heightened empathic and telepathic powers. When they find a suitable prospect, nine times out of ten they can make the person believe it was his own idea to join the gang.

The yellow tattoos are probably the least popular because they produce no flashy effects or obvious changes. At the lower ranks the Daj get heightened Intelligence and Willpower. After that they start to develop various psychic abilities like telepathy, psionics, and certain kinds of emotion control. The highest-ranking Daj can use a mind blast to disable their enemies. Most Daj are also smart enough to know that they should rely on more than just their minds in a combat situation. They also carry pistols and knives for personal protection.

7.18.6.8.1Eagle Yellow Ink Man *Kama*

- Rank Minion
- Description Different colored enchanted inks give Tsoo soldiers different powers. The yellow ink enhances the Tsoo's agility and dexterity, allowing him to strike with superhuman accuracy and speed and making him a formidable martial artist.
- Levels 19,20,21,22
- Powers

<i>Kama</i>	This deadly weapon has a curved blade that can reduce a targets accuracy.
<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Dominate</i>	Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.8.2Serpent Yellow Ink Man *Sai*

- Rank Minion
- Description Different colored enchanted inks give Tsoo soldiers different powers. The yellow ink enhances the Tsoo's agility and dexterity, allowing him to strike with superhuman accuracy and speed and making him a formidable martial artist.
- Levels 19,20,21,22
- Powers

7.18.6.8.3 Tiger Yellow Ink Man Claws

<i>Sai</i>	Successful hits with this elegant weapon can increase your own defense to melee attacks.
<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Dominate</i>	Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

- Rank Minion
- Description Different colored enchanted inks give Tsoo soldiers different powers. The yellow ink enhances the Tsoo's agility and dexterity, allowing him to strike with superhuman accuracy and speed and making him a formidable martial artist.
- Levels 19,20,21,22
- Powers

<i>Claws</i>	Claw Strike is a standard claw attack against a targeted foe.
<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Dominate</i>	Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.8.4 Dragon Yellow Ink Man Katana

- Rank Minion
- Description Different colored enchanted inks give Tsoo soldiers different powers. The yellow ink enhances the Tsoo's agility and dexterity, allowing him to strike with superhuman accuracy and speed and making him a formidable martial artist.
- Levels 19,20,21,22
- Powers

<i>Katana</i>	Deals massive amounts of damage for its speed, but at a high endurance cost. Has a chance to deal double damage. A very deadly weapon.
<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Dominate</i>	Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.9 Green Ink Men

Gangs have always valued strength and toughness, and the Tsoo are no exception. No matter how quick you might be with a gun or throwing knife, a slightly built gangster is never as intimidating or respected as a big, strong, tough guy. The Ntsuab, or Greens, are as strong and tough as they come. Tub Ci knows that there is little point in having muscles without brains, and so the Green tattoo process not only increases the physical attributes but also the perception and intelligence as well. Thus the Ntsuab are the leadership class within the gang, or at least they have the potential for leadership.

Beyond physical and mental enhancements, the tattoos also bring with them martial arts knowledge passed down through the Ancestor Spirits. Without ever spending a day in the dojo, a Ntsuab becomes a deadly trained fighter with the mere application of a tattoo. Some of the lower level Ntsuab use melee weapons, chiefly knives and swords, but by the time they reach the Third Rank they no longer need a weapon – they are a weapon unto themselves. The highest rank Ntsuabs can channel their energy to create an effect identical to the Power Punch and some can achieve other amazing effects as well.

7.18.6.9.1 Green Ink Man Pistol

- Rank Minion
- Description Different colored enchanted inks give Tsoo soldiers different powers. The green ink enhances their mental powers, giving them the ability to dominate and entrance their opponents, which in turn leaves the poor victim extremely vulnerable to attack.
- Levels 23,24,25,26
- Powers

<i>Whirling_Hands</i>	Launches a dizzying attack against everything in a nearby area.
<i>Stun</i>	Stun blow deals a little bit of damage, but Disorients its targets a whole lot. This attack can Disorient most opponents.
<i>Barrage</i>	Barrage is a short, quick one-two combo punch. Deals little damage, but is quick and has a chance to disorient the target.
<i>Energy_Punch</i>	Powerful focused punch that may Disorients your opponent!
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.9.2 Green Ink Man Gunner Sub

- Rank Minion
- Description Different colored enchanted inks give Tsoo soldiers different powers. The green ink enhances their mental powers, giving them the ability to dominate and entrance their opponents, which in turn leaves the poor victim extremely vulnerable to attack.
- Levels 23,24,25,26
- Powers

<i>Whirling_Hands</i>	Launches a dizzying attack against everything in a nearby area.
<i>Stun</i>	Stun blow deals a little bit of damage, but Disorients its targets a whole lot. This attack can Disorient most opponents.
<i>Barrage</i>	Barrage is a short, quick one-two combo punch. Deals little damage, but is quick and has a chance to disorient the target.
<i>Energy_Punch</i>	Powerful focused punch that may Disorients your opponent!
<i>Submachine_Gun</i>	Rapid fire rifle. Can reduce targets defense.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.9.3 Green Ink Man Buckshot

- Rank Minion
- Description Different colored enchanted inks give Tsoo soldiers different powers. The green ink enhances their mental powers, giving them the ability to dominate and entrance their opponents, which in turn leaves the poor victim extremely vulnerable to attack.
- Levels 23,24,25,26
- Powers

<i>Whirling_Hands</i>	Launches a dizzying attack against everything in a nearby area.
<i>Stun</i>	Stun blow deals a little bit of damage, but Disorients its targets a whole lot. This attack can Disorient most opponents.
<i>Barrage</i>	Barrage is a short, quick one-two combo punch. Deals little damage, but is quick and has a chance to disorient the target.
<i>Energy_Punch</i>	Powerful focused punch that may Disorients your opponent!
<i>Shotgun</i>	Good at close range. Fires a cone of buckshot pellets and can knock some foes down.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.10 Red Ink Men

The Reds (Liab in Hmong) all carry firearms of one sort or another. They while away their leisure hours with shooting contests and quick draw competitions. The Reds hate to get their hands dirty or their fine clothing wrinkled and are widely regarded by the rest of the gang as lazy and shiftless. But when the time for action comes they jump right into the fight with wild abandon. Their deadly accuracy allows them to fire into melee without worry or care for harming their comrades. Their tattoos increase their agility and accuracy, but also give them control over kinetic and light based powers that further improve their shooting skills. The higher ranks Liabs can learn to dispense with firearms all together, using their kinetic energy control powers to fling knives and even stones with the force of a high-powered rifle shot. Their red rank is represented by their red pants.

7.18.6.10.1 Serpent Red Ink Men Sai

- Rank Minion
- Description Different colored enchanted inks give Tsoo soldiers different powers. The Red Ink Men prefer to use firearms to engage opponents from afar while they use their ink induced powers to siphon off their enemy's speed and power so they can't move fast enough to fight in close.
- Levels 27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Sai</i>	Successful hits with this elegant weapon can increase your own defense to melee attacks.
<i>Siphon_Speed</i>	The Red Ink Men can Siphon the Speed from a targeted foe, reducing the movement speed, and increasing his own.
<i>Siphon_Power</i>	The Red Ink Men can Siphon the Power from a targeted foe, reducing the targets damage potential, and increasing his own.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.10.2Eagle Red Ink Man Kama

- Rank Minion
- Description Different colored enchanted inks give Tsoo soldiers different powers. The Red Ink Men prefer to use firearms to engage opponents from afar while they use their ink induced powers to siphon off their enemy's speed and power so they can't move fast enough to fight in close.
- Levels 27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Kama</i>	This deadly weapon has a curved blade that can reduce a targets accuracy.
<i>Siphon_Speed</i>	The Red Ink Men can Siphon the Speed from a targeted foe, reducing the movement speed, and increasing his own.
<i>Siphon_Power</i>	The Red Ink Men can Siphon the Power from a targeted foe, reducing the targets damage potential, and increasing his own.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.10.3Tiger Red Ink Man Claws

- Rank Minion
- Description Different colored enchanted inks give Tsoo soldiers different powers. The Red Ink Men prefer to use firearms to engage opponents from afar while they use their ink induced powers to siphon off their enemy's speed and power so they can't move fast enough to fight in close.
- Levels 27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Claws</i>	Claw Strike is a standard claw attack against a targeted foe.
<i>Siphon_Speed</i>	The Red Ink Men can Siphon the Speed from a targeted foe, reducing the movement speed, and increasing his own.
<i>Siphon_Power</i>	The Red Ink Men can Siphon the Power from a targeted foe, reducing the targets damage potential, and increasing his own.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.10.4Dragon Red Ink Man Katana

- Rank Minion
- Description Different colored enchanted inks give Tsoo soldiers different powers. The Red Ink Men prefer to use firearms to engage opponents from afar while they use their ink induced powers to siphon off their enemy's speed and power so they can't move fast enough to fight in close.
- Levels 27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Katana</i>	Deals massive amounts of damage for its speed, but at a high endurance cost. Has a chance to deal double damage. A very deadly weapon.
<i>Siphon_Speed</i>	The Red Ink Men can Siphon the Speed from a targeted foe, reducing the movement speed, and increasing his own.
<i>Siphon_Power</i>	The Red Ink Men can Siphon the Power from a targeted foe, reducing the targets damage potential, and increasing his own.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.11 Sorcerers

The Sorcerers, or Neng in Hmong, are without a doubt, the most powerful and important members of the gang (side from Tub Ci of course). They stand outside the system. They did not come up through the ranks, but rather were with Tub Ci from the beginning. The Neng perform one of the most important services in the Tsoo: they are the only ones who can create the magical tattoos that give the gang its competitive edge. Only they and Tub Ci himself have the power and knowledge and support of the ancestors necessary. This ability alone would earn them the respect of the gang members, but they have far more power at their disposal.

