

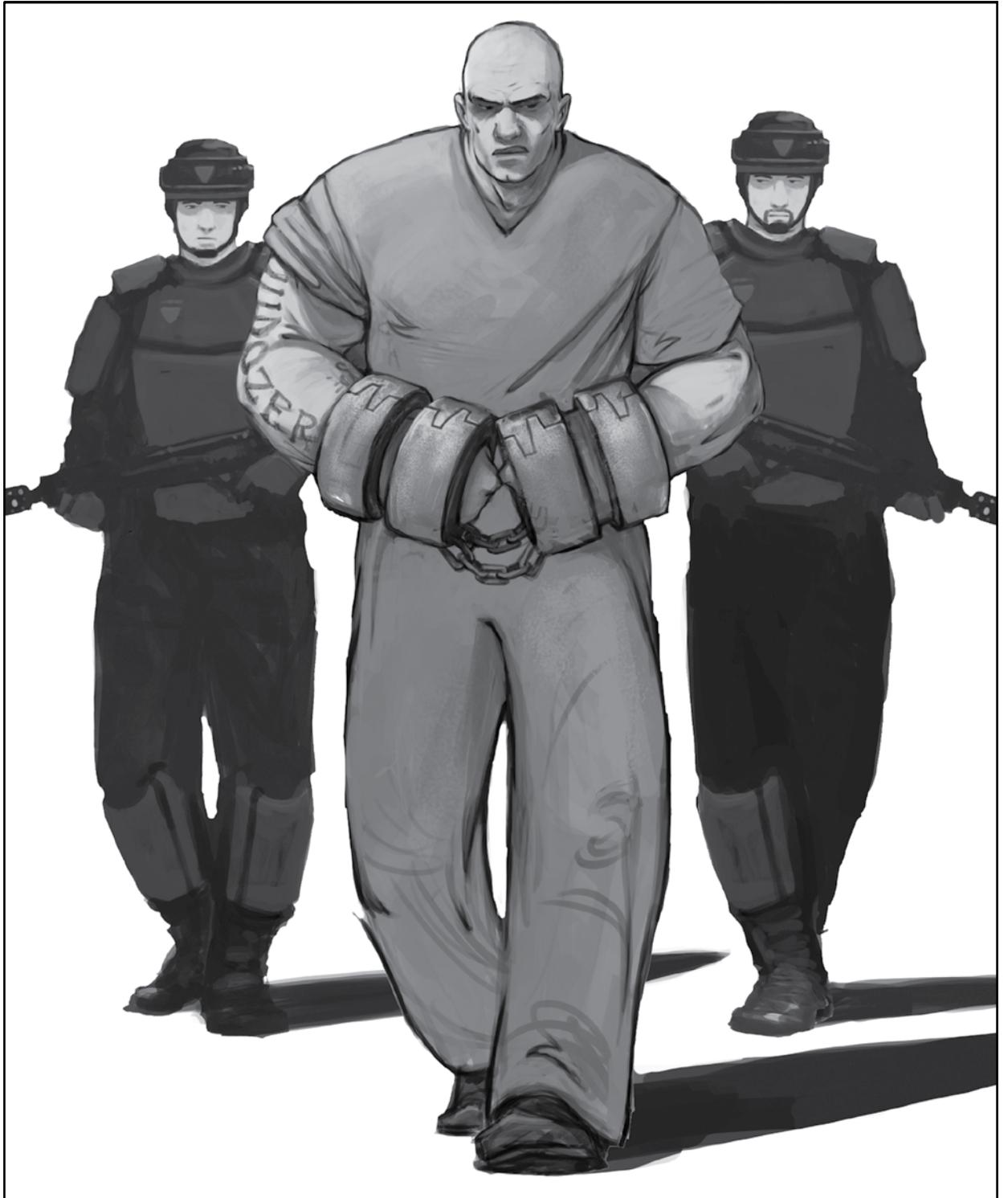
A sourcebook for  
**CHAMPIONS**

# STRONGHOLD



**STEVEN S. LONG & JOHN LEES**

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A Setting Book For *Champions*

**Author:** Steven S. Long, John Lees

**Additional Contributions:** Scott Bennie

**Editing and Developing:** Darren Watts

**Layout & Graphic Design:** Andy Mathews

**Cover Illustration:** Andrew Bosley

**Cartography:** John Lees

**Interior Illustration:** Storn Cook, Brendon and Brian Fraim, Scott Heine, Sam Kennedy, Eric Lofgren, Brad Nault, Greg Smith, Kay Steele, Tony Steele, Eric von Hase, William Withers, Pat Zircher

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# INTRODUCTION



In a world where supervillains exist, some troubling issues arise. One of the most intriguing is this: once they're caught — assuming the authorities can capture them at all — how do you keep them prisoner through their trial and, possibly, prison sentence? Villains can smash jail cell bars with their bare fists, teleport, walk through walls, control guards' minds, and do all sorts of other things that basically makes it impossible to keep them prisoner in a conventional penitentiary. Some, particularly those who get their powers from gadgets, can be sent to a mainstream prison population... but others require a more drastic solution.

Enter Stronghold, the prison for superhuman criminals. Conceived, designed, and built by the brilliant but eccentric Dr. Charles Wildman in the mid-Seventies, it's housed hundreds of Champions Universe supervillains over the decades. Despite some well-publicized escapes — most notably the “Great Stronghold Breakout” of 1990 — it's established an enviable track record for its security and efficiency. Organizations and nations all over the world have copied it to help them cope with their own villain problems.

*Stronghold* is your guide to this super-prison — everything from its history, facilities, and procedures to the people and inmates who make it run. It includes everything the GM needs to incorporate Stronghold and Stronghold-based adventures into his campaign.

## PRISON “REALISM”

As prisons go, Stronghold is pretty restrictive and tough — it has to be, to hold the kind of inmates it's intended to keep incarcerated. However, “realistically” it's not as harsh a place as it could be. There are “supermax” prisons in the United States today that impose far stricter discipline on inmates and allow them far less contact with each other and the outside world. While you could make Stronghold that confining, too much emphasis on realism overlooks Stronghold's primary purpose. It's not intended to be a “realistic” prison so much as it is to generate stories and plot seeds for your *Champions* campaign. It fails at that purpose if it's too difficult to break out of (or into), if it restricts prisoners' interaction with each other too much, or if it chokes off other story possibilities purely in the name of “realism.”

In short — you can definitely make Stronghold more “realistic” if you want to... but if you do it probably won't provide you with nearly as much fun as a part of your *Champions* game.

Chapter One, *The Supervillain In The Arms Of The Law*, starts at the very beginning, when the supervillain is captured. It discusses what happens to him after that: how he's held and transported; how the state puts him on trial. In addition to examining how you can use the criminal justice system in your games, it discusses how the law applies to supervillains in the Champions Universe — everything from whether information gained by Telepathy is admissible in court to whether aliens and vampires have civil rights under the Constitution.

Chapter Two, *Welcome To Stronghold*, picks up where Chapter One leaves off: the villain's arrival at his new “home away from home.” It reviews the history of the super-prison and describes Stronghold's layout and physical facilities. It also discusses (and provides *HERO System* write-ups for) Stronghold's security technologies.

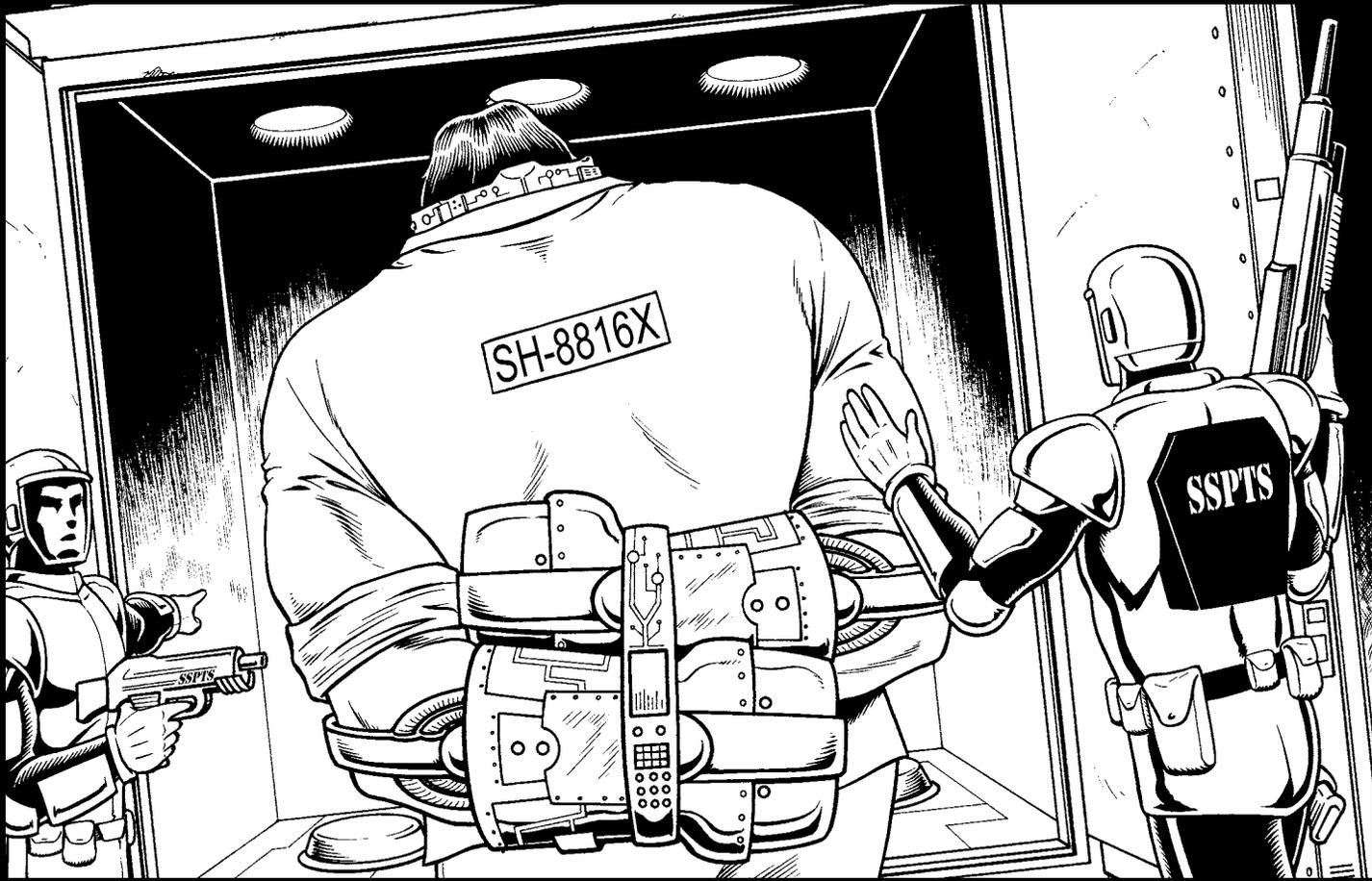
Chapter Three, *Life Behind Bars*, describes what it's like to serve time in Stronghold. It covers the daily routine prisoners live with for years at a time, how inmates get along with each other and the guards, and how prison officials and personnel react to emergencies like escape attempts and riots.