The Neng do not wear body tattoos like the rest of the gang. They are close enough to the source of the tattoos' power that they can draw upon it directly. Through prayer and concentration they can imbue themselves temporarily with any of the powers granted to the Ink Men. They can only use three of these powers at a time however, and imbuing themselves involves a ritual of several hours. Thus they must prepare ahead of time for whatever excitement the day might bring. Once they've chosen a power, it stays with them until they replace it with another. Neng usually choose one from each color. The most common combination is the Red's kinetic energy attack, the Green's increased strength or Leaping, and the Yellow's mind reading abilities. Additionally, the Neng have their own special power: healing. With the Ancestors' help, they can heal almost any wound with a simple laying on of hands. They cannot however raise the dead, and so deaths within the gang, especially amongst lower echelon members, are still quite common.

The Neng wear religious garments of their own design. These are loose fitting, silk pajamas style clothing inlaid with the same tattoo pattern that the Ink Men wear. The Neng silks usually consist of a mixture of Red, Green, and Gold or Yellow fabrics. The Neng ritually shave their heads, and the men always have long, braided beards. While their powers provide them with most of the protection they need, the Neng are all skilled soldiers and martial artists. If necessary they can use swords, knives, and firearms with deadly skill.

The Neng seldom actually go out on the streets and tangle with rival gangs. They are too few and too important to the Tsoo's operations. When they do become involved in any kind of combat they stay in the background, offering support and healing to their fellow gangsters. The other members will invariably rally to their aid should they come under direct attack. Preserving the life of a Neng is always first priority for any Tsoo.

7.18.6.12 Sorcerer

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description The Tsoo sorcerers are the most in touch with the ancestor spirits that provide the Tsoo with their magic and power. They have a wide variety of powers that allow them to either attack whole groups of enemies or aid large numbers of friends, making them potent support players in any fight.
- SpawnLimit 2
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- AI Teleports to stay out of combat, but will teleport to most injured teammate in order to heal them. Once all teammates are defeated, they stop teleporting and fight as normal.
- Powers

<i>Brawl</i>	Tsoo Sorcerer Spirits brawling attacks
<i>Petrifying_Gaze</i>	Petrifies a single targeted foe with an terrifying gaze. The victim is held and defenseless.

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<i>Darkest_Night</i>	While active, the TSoo channels negative energy onto a targeted foe. Darkest Night decreases the damage potential of the target, and all foes near the target, as long as you keep the power active.
<i>Teleport</i>	The Tsoo Sorcerer can Teleport long distances.
<i>Chill_of_the_Night</i>	While active, the Tsoo channels negative energy to reduces all nearby foes chance to hit while slowly dealing damage.
<i>Hurricane</i>	The Tsoo summons a Hurricane. The wind and rain from this massive storm reduces the range and accuracy of nearby foes. Also, the massive winds of this storm can periodically send foes tumbling.
<i>O2_Boost</i>	Saturates the air around a targeted ally with rich oxygen, to heal his wounds. The O2 boost can also protect a targeted ally from Sleep, Immobilize, Confuse and Stun effects.

7.18.6.13Ancestor Spirit

This is an additional minion type for the Tsoo. It represents a higher-level minion that would only be found at the upper levels of the gang.

The Tsoo Sorcerers and Enforcers can, when necessary, contact the spirits of their most dangerous and evil ancestors: those who have been consigned to one of the many torturous hells in the afterlife. These dangerous souls have become like demons themselves and are now more monsters than men. When they possess a Sorcerer or Enforcer, they transform their descendant's form completely, taking on the monstrous visage they wear in hell. The Tsoo use the ancestor spirits as a matter of last resort, since they are quite difficult to control once summoned.

The Ancestor spirit's stand well over 8 feet in height and are based on the Gargantuan body type. They wear a breastplate of black armor inlaid with a demonic face in gold and red relief. Their wear horrifying black and white porcelain masks over their own ravaged features, but the masks only cover the front of their head. The rest of the burned, scarred flesh is clearly visible, giving a hint of the horrors beneath. Their legs are armored as well, and they wear high, black boots. The Ancestor spirits are masters of the martial arts and prefer to fight in hand-to-hand combat. However, they can also control the element of fire, allowing them to create bolts of flame from their hands or even a flaming sword if they so desire.

7.18.6.14Ancestor Spirit

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description The monstrous Ancestor Spirits are physical manifestations of the long-dead Tsoo progenitors. They're incredibly strong and tough in combat but are also wily - they have the ability to become intangible at will, making them slippery opponents to pin down in a fight.
- AIConfig Tsoo_Minion
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Hand_Clap</i>	The Tsoo Ancestor Spirits can clap his hands together to send out a violent shockwave. The shockwave can knockdown most nearby foes and many of those knocked down may be Disoriented. Hand Clap deals no damage.
<i>Foot_Stomp</i>	The Tsoo Ancestor Spirits shakes the very Earth itself with a super Foot Stomp, attacking everything in a nearby area.
<i>Haymaker</i>	The Haymaker is a slow attack, but makes up for it with a greater damage and a high chance of Knockback.

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<i>Phase_Shift</i>	The Tsoo Ancestor Spirits can Phase Shift to becomes out of sync with normal space. Although you do not become completely invisible, you are translucent and hard to see. The Tsoo becomes intangible, and cannot affect or be affected by those in normal space.
<i>Resistance</i>	Tsoo Ancestor Spirits are resistant to Sleep, Fear and Immobilize
<i>Fly</i>	Tsoo Ancestor Spirits can Fly!

7.18.6.15Masters

Masters have reached the pinnacle of various martial arts traditions. Tub Ci has placed these accomplished warriors at the head of his organization.

7.18.6.16Dragon Fly Boss_01

Rank Boss

- Description The Dragonfly order concentrate on the power of a few key hand to hand techniques, and on extending their inner power to control the forces of wind and rain.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Thunder_Kick</i>	A typical martial arts attack that may Disorients its target.
<i>Storm_Kick</i>	Unleashes a flurry of quick kicks to pummel your foe.
<i>Hurricane</i>	Dragon Fly can summon a Hurricane. The wind and rain from this massive storm reduces the range and accuracy of nearby foes. Also, the massive winds of this storm can periodically send foes tumbling.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.17Iron Hands Boss_02

- Rank Boss
- Description Masters of the Iron Hands technique have trained their fists to break metal. They have also mastered pressure point techniques to drain the life away from a foe and replace their own energies.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Shuriken</i>	Small throwing weapon.
<i>Hand_Clap</i>	Iron Hands can clap his hands together to send out a violent shockwave. The shockwave can knockdown most nearby foes and may disorient many of those. Hand Clap deals no damage.
<i>Cobra_Strike</i>	This focused attack can severely Disorient most target as well as deal some damage.
<i>Haymaker</i>	The Haymaker is a slow attack, but makes up for it with a greater damage and a high chance of Knockback.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.18 Bronze Leopard Boss_03

- Rank Boss
- Description Bronze Leopard Masters use claw-like weapons in combat to deadly effect. They disdain the more spectacular uses of power and prefer to concentrate on physical techniques.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 15,16,17,18,19
- Powers

<i>Slash</i>	A Slash attack deals high damage, and reduces the targets defense.
<i>Shuriken</i>	Small throwing weapon.
<i>Swipe</i>	A fast Claw attack that shreds your opponent.
<i>Strike</i>	Claw Strike is a standard claw attack against a targeted foe.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.19 Swift Steel Boss_04

Rank Boss

- Description The Swift Steel school emphasizes speed of body and of blade. Masters of this technique can extend their inner power to alter the speed and rhythms of combat, slowing and limiting the power of their foes.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 18,19,20,21,22
- Powers

<i>Shuriken</i>	Small throwing weapon.
<i>Siphon_Speed</i>	Swift Steel can Siphon the Speed from a targeted foe, reducing the movement speed, and increasing his own.
<i>Quick</i>	Swift Steel can naturally travel slightly faster and jump higher than normal.
<i>Sai</i>	Successful hits with this elegant weapon can increase your own defense to melee attacks.
<i>Siphon_Power</i>	Swift Steel can Siphon the Power from a targeted foe, reducing the targets damage potential, and increasing his own.
<i>Katana</i>	Deals massive amounts of damage for its speed, but at a high endurance cost. Has a chance to deal double damage. A very deadly weapon.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.20 Ice Wind Boss_05

- Rank Boss
- Description Through special alchemies and meditations, masters of the Ice Wind technique have taken on the powers of winter's fiercest storms. Their chilling techniques can leave a foe frozen and helpless beneath an onslaught of ice.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 18,19,20,21,22
- Powers

<i>Frozen_Fists</i>	Frozen Fists is a quick melee attack that deals light damage. Frozen Fists engulfs Ice Wind's hands in ice that chills villains. The target attack speed is slightly slowed.
<i>Storm_Kick</i>	Unleashes a flurry of quick kicks to pummel your foe.

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<i>Frost</i>	This power emanates a very short cone of Frost from the Ice Wind's hands chilling all those in its arc. This attacks slowly chills the target over time, slowly dealing damage and slowing his attack speed.
<i>Snow_Storm</i>	While active, the chill from this Snow Storm can dramatically Slow the attack and movement speed of the target and all foes near the target.
<i>Frost_Breath</i>	Unleashes a cone of frosty breath that can slow your opponent. Very accurate and very deadly at medium range.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.21Midnight Boss_06

- Rank Boss
- Description The Midnight order draws it's fearsome might from the darkest places within the spirit, amplifying and focusing this darkness into a number of devastating darkness based attacks and techniques.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 18,19,20,21,22
- Powers

<i>Midnight_Grasp</i>	A brutal attack that leaves the target exposed to dark tentacles that Immobilize and continue to drain the life from your foe.
<i>Smite</i>	More powerful version of Shadow Punch, Smite deals more damage, but takes longer to recharge. Like Shadow Punch, Smite can reduce the targets accuracy.
<i>Shadow_Punch</i>	A basic punch draws power from the netherworld. Shadow Punch deals moderate damage and reduces the targets accuracy.
<i>Dark_Blast</i>	A long range blast of dark energy. Deals moderate damage and reduces the targets chance to hit.
<i>Katana</i>	Deals massive amounts of damage for its speed, but at a high endurance cost. Has a chance to deal double damage. A very deadly weapon.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.22Death Moon Boss_07

- Rank Boss
- Description Masters of the Death Moon school have learned to tap into the powers of life and death. They can project draw out an enemy's very life, or concentrate negative energies to give themselves power.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 21,22,23,24,25
- Powers

<i>Siphon_Life</i>	Death Moon taps the powers of the netherworld to steal life from a target foe and transfer some of it to himself. A successful hit can reduce the targets accuracy.
<i>Gloom</i>	Gloom slowly drains a target of life and reduces the his chance to hit. Slower than Dark Blast, but deals more Damage over time.
<i>Life_Drain</i>	Death Moon taps the powers of the netherworld to steal some life from a target foe and reduce his chance to hit. Some of that life is then transferred to DeathMoon.

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<i>Smite</i>	More powerful version of Shadow Punch, Smite deals more damage, but takes longer to recharge. Like Shadow Punch, Smite can reduce the targets accuracy.
<i>Shadow_Punch</i>	A basic punch draws power from the netherworld. Shadow Punch deals moderate damage and reduces the targets accuracy.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.23 Lightning Blade Boss_08

- Class Boss_Grunt
- Rank Boss
- Description Lightning Blade techniques concentrate on mastering the chaotic powers of electricity and matching it with fearsome sword skills. A disciple of the Lightning Blade school can at once channel the power of lightning into every attack.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 21,22,23,24,25
- Powers

<i>Lightning_Bolt</i>	Lightning Blade can send a large blast of electrical energy at a foe. Lightning bolt deals good damage and also drains some Endurance.
<i>Charged_Brawl</i>	Lightning Blade's fists become electrically charged and the energy is released when this powerful punch is delivered. Charged Brawl can drain some Endurance.
<i>Lightning_Katana</i>	Deals massive amounts of lethal and energy damage for its speed, but at a high endurance cost. Has a chance to deal double damage. A very deadly weapon.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.24 Fire Dagger Boss_09

- Rank Boss
- Description Masters of the art of the Fire Dagger have suffused their internal energies with the power of flame. Fire comes to their fingertips at a whim, allowing them to devastate their foes.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 21,22,23,24,25
- Powers

<i>Fire_Smash</i>	Fire Dagger fire punch attack
<i>Flares</i>	A quick attack that throws Flares at the target. Little damage, but very fast.
<i>Scorch</i>	Fire Dagger attack hands are engulfed in flames, igniting the target.
<i>Fire_Sword</i>	Fire Dagger attack can summon a fire sword that sets foes ablaze. Successful attacks will also do a slight damage over time.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.25 Lost Son Boss_10

- Rank Boss
- Description The powerful strikes of the Lost Son style are used in conjunction with deadly pressure point techniques to cripple and incapacitate foes.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 24,25,26,27,28
- Powers

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<i>Crane_Kick</i>	A slow, high damage kick that can send your target flying!
<i>Blind</i>	Blinds a single targeted foe so severely, that he is rendered helpless, and unable to defend himself.
<i>Shuriken</i>	Small throwing weapon.
<i>Crippling_Axe_Kick</i>	This sharp kick that can Immobilizes you opponent and slow his attack rate.
<i>Eagles_Claw</i>	A devastating kick that can severely Disorient most opponents. It also has a chance of dealing extra damage.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.26Death's Head Boss_11

- Rank Boss
- Description The Death's Head Order have mastered and fused techniques from both the Midnight and Death Moon styles to form a devastating martial art based around control of darkness and shadow. It is said they can kill without even striking.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 24,25,26,27,28
- Powers

<i>Dark_Katana</i>	DeathsHead can channel the dark power of the netherworld through his Katana. This deadly blade deals negative energy, as well as lethal damage, and can reduce a targets accuracy.
<i>Gloom</i>	Gloom slowly drains a target of life and reduces the his chance to hit. Slower than Dark Blast, but deals more Damage over time.
<i>Shadow_Maul</i>	This deadly attack unleashes a flurry of shadow punches pummeling your foe with focuses negative energy. Shadow Maul deals a lot of damage over short period of time. Like most Shadow Punches, Shadow Maul can reduce the targets accuracy.
<i>Life_Drain</i>	Deaths Head taps the powers of the netherworld to steal some life from a target foe and reduce his chance to hit. Some of that life is then transferred to the Deaths Head..
<i>Chill_of_the_Night</i>	While active, Deaths Head channels negative energy to reduces all nearby foes chance to hit while slowly dealing damage.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.27Viridian Fear Boss_12

- Rank Boss
- Description The Viridian Fear techniques are based around amplifying and controlling the power of fear itself through shadow techniques. A Viridian Fear master can manifest the very fears of his enemies to defeat them.
- Levels 24,25,26,27,28
- Powers

<i>Petrifying_Gaze</i>	Petrifies a single targeted foe with an terrifying gaze. The victim is held and defenseless.
<i>Tenebrous_Tentacles</i>	Cone blast that envelopes all foes in oily tentacles. The tentacles deal damage and reduces the targets chance to hit while they Immobilize the targets.

Cryptic Studios

<i>Smite</i>	More powerful version of Shadow Punch, Smite deals more damage, but takes longer to recharge. Like Shadow Punch, Smite can reduce the targets accuracy.
<i>Shadow_Punch</i>	A basic punch draws power from the netherworld. Shadow Punch deals moderate damage and reduces the targets accuracy.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.28Copper Serpent Boss_13

- Rank Boss
- Description Members of the Copper Serpent order suffuse their bodies with toxins to utilize their deadly poison based martial art. Masters of the style gain the dreaded Body Fang ability, and can create poison thorns on their skin at will.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Barb_Swipe</i>	Small spikes protrude from Copper Serpent's hands that can be used to shred and poison your opponent.
<i>Lunge</i>	Extends a large Quill from Copper Serpent's arm. Lunge is a standard attack against used to stab a targeted foe and poison him.
<i>Quill_Throwing</i>	Copper Serpent throws a bunch of Quills in a wide cone arc and impale a group of foes. Impaled foes are dramatically slowed.
<i>Impale</i>	Impale shoots a large Quill at a targeted foe and impales in the chest. This attack injects a massive volume of neural toxin that completely Immobilizes most foes.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.29Far Fire Boss_14

- Rank Boss
- Description The Far Fire style utilizes internal energy to burn the very air, enabling Far Fire masters to hurl flame at enemies to burn, blind, or entrap them.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Flares</i>	A quick attack that throws Flares at the target. Little damage, but very fast.
<i>Flashfire</i>	Far Fire casts forth Flashfire at a group of foes to Disorient them and deal some damage over time.
<i>Katana</i>	Deals massive amounts of damage for its speed, but at a high endurance cost. Has a chance to deal double damage. A very deadly weapon.
<i>Ring_of_Fire</i>	Immobilize your target in a Ring of Fire. Deals some damage over time. Very Accurate! More resilient foes may require multiple Fire Rings to Immobilize.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.30Crescent Boss_15

- Rank Boss

Cryptic Studios

- Description Crescent style masters have learned to tap into the very power of the universe itself and focus it through their own internal energies. This power enhances their own strength and allows them to alter reality itself around a foe.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Crane_Kick</i>	A slow, high damage kick that can send your target flying!
<i>Crush</i>	Creates a localized gravitational field strong enough to Immobilize a single foe. Crush can also bring down flying entities. This power is very accurate and deals some crushing damage over time.
<i>Gravity_Distortion</i>	Causes a single foe to experience an intensely misshapen gravitation field, rendering them unable to take any action.
<i>Propel</i>	Crescent can open up a portal and pull in a heavy object that her can then levitate and propel at foes!
<i>Cobra_Strike</i>	This focused attack can severely Disorient most target as well as deal some damage.
<i>Eagles_Claw</i>	A devastating kick that can severely Disorient most opponents. It also has a chance of dealing extra damage.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.31Herald Boss_16

- Rank Boss
- Description The masters called Heralds have sharpened their mental focus to a deadly weapon. They can use the power of their will to render their enemies helpless before their weapons.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 26,27,28,29
- Powers

<i>Mesmerize</i>	Hypnotize painfully enraptures a target with psychic energy rendering him unconscious. The target will remain asleep for some time, but will awaken if attacked.
<i>Kama</i>	This deadly weapon has a curved blade that can reduce a targets accuracy.
<i>Dominate</i>	Tear at the mind of a single target foe. Dominate renders a victim helpless, lost in his own mind and unable to defend himself.
<i>Sai</i>	Successful hits with this elegant weapon can increase your own defense to melee attacks.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.6.32Sky Fall Boss_17