Chapter Four, *Personnel*, covers the people who make Stronghold run (from Warden Arthur Wildman all the way down to individual guards) and the people who are the reason for its existence (the inmates). The latter group includes half a dozen supervillains, ranging from some you've never heard of before to a few old favorites who've been in prison a long, long time.

Chapter Five, *Running The Joint*, discusses gamemastering Stronghold: how to include it in your campaign; how to use it in other genres; how to create your own super-prison. It concludes with several scenarios for use with Stronghold, including a new take on the classic “Escape From Stronghold.”

Since most of the information in this book concerns things PC superheroes probably don't know, there's no separate GM's Vault. That means “secret” information can be found throughout the book — so if you're a player, get your GM's permission before reading it.

Get ready to see what life is like inside *Stronghold*!



# Supervillains In The Hands Of The Law

# BEFORE THE TRIAL



**L**ong before the authorities put a supervillain in Stronghold, he comes into contact with the law in many ways — from the investigation that leads to his arrest, to a trial that determines his guilt or innocence. In the Champions Universe, the existence of superhumanly powerful criminals has affected the law and legal procedures in many ways, causing them to evolve and adapt to take such beings into account.

## SUPERLAW BASICS

American superhuman law (also known as “superlaw”) began with the 1968 case of *James “Smasher” Aronson v. United States*, 390 U.S. 1420 (1968). In *Aronson*, the Supreme Court created what has become known as the “different strokes” rule:

*It cannot be denied that... superhumans possess capabilities and powers that elevate them above the status of normal humans. Thus, rules and laws that apply to normal humans may not apply in precisely the same ways to superhumans. Simply put, legal standards granting rights to humans will, in many cases, have to be altered to account for the vastly increased capabilities of superhumans.*

*Id.* at 1428. This rule forms the basis for all of the special legal rights and liabilities of superhumans.

### DEFINING “SUPERHUMAN”

Of course, the key to applying the “different strokes” rule is defining who qualifies as a “superhuman,” since plenty of criminals put on costumes and find ways to threaten a city (or the world) without having true superhuman abilities. The Court in *Aronson* also tackled this issue by delineating three categories of humanity: superhumans; paranormals; and normal humans. Ordinary legal standards apply to normal humans, and in most cases to paranormals; superhumans (and some paranormals in some circumstances) are subject to the *Aronson* rule allowing for different standards that take their abilities into account.

To be “superhuman,” an individual “must inherently possess capabilities or powers that exceed those a normal human being could ever possess.” For example, a normal human, no matter how much training he undergoes, could never teach himself to become intangible. This also includes non-human beings with abilities greater than those of normal humans. A “paranormal” is an individual “who, by means

## “REALISTIC” SUPERLAW

While this chapter tries to provide some “realistic” guidelines regarding how the law might adapt to the existence of superhumans and superhuman threats, ultimately there’s only so much that can be done. Particularly after recent real-world problems with terrorism and the obvious applications of related laws to supervillains who commit acts of destruction, it’s difficult to think of any government that would “realistically” have laws permitting masked superhuman vigilantes to operate with the same reckless abandon shown by most superheroes in typical four-color comic book universes.

So to establish a framework of “superlaw” function within your campaign, you need to accept three basic premises:

- society is willing to tolerate (and in some cases work with) vigilante superheroes
- the legal system tolerates vigilantes who maintain secret identities (albeit within certain limits) and allows them to participate in the legal system without revealing their real identities
- even though “realistically” lawsuits would probably be filed against superheroes on a daily basis, lawsuits against superheroes are a relatively rare and special event. The average superhero isn’t trapped in litigation hell or facing the constant threat of bankruptcy... except when the scenario requires it. (See page 30 for more information.)

Once you accept these three points, the GM can tinker with legal conventions in a realistic manner and use them to build interesting scenarios.

of training and dedication, or by use of devices, has reached levels of human capability that are extraordinary, but within maximum human limits; or an individual who, by use of devices or other means, is able to simulate superhuman powers.” A paranormal is not “superhuman” because his abilities stem from training or technology that could, in theory, work for any human. As noted in many court decisions since then, “levels of human capability” can include non-physical achievement, such as extensive knowledge of science or, in some cases, the ability to cast magic spells. (Magic, now as in 1968, remains a subject courts have some difficulty grappling with.)

To give a few examples from the Champions Universe, Defender, Nighthawk, Nightwind, Black Mask, and Witchcraft are paranormals; their abilities all derive from learning, training, gadgets, and the like that in theory any human could duplicate. Doctor Silverback is also a paranormal, since

his only “superpower” (heightened intelligence) is “super” merely in relation to other apes, not humans. Sapphire, Kinetik, Diamond, Diadem, Blink, and Flashover are all superhumans; they have powers in excess of those any normal human could hope to achieve.

### STATE SANCTION

A superhero’s legal status also depends on whether he has the official sanction of a local, state, or the federal government. A sanctioned hero has “official” status and works with the police. A non-sanctioned hero does not work with the police — and in fact, since his status and/or activities are usually illegal, the police probably want to arrest him.

#### Sanctioned Heroes

Sanction has three major advantages. The first is that sanctioned characters have access to all of their sanctioning authority’s resources: money, men, equipment, and information. They may not be able to call on them at all times or get exactly what they need, but the benefits of official support are significant. The second advantage is respectability and prestige. A sanctioned hero is usually well-liked by both the public and the force, can get help from all responsible citizens, and generally has an easier time doing things as a hero. Third, a sanctioned hero can testify in court without revealing his secret identity, unless the court has grounds to rule otherwise.

However, sanction has two drawbacks as well. The first is that police departments and other law enforcement agencies typically require a hero to reveal a lot of information about himself before they sanction him — his identity, powers, and so forth. (Technically, under the terms of the American Superhuman and Paranormal Registration Act, or ASPRA, he should already have disclosed this information to the federal government, but that law is largely unenforceable until some official has the means and desire to enforce it; see *Champions Universe*, pages 35-36.) In part, this is so a court can properly identify the hero, but it’s also a security measure. All police departments with sanctioned superheroes keep the information on them very, very secure.

The second drawback is that sanctioned heroes must follow normal police procedures, such as arresting villains only upon “probable cause” and reading criminals their rights. *John “Starblaze” Doe v. Washington*, 446 U.S. 1535 (1980). To some heroes this seems contrary to one of the reasons they decided to become superheroes — to cut through all the red tape that sometimes strangles the justice system. But most courts tend to give sanctioned heroes a lot of leeway on procedure. Many decisions have held that the “different strokes” rule of *Aronson* justifies granting sanctioned superhumans a little “extra authority” because of the often extreme and dynamic situations they confront. A “superhero exception,” used by a few states, gives sanctioned heroes the power to ignore many criminal procedure rules in emergencies.

(As a matter of campaign management, the GM should establish just how far sanctioned superheroes can bend the normal police rules, and then tell the players. Any PC who goes beyond that point should be in a lot of trouble (he could be arrested and jailed, suspended, fined, or sued, for example), but as long as the heroes stay within the bounds established by the GM they shouldn’t get in any trouble more serious than being chewed out by their commanding officers. Make sure the PCs know their actions as law enforcement officers have consequences, but don’t pressure them so much that being a sanctioned hero is no longer worth it.)

### NON-SANCTIONED HEROES

Any hero who’s not sanctioned is by definition non-sanctioned — in other words, he operates without official approval and support, and thus violates the law by fighting crime. Being a non-sanctioned hero has its good points and bad points, just like being a sanctioned hero. The drawbacks are that non-sanctioned heroes lack access to police powers and police department resources, and are often actively pursued by the police.

The benefit to being non-sanctioned is that non-sanctioned heroes don’t have to follow any police procedures at all. The Supreme Court held in *Burdeau v. McDowell*, 256 U.S. 465 (1921), that the Fourth Amendment’s search and seizure rules do not apply to private citizens (unless they’re working as agents of the police). In *Burdeau*, a private citizen burgled and vandalized McDowell’s office to obtain certain papers. Some other papers incriminated McDowell in a crime. The police arrested McDowell, who was later convicted for that crime. Since the police hadn’t participated in or instigated any wrongdoing, there was no Fourth Amendment violation and the conviction was valid.

The Court confirmed that the *Burdeau* rule applies to superhuman crimefighters in the case of *Parkson v. California*, 479 U.S. 1363 (1986), in which the activities of a non-sanctioned crimefighter led to Parkson’s arrest for drug trafficking. Parkson established the so-called *vigilante doctrine*: just because someone wears a mask and costume to conceal his identity and engages in crimefighting practices that would be unconstitutional if done by the police doesn’t prevent the state from using evidence that a costumed “vigilante” obtains. In other words, a non-sanctioned costumed crimefighter can break into a criminal’s house, beat him up, tear his house apart looking for evidence, and then turn the criminal and the evidence over to the police... and the state can use that information to prosecute the criminal. (But of course, the non-sanctioned hero can still be arrested for doing this, since breaking and entering and assault are crimes, and he can be sued by the “victim” in civil court on various grounds.)

## PRECEDENT

The basis for decisions in the American legal system is the concept of *precedent*. This means that when a ruling of law is made, it's considered to be controlling in the jurisdiction where it was decided. In other words, later cases on the same subject have to be decided the same way. A ruling of law won't be changed unless circumstances or a changing society make it clear the previous ruling was wrong. Thus, past cases serve as "examples" or "guidance" for how similar cases should be decided in the present.

In the Champions Universe, superhumans have existed for decades, so the legal system has adapted to cope with them, creating a lot of "superlaw" precedents that guide the courts of the twenty-first century. If the PCs in your campaign are among the first superhumans in your campaign setting, or if superhumans have not been around for very long, there will be few (if any) precedents specifically about superhumans. In that case the PCs may find themselves in the perhaps unenviable task of helping to create some.

## Criminal Law

While it's possible for a superhuman to run afoul of the law in many different ways, in most *Champions* campaigns and scenarios all that really matters is criminal law. The vast majority of criminal cases are brought in state court, because most crimes are defined by state law. The criminal laws vary from state to state; an act which is Crime X in State One may be Crime Y in State Two.

Crimes are divided into two types: misdemeanors (crimes punishable by less than a year in jail, such as petty theft, minor acts of assault, and so forth); and felonies (crimes punishable by a year or more in prison, such as murder, rape, armed robbery, and aggravated assault). Besides the actual crimes committed by superpowered criminals — robbery, murder, kidnapping, and so on — the main impact of criminal law on superhumans is when their powers or activities are, for some reason, illegal. Here are some examples:

### AGGRAVATED ASSAULT

Superhumans can use their powers to commit aggravated assault (also called "assault with a deadly weapon"). In all fifty states and under federal law, the offensive use of *any* superpower on another person, regardless of the power's potential lethality, counts as aggravated assault. Legally, a Killing Attack, Ego Attack, Transform, Desolidification Usable Against Others, and Drain are all "deadly weapons." Punishment for an act of aggravated assault usually ranges from two to five years plus a possible fine.

### CONCEALING ONE'S IDENTITY

Most states have laws that forbid concealing one's identity in public. "Antimask" laws that increase the penalty for any crime committed while wearing a mask exist in most jurisdictions as an additional weapon against supervillains.

### RECKLESS ENDANGERMENT

A superhuman's use of his powers can (and often does) constitute the crime of reckless endangerment. This means the superhuman recklessly does something that creates a substantial risk of serious physical injury to someone else. ("Recklessly," in turn, means to act with a culpable disregard of the foreseeable consequences of one's actions — in other words, the superhuman doesn't have to know or be reasonably certain that what he's doing will hurt someone, he just has to ignore the fact that there's a substantial likelihood someone will get hurt.) Pointing a firearm at someone, or threatening to use a superpower on them, usually qualifies as reckless endangerment.

### EXCESSIVE FORCE

A police officer or sanctioned superhero who uses excessive force when arresting a suspect can be prosecuted or sued. The test for whether force is excessive is one of objective reasonableness: a particular degree of force is allowable if it would be used by a reasonable police officer on the scene

in light of the need for split-second decision-making in a potentially lethal situation. This is a lenient test which disregards the officer's underlying intent or motivation. *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989).

## SUPERPOWERS LAWS

Some jurisdictions have laws outlawing the use of specific superpowers, either in general or in specific places or circumstances. These laws usually apply to one or more of three groups of powers:

- Powers that make it too easy to commit burglaries and other crimes (for example, Clairvoyance, Desolidification, Invisibility, Mind Control, and Teleportation)
- Powers that make it too easy to invade someone's privacy (for example, Clairvoyance, various Enhanced Senses, Invisibility, Mind Scan, and Telepathy)
- Powers considered inherently dangerous, especially if Always On (for example, Damage Shields, Density Increase, Invisibility, Growth, Mind Control, and Summon)

Typically the punishment for these laws is a fine or short jail sentence, but if serious property damage or personal injury result, the penalties can become severe.

## SUPERPOWERS REGISTRATION LAWS

In 1980 Congress enacted the American Superhuman and Paranormal Registration Act, or ASPRA, requiring all superhumans (be they hero, villain, or neutral) to register with, and disclose certain information to, the federal government. (See *Champions Universe*, pages 35-36.) While this law remains controversial, it has been upheld as constitutional by the Supreme Court (*John "Captain Courage" Doe v. United States*, 455 U.S. 3841 (1982)). The Court pointed out that one reason the law withstood constitutional muster was that it applies to *all* superhumans; a law that tried to single one type out (such as mutants or spellcasters) would likely violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Following *Captain Courage*, many states (including New York, California, Michigan, and Texas) have enacted state superhuman registration laws that mirror ASPRA. While registration laws remain difficult to enforce, any time a superhuman is arrested and found not to be registered, failure to register is added to the charges against him. Most states and the federal government share registration information, so a superhuman registered with one is in effect registered with all other jurisdictions that share data.

## DEFENSES TO CRIMES

Someone who's accused of a crime can avail himself of many possible defenses, including intoxication, entrapment, age, mistake, necessity, duress, and the classic "you've got the wrong guy" in all its many forms. Some defenses superhumans are likely to encounter include:

### The Insanity Defense

A person who is insane can plead his insanity as a defense. From a legal perspective, “insanity” usually means one or more of the following: the defendant didn’t know his actions were wrong; the defendant was unable to understand the nature and quality of his actions; or the defendant lacked the capacity to conform his conduct to the law even though he knew he was doing something wrong.

A defendant who successfully uses the insanity defense is typically found “not guilty by reason of insanity,” but that doesn’t mean he’s free — instead of incarcerating him, the court commits him to a mental institution, where he remains until cured. This may keep him confined for a longer period than the jail sentence he’d have received if convicted.

Supervillains often plead insanity when put on trial, but it doesn’t usually work. Some notable supervillain insanity cases include: *John “Gauntlet” Doe v. California*, 487 U.S. 1388 (1988) (putting on a silly-looking costume and committing unusual crimes does not necessarily mean that a person is insane); *John “Deathblade” Doe v. United States*, 877 F.2d 1734 (2d Cir. 1989) (a murderous vigilante’s delusion that several federal government officials were plotting to take over the United States was not sufficient for an insanity acquittal, because even if the delusion had been true, it would not have entitled him to kill those officials); and *California v. John “Foxbat” Doe*, a 1993 case from California (Foxbat’s deranged idea that he is a great and powerful supervillain, and that he is actually “in a comic book,” meant he could not understand the nature and quality of his actions when he kidnapped the employees of a small San Francisco, California game company).

### Defense Of Self, Others, Or Property

People who are attacked have a legal right to defend themselves, but there are some restrictions on how much force they can use. The main distinction is between deadly and non-deadly force. An individual who’s without fault can use whatever amount of non-deadly force reasonably appears necessary to protect himself from an imminent unlawful attack. He can use deadly force when he’s without fault and reasonably believes he’s threatened with imminent death or great bodily harm. The key issue is the person’s reasonable belief. Just being attacked does not mean one can use deadly force, because not all attacks could reasonably cause death or great bodily harm. In a few states, there’s a duty to retreat before using deadly force in self-defense. However, retreat is never necessary if one cannot retreat safely, and is almost never necessary when one is in one’s own home.

The standards for defending another person are basically the same as those for self-defense. However, the individual claiming a “defense of others” defense must have reasonably believed the person he saved would have had the right to use force in his own defense.

The use of non-deadly force to protect one’s home is always legal; sometimes this rule applies to other property as well (such as a car). Deadly force is sometimes justified in protection of one’s home, but is never justified to protect other property.

### Crime Prevention

Generally, a person can use force to the extent that the force seems reasonably necessary to prevent the commission of a felony. He can use deadly force to prevent dangerous felonies (such as murder, rape, or robbery). See, e.g., *John “Deathblade” Doe v. United States*, 877 F.2d 1734 (2d Cir. 1989) (vigilante found innocent of twelve murders on the grounds that he had properly prevented a crime).

### Diplomatic Immunity

Although it has its roots in ancient practices, diplomatic immunity is governed by the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Diplomatic immunity is not a “right,” *per se*; rather, it’s a privilege granted by nations to each other’s representatives by mutual consent.

The main provisions of the Vienna Convention are these:

- **Diplomatic mission:** The premises and buildings of a diplomatic mission are inviolate, and may not be entered or searched. Humanitarian concerns, such as the need to save the lives of persons in the embassy, may override this provision.
- **Diplomatic documents:** The papers and correspondence of the mission are immune from search and seizure.
- **Diplomatic pouches/containers:** The diplomatic bag (a clearly marked pouch used to carry diplomatic documents) and other diplomatic containers may not be detained, searched, or examined. Similarly, diplomatic couriers may not be detained or searched. However, a state may refuse entry to a diplomat or his containers. In recent years criminals have used diplomatic pouches to smuggle drugs and weapons (and even kidnapped persons), so many nations no longer allow “suspicious” diplomatic containers to enter or leave their country unless they receive permission to search them.
- **Diplomats and their households:** Diplomats (ambassadors, ministers, counselors, and so forth) and all members of their families have *full criminal and civil immunity* — they may not be convicted of *any* crime. They can murder, rape, rob, sell drugs, spit on the sidewalk, or park illegally, and the only thing the host nation can do about it is detain them and then deport them. (Of course, a diplomat’s home nation may punish him for his acts once he arrives back there, but it’s not obligated to.) Also, they cannot be compelled to be witnesses, nor are they subject to taxes or civil lawsuits.
- **Administrative, technical, and service staff:** Administrative, technical, and service staff members of a diplomatic mission and their households

have full criminal and civil immunity for all acts *within the scope of their official duties*. Acts outside the scope of their duties may still subject them to criminal prosecution.

Diplomatic immunity usually extends to a diplomat who's traveling from his home country to his host country, even if he passes through a third country.

Because it offers such blanket protection, diplomatic immunity is a superb "plot device" for use in scenarios where the GM needs to ensure the villain escapes to fight another day. It's conceivable that a nation hostile to, for example, the United States might appoint an ambassador to the U.S. who's secretly a superhuman. The ambassador could then proceed to wreak havoc with his superpowers until stopped and detained — but the U.S. could not prosecute him for his crimes. Once deported, he could resume working for his employer nation.

## THE INVESTIGATION

A supervillain begins interacting with the law long before he's in custody. It all starts when the police begin investigating his crimes in an effort to bring him to Justice. This is the earliest stages of what the law refers to as "criminal procedure," and its rules at this point derive from two Amendments to the Constitution: the Fourth Amendment, which forbids "unreasonable searches and seizures" by the government, and which requires that "no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause"; and the Fifth Amendment, which defines the privilege against self-incrimination.

### The Fourth Amendment

The Fourth Amendment to the US Constitution forbids "unreasonable searches and seizures" by the government. Defining exactly what that means, both in general and in the context of superhuman powers and activities, has generated an enormous body of case law.

#### ARREST WARRANTS

An arrest is the "seizure" of a person. Arrest warrants are not required, at least for most felony arrests: all the police need to arrest someone for a felony is *probable cause* to do so. This means probable cause that a crime was committed and that the suspect was the one who committed it. However, the police usually obtain a warrant if they have time, since it makes the arrest more "official." Warrants are issued by "neutral and detached" magistrates. If a suspect attempts to escape arrest, the officer may only use deadly force to stop him if the officer has a reasonable belief the suspect is a danger to the officer or to others. *Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1 (1985). See also *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989).

#### SEARCH WARRANTS

Search warrants are usually required to search a person or a place for evidence of a crime. A search warrant has to meet three criteria to be valid. First, a search warrant will only be issued by a magistrate based on *probable cause*. This means probable cause that a certain item is evidence of a crime, or was used to commit a crime; and that the item is at the place to be searched. To have probable cause, an officer must have a "substantial basis" for concluding that the search will find an incriminating object. *Illinois v. Gates*, 462 U.S. 213 (1983). Probable cause may be established in a number of ways, including confidential informants, witnesses, physical evidence, and police observation (but a policeman's or superhero's sworn statement, by itself, is not sufficient to show probable cause).

Second, the warrant must give a "particular description of the place to be searched." Third, a search warrant must provide a "particular description of the item to be seized," *i.e.*, a description accurate enough for the police to easily find the item and to prevent them from conducting a "general search." An item may require more or less description, depending on its nature — unique items (such as many villains' Foci) require less description, common items (such as a radio) require more.

If the police have a valid warrant, they may search any place it authorizes them to search. But they may only search where an object could reasonably be located. For example, if they're searching a house for a shotgun, they can't look through the papers on the suspect's desk. Once the police find the object they're looking for, they must stop searching.

#### When A Search Warrant Is Not Required

There are six basic situations in which the police don't have to obtain a search warrant before they search a person or place. They are:

**Searches incident to a lawful arrest:** After making a lawful arrest, the police are allowed to make a warrantless search of the person arrested and his "wingspan" — the area within his immediate control, from which he could seize evidence that he could destroy or a weapon. *Chimel v. California*, 395 U.S. 752 (1969).

**Plain view:** If an officer is in a place where he has a right to be, and he sees something illegal in plain view, he may seize it at once. There is no expectation of privacy in objects that are in plain view. *Coolidge v. Hew Hampshire*, 403 U.S. 443 (1971). The object must be immediately apparent as illegal (for example, heroin is obviously illegal, but a gun may not be). Similarly, an officer could perceive things with "plain hearing" or "plain smell."

**The vehicular exception:** This exception, described in *California v. Carney*, 471 U.S. 386 (1985), allows the police to make warrantless searches of vehicles when they have probable cause to believe that evidence of crime will be found in the vehicle. Courts allow this because (a) vehicles are easily moved



and may not be available for a search if the officer takes the time to get a warrant, and (b) since vehicles are subject to so many regulations, there's a decreased expectation of privacy in them.