- Rank Boss
- Description The Sky Fall technique is an incredible power, but requires incredible internal power and will to master. Those who have attained it become elemental forces empowered with the might of the storm.
- SpawnLimit 1
- Levels 26,27,28,29

Cryptic Studios

- Powers

<i>Bow</i>	Typical Long Bow. Long range and deadly.
<i>Thunder_Clap</i>	Sky Fall can call a tremendous Thunder Clap that will Disorient most foes in a large area around the Witch Doctor for quite a while.
<i>Lightning_Storm</i>	Sky Fall can summon a massive Lightning Storm overhead that will strike any foe that approaches the him. Lightning Bolts from this storm can knock down and damage all foes near the strike, and can cause panic. Lightning Bolts will continue to strike for the lifetime of the storm.
<i>Thunder_Strike</i>	A massive attack. SkyFall smashes his foes with all the power of the lightning to deal a blow. The pummeled victim may be Disoriented and all nearby foes may be knocked down and take additional damage from the resulting violent release of energy.
<i>Lightning_Clap</i>	The SkyFall can clap his hands together to release a violent Lightning Clap. The Lightning Clap can knockdown most nearby foes and many of those knocked down may be Disoriented. Lightning Clap deals no damage.
<i>Hurricane</i>	Sky Fall summons a Hurricane. The wind and rain from this massive storm reduces the range and accuracy of nearby foes. Also, the massive winds of this storm can periodically send foes tumbling.
<i>Snow_Storm</i>	While active, the chill from this Snow Storm can dramatically Slow the attack and movement speed of the target and all foes near the target.
<i>Katana</i>	Deals massive amounts of damage for its speed, but at a high endurance cost. Has a chance to deal double damage. A very deadly weapon.
<i>Super_Leap</i>	All Tsoo can jump high.

7.18.7 Future Villains

7.18.7.1 Tub Ci

The gang's supreme leader is also it's most fearsome fighter. He is a mix between an Enforcer and a Sorcerer, possessing the abilities of both of them. He alone out of all the thugs has a unique tattoo color – a kind of bluish-silver. His tattoos thus give him access to all three power groupings as well as the special force field and healing powers of the Pha and Neng. He wears a uniform much like that of an enforcer, except that his is Red with gold trim instead of black. Also, he wears an open vest instead of a long sleeved top, which exposes his tattooed torso, arms, and of course head. He is a tall, strong man in his early 40's with graying black hair tied back in a long ponytail. His tattoos glow brightly at all times during combat, making him hard to hit in combat (like the Light Control power). He is first and foremost a martial artist and prefers hand to hand combat. His super enhanced strength, agility, and stamina make him particularly fearsome.

7.18.8 Missions and Story Arcs

Level 3 Pools	
SL3_Tsoo_Mission1	Recover Tsoo tattooing inks so Contact can have them analyzed REVEALED: These inks are somehow related to Tsoo powers
SL3 Tsoo_Mission3	Recover a magical scroll from the Tsoo

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SL3 Tsoo Errand1	Use Lethargy Inducer in killtask to reduce gang violence
SL3 Tsoo Errand3	Killtask to stop extortion of business owners
SL3 Tsoo Mission2	Rescue a hacker who has information about a Tsoo smuggling ring
SL3 Tsoo Mission4	Recover cursed weapons from Tsoo
SL3 Tsoo Errand2	Killtask to decrease Tsoo territory

Level 3 Story Arc: The Tsoo Shenanigans

An investigation into Tsoo activities leads to the shocking conclusion that they're trying to undermine all the other gangs of Paragon City. They're poisoning the Trolls with Superadine and tempting the Outcasts with soul-sucking artifacts.

REVEALED: The Tsoo are power mad and will stop at nothing to gain supremacy over all other gangs.

Level 4 Pools

SL4 Tsoo Mission1	Recover stolen paintings that depict Tsoo ancestor spirits
SL4_Tsoo_Compound2	Save kidnapped rock star who got into debt with Tsoo drug dealers. REVEALED: Tsoo Superadine ring REVEALED: Tsoo fox hunts described.
SL4 Tsoo Errand1	Killtask to stop Tsoo recruiting
SL4 Tsoo Errand2	Killtask to stop violence between Tsoo and Family
SL4 Tsoo Errand3	Killtask to prevent dangerous mystical buildup of ancestor spirits

Level 4 Story Arc: The Tsoo Coup

The Tsoo are still on a mad power grab. This time you have to stop them from taking out some heavy Warrior and Family muscle.

7.19 Vahzilok

7.19.1 Overview

Vahzilok is meant to be a tragic figure of sorts, a man driven mad by grief and desire to make the world a better place. For all that sympathetic claptrap, he's still an evil monster, although he would not classify himself as such. He is still a small time player in Paragon City, and although his public acknowledgment of his bizarre medical experiments has earned him a degree of infamy most of his crimes center around grave robbery rather than the genocidal efforts of more powerful villain groups. Thus it is left to the less famous, less potent heroes to deal with Vahzilok and his mechanical zombies. Still, he should prove a sufficient challenge for any group, especially when his more resilient creations are encountered in force. Furthermore, he has the potential for growth, becoming a more powerful villain as his researches advance.

7.19.2 History

Constantine Vasilikos was probably the most famous doctor in all of Paragon City. Throughout the 50's and 60's he earned a reputation as the "Doctor to the Heroes." After Commander Comet saved his life during an attack by the Queen of Lashes, Dr. Vasilikos offered to treat him for free whenever the hero had medical problems of any kind. Soon other heroes were coming to the good doctor, some who needed free care and some who paid lavishly for his quality, no-questions-about-secret-identities asked care. Word got out and soon Constantine had a list of wealthy and famous non-hero clients as well. By the time he retired in 1980, he was one of the wealthiest, most respected private individuals in the city.

His son, Demetrios Vasilikos admired his father greatly and followed him into medicine. He turned out to be an even more gifted surgeon than his father, but growing up rich and famous left him much less personable than his father. After his residency he went into the family business, taking over many of the more prominent cases. His father was very proud and confident in his son's abilities. He all but retired in 1980, continuing to see just a handful of the most famous and important clients. It was one of these elite heroes that proved his undoing. It was the second Commander Comet (the original one's son) who returned from a mission in outer space with a very deadly alien infection that gave the near invulnerable hero an annoying rash. Unfortunately, a rash to the hero proved a deadly, cancer like disease to the aged doctor Vasilikos.

With his father on death's door, Demetrios turned all his attention to fighting this mysterious disease. He called upon every friend and client in dad's rolodex for help, and indeed many heroes offered whatever advice or aid they could. It was all for naught, and after a harrowing, pain-wracked month, the good doctor died. His son blamed the heroes for his death, especially Commander Comet. But this alone did not drive Demetrios down the path of villainy. He also saw just a taste of some of the wondrous science and technology these heroes had at their disposal. He knew in his heart that if he'd had more time with these resources he could have saved his father. Indeed, he felt certain that he could save thousands, maybe millions of lives. Maybe beat death entirely.

In fact, his father's death and his own inability to save him had snapped some small, vital piece of Demetrios' psyche. He left most of his practice in the hands of his partners and threw himself into research. While still a public figure (and the city's most eligible bachelor) he saw only those few, famous clients that had once been his father's. He used his position to not only ask favors of them, but also to use tissue and fluid samples for his own purposes. His studies soon convinced him that the key to beating diseases like cancer, heart disease, and even AIDS was to find a way the perfection of transplant surgery. The more of the old body that could be cut away and replaced with new flesh, the better.

One of the largest stumbling blocks is the fact that the human body rejects anything not like itself. Rather than trying to find better ways to produce compatible transplant organs, Demetrios decided to focus on finding ways of overcoming the body's ability to reject what it was given. This led down a dark, experimental path that found the doctor discovering new ways to animate and preserve flesh and organs. His brilliant mind began to incorporate advances in engineering and computer science into his work, creating artificial systems to work with the transplanted ones. It wasn't long before Demetrios had created his first "Cadaver," a nearly brainless stitched together body of a dog that could move under its own power with the help of motors and simple machinery implanted in its body.

It wasn't long before Demetrios went too far, killing a live person to further his research. At this point the good doctor's already unstable mind split in two completely. He had for years lived a double life – society doctor by day, mad scientist by night. Now the split became official. Dr. Vasilikos abruptly forgot about his experiments and dreams of conquering death, turning all those memories, ideas, and emotions over to a new personality: Vahzilok, the zombie master. The Vahzilok personality could do everything Demetrios couldn't. He had no second thoughts or uncertainty. He had no qualms about killing innocents for the greater good. He had no limits on his sick imagination and where it could take him.

The Vahzilok personality began to set up secret labs and cutting rooms around the city and attracting followers. He began to build his army of zombies and plot and plan for the final destruction of death itself. Dr. Vasilikos continued to run his celebrity practice by day, unknowingly providing funds for his evil alter-ego. Demetrios has diagnosed himself with a form of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and has cut his practice back to just the most famous and wealthy clientele. He sleeps a lot, or so he thinks. In fact, these are the times, particularly at night, when Vahzilok takes over.