**Consent:** A person can consent to a warrantless search of his home, car, or other area that he owns. Consent must be given voluntarily, without any form of coercion. *Schneckloth v. Bustamonte*, 412 U.S. 218 (1973).

**Stop-and-frisk:** If a policeman does not have probable cause to arrest someone, but does have an “articulable suspicion,” based on specific facts and inferences, that the person is armed and dangerous, the officer may stop that person and “pat him down” for weapons (but not anything other than weapons, such as drugs). *Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1 (1968). “Terry stops” must be as short and as least intrusive as possible.

**Hot pursuit:** If the police are in “hot pursuit,” or if getting a search warrant would put them in danger, they do not need to obtain a warrant. See *Warden v. Hayden*, 387 U.S. 294 (1967). This exception is limited; it's not a “general emergency” exception to the warrant requirement.

These six exceptions derive from two concepts. The first is diminished expectations of privacy. The Fourth Amendment doesn't protect areas and situations in which a person's expectation of privacy in his person and property is “diminished.” For example, the police may make warrantless searches of abandoned property, *California v. Greenwood*, 486 U.S. 35 (1988), or of

“open fields” (land not immediately adjacent to a building), *Oliver v. United States*, 466 U.S. 170 (1984). Similarly, the Fourth Amendment offers no protection against “overflights” — when the police or superheroes fly over a person's land to look for evidence of a crime. *California v. Ciraolo*, 476 U.S. 207 (1986). The second is exigent circumstances. This means there are instances where the nature of events or circumstances requires the police to act immediately. An example of exigent circumstances is when the police fear evidence will be destroyed or removed in the time it takes to have a warrant issued.

#### Enhanced Senses And Sensory Devices

The police or sanctioned superheroes can conduct searches with enhanced senses and sensory devices. Warrantless searches conducted with ordinary enhancements (for example, flashlights or binoculars), or using such devices to aid a warrant search, are constitutional; effectively all that does is extend the range of an officer's “plain view.” The same standard applies to using magnified aerial photography to view open, outdoor areas. *Dow Chemical Co. v. United States*, 476 U.S. 227 (1986). Similarly, using a drug-sniffing dog to detect the presence of illegal drugs isn't an unconstitutional search because it only reveals the presence of an illegal item and does not expose non-contraband items. *United States v. Place*, 462 U.S. 696 (1983), *Illinois v. Caballes*, 543 U.S. 405 (2005). On the other hand, the use of some sensory or sense-enhancing devices in some circumstances can be so intrusive that it does constitute a search,

and thus requires a warrant. For example, in *Kyllo v. United States*, 533 U.S. 27 (2001), the Court ruled that using a thermal imaging device from a public place to scan inside a person's home qualified as a "search."

The issue becomes even more complex when sensory superpowers are involved. The general rule, first stated in *Diana "Shrinker" Whitmore v. United States*, 483 U.S. 1723 (1987), is that superhumans can use any sense they innately possess to conduct "plain view" searches — heroes are not required to "blind themselves" just because they possess senses ordinary police officers lack. Thus, there's virtually no expectation of privacy against a sanctioned superhero with N-Ray Perception. If a superhero has an Enhanced Sense that derives from a device, such as Defender's Infrared Perception, he's governed by the standards laid down in cases like *Dow Chemical, Caballes*, and *Kyllo*.

Electronic tracking devices are a special type of sense-enhancing device. The police can use them without a warrant in some cases, but since they almost always plan how to use them in advance, they usually obtain a warrant. See *United States v. Knotts*, 460 U.S. 276 (1983). Similar to electronic tracking devices are wiretaps and hidden microphones (including "bugs" hidden at a particular location and "wires" worn by informants). Their use is carefully controlled by law; a search warrant can and should be obtained in almost all cases.

#### Searches Conducted With Mental Powers

The existence of mental powers has created whole new legal frontiers in the realm of search and seizure. Telepathy in particular causes many problems. The Supreme Court ruled in *Corbeau v. Michigan*, 505 U.S. 1770 (1992), that telepathic searches of someone's mind are not *per se* unconstitutional violations of his rights. Beyond that it left it up to the individual states to decide how they wanted to handle things; see *The Law Of Evidence*, below, for more information and discussion.

The federal government and most states consider Mind Scan to be legally equivalent to an electronic tracking device. In most situations the police must obtain a search warrant before using Mind Scan to find someone. See, e.g., *Jamie "Cryptogram" Murrow v. State*, 487 N.Y.S.2d 1105, 479 N.E.2d 1436 (1985). Warrantless Mind Scan is allowed only in emergencies.

## The Fifth Amendment

The Fifth Amendment to the US Constitution defines (among other things) the privilege against self-incrimination, which affects interrogations and confessions. It states: "No person... shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself." This is the basis for the "Miranda rules" that policemen must read to suspects before questioning them. *Miranda v. Arizona*, 384 U.S. 436 (1966).

*Miranda* assumes that a person subjected to interrogation while in police custody who confesses or provides incriminating information has been compelled to do so. *Miranda* doesn't apply if the suspect is not in police custody or is not questioned by the police (in other words, just because someone's been arrested doesn't automatically entitle him to a reading of his rights). The state can overcome this presumption of compulsion if it shows two things. First, the state must prove it informed the suspect of these rights:

1. The suspect has the right to remain silent.
2. If the suspect gives up this right, anything he says can and will be used against him.
3. The suspect has the right to have an attorney present, both at the interrogation and afterwards.
4. If the suspect cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed for him by the state.

Second, the state must prove that the suspect made a "knowing and voluntary waiver" of these rights before he confessed. "Knowing and voluntary" means the suspect was fully aware of his rights and the consequences of foregoing them.

The key elements in this analysis are "police custody" and "interrogation." A person is considered to be in "police custody" if he's not free to leave or if his freedom of action has been significantly curtailed (this does not necessarily require an arrest). See, e.g., *Orozco v. Texas*, 394 U.S. 324 (1969). "Interrogation" is any words or actions by the police which they know, or should know, are reasonably likely to elicit incriminating information from the suspect. *Rhode Island v. Innis*, 446 U.S. 291 (1980). The stereotypical act of "beating a confession out of him" is not required; many lesser acts are considered to be "interrogation." In one sense, a person is only in "custodial interrogation" if he knows he's in custody and is under interroga-

tion — if someone talks to an undercover officer, this usually isn't "interrogation" because he doesn't know he's talking to the police. See *Illinois v. Perkins*, 496 U.S. 292 (1990).

One important exception to *Miranda* is the "public safety" rule stated in *New York v. Quarles*, 467 U.S. 649 (1984). The need for answers to questions about immediate public safety concerns overrides a suspect's Fifth Amendment rights. Statements taken for public safety purposes do not violate *Miranda*. An example of this is questioning a suspect about a gun he threw away while fleeing from the police — the need to retrieve the gun as soon as possible is more important than the suspect's *Miranda* rights.

A confession obtained through Mind Control (or similar forms of psionic domination, coercion, or trickery) imposed on a suspect by a police officer or agent violates the suspect's Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate himself. *John "Flesh-tone" Doe v. Michigan*, 489 U.S. 1587 (1989).

### THE EXCLUSIONARY RULE

Evidence (including confessions) obtained in violation of a suspect's constitutional rights is subject to the *exclusionary rule*. This means it, and any other evidence derived from it, may not be admitted at the trial of the defendant whose rights were violated. *Mapp v. Ohio*, 367 U.S. 643 (1961). The case against the defendant still stands, though the prosecution may have to drop it if there's no longer enough evidence to convict. This is what the public refers to as dismissing a case "on a technicality." "Technicalities" are not nearly as common as comic books and television make them seem, but GMs can run an occasional scenario based around a technicality without distorting reality too much.

There are several exceptions and limitations to the exclusionary rule. The first was mentioned earlier: the exclusionary rule applies only to the government, not to private citizens acting on their own. The second is the "good faith" exception of *United States v. Leon*, 468 U.S. 897 (1984): if the police rely in good faith on a warrant they believe is valid, but which later turns out to be invalid, the search is constitutional. The third exception is "independent source": if the police have learned about what would otherwise be illegal evidence from a legal "independent source" — a source not tainted by a constitutional violation — then the evidence is legal and admissible in court. The fourth exception is "inevitable discovery": if the state can show that illegal evidence would have inevitably or eventually been found by legal means, then the evidence is legal. *Nix v. Williams*, 467 U.S. 431 (1984).

## PRETRIAL PROCEDURE

After a villain's arrested he enters the judicial system. This involves everything from being "booked" at the police station to pretrial motions to exclude evidence or establish the parameters of a criminal trial.

### ARREST

Assuming an investigation turns up enough evidence of a crime and the authorities can capture a villain (perhaps with the help of friendly superheroes), he's *arrested* based on probable cause that a crime was committed and the villain committed it. If possible the police obtain an arrest warrant authorizing the arrest (see above).

An arrested suspect is taken to the nearest police station or office for *booking*. At booking he's thoroughly searched and any property or objects he's carrying are taken from him. Some articles of clothing, such as belts, shoes, or capes, may also be taken if the authorities think they could be fashioned into weapons, used to commit suicide, or the like. A suspect who's later released has his property returned to him (unless the property itself is illegal to own).

## MAINTAINING A SECRET IDENTITY

Once a villain is arrested and taken into "the system" via fingerprinting, DNA typing, retina scans, and the acquisition of personal information, it becomes much more difficult to keep his identity secret... but not impossible.

If a superhuman's never had reason to have his personal data in the system before becoming a costumed criminal — he wasn't a "civilian" criminal (or was never caught), he never had to go through a security check for which his information became part of police records, didn't belong to the military, or the like — then being taken into custody doesn't mean he's going to lose his Social Limitation: Secret Identity. Just because the police have his fingerprints and DNA now doesn't mean they can learn his real name and background. However, he may, at the GM's discretion, acquire the Social Limitation *Criminal Record* (Frequently, Minor; 10 points). This means anyone with access to official records can view his file, and since the police have his fingerprints and other data they can easily link him to other crimes.

Of course, having a superhuman in custody often makes it easier to investigate him and uncover his identity, even if the investigation is as simple as broadcasting his unmasked picture on television and asking people, "If you know this man, please contact the police at 1-800-555-VILL." It's not a guarantee the authorities can learn who he really is, but it gives them a decent chance. At the GM's option, a character who loses his Secret Identity this way can substitute Social Limitation: Public Identity instead, or perhaps Social Limitation: Criminal Record. If the character is a PC, any points he can't "compensate" for by switching to other appropriate Disadvantages must be "paid off" with Experience Points as soon as possible.



During booking a suspect is asked for his name, address, and other pertinent information, but he can't be forced to reveal anything. Supervillains who have secret identities usually remain silent (and are then listed as John or Jane Does) or give false information. After booking concludes, the suspect is sent to a holding cell.

#### **PROBABLE CAUSE HEARING**

The Constitution requires that anyone who's been arrested cannot be held for a long time unless a "neutral and detached magistrate" determines that there is, in fact, probable cause to believe he committed a crime. *Gerstein v. Pugh*, 420 U.S. 103 (1975). This is called a *probable cause hearing*. A defendant does not have the right to be present at this hearing, and the prosecution can use evidence that would not be admissible at trial (such as hearsay) to prove probable cause.

Typically a probable cause hearing has to be held within 48 hours. That's not a hard and fast rule, but unreasonable delays are not tolerated. For example, arresting a villain to hold him for 48 hours so the police can continue investigating and hopefully find evidence of a crime is unreasonable. On the other hand, emergencies may justify holding someone for more than 48 hours before a hearing is held... and when superhumans are involved, emergencies are frequent events.

#### **FIRST APPEARANCE**

In many jurisdictions the probable cause hearing is combined with the *first appearance*, also known as an initial appearance or preliminary arraignment. The defendant must be present at this hearing; he doesn't have the *right* to have an attorney there, but is allowed to have one if he's already hired one. Typically the purposes of the first appearance are to inform the defendant of

the charges against him and his rights. The court appoints an attorney for him at this point if he can't afford to hire one himself.

#### **Pretrial Release, Detention, And Bail**

The first appearance is also where conditions of pretrial release are set... if the court allows pretrial release at all. Pretrial release typically involves setting *bail*, an amount of money a defendant is required to deposit with the court as a guarantee he'll appear for his trial. Defendants do not have a right to bail, but if bail is set under the terms of the Eighth Amendment it cannot be "excessive." In deciding whether to set bail (and how much bail), the court considers many factors, including:

- severity of the crime
- the strength of the evidence against the defendant
- the likelihood that the defendant will return for his trial. Is he a "flight risk" — is he likely to try to flee, or does he have abilities or capabilities that make flight easier? Is the punishment for the crime so severe (*e.g.*, the death penalty) that no sum of money can guarantee his return?
- the defendant's wealth
- the defendant's ties to the community
- the defendant's character (primarily meaning, what sort of criminal record does he have, and how well has he done on pretrial release in the past)

In cases involving superhuman defendants, bail often isn't granted. Not only do most superhumans have a track record of concealing their identities (which may not even be known to the court at this point), they often have powers that make fleeing the jurisdiction ridiculously easy. On top of that, many of them are very wealthy (or assumed to be very wealthy), have escaped from the authorities in the past, or otherwise shown themselves to be poor flight risks.

The judge has discretion to set the amount of bail. In practice, judges often use pre-approved “schedules” of bail amounts based on the crimes involved. In some cases they set bail at such a high amount that the defendant can’t possibly pay it (so that the authorities can keep him in pretrial detention). However, some defendants hire the services of a *bail bondsman*. They pay him 10% of the specified bail, and the bondsman guarantees to pay the full amount to the court if the defendant doesn’t show up for his trial. If that happens, the bondsman may hire bounty hunters to track the defendant down and drag him into court so that he (the bondsman) isn’t stuck with a big bill. Alternately, some courts simply let the defendant himself make the 10% deposit directly to the court and execute a bond for the remainder.

In some cases, where the defendant isn’t considered a flight risk and the charges aren’t too severe, bail may not even be required. The court can release the defendant “on his own recognizance” — in other words, his personal promise to appear for trial. Supervillains rarely get released on personal recognizance; few judges regard them as trustworthy.

### Preventive Detention

Federal law and many state laws also provide for *preventive detention* as a way of discouraging the (often technically illegal) practice of setting bail so high a defendant can’t possibly pay it. This is appropriate primarily when crimes of violence or crimes that can involve a sentence of life imprisonment or the death penalty are involved. A judge or magistrate can hold a preventive detention hearing (often in conjunction with the first appearance) at which the issue is whether the defendant poses an unacceptable risk of flight, danger to others, or danger to himself. The defendant has the right to an attorney at this hearing, but the standard rules of evidence that apply at a trial do not apply to a preventive detention determination.

Supervillains are often subject to pretrial detention due to the violent nature of their crimes (after all, they fight city-destroying battles with superheroes) and their ability to flee.

### THE PRELIMINARY HEARING

The next step in the judicial process in many states is the *preliminary hearing*. At this hearing, the prosecution has to present the court with evidence that, depending on state law, justifies either sending the case to trial or sending it to the grand jury. The defendant has the right to be represented by an attorney and to cross-examine witnesses. In most jurisdictions the standard rules of evidence do not apply, but in some they do.

If the court finds that there’s sufficient evidence to justify the case, the defendant is “held over” or “bound over” for the grand jury or trial. If the court finds that the evidence is insufficient, the charges are dismissed — but the prosecution can refile charges if desired, or seek a grand jury indictment.

### THE GRAND JURY

About one-third of the states and the federal government also require review by the *grand jury*, a body of 12-24 citizens who determine whether there’s sufficient evidence to justify holding a trial. (States without the grand jury use a document called an *information* instead of an indictment; it’s prepared by the prosecutor.) A grand jury isn’t limited just to the evidence the prosecution presents — it has broad powers to conduct investigations and issue subpoenas requiring witnesses to testify before it or produce documents and other evidence. If the grand jury finds that there’s sufficient evidence for a trial, it issues an *indictment* (or a “true bill”) against the defendant.

Grand jury hearings are not conducted in front of a judge, not open to the public, and not adversarial (*i.e.*, the defendant doesn’t get to have an attorney there or present evidence). In short, they’re almost entirely controlled by the prosecution. In some cases the grand jury can reach its conclusion before the preliminary hearing is scheduled, making that hearing unnecessary. Therefore many prosecutors prefer grand juries to preliminary hearings, since the odds are more in their favor and the defendant can be kept in the dark longer about the evidence against him.

### ARRAIGNMENT; PLEA BARGAINING

After the grand jury indicts a defendant (or the prosecutor files an information against him), he’s *arraigned*: brought before the court to enter his plea of guilty or not guilty.

Most felonies are resolved at this stage by a guilty plea, since in real life there’s not much doubt about who did what in most cases. (But of course, the sort of dramatic situations that occur when superhumans are involved may easily muddy the waters, making a not guilty plea, and thus a trial, much more likely.) Guilty pleas usually result from *plea bargaining*, in which the defendant agrees to plead guilty in exchange for concessions from the state (such as a reduced sentence).

### DISCOVERY AND PRETRIAL MOTIONS

If a defendant pleads not guilty and the case heads to trial, two things occur. First, the defendant gets to *discover* the prosecution’s evidence. The prosecution can’t keep any evidence or witnesses secret; it has to turn everything over to the defendant so he can prepare his case. In particular, the prosecution has to turn over any potentially exculpatory evidence; it can’t hide evidence that suggests the defendant may be innocent. *Brady v. Maryland*, 373 U.S. 83 (1963). The defendant, on the other hand, generally doesn’t have to reveal anything to the prosecution due to the Fifth Amendment’s prohibition against self-incrimination. However, the defense is sometimes required by the laws of the jurisdiction to disclose that it intends to raise certain defenses, such as an alibi or the insanity defense.

Second, at this stage any issues about the evidence, the prosecution’s actions, or the conduct of the trial are resolved by *pretrial motions* made to the court by the defendant. A motion to exclude evidence because it was unconstitutionally seized is a classic example of a pretrial motion.

# THE TRIAL



**O**kay, so you've captured the bad guys, filled out the police reports, and smiled for the television cameras. What's next?

Unfortunately, the bad guys don't go straight to prison just because they got knocked unconscious in a fight with superheroes. One of the most important principles of a democratic society is that the bad guys, no matter how scummy, get their day in court. In short, captured supervillains go on trial for their crimes.

A trial is a dramatic situation, which is why it's so often the centerpiece of television shows and movies. It's just as useful for Champions GMs as a potential source for complications and adventures they can exploit. This section of Chapter One discusses what happens at a trial and how to develop scenarios around a supervillain's day in court.

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## TRIAL BASICS

Every trial is unique, and obviously one involving a superhumanly powerful (and perhaps popular or reviled) criminal is likely to feature all sorts of quirks and special circumstances. There are also variations in trial procedure from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. However, generally speaking, here's what happens in a typical American trial. (This description glosses over a number of important legal issues, including the prosecution's decision whether to prosecute [and on what charges]. While crucial to the legal system, they're not usually of any importance to superhero scenarios... though of course the GM can work them into his game if he prefers.)

### The Jury

The first step in a trial is selecting the jury. The court assembles a *venire*, or group of potential jurors, typically by selecting names at random from local driver's license, voter registration, and property ownership lists. Some or all of the *venire* is then put through a process called *voir dire*, in which the prosecutors and defense attorneys question potential jurors about their biases, whether they know the defendant, and so on. Anyone who seems like he might be biased for a specific reason (such as being a friend of one of the attorneys) can be removed from the *venire* "for cause." Additionally, each side has a number of "peremptory challenges" that allow it to remove potential jurors for no cause — simply because they think, based on a potential juror's answers to *voir dire* questions, that he's not likely to favor their side. (However, an

attorney cannot exercise a peremptory challenge for discriminatory reasons — for example, he can't remove a black juror just because he's black, or a female juror just because she's a woman. *Batson v. Kentucky*, 476 U.S. 79 (1986).) Depending on the complexity and notoriety of the case, the *voir dire* process can take hours, days, or weeks.

When *voir dire* is done, the court has a jury of 12 members of the community. Typically it also has in reserve a number of alternate jurors so it can replace jurors who become sick, are discovered to have lied to the court, or the like. For a lengthy, complicated trial, the pool of alternate jurors may be one, two, or more times the size of the initial jury.

The jury's role in the trial is to decide the guilt or innocence of the accused, and in some trials also to determine the punishment. After all evidence has been heard, it does this by answering specific questions put to it by the judge, following specific instructions given to it by him (after he consults with the attorneys on both sides regarding the wording of those instructions). Jury deliberations may end quickly in open-and-shut cases, but may drag out for days or weeks in complicated or emotionally-tangled cases.

During long trials, jurors may be *sequestered* — forced to live under court supervision to prevent them from having any outside contact with people who want to influence their decision or learning facts the judge has excluded from evidence. This can become a stressful and aggravating situation fraught with potential for plot development.

### Courtroom Personnel

Besides the jurors, there are plenty of other people who participate in the conduct of a trial. They include:

#### THE JUDGE

The man (or woman) in charge. He sits on a bench that's slightly elevated above the rest of the courtroom, wears black robes, and bangs his gavel to maintain order or signal certain steps in the proceedings. Most importantly, he makes rulings about the conduct of the trial, whether to admit or exclude specific evidence, whether an objection to a question is valid, and so on. Within the courtroom the judge has enormous authority; he can, for example, order people removed from court, have unruly defendants restrained or gagged, and slap uncooperative or disrespectful persons with contempt of court charges. While a judge cannot

do whatever he wants or create new laws — anything he does that's incorrect or abusive usually gets overturned on appeal, which often means the trial has to be held all over again — he has a lot of power and leeway.

Some stereotypical judges seen in genre fiction include:

**The Folksy Southern Boy With Knives Under His Robes:**

This man is a real charmer, formerly a great lawyer and orator. Now one of the most respected men on the bench, he's usually relaxed and in good spirits — but when someone annoys him, he'll cut that person down to size so quickly their heads will spin.

**High Priest Of The Law:** To this judge, the law and its procedures are practically a sacred thing, and woe betide he who tries to circumvent them. He can't be swayed by sentiment or bribery; only the letter of the law and cold, hard logic matter.

**The Insane Ol' Coot:** Sometimes when a judicial authority behaves like a ranting madman, it's not because he's being mind controlled, it's because he's too old and too burned out to be a judge anymore. His rulings are bizarre, his statements even more bizarre, he abuses his authority at the drop of a hat, and he's lost everything except the pity of the older court clerks who remember him back in his prime. The presence of this judge on the bench guarantees a trial will be thrown into turmoil.