For now the two remain entirely separate, but Vahzilok knows that he only has half the time and resources he needs to complete his work. He wants the friends and contacts Demetrios takes for granted, craving the legitimacy that his other life has. The Vahzilok personality is hampered by a number of psychoses that attend his control of the jointly held body. Vahzilok feels compelled to wear a surgical mask at all times. He cannot bring himself to take it off and only does so when the Demetrios personality reasserts itself. Furthermore, his manner and speech patterns are those of a brilliant but crazed zealot. Not the kind of person Demetrios' friends and colleagues want to talk with. As for Demetrios, he has no idea what his other self is up to, not even in dreams. His self defense mechanism works quite well, insulating his fragile psyche from the madness that lurks within him.

7.19.3 Goals

First and foremost, Vahzilok wants to defeat death. He has no particular ill will for the law or for heroes. However, he has absolutely no respect for them either. As far as he's concerned, the heroes had their chance when his father was ill and they failed. They now have no right to stand in his way. After all, he plans to destroy death. What could be a loftier goal than that? What does it matter how he wins his war, when so much good will come of it in the end?

More and more he spends his days and nights in the Vahzilok personality. Dr. Demterios Vasilikos has become a bit of a recluse. However, Vahzilok does have plans for the good doctor side of his personality. Demetrios has begun to take on special clients. He will now see only the oldest and richest men and women in the city. What Demetrios doesn't know is that the Vahzilok personality is sometimes taking over and offering them a special taste of immortality, transferring their brains into youthful, reanimated bodies. These desperate, incredibly rich individuals are willing to pay anything to cling to life, and Vahzilok is happy to use the money on for his "research."

The money from these wealthy donors is not enough to support Vahzilok's ambitious research program. He needs millions upon millions of dollars for the various chemicals, machinery, and other pieces that go into making his zombies. Thus he is constantly resorting to less than legal means. Every night he dispatches his minions out into the city to steal anything of value that they can lay their undead hands on. He also sends more focused raids to morgues, warehouses, laboratories, and anywhere else that might have something he wants.

In order for his research to continue, Vahzilok needs a constant supply of experimental subjects. His human followers, called Reapers, comb the city looking for corpses and victims to turn into corpses. Vahzilok has more subtle plans as well. He has begun to sink his talons into the city's medical industry. His men are infiltrating emergency clinics and hospitals throughout the city, especially ones that cater to heroes. This allows them to be on hand when heroes or normal humans die. In the not too distant future he plans try and hack into the life saving teleportation network so that he can send fallen heroes directly to his labs instead of the hospitals.

Having agents in the hospitals also puts Vahzilok in a position to tamper with the medical equipment and supplies. Vahzilok not only steals drugs and other materials, he also has begun to alter the drugs that he leaves behind. He has found that if patients take a special series of drugs and shots before they actually die, they become much more susceptible to his post mortem procedure. Vahzilok plans to introduce these potent drugs into as many people as possible, thus upping the odds of finding useful test subjects in the future. When his spies can access medical records he keeps track of the unknowing drug recipients, occasionally dispatching Reapers to harvest them when he needs fresh meat.

Vahzilok also craves the recognition and adulation of the world medical community. As described in the Technology section below, Vahzilok makes his discoveries publicly available on the Web. He does the same thing with his philosophy. He desperately needs people to believe that what he is doing is right. In a way the Vahzilok part of him is trying to convince the Dr. Vasilikos part of him that all these monstrous medical experiments really are morally justified. While he's had no luck persuading the establishment that he's sane and moral, a number of fringe groups and crazed outsiders have begun flocking to Vahzilok's banner.

The mad scientist plans to use these new admirers both to further his research and distract the authorities from their efforts to hunt him down. He plans to supply advisors and small amounts of resources to various copycat groups, encouraging them to follow his lead and set up their own labs, create their own zombies, and generally further the cause. For the uninitiated it will be hard to tell the difference between the clumsier copycat gangs and Vahzilok's own crew of madmen.

Ultimate vindication will only come when the world sees his discoveries as not only legitimate but vital to society. That means some respected, admired individuals have to come forward and endorse the process. Since no one seems willing to volunteer for the role of spokesperson, Vahzilok plans to force people into the role. He keeps a constant look out for well-known individuals who are sick or dying. Once the medical community has given up on this person – like they gave up on his father – Vahzilok plans to snatch the poor, ill soul and subject him to his "treatment." He believes that the victim will be so happy to have a life back, albeit an undead life, that he will validate Vahzilok to the world at large. Who knows, he might even be right.

Eventually Vahzilok hopes to take over the Demetrios personality completely and announce his true identity to the world. So far the "good" doctor has resisted this total transformation, although he's beginning to become aware that something strange is going on. He has heard of Vahzilok and has read some of his postings on the Internet. Demetrios finds him quite intriguing, although he's still repulsed by his counterpart's methods. Once Vahzilok takes complete control of the body and mind, he will be able to operate much more efficiently and use the Demetrios persona to access new contacts and resources within the higher echelons of Paragon City society.

7.19.4 Technology

Vahzilok is constantly expanding and developing his research, and he is quite proud of his results. There is no greater authority on transplant medicine in the world, although his methods and goals would get him thrown out of the medical community should anyone ever discover his true identity. One important fact to note is that Vahzilok (or rather Dr. Demetrios Vasilikos comes from a tradition of sharing discoveries and peer review science. While he cannot personally present his ideas and discoveries to the scientific world, he can give them access to his information. Fortunately, the modern world makes the sharing of knowledge stunningly easy. Vahzilok publishes every single discovery he makes, along with plans for creating his various zombies, on the Web. He does not of course have his own Web site, but rather he makes periodic mass e-mailings of his latest findings.

As a result, anyone with the resources and technical/medical know-how can do all the same things Vahzilok is doing. Indeed, this is exactly what he wants. The more people working on the struggle against death, the faster humanity will achieve victory over the Grim Reaper. The scientific community has met these moves with a mix of outrage and interest. It is illegal in many countries to even post the material, but of course it has a way of getting out and there's probably not a single scientist interested in transplants surgery, prosthetics, or just plain longevity that hasn't read the mad doctor's findings. Not only have these posts got him a few more followers, they've also resulted in a number of other morally bankrupt scientists following in his footsteps

It is now not uncommon to find Vahzilok or Vahzilok inspired technology on the streets. All of these items are dangerous, but they also achieve results no over the counter product can. An entire subculture is beginning to develop around Vahzilok and his discoveries, a kind of mix between the Goth/Piercing scene and mad scientists.

7.19.5 Behavior Patterns

Vahzilok has learned the value of staying mobile and keeping out of other villains' way. He knows full well that he is one of the weaker independent powers out there (although he does not consider himself a villain). As such he respects their turf and is forced to operate in locales not otherwise claimed. He has no permanent base of operations except for a secret underground lab located beneath the Vasilikos mansion. However, only Vahzilok and a few of his most trusted servants even know this place's location. Vahzilok fears exposing his alter ego too much.

For the most part Vahzilok and company set up "chop shops" wherever it's convenient for them. They tend to like locations close to the sources of bodies. With his new initiative to infiltrate hospitals and clinics around the city, it is not uncommon to find the zombie maker's minions ensconced in some nearby abandoned building or dark alley, waiting for a chance to snatch a corpse or push a dying soul over the edge. Graveyards are another common site, especially when it comes time to create more patchwork zombie minions.

Vahzilok tends to stay out of the underground sewers and caves that honeycomb the earth beneath Paragon City. There are bigger, badder things than him down there and he knows enough to avoid trouble. However, occasionally he will find a small patch of sewer that's been cut off from the main system. Although he abhors the unsanitary conditions, sometimes they serve as staging grounds for his future plans. Occasionally he will try and make deals with other villain groups to secure a location, trading them medical supplies and money in exchange for a safe haven. There is seldom honor amongst thieves though, and Vahzilok usually fares better with abandoned buildings and warehouses.

When he does find a suitable location, Vahzilok typically secures the locale with hidden patchwork zombies buried beneath the ground or hidden away under the floorboards. They are trained to ignore anyone who knows the password, but will gladly attack any trespassers. Vahzilok has set up such safe houses all over the parts of the city he frequents so that he always has a fortified position to retreat to when necessary.

Vahzilok doesn't much care what happens to any given Cadaver. They're easy to create and since he's left the plans for them on the Web, they have no secrets to reveal. While he does not randomly turn them loose upon the city, it's not uncommon for individual or groups of the creatures to just wander off aimlessly. They are an obvious threat to human health and safety, and invariably cause a bit of fear and panic when they come lumbering down the street. Most of the time they're like bees – they won't attack unless provoked, but it's hard to say for sure what will provoke them.

The more dangerous and commonplace zombies are those created by copycats. Since he made his discoveries public, a number of Vahzilok's "peers" (by which I mean madmen) have followed in his footsteps. Creating a Cadaver still requires a certain amount of medical and mechanical know-how, but nothing beyond your average home-built fighting robot enthusiast. Some of these copycats create zombies to fight in sort of gladiatorial games. Others create them for use as muscle for their criminal enterprises. Only a few actually want to follow in Vahzilok's footsteps and try to overcome death. Whatever the personal motivation, recent months have seen a plague of these homemade undead getting loose and terrorizing the streets. Sometimes they're even under the control of some mad genius, but often enough they just get loose (maybe after killing their creators).

For the most part Vahzilok's followers keep to the shadows and come out only at night. Unless there is a specific operation that requires a daylight raid, they prefer the cover of darkness. The sole exceptions to this rule are the Eidolons, who can freely walk the streets whenever they please. They often wander for hours at a time, looking for someone who strays away from the crowd and who might make a good organ donor. Their access to medical records allows them to stalk potential donors and they often try and force these poor souls into "accidents," pushing them in front of a car or down a flight of stairs, or merely into a dark alley where a squad of Reapers waits to harvest their flesh.

Vahzilok himself never ventures out alone, and always wears his "armor" whenever he's not working in the lab. He likes to have a bodyguard of Abominations with him at all times and there is usually a bevy of Reapers in tow, waiting for the next pearl of wisdom to drop from the master's mouth. Vahzilok only sets forth into battle when the prize is truly great, like a hero's corpse or a singular chance to improve the chances of success for his research. When heroes do encounter him, they will most likely find him in one of the chop shops, assembling some terrifying new creation or tending to the needs of his wealthy patients.

7.19.6 Allies and Enemies

Vahzilok is not in the business of making enemies. His obviously illegal and immoral actions have put him at odds with the city's heroes, but most of the rest of the villains in Paragon City either ignore him or are intrigued by his discoveries. For his part, Vahzilok is always happy to meet with anyone who wants to learn about his discoveries and who might possibly offer aid.

Vahzilok has a particularly interesting relationship with the Freakshow. While he does not approve of their lawless ways, he is an admirer of their technology. More importantly, he is now the sole purchaser of their discarded body parts. When a Freakshow member discards a limb or replaces an organ, Vahzilok is only too happy to pay a decent price for fresh meat. The two groups sometimes even work together, with one or the other providing added muscle to a joint operation – usually a smash and grab or raid of some sort.

Crey Industries has publicly decried Vahzilok as a disgrace and a menace. Vahzilok took this rather personally and so disregards the Countess and her company. What he doesn't realize is that in fact, Crey Industries has an entire research team devoted to following every innovation that Vahzilok publishes online. Of course Vahzilok's methods are much too crude and unmarketable for Crey to use them directly, but they have no qualms about using his research findings to further their own goals. The Countess has even gone so far as to place a number of her operatives within Vahzilok's Reapers in order to keep a close watch on his research.

The Rikti didn't much interest Vahzilok at first. Like most residents of Earth, he found them terrifying and dangerous, a race to be hated. He still feels that way, and like the majority of humanity he hates them for starting the war and causing so much death and destruction. Recently he has come to appreciate Rikti technology, especially their ability to transmute flesh and change their own shapes. Vahzilok is certain that he could learn a great deal from their technology, but a few botched attacks on Rikti patrols quickly taught him that the aliens are much too powerful for him to confront alone. For their part, the Rikti scarcely acknowledge Vahzilok's existence. He's just one more crazed, costumed human.

Vahzilok continues to have a scientist's disregard for all matters mystical and magic. Thus he has no interaction with the Circle of Thorns, nor does he care to. For their part, the Circle tends to leave him alone, although some initiates have expressed interest in using Vahzilok's zombies as vessels for the souls of lost Oranbegans. The Circle has thus made some overtures to some of the copycat groups that use Vahzilok's technology but don't have his scientific snobbery. The possibility of Circle empowered zombies roaming the corridors of Oranbega is not too far fetched.

The Fifth Column is certainly no stranger to inhuman and amoral experimentation. Their own Vampyri are the product of such research and their lead scientist, Nosferatu, is a keen admirer of sick and twisted science. While Vahzilok himself has a deep hatred for fascism (his uncle fought the Nazis in Greece in World War II), he does admire Nosferatu's achievements. The two have met on several occasions and exchanged notes. Nosferatu has yet to reveal any of his true secrets, as he has no intention of giving away his discoveries on the Internet. Vahzilok's medical discoveries and transplant techniques have already helped save the lives of numerous Fifth Column soldiers, and Nosferatu is investigating the idea of a line of zombie soldiers based on Vahzilok's designs.

Nemesis, another master of human-machine interaction, views Vahzilok as weak minded and disgusting. He himself has had no direct contact with the scientist, although like everyone else he monitors the man's discoveries. He finds the use of dead flesh quite distaste full and is far advanced beyond Vahzilok when it comes to machinery. He does have a few plans for the zombie-maker, most of which involve getting respectable members of society to agree with the doctor's methods and then exposing them all as charlatans and frauds (thus paving the way for his own puppets to rise in the world). He is one of the only people in the world who knows Vahzilok's true identity as Dr. Vasilikos and some day he plans to use that knowledge to his advantage.

7.19.7 Future Developments

Vahzilok has plans for the future, ones that will open his research into new and more horrifying areas. First on the list is a plan to start not only raising the dead, but also actually restoring the long lost memories and consciousness to a dead body. This would be Vahzilok's greatest achievement to date, a true mastery over death. At first he will only be partially successful, restoring basic mental functions and some memories to the dead. This will work in his favor though, since it will allow him to exert a fair amount of control over his newly resurrected creations.

Since he is constantly seeking public approval for his twisted research, Vahzilok will begin by resurrecting popular people. In particular he will raid the graves and monuments of some of the city's greatest fallen heroes. The result will be undead heroes from the past three or four decades who have a major portion of their original powers and are subject to Vahzilok's will. The city will not know what to make of these abominations at first, but their role as procurers and spokesmen for Vahzilok will certainly backfire on the zombie lord, driving him even further down the path of villainy, only this time he'll have a cadre of dead heroes backing him up.

The success of his creations has given Vahzilok some interesting ideas. He no longer needs to be totally bound by the original human form. He can use his reanimated body parts to create entirely new forms of "life." Right now he has on his drawing board a sick behemoth of a creature that resembles a twenty-legged centipede made out of sewn together human bodies. This giant worm of human flesh would be a monstrous answer to the various heroes who keep interfering in his work. It would also be a first attempt to link together multiple brains into one large neural network. The result will be a creature much smarter than the average Cadaver and will offer a clue to future successful research endeavors.

Another interesting development will be the impact of Vahzilok's science on society as a whole. Already certain fringe groups are copying him, but eventually the medical community will have to face the fact that Vahzilok has achieved some extraordinary results through the most malignant of means. Not surprisingly, it will be the unwitting Dr. Vasilikos who leads the charge to use these discoveries for good, even as he condemns the man responsible. He'll found his own research lab devoted to perfecting Vahzilok's techniques, perhaps one day allowing for undead player characters, or at least Eidolon style zombies being more common in the city.

The final evolution will come when eventually Vahzilok himself dies and must be resurrected by his followers. Perhaps he will even take his own life publicly in order to prove that the process works. He will have built a special body for himself, a huge, bipedal form built from a dozen different corpses and containing a neural network of several dozen brains. His mind will become the lynchpin that directs this new, improved life form. Unfortunately his own psychoses and split personality will fracture the group brain and result in an even crazier, more monstrous mad scientist.

7.19.8 Villains

7.19.8.1 Cadavers

The Cadavers comprise the majority of Vahzilok's forces. They are simple, robot-like things made from stitching together corpses and robotic parts to create walking dead. The key to their functionality remains the semi-active brains that Vahzilok has managed to jump-start. They possess only the most basic intelligence. They can understand language and follow simple orders, but they do not think for themselves. Thus, they usually have uncomplicated instructions like "kill anything that you see."

Their leathery skin and lack of vital organs besides the brain make Cadavers pretty difficult to destroy. The only way to really kill one of them is to destroy the brain or sever its connections to the rest of the body. However, it is possible to effectively immobilize the thing by disabling all the motors that allow it to use its limbs. Thus it is possible to defeat a Cadaver by simply beating up on it for long enough. However, they should take reduced damage from any attacks not directed at their head.

In combat the Cadavers rely mostly on their damage resilience to carry them through. They are not particularly strong. Indeed, they're often somewhat weaker than a normal, living human. They can however use simple melee weapons like clubs. The swinging/hacking motion is well within their capabilities. They lack the hand eye coordination and fine motor skills to effectively use firearms. They can also simply use their fists and claws for combat. Vahzilok has taken to leaving the tips of their finger bones exposed and then sharpening them to points in order to give them effective natural weapons. The Cadavers can also vomit a poisonous bile; this is their only distance attack.

Vahzilok uses these cadavers primarily as guards for his various research locations (and those of his followers and devotees). They can either wander in regular patterns or simply stand guard and attack anyone who doesn't know the password. Since they don't need to breathe, Vahzilok often buries them just underneath the ground, like land mines. They then rise up and attack anyone who treads over their shallow graves. This ambush tactic has proven quite effective, and the cadaver lord is making more and more use of it. Likewise he can hide them in pools of water for much the same effect.

Copycats: It is important to note that, as discussed below, Vahzilok has taken a kind of Open Source approach to zombie making. As a result, there are a number of copycat zombie groups out there. They primarily make only zombies but they have the necessary plans for recreating any of Vahzilok's designs. While the primary design remains the same, each of these copycat groups does take the time to personalize their creations a little bit (sometimes quite a bit). The result is a number of different versions of zombies shambling about the city. Some of the more notable motifs include: skin dyed primary colors, tattoos on the skin, flags or signs implanted in the flesh, special uniforms for the dead bodies, and even signature weapons like specially designed clubs or hatchets.

7.19.8.2 Cadaver

- Rank Minion
- Description These reanimated corpses give off a powerful stench that's a mixture of chemicals and rotting flesh. The odor becomes a hundred times worse when they use their favorite attack - vomiting forth a stream of corrosive acid against nearby opponents.
- AI Mindless, HtH - shorter period of "seeing" - don't team up after reapers are gone.
- Levels 1, 2, 3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10
- Powers

<i>Zombie_Vomit</i>	The Cadaver vomits a corrosive acid that deals damage over time. This is a melee attack.
<i>Zombie_Brawl</i>	Relentless but slow.
<i>Resistance</i>	Cadavers are resistant to Sleep, Fear and Immobilization. They are also resistant to smashing and lethal damage but they are slow. They also are fairly dumb, and have may wander around mindlessly if there are no Reapers around to tell them what to do.
<i>Projectile_Vomit</i>	The Cadaver can Projectile Vomits a corrosive acid that deals damage over time. This is a ranged attack.