Of course, sometimes there are other explanations for a judge's bizarre behavior. Telepaths love to play with authority figures (including judges, lawyers, and bailiffs) and even if the judge isn't directly influenced, he can be blackmailed into making rulings that will hurt the PCs' side.

**The Liberal Activist:** This judge's rulings are guided by a profound sense of social justice — and much less respect for precedent. He's interested in fairness toward minorities and protecting the little guy from establishment interests. If you're onboard with his agenda, great; if not, watch out.

**The Relentless Harpy:** Maybe at one time, this woman wasn't such a relentless control freak, but now she's one of the most unbearable people in the whole legal system. She's constantly berating witnesses and lawyers, intimating that people are liars, and screaming how much smarter she is than anyone else. (There are male versions of this archetype, of course, but in fiction it's usually a woman.)

## THE LAWYERS

Currently one of the most maligned professions on the planet, lawyers are necessary for the criminal justice system to function. But that doesn't mean superheroes are going to appreciate them when they do their job right, which involves putting professional ethics and loyalty to the client ahead of everything else (including, in some circumstances, universal human morality).

Typically seated at a large table to the right as one faces the bench is *the prosecutor* — the lawyer for the state, the one who's trying to convict the defendant. In many jurisdictions the chief pros-

ecutor for a county is known as a District Attorney (or, in federal court, the US Attorney), and the lawyers working for him are Assistant DAs (or Assistant US Attorneys). A large or complex trial may have two or more prosecutors assigned to it full-time; simpler trials only require one.

The prosecutor's opposite number is the *defense attorney* — the lawyer who works for the defendant and tried to get him acquitted. He sits at a large table to the left as one faces the bench. Most defendants hire a private defense attorney with their own money if they can, since they think they get better representation that way. Defendants who cannot afford their own attorney have a *public defender* appointed for them by the court.

Distinctions between prosecution and defense attorneys aside, within the fraternity of lawyers (at least in cinema and the comics) there are some distinctive sub-varieties:

**The Crusader:** This young firebrand believes in the purity and righteousness of his profession, and loves to represent the underdog or the person neglected by society or (in the case of district attorneys) the interests of society that are crushed by the system. The Crusader is one of the most loyal people you'll ever meet, but his passion can get in the way of his work.

**The Dealmaker:** This attorney is tired, worn out, overworked, and coasting. He wants to get the case over with as quickly as possible, pick up his next paycheck, and go. Even if it's in his client's worst interest, he'll take the first deal that's set on the table... and if the client's too mentally incompetent to judge his actions, so much the better.

**The Gloryhound:** "When capes commit crime, they must do the time, or else they're slime!" Welcome to the world of the Nationally Famous Lawyer. He's on all the talk shows, he knows how to play the media like a violin, he's almost certainly a capable attorney, but he's more interested in getting high-profile cases than defending a client to the best of his abilities.

**The Mob Mouthpiece:** Long ago, whatever integrity this guy possessed was swallowed up by greed, fear, and deals with the devil. He knows all the dirty tricks of the trade and doesn't hesitate to use them. He may also be an active participant in his boss's crimes by strategizing ways to circumvent the law before the crime's even committed.

**Old Man Eloquent:** This attorney was at one time a top lawyer in his field, but he's been on the decline for many years (perhaps because of alcoholism or some other personal failing). Now he only gets an occasional case, and even the judges take pity on him. Nonetheless, give this lawyer a cause of great importance, one in which he truly believes, and he'll display oratorical skills of legend.

**The Overworked Newbie:** Life's rough for newcomers in any profession, and the law is no exception. The Overworked Newbie's probably juggling a dozen cases, and the lack of sleep is killing him. Usually only half-prepared, the Overworked Newbie is fresh meat for an experienced oppo-

ment, who usually leaves his arguments bleeding on the floor after the first cross-examination.

**The Vengeful DA:** This type of district attorney prides himself on being on the right side of the truth nine times out of ten. Sometimes he expresses his pride through pig-headedness, contempt for the other parts of the judicial process (including superheroes), excessive competitiveness, and a desire to win every case, regardless of whether the defendant is guilty or innocent.

#### OTHER COURTROOM PERSONNEL

To help the judge handle the administrative details of running a courtroom, he has a *court clerk*. The clerk typically sits next to him, on the opposite side from the witness box. Most (but by no means all) court clerks are women.

To ensure that there's a full and accurate record of what's said and done at a trial, a *court reporter* transcribes the proceedings using a special dictating machine (or sometimes voice recordings). In most courtrooms the reporter sits directly in front of the bench so she (most court reporters are women) can hear and see everything clearly.

To ensure courtroom security and decorum, one or more *bailiffs* are assigned to a trial. (The federal courts have Assistant US Marshals instead.) The bailiff escorts the defendant into and out of the courtroom, announces the opening and closing of the court, removes disruptive persons, and so forth. See *Trial Security*, below, for more information.

### MORE COURTROOM NPCs

Some other stereotypical "color characters" who tend to show up at trials include:

**The Hardened Police Detective:** This guy's a star witness for the prosecution who thinks he's seen it all. He may be honest or he may be in the pockets of the mob (or running a small independent operation on the side), but this tough-as-nails investigator backs down from no one, even when it's in his best interest to do so. He's a reluctant ally at best (though secretly he may admire the heroes); cast as an adversary, he's as ruthless as anyone the heroes will ever encounter. He doesn't have a lot of respect for the judicial process and is used to getting away with telling bald-faced lies under oath.

**The Crusading Newspaper Reporter:** This young man (or sometimes woman) is a trusted ally of the PCs (unless they have something to hide). Even more idealistic than most superheroes, he's determined to pursue justice regardless of the personal cost. If the PCs don't have a lot of investigative skills, his assistance can be invaluable (though he'll usually point the PCs in the right direction, rather than do all the legwork himself... in exchange for an exclusive on the final story, of course).

**The Stubborn Juror:** There's one on every genre jury. Perhaps he's a hardcase who'll never buy into a character's guilt or innocence, no matter how obvious it might be to everyone else. Perhaps he's a supervillain in his secret identity with an agenda. Whatever his motivation, he's so intractable that he makes Mechanon look wishy-washy.

*Witnesses* to be called by the prosecution or the defense sit on benches outside the main area of the courtroom. Typically a witness is told when to show up to give his testimony; witnesses generally aren't required to sit through the entire trial (and in fact are often discouraged, if not forbidden, from doing so).

Important trials, or ones involving famous people or salacious details, usually attract media attention, and that means *reporters* (not to be confused with the court reporter, see above). Some jurisdictions allow television cameras in the courtroom, others do not. Reporters often cluster just outside the building on the courthouse steps, ready to ambush anyone involved in the case with a hundred microphones and a thousand questions.

## Trial Security

Because criminal trials can become dramatic and emotional, and often involve people (defendants and witnesses alike) with known propensities for violence, steps have to be taken to keep things secure. For an average trial, one or two bailiffs (see above) is enough. For a larger, more complex trial, particularly one that attracts a lot of media attention, many more bailiffs may be required.

Supervillain trials often go a step beyond even that. Compared to jail or prison, a trial is an open, uncontrolled situation that offers excellent opportunities to escape (or to have one's friends break one out of custody). That translates into a need for greater security — security that can cope with superpowered opposition.

The responsibility to provide courtroom security rests with the jurisdiction that controls the court. The federal government tasks PRIMUS agents with courtroom security detail when necessary. Aside from New York City and Millennium City, who both have special police squads trained and equipped by Stronghold for super-trial security, few state courts have that sort of resource available on a full-time basis. Instead they use one of several solutions to the problem:

- contract with the federal government for PRIMUS assistance, or with UNTIL for its assistance
  - contract with a private organization, such as Executive Control Solutions (see *Cops, Crews, And Cabals*) to provide security
  - hire Stronghold as a "trial security consultant." Basically what this involves is that the Stronghold Superhuman Prisoner Transport System guards who escort the prisoner and oversee his temporary incarceration (see *Supervillain Prisoner Transport*, page 31) stay with the defendant at all times during the trial instead of just transporting him and handing him off to local officials.
  - bring in extra conventional guards and police officers and hope that will suffice
- See page 33 for examples of the technology used to restrain a superhuman defendant at trial and ensure that he doesn't escape.

## SECURITY DURING NON-TRIAL HOURS

Of course, a superhuman defendant has to be restrained in some fashion during the times when the trial is not in session (such as at night). Since most jurisdictions lack ready access to power-draining cells, supervillains are usually kept in ordinary jail cells while still wearing their power-dampening collars (or whatever else is used to keep their powers from functioning).

## CONDUCTING THE TRIAL

The second step, after the selection of the jury, is conducting the trial itself. It starts, appropriately enough, with *opening statements*. First the prosecution, and then the defense, gets up in front of the jury and summarizes what it believes the facts of the case to be and what the evidence it intends to present will show. On television legal dramas opening statements are pithy, dramatic things that rarely take more than a minute. In real life they can go on for hours or days in complex trials, but most of the time lawyers try to keep them fairly simple and straightforward.

After opening statements are concluded, the prosecution puts on its case. It has to prove “beyond a reasonable doubt” (a high legal standard) that the specified crime was committed and that the defendant committed it. The prosecutor presents witnesses to tell what they saw, describe evidence (and its significance) so it can be admitted into the record, and the like. The prosecution cannot ask leading questions of a witness during direct examination (questions that suggest their own answers, such as, “You were at home that night, weren’t you?”); it must confine itself to non-leading questions. After the prosecution finishes with each witness, the defense can *cross-examine* him. On cross-examination a defense attorney *can* ask leading questions in an attempt to trip up the witness, and although it can’t abuse or browbeat a witness can treat him with hostility, contempt, and scorn (within reasonable limits). The general rule in cross-examination, though it’s not always one an attorney can follow, is “Never ask a question you don’t already know the answer to” — cross isn’t a time to gather information so much as it is a time to attack a witness’s credibility and accuracy. After each cross-examination, the prosecution can re-direct questions to the witness, to clarify statements made on cross-examination or try to undo the damage the defense did to its case.

After the prosecution presents all the witnesses and evidence it has, it “rests” and the defense gets its turn. If it thinks the prosecution has failed to make its case, it can make a motion to dismiss, though these are rarely granted (and almost never in dramatic situations unless the GM wants to force the characters to dig up more evidence as part of the overall adventure). Assuming the motion is denied, now the roles are reversed: the defense puts on witnesses and evidence, and the prosecution cross-examines them. In real life the defendant himself rarely takes the stand, but in a dramatic trial like the ones in a Champions

game, he just might. Even if he does, he can always “take the Fifth” to avoid answering incriminating questions... though that looks bad to the jury.

After the defense rests its case, the prosecution has a chance to call witnesses and present evidence in rebuttal. This is more common in complex cases; in simple cases it may not be necessary.

After both sides rest, the prosecution and then the defense (or sometimes the reverse) make *closing arguments*. These are like opening statements, but instead of forecasting the case and its evidence they attempt to summarize everything in a persuasive way. Each side emphasizes the facts and evidence in its favor in the hopes of getting the jurors to see things its way.

After closing arguments, the judge instructs the jury. The instructions are agreed upon in advance by the court, the prosecution, and the defense, though to the extent they explain basic facts and issues of law they’re often taken from formbooks used in the jurisdiction. The instructions conclude with one or more basic questions that the jury has to decide on (such as, “Do you find beyond a reasonable doubt that John Doe murdered Jim Doe?”).

After receiving its instructions and questions, the jury retires to the jury room to deliberate. Depending on the nature and complexity of the issues confronting it, the deliberations may take a few minutes or hours, or could stretch on for days or weeks. Typically a jury has to answer each question before it unanimously, but depending on the crime and jurisdiction something less than unanimity may do. If a jury absolutely cannot come to an agreement after sufficient deliberation, the judge declares a mistrial and a new trial is scheduled.

Barring a mistrial, the jury reaches and announces its verdict: guilty or not guilty. In the event of a guilty verdict, the defense can motion to have it set aside in favor of a new trial, but such motions are rarely granted.

Next the defendant is sentenced (see below).

## THE LAW OF EVIDENCE

A vast and intricate body of law governs what can and cannot be introduced into evidence during a trial. Covering that entire body of law is beyond the scope of this book, not to mention beyond the level of detail most campaigns need. However, the GM and players should be aware of a few important points, even if only to help them shout “Objection!” at the right time.

- the *exclusionary rule* prevents evidence and confessions, as well as any evidence derived from them, from being admitted unless certain exceptions are met (see page 13)

- in general, it’s not permitted to introduce opinion, reputation, habit, or specific acts of conduct to prove character or propensity to act a certain way, and thereby to prove that the defendant acted that way. However, this area of law is fraught with exceptions, exemptions, and the need for judicial discretion.

## OFF-STAGE VERSUS ON-STAGE ACTIONS

As with paperwork and police interviews, appearing at trials is usually a boring, mundane activity. Players with a simulationist bent often want to act out everything in their character's lives, even the most boring parts. But fiction rarely encompasses the entirety of a character's life — fiction covers the interesting bits (with enough added background to form a coherent narrative). So unless a GM includes something interesting in a courtroom scenario, he should leave the courtroom off camera.

But the risk with keeping an important event, no matter how dull, “off-camera” is that the players will be so unfamiliar with it that they'll stumble. If a PC decides not to swear an oath on a Bible because he's the reincarnation of a non-Christian god, that conflict would probably have been resolved a long time before. Likewise, unless the PC has only recently arrived in the campaign setting, he should play it as though he's familiar with the basic procedures of American superhero law. Situations like these, however, do bring up the thorny issue of precedent.

■ *Hearsay* cannot be admitted. A hearsay statement is a statement made outside the trial by someone other than the testifying witness that's offered to prove the truth of the matter asserted. For example, suppose Carl testified, “Stan said the light was green.” Since Stan isn't testifying, and the statement's being used to prove the truth of the matter asserted (that the light was green), it's hearsay and cannot be admitted into evidence. But there are numerous exceptions to the standard hearsay rule. Examples include a person's “dying declarations,” a statement made against one's own personal interests (like confessing to a crime), testimony from a former trial, and declarations regarding current state of mind or feelings.

■ some types of witnesses have a *privilege* that protects them against having to disclose certain information. The most common privileges are doctor-patient privilege and attorney-client privilege. In some jurisdictions a marital privilege exists that allows someone not to testify against his spouse, or that can be used to prevent him from testifying even if he wants to.

### Telepathic Evidence

Superlaw and evidence law intersect on the issue of whether evidence gained by using telepathy on an unwilling suspect is admissible in court. While telepathic searches of someone's mind are not automatically unconstitutional according to the *Corbeau* case (see page 12), the Supreme Court has left it to the individual states to decide how to handle this controversial issue.

A slim majority of states (including California, Florida, and Washington) rules that telepathic evidence is usually inadmissible in court, on one of several theories: it violates the suspect's right to privacy; it violates the suspect's Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination; it cannot be satisfactorily monitored and is potentially subject to abuse; it constitutes hearsay. Absent a few very strict, narrowly-constructed exceptions, these states exclude telepathically-obtained evidence outright.

The rest of the states (including New York, Michigan, and Texas) permit evidence gained by telepathy (or similar means) to be admitted in court *if* it satisfies certain conditions to ensure its accuracy, reliability, and the honesty of the telepath. First, only telepathic evidence from sanctioned heroes is admissible. Except in extreme emergencies, the hero must obtain a warrant to read a suspect's mind (similar to getting a warrant for a wiretap) and must obey all other rules regarding searches and seizures (including announcing the search, unless “destruction” of the evidence [because of strong mental defenses] is feared). Whenever possible, the search must be conducted in controlled conditions (such as at the police station) with the telepath hooked up to a *mentaphone*, a machine that transcribes the thoughts the telepath reads. The mentaphone prevents the telepath from abusing the limited right of “mental entry” the warrant gives him. (When possible, most police agencies prefer to have *two* telepaths simultaneously conduct a search, to

heighten accuracy and reliability.) Furthermore, when the telepath gets to court, he's subjected to tests, run by the criminal defense attorney, to prove that he's a genuine telepath. These tests often involve reading the mind of the most neutral person in the courtroom — the judge. The testing is done out of the presence of the jury to avoid possible prejudice to the defendant.

## THE TRIAL AS SCENARIO

Aside from the basics (like deciding what the supervillain is on trial for, and what sort of escape attempt, if any, he will make), a GM who wants to run a trial scenario needs to consider four things: what makes this trial worth turning into a scenario; why the PCs are involved; prominent NPCs who are also involved; and what events or plot complications will arise.

### RUNNING THE TRIAL

There are two ways for a GM to run a trial as a scenario (or part of a scenario). The simplest is for each player to play his character while the GM plays everyone else — the usual RPG method. Depending on the nature of the trial, a PC may appear in his crimefighting identity, his secret identity, or both. Unfortunately, since so many NPCs interact with one another at a trial, this may not be very satisfying.

A more complicated but enjoyable method is “troupe-style” play, in which each player takes on the role of one or more trial participants in addition to playing his PC. The GM should keep the roles of judge and defendant for himself, but other crucial roles — prosecutor, defense attorney, key witnesses, and so on — can be given to willing players.

Troupe-style trials are a great way to involve all of the players in a roleplaying experience. It doesn't even matter if they have no legal experience; let the players make “objections” and “file motions” and so on based on what everyone's seen on TV trial dramas, while the GM as judge does his best to rule correctly on them. You should just make sure emotions don't get too high. The urge to be a lawyer and win a case is a powerful one for some people, and when players get emotionally involved in a scenario, they *really* get involved.

### SCENARIO-WORTHY TRIALS

Legal dramas make for great television and movies, but not necessarily for good games — the average trial is a routine, even boring affair in most respects. Every supervillain who's captured could go on trial, but don't feel compelled to roleplay *every* trial. Trials you focus on during game time should involve special situations: legal controversies concerning superlaw; the trial of one of the PCs' arch-enemies (crime bosses and master villains who've previously escaped capture and believe themselves beyond the reach of the justice system, for instance); trials with lots of twists, turns, and surprises; and trials you expect to degenerate into a battle against supervillains in the courtroom.



Open and shut cases don't make for interesting trials. If Black Harlequin's game of "Pirates of the Spanish Maim" results in six fatalities, and the crime was committed on live television, unless it's got a really novel twist ("Black Harlequin's pleading self-defense?!") it's not worth running as a game session. On the other hand, if the evidence against the Master of Macabre Merriment is sketchy and he's serving as his own attorney, it might make for a fun game. It will become even more entertaining if he can somehow put on a convincing case that *one of the PCs is the real killer!*

Another good reason to have a trial scenario is to use it as cover for another scenario. Suppose a villain kidnaps a DNPC and then gets arrested. He can blackmail the PCs by offering the safety of the hostage in exchange for a guarantee that he won't be imprisoned for his crime. A more convoluted plan might involve a villain deciding that being in a public trial would make a perfect alibi for another crime (though he'd have to make a secret deal with someone in the district attorney's office to ensure he gets the right court date to set up the alibi and that the DA drops the charges when they become inconvenient).

## Roles For Player Characters

A PC enters a trial scenario based on his potential role in the trial. If he's a criminal defense lawyer, he may be hired or assigned to the case; similarly, a character who's a prosecutor could get assigned to the case by the DA. If he captured the defendant or has other relevant information, he appears as a witness (either at the request of the prosecution, or in obedience to a subpoena if he doesn't want to get involved). If he's a citizen of the local community in his secret identity, he might get chosen for the jury, or may simply show up to watch. Worst of all, if he's committed (or been framed for) a crime, he could be the defendant!

As you read through these suggestions, don't forget — villains often have secret identities, too. A PC attorney who has to defend a villain he knows to be guilty is bad enough, but a situation where the judge is secretly a supervillain is even worse.

### THE SUPERHERO JUROR

It's not often that a GM has a really good opportunity to work a superhero's Secret Identity into an adventure in a meaningful way. Trial scenarios offer just such an opportunity: make a PC a juror.

In the real world, unfortunately it's usually not too difficult to get out of jury duty. However, if the GM *really* wants a PC to sit in the box, it's not hard to cut off all routes of escape. After all, the GM plays the clerk of court and all the judges. In the end, though, the most persuasive argument might be this: "This villain has gone to trial and walked in the past. This is your chance to try to make a difference and ensure that he gets thrown into Stronghold for good."

What's even better is that a hero might actually have an ironclad reason for getting out of jury: personal involvement. If he's fought the villain who's going on trial, he knows things a juror shouldn't know and would undoubtedly be excused for potential bias by the court. A conscientious hero will agonize over this and do anything he reasonably can to get off the jury; a more vigilante-oriented one will look at it as an opportunity to see Justice done regardless of what the rules say.

If you want to get *all* the PCs on the same jury at once, you have to use a little dramatic license. In that case, their presence on the jury isn't a mistake or dumb luck; it's part of someone's deliberate plan. Perhaps a court official who knows the PCs' secret identities and who wants the heroes on that jury arranges for each of them to get a summons. Perhaps the trial itself is a sham, staged to catch a crooked judge or to get close to another juror (a suspected criminal) and spy on him during the proceedings.

A truly fiendish GM, of course, uses PC jurors to make the scenario more interesting. What happens when the PC is on a jury in his secret identity *and* is on the witness list in his costumed identity? Even worse, what if while the PC is in the jury, someone pretending to be him in costume enters the courtroom and testifies? Who's the imposter, how did he know the hero wouldn't be there himself, and what's he up to?

In play, there are several potential problems with the "superhero on the jury" scenario. The first is staging and party separation. If a single member of a superhero team is stuck on jury duty, he doesn't interact with the rest of his teammates and other players don't have a reason to be emotionally invested (*i.e.*, to pay attention to the scenario). The GM has to find a way to keep the PCs involved in events. Perhaps the other PCs have to investigate behind the scenes to help clear the innocent defendant while the juror PC hears the evidence, for example.

Second, if you want to really roleplay a trial, the role of a juror requires PCs to listen to a *lot* of dialogue (and what may be worse, all done by the GM "arguing" with himself as judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, and witness). Instead of playing out large sections of the trial, the GM can summarize the key points of each witness's testimony and cross-examination. For important testimony, roleplay the most dramatic exchanges between the witness and the attorney. Although in real

life jurors aren't allowed to ask questions at a trial, the players should be allowed to ask the GM whether certain topics were covered or questions answered during testimony. The answer doesn't always have to be yes, but the questions give the GM an idea of what issues interest the players; he can use that information as a guide to make the trial more dramatic.