7.19.8.3 Embalmed Cadaver

- Rank Minion
- Description These zombie-like constructs have numerous pieced of metal and technological equipment protruding from their dead flesh. The entire purpose of all this machinery is to ensure these undead walking bombs explode when they're near enough to their targets to cause maximum damage.
- AI Mindless, HtH - shorter period of "seeing" - don't team up after reapers are gone.
- SpawnLimit 3
- Levels 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
- Powers

<i>Kamikaze</i>	Vahzilok Cylok Cadavers and Abombinations are pumped full of explosives and rigged to detonate.
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<i>Resistance</i>	Cadavers are resistant to Sleep, Fear and Immobilization. They are also resistant to smashing and lethal damage but they are slow. They also are fairly dumb, and have may wander around mindlessly if there are no Reapers around to tell them what to do.
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7.19.8.4 Abominations

While the Cadavers are the workhorses and experimental subjects for Vahzilok's research, the Abominations represent a second stage of evolution in the zombie making process. Like good cooking, Vahzilok determined that the most important part of raising the dead was having good ingredients. Normal human bodies tend to decay too quickly, even when they've been subjected to Vahzilok's various chemical compounds and mechanical enhancements. The bodies and organs of super powered heroes are another matter entirely. The corpse of a hero results in a tougher, stronger, and more resilient zombie and often retains some portion of its power in life.

Unfortunately for Vahzilok, hero corpses aren't easy to come by. As a result he has to take what he can get (often from graveyards and morgues) and stretch it out over a number of different creatures. The results are Abominations, which are really just Cadavers with the limbs, heads, or torsos of costumed heroes sewn on to give them a little extra punch. In appearance, Abominations are larger versions of the Cadavers.

In most respects the Abominations are like their Cadaver kin. They are not terribly bright but can follow simple orders. They are always tougher, stronger, and faster than their weaker counterparts. It often looks like they take a leadership role when fighting alongside a group of Cadavers, because they always act first and the others follow suit. In fact this is simply a function of the fact that they have a quicker reaction time. The zombies themselves can't tell the difference between standard and enhanced models. What does make them especially dangerous is that they often have some low level super power, thanks to the corpse that gave them their enhanced stature. Since they come from a side variety of "donors," Abominations can have almost any super power. The only restriction is that they have the weakest or near weakest incarnations of these powers. After all, Vahzilok himself isn't powerful enough to get his hands on the bodies of more powerful heroes and death and dismemberment tend to reduce the powers' effectiveness.

7.19.8.5 Abombination

- Rank Minion
- Description
- AI Mindless, HtH - shorter period of "seeing" - don't team up after reapers are gone.
- Levels 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
- Powers

<i>Zombie_Vomit</i>	The Cadaver vomits a corrosive acid that deals damage over time. This is a melee attack.
<i>Zombie_Brawl</i>	Relentless but slow.
<i>Resistance</i>	Cadavers are resistant to Sleep, Fear and Immobilization. They are also resistant to smashing and lethal damage but they are slow. They also are fairly dumb, and have may wander around mindlessly if there are no Reapers around to tell them what to do.
<i>Projectile_Vomit</i>	The Cadaver can Projectile Vomits a corrosive acid that deals damage over time. This is a ranged attack.

7.19.8.6 Embalmed Abomination

- Rank Minion
- Description
- AI Mindless, HtH - shorter period of "seeing" - don't team up after reapers are gone.
- SpawnLimit 3
- Power "Pets" "MissionDamRes" "*"
- Levels 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
- Powers

<i>Kamikaze</i>	Vahzilok Cylok Cadavers and Abominations are pumped full of explosives and rigged to detonate.
<i>Zombie_Vomit</i>	The Cadaver vomits a corrosive acid that deals damage over time. This is a melee attack.
<i>Zombie_Brawl</i>	Relentless but slow.
<i>Resistance</i>	Cadavers are resistant to Sleep, Fear and Immobilization. They are also resistant to smashing and lethal damage but they are slow. They also are fairly dumb, and have may wander around mindlessly if there are no Reapers around to tell them what to do.

7.19.8.7 Reapers

The Reapers are among the only truly living minions Vahzilok has. They are men and women who have willingly joined in Vahzilok's quest to end death as we know it. Although they rarely have any formal medical training, Reapers like to think of themselves as medical technicians or even doctors. Vahzilok personally trains them in the basics of amputation and organ removal, turning them into very specialized butchers who could can break down a body into its constituent parts in record time. Every night Vahzilok dispatches his Reapers out across the city to find and recover new materials for his experiments. For the most part they only take from the already fallen, but on a slow night or when Vahzilok needs something in particular, they are more than willing to kill to meet their nightly quota.

When they head out to do their dirty work, Reapers wear a bizarre mixture of medical gear and horror show fashion. They cover their faces and heads with surgical masks and wear a long sleeved white tunic and pants reminiscent of a hospital employee. Of course keeping white clean is never easy, and most of these uniforms are stained with blood and mud.

The Reaper weapon of choice is a long, thick, serrated bone saw that they wield as an amputation tool and a weapon. This oversized knife is for close in, finishing work. At a distance they use a specially designed dart gun that fires a disabling poison dart up to a hundred feet. These paralyzing guns immobilize the target and leave him vulnerable for the knives.

7.19.8.8 Reaper

- Rank Minion
- Description The Reapers are seemingly the only 'normal' humans within the ranks of Vahzilok's otherwise reanimated legions. They are trained doctors and surgeons who collect 'parts' in the field with the help of poison darts and industrial strength hacksaws.
- AI Standing back and cycling through targets - debuffing - unless attacked - area of effect that buffs villains perception radius so that when there are no reapers, the zombies see very little.
- Levels 5, 6, 7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20
- Powers

<i>Cleaver</i>	Hack through flesh and bone.
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<i>BoneSaw</i>	Saw through flesh and bone.
<i>DartGun</i>	Fires a Poison Dart that can slow a target's recharge and movement speed.

7.19.8.9 Mortificator

- Rank Lieutenant
- Description The Reapers are seemingly the only 'normal' humans within the ranks of Vahzilok's otherwise reanimated legions. They are trained doctors and surgeons who collect 'parts' in the field with the help of poison darts and industrial strength hacksaws.
- AI Standing back and cycling through targets - debuffing - unless attacked - area of effect that buffs villains perception radius so that when there are no reapers, the zombies see very little.; "Resurrect" minions when they die. Area endurance effect?
- Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
- Powers

<i>Cleaver</i>	Hack through flesh and bone.
<i>BoneSaw</i>	Saw through flesh and bone.
<i>DartGun</i>	Fires a Poison Dart that can slow a target's recharge and movement speed.
<i>Resurrect_Zombie</i>	The Reaper can resurrect a fallen Cadaver or Abomination.

7.19.8.10Eidolons

While the various animated corpses above represent mere stepping-stones on the path to Vahzilok's final goal, the Perfected are the end result. These are humans who Vahzilok has given his newest and best treatments to – men and women who have managed to escape death and find potentially eternal life in a reanimated body. Unlike the other creations, these “zombies” can pass for human, especially with the right clothes and make-up. Closer examination reveals that their faces are pale and gaunt and the eyes tend to turn red or yellow. The bodies are also sometimes a little hunched or misshapen since it is often necessary to use parts not originally meant to go together.

The only real problem is that they need to have their skin and other parts replaced or renewed on a regular basis. Thus the Eidolons require a regular supply of fresh body parts to stay their healthy best. Additionally, they need regular injections of Vahzilok's restorative drugs to remain active youthful in appearance. It costs Vahzilok close to a million dollars to produce an Eidolon and it takes between 30 and 45 thousand dollars worth of materials to maintain the body each month. Not surprisingly then, only Vahzilok's richest or most favored friends get access to this treatment. In return they lend their talents and resources to helping Vahzilok maintain his operation.

In order to prolong the new body's effectiveness and resilience, Vahzilok has incorporated a number of super powered tissue elements into the standard treatment for Eidolons. Thus Eidolons sometimes have low-level super powers like energy blast or power punch. All of them possess a tougher than average strength and toughness. Eidolons have the advantage of being able to walk the streets unnoticed. Thus they often act as advance scouts or a kind of special forces unit. They infiltrate an area that has something Vahzilok wants – bodies, money, parts, technology – and prepare the way for the more fearsome looking creatures to come.

7.19.8.11Mire Eidolon

- Rank Boss

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- **Description** The Eidolons are the next great evolutionary leap in Vahzilok's creations. Unlike the cadavers, they retain all of their memories and personality, and thus allow the lucky reanimated few to cheat death. They're also made from the remains of heroes, giving them super powers to help continue their unives. Mire Eidolons have master the ability to control Darkness itself. They tend to root their foes with tendrils of darkness and then launch into an attack.
- **AI** Melee preferred
- **SpawnLimit** 1
- **Levels** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
- **Powers**

<i>Night_Fall</i>	Unleashes a burst of netherworld particles in a narrow cone at modest range. All targets in the cone area take damage and have a reduced chance to hit.
<i>Brawl</i>	When all else fails, a villain has only his two fists to depend on
<i>Dark_Regeneration</i>	Tap the dark powers of the netherworld to drain a small amount of life from your nearby enemies to heal yourself.
<i>Tenebrous_Tentacles</i>	Cone blast that envelopes all foes in oily tentacles. The tentacles deal damage and reduces the targets chance to hit while they Immobilize the targets.
<i>Dark_Blast</i>	A long range blast of dark energy. Deals moderate damage and reduces the targets chance to hit.

7.19.8.12Mirk Eidolon

- **Rank** Boss
- **Description** The Eidolons are the next great evolutionary leap in Vahzilok's creations. Unlike the cadavers, they retain all of their memories and personality, and thus allow the lucky reanimated few to cheat death. They're also made from the remains of heroes, giving them super powers to help continue their unives. Mirk Eidolons, like the Mire Eidolons, have mastered the ability to control darkness. Their abilities, however, are quite different. They immobilize their opponents, but also drain their life.
- **AI** Melee Preferred
- **SpawnLimit** 1
- **Levels** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
- **Powers**

<i>Midnight_Grasp</i>	A brutal attack that leaves the target exposed to dark tentacles that Immobilize and continue to drain the life from your foe.
<i>Oppressive_Gloom</i>	Taps the dark powers of the netherworld to drain a small amount of life from yourself, to keep your nearby enemies Disoriented!
<i>Dark_Embrace</i>	The Eidolon taps into the energy of the netherworld to protect him from damage. Dark Embrace shrouds the Eidolon in darkness and grants the Eidolon resistance to Lethal, Smashing, and Negative Energy Damage. Cannot be used at the same time as Murky Cloud or Obsidian Shield.
<i>Shadow_Punch</i>	A basic punch draws power from the netherworld. Shadow Punch deals moderate damage and reduces the targets accuracy.
<i>Dark_Blast</i>	A long range blast of dark energy. Deals moderate damage and reduces the targets chance to hit.

7.19.8.13 Luminous Eidolon

- Rank Boss
- Description The Eidolons are the next great evolutionary leap in Vahzilok's creations. Unlike the cadavers, they retain all of their memories and personality, and thus allow the lucky reanimated few to cheat death. They're also made from the remains of heroes, giving them super powers to help continue their unlives. The Luminous Eidolons toss blasts of radiation to weaken their foes; they are masters of long ranged attacks.
- AI Melee Preferred
- SpawnLimit 2
- Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
- Powers

<i>Focus</i>	The Eidolon can Focus his mind to evade many attacks.
<i>Brawl</i>	When all else fails, a villain has only his two fists to depend on
<i>X-Ray_Beam</i>	Sends a ray of X-ray radiation energy that deals heavy damage. X-Ray Beam can bypass some of a targets defenses and reduce the targets defense.
<i>Neutron_Bomb</i>	This devastating attack lobbs an explosive sphere of deadly radiation damaging the target and all nearby foes. Neutron Bomb can bypass some of a targets defenses and reduce the targets defense.
<i>Neutrino_Bolt</i>	A very quick, but low damage attack. Neutrino Blast can reduce the targets defense.
<i>Electron_Haze</i>	A short range conical blast of electron radiation. This attack can bypass some of a targets defenses and reduce the targets defense. It can also knock down some targets.
<i>Irradiate</i>	Emits radiation in all directions, damaging all nearby foes over a short duration. Like other Radiation attacks, this power can bypass some of a targets defenses. Irradiate severely reduces the targets defense.

7.19.8.14 Vahzilok

Vahzilok himself is a normal, fit, middle aged man. He's handsome, well spoken, and very charismatic. In his Demetrios Vasilikos persona he is a media and society darling. In his Vahzilok persona he is a driven zealot who can inspire men to do great horrors and still think they're morally justified. As Vahzilok he always hides his face behind a surgical mask. Heroes however, will never encounter the man without his armor. In a world filled with flying, costumed freaks, Vahzilok has taken the precaution of creating a suit of "armor" to put him on an even playing field with the super powered meddlers. The suit consists of flesh, bone, and muscle taken from the best corpses to come through Vahzilok's cutting rooms. He has stitched them together with powerful hydraulic machinery to create a device that makes him incredibly strong and tough.

Beyond its raw strength and size, Vahzilok has built the suit to incorporate the flesh and powers of fallen heroes, much like his Eidolons and Enhanced Zombies. Vahzilok of course saves the best for himself, and can change out the "power organs" for different purposes. He has yet to recover flesh potent enough to let him fly or teleport, but he has a number of different control powers at his disposal. Vahzilok intends to make more of these battle suits for his reapers, once he works all the kinks out of this original model.

7.19.8.15 Dr. Vahzilok

- Rank ArchVillain

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- **Description** The insane leader of the Vahzilok comes across more like a religious zealot than an arch-fiend. Dr. Vahzilok continually exclaims that all he wants to do is to overcome death itself. In his twisted logic, the horrid reanimated corpses are only stepping stones towards greater medical miracles.
- **AI** Default
- **Levels** 15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22
- **Powers**

<i>Assault_Rifle</i>	Quickly fires a burst or rounds at a single target at very long range. Damage is average, but the fire rate is fast. Can also reduce targets defense.
<i>Grenade_Launcher</i>	Launches an M30 Grenade at long range from under the barrel of your Assault rifle. This explosion from this grenade affects all within the blast and can knock them back.
<i>Blade</i>	The WarHulk has a built in Claw that can shred foes.
<i>Resistance</i>	Dr. Vahzilok is resistant to Knockback, Disorient, Sleep, Confuse, Fear, Teleport and smashing damage. However. He is vulnerable to lethal damage and is a little slow

7.19.9 Missions and Story Arcs

Intro Tasks

SERAPH_Intro.1	Vahzilok introduced. Save one of their victims, who mentions a puzzling reference to 'the doctor.' He also says he was handled with care.
SERAPH_Intro-GC.1	Vahzilok introduced. Save one of their victims, who says he was handled with care.

Stature Level 1 Pools

L1_P_Vahzilok_Mission1	Track down wealthy citizens who have disappeared. A hostage admits Dr. Vahzilok offered to help her cheat death—but she didn't realize he meant to turn her into a zombie! REVEALED: Dr. Vahzilok takes money to help people cheat death
L1_P_Vahzilok_Mission2	Investigate strange medical conference in sewers. Find grizzly research notes. REVEALED: Dr. Vahzilok's gruesome techniques for reanimation
L1_P_Vahzilok_Compound2.2	Take data on Vahzilok to Jose Brogan, who tips you off to a Vahzilok lab. Bust it up, save some hostages, acquire research data. REVEALED: Vahzilok conducting 'involuntary organ donations'
L1_P_Vahzilok_Mission1-GC	Save Chiron Med Center patients who the Vahzilok took for experimentation
L1_P_Vahzilok_Mission2-GC	Seek clue to Vahzilok's identity. Find a corpse autopsied with a surgeon's precision

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	REVEALED: Dr. Vahzilok probably has a background in legitimate medicine.
L1_P_Vahzilok_Compound1-GC	Take data on Vahzilok to Henry Peter Wong, who tips you off to a Vahzilok lab. Bust it up, save some hostages, acquire research data. REVEALED: Vahzilok conducting ‘involuntary organ donations’
L1_P_Vahzilok_Errand1-GC	Patrol to quell Vahzilok activity. REVEALED: Disease follows in the Vahzilok’s wake
L1_P_Vahzilok_Errand2-GC	Killtask to prevent kidnappings

Stature Level 2 Pools

SL2_Vahzilok_Mission1	Stop theft of corpses from mortuary
SL2_Vahzilok_Errand1	Killtask to learn whether Vahzilok target certain victims REVEALED: Vahzilok kidnapping are sometimes targeted
SL2_Vahzilok_Errand2	Killtask to prevent kidnappings

Stature Level 2 Story Arc: The Vahzilok Pollutant Plot

Several clues lead you to a horrifying conclusion: the Vahzilok plan to introduce some strange drug to the water system! Your contact surmises that it’s a drug to hamper the human immune system, making citizens more vulnerable to Vahzilok’s machinations.

Stature Level 2 Task Force Story Arc: Electricity, Electricity

A series of missions leads you to the conclusion that 3 separate villain groups are all interested in the Paragon City Dam. The Clockwork plan to destroy it, the Vahzilok plan to poison it, and the Circle wants to employ it as a focus for some sort of magic ritual. You have to stop the violence between the groups and make sure their varied plots fail.

Stature Level 2.5 Pools

SL2_Vahzilok_Mission2.1	Rescue a surgeon forced to participate in macabre experiments REVEALED: Vahzilok posts his note to Internet
SL2_Vahzilok_Errand4	Killtask to collect data for a newspaper interview
SL2_Vahzilok_Errand3.1	Killtask to stop theft of medical equipment

Stature Level 3 Pools

SL3_Vahzilok_Mission1	Vahzilok have developed a wasting disease. Destroy the contaminant before it's released
SL3_Vahzilok_Errand1	Killtask to decrease disease in Paragon City
SL3_Vahzilok_Errand2	Killtask to stop kidnappings
SL3_Vahzilok_Errand3	Killtask to stop organ thefts
SL3_Vahzilok_Mission2.1	<p>Stop an Eidolon from performing a magic sacrifice that will restore her beauty</p> <p>REVEALED: The Eidolons remember their human lives</p>

Stature Level 3 Story Arc: The Vahzilok Plague

The Vahzilok have developed a terrible wasting disease. Though infected yourself, you help the city respond to this dire threat, and eventually eliminate all the disease's carriers. You come face to face with Vahzilok himself, who seems just as concerned with containing the plague!

REVEALED: Perhaps Vahzilok really does care about the harm he causes.