Serving as a juror may have other implications for the PCs as well. First, when PC jurors deliberate with other jurors in their secret identities, don't miss the opportunity for the conversation to drift to the subject of the PCs' costumed identities — and what the NPCs really think about them. Sure, it's a cheap shot, but if the players become more involved in the scenario because of it, you've done some good. Second, in genre fiction jurors who send a villain to prison often become that villain's target when he escapes. Having a PC be on his Hunted's jury and become the target of his Hunted's vengeance even though the Hunted doesn't know who he is in his Secret Identity makes for a great twist on the Disadvantage.

### **LAWYER SUPERHEROES**

Some PCs are attorneys in their secret identities, making it relatively easy to incorporate them into trial scenarios (assuming they practice the right type of law). However, that's not the only way to get a PC involved in arguing a case. In some courts, like small claims court, people rarely have their own attorneys; they present their own cases. Similarly, a PC who's accused of a crime has the right to act as his own attorney, though few sayings are as true as, "The man who acts as his own attorney has a fool for a client." Player characters are particularly likely to represent themselves in scenarios where they're kidnapped and put on trial in an alien court for "crimes against the Universe" or the like.

Player characters who are actually lawyers should have a chance to shine in a trial scenario... though that doesn't mean they can avoid a few complications along the way. A prosecutor PC might be ordered to try a villain the PC knows is innocent, forcing him to work to put the villain in prison during the day while hunting for clues to free him at night as a superhero. Even worse, a PC who knows a villain is guilty (because he caught him in the act!) might be ordered by the court to defend that villain. Failure to provide effective representation could earn the villain a new trial and/or get the PC in big trouble with the bar association — so it's up to the PC to find a way to balance what he knows to be true with his professional obligations.

If the lawyer PC's player is up to it, let him roleplay some key parts of the trial — opening and closing arguments, perhaps, or the examination or cross-examination of a key witness. Let the other players feed the PC questions to help keep them involved.

## WHEN SUPERHEROES TESTIFY

The most likely role for a superhero in a trial scenario is that of witness. If a hero participated in the capture of a villain, saw the villain commit the crime he's on trial for, or has other relevant information, the odds are the prosecution will call him as a witness, perhaps even its primary witness. It probably won't call a hero to testify about a villain's past crimes, reputation, or the like; that sort of information generally is inadmissible unless the defendant brings it up first. On the other hand, it might call the hero to testify as to his knowledge of how a villain's powers work, if that information helps make the case.

In most situations, the main thrust of a hero's testimony will be to establish a timeline of events and to describe the PC's perception of the crime in detail. The cross-examination will attempt to poke holes in the PC's statements, call the PC's credibility into question, make him reveal additional information that helps the defendant, or the like. However, there's always the possibility that the defendant (or someone else) hates the PC witness so much that he'll instruct the defense attorney to do everything he can to besmirch the PC's reputation, even if that means risking losing the case (see accompanying text box).

## CAPES IN THE GALLERY

Beyond the traditional roles discussed above, there's always the possibility that superheroes can simply attend a trial to watch what happens. "Realistically," superhero spectators would be expected to act beyond reproach, and the bailiffs would probably keep a close eye on them. But in genre stories, courts are rarely as orderly as they're supposed to be, so spectators can usually get away with a few interruptions and outbursts until the judge throws them out.

Likewise, in the real world, when court is in session spectators can't burst into the closed courtroom, proclaim they've uncovered new evidence, and not expect to hear the words "contempt of court." Yet in the genre, this sort of behavior usually gets rewarded (even in situations where the opposing attorney would be entitled to an evidentiary hearing).

If the only role for a PC to play is as spectator, the GM should give him something else interesting to do while he's sitting there. Perhaps he overhears an interesting conversation between two other spectators, or spots someone acting suspiciously (why is that man staring at his watch?). Maybe a key lieutenant or close friend of the defendant is in the court, so a hero can keep an eye on him. Trials are, after all, a good opportunity for a villain to make an escape (or be rescued), so having a PC in the audience to prevent that might make him a more important "participant" in the trial than the lawyers or the witnesses.

## TEN HOSTILE QUESTIONS FOR HERO WITNESSES

Here are some questions a defense attorney (particularly one who wants to treat a PC hostilely, for whatever reason) might ask a hero on the witness stand. Many are likely to be met by objections from the prosecuting attorney.

- 1 **"So you like to hurt people?"** This is an attempt to discredit the PC, and perhaps to open the door to discussing incidents where the PC physically abused criminals and/or the PC's psychological issues.
- 2 **"Didn't you once tell the police..."** If the hero has ever deliberately misled the police or other officials and that fact is publicly known (or can be uncovered with reasonable investigation), any good defense attorney will bring it up in an effort to impress on the jury that the hero's word cannot be trusted.
- 3 **"So how did you come to be in that particular place at that time?"** This question tries to trick the PC into admitting that he used illegal methods to get to the scene of a crime, so the entire testimony can be thrown out (if he's a sanctioned hero) or his credibility questioned.
- 4 **"What was your past relationship with the defendant?"** This question allows the defense attorney to establish a context for a superbattle — and to paint the PC as prejudicial to the defendant because of their history.
- 5 **"Could you describe the combat in detail?"** This is a winner for the defense because the odds are no one, even a hero with Eidetic Memory, can observe and precisely remember everything that happens in a superbattle. It's particularly effective if the defense can afford to hire a slew of expert witnesses to reconstruct the events of the battle in a way that favors the defendant. It's also good if the PC was Knocked Unconscious (or even Stunned) and might have missed crucial details.
- 6 **"Have you ever been mind controlled?"** and/or **"Have you ever had your senses confused by a telepath?"** These are especially pertinent questions if a telepath was involved in the scenario, since for many juries the existence and possible use of mental powers can create reasonable doubt or cause them to question a witness's credibility.
- 7 **"When the battle was over, did you or anyone else handle any of the evidence on the crime scene?"** This question helps to plant doubts on the reliability of evidence and the prosecution's forensics experts — or catch the PC committing perjury. Of course, if the PC is the police forensics expert, it's not as useful.
- 8 **"How long have you been a superhero? How much time did you spend training for your profession?"** This question strikes at the heart of a PC's "qualifications," and thus the quality of his testimony. As noted in the main text, *general* questions about a hero's training and preparations for crimefighting are permissible.
- 9 **"Have you ever received treatment for psychiatric problems?"** Defense attorneys save this question for certain situations: when they have concrete evidence already in hand that a hero witness has, in fact, been treated for mental illness or instability; when they're more interested in savaging a hero's reputation than winning the case; or when they get really desperate.
- 10 **"Have you ever taken a life?"** This is another cheap shot question designed to rattle the witness, though unless the attorney has laid down a foundation for the hero being a killer (and it's relevant to the case), it's unlikely to get past a prosecution objection.

## SUPERHERO ON TRIAL

Perhaps the most dramatic situation for a superhero is to be the defendant in a trial. Superheroes often commit minor crimes in the performance of their duty and the authorities look the other way... but some crimes can't be overlooked. And there's always the possibility that an enemy frames the PC for a crime he didn't commit.

Superhero trials shouldn't be handled too much differently than other jury trials. The defendant has to face a lot of pretrial interrogation from the police; discrepancies between his initial state-

ments and what he says on the stand will be noted. (In real life, defendants cannot be required to testify and rarely do; in a dramatic Champions trial, it's a lead-pipe cinch that a superhero PC will take the stand in his own defense.) He'll be restrained before and during the trial just like any other superpowered defendant (*i.e.*, usually with power-dampening devices so he can't use his superhuman abilities). And if he's found guilty, he'll find himself in Stronghold.

A few scenes that can be expected at a superhero's trial (or soon after) include:

**Blasts From the Past:** Okay, maybe the GM promised the PCs that certain villains would remain captured for the rest of the campaign. Nothing was said about them never *appearing* again. The GM should feel free to re-introduce enemies of the PCs who are languishing in Stronghold for a guest appearance. Let the PC's rogues' gallery get a chance to smear the PC on the witness stand.

**Harassing The DNPCs:** As tough as it is for a superhero to stand trial, when the press is camped on the doorsteps of a person's loved ones and known associates, it's even tougher.

**The Offer:** Sometimes when a superhero's on trial, he hears from the "other side." Maybe it's a long-time opponent who respects his ability, or maybe it's a crimelord who thinks he has the PC "right where he wants him." The villain offers to help the hero escape from custody in exchange for his allegiance or assistance.

**The Villain Gloats:** So what do you do when you're a supervillain and you've framed a superhero for murder, destroyed his life, and he's on the verge of being sent to Death Row? You go to the prison (in disguise, if necessary) and tell him that you're responsible for all his misery and suffering, of course.

**I Was In My Secret Identity, So I Don't Have An Alibi:** A superhero may find himself trapped between being falsely convicted and having to reveal his true identity to remain a free man.

## Trial Complications

Of course trials, especially in comic books, can quickly turn into a farce or a complete disaster for one side or another. Consider the following complications:

**A Dark Secret Comes Out:** While it may have no bearing on the trial, at some point in the proceedings (in true soap opera fashion) someone's darkest secret comes out: affairs, children sired out of wedlock, visits to strip clubs or leather bars, evidence that someone participated in a crime long ago and covered it up, or the like.

**The Battle For Court TV:** Major trials are media circuses, and competition in the big top has never been as fierce as it is today. When the media gets its teeth into a trial, regardless of how many more gruesome crimes might go unpublicized, it grabs onto it and mercilessly

exploits it. Imagine what could happen if a commentator on a legal television show really dislikes a PC who's on trial (or a major witness).

**Contaminated Evidence:** The PCs may have gotten the perpetrator, but the lab boys botched their work. Samples taken from the crime scene have been contaminated and invalidated, so a major part of the case is thrown out of court. It's up to the heroes to find replacement evidence that was overlooked before.

**Dead Alive:** A true melodramatic staple, someone who was thought to be dead (in murder trials, it's often the victim), bursts through the doors of the courtroom and proclaims that he's alive. In superhuman worlds, this could be a shapeshifter who's impersonating the deceased.

**Disruptive Relatives:** A distraught relative of the accused (or the victim, use whichever side is opposed to the PCs) makes a public scene at the trial, throwing wild accusations at one of the PCs. When the trial's adjourned for the day, the relative gets out in front of the press and calls for an independent investigation of the PC's conduct. (It's even possible he'll start an organization that becomes a persistent thorn in the PCs' side.) They'll also go on court television programs and besmirch the reputation of the PCs (and his supporters).

**A Sympathetic Witness Is A Liar:** The PCs' side was relying on the testimony of a particular witness (a stoolie, a police officer, a relative of one of the parties) but when he gets on the stand, the opposing side easily dismantles him and shows that he's a complete liar. This doesn't just affect his testimony — it puts the entire case in jeopardy.

**Someone Else Comes Forward:** Halfway through the trial, a plausible suspect comes forward and confesses to the crime. Perhaps it's a supervillain who doesn't want to see his illegitimate son (who's just manifested the same powers as his dad) get off to the same lousy start, or perhaps it's someone hired by a mob boss to take the fall for a crime. Regardless of his reason, his confession is throwing the trial into turmoil.

**A Witness Is In Danger:** This is a very common problem when the mob or ethnic gangs are involved. Witnesses are afraid to talk about a crime or come forward to testify, and when they do, the mob calls for a hit. Sometimes a superhero has to be extremely persuasive to get people to talk, and sometimes he'll have to bodyguard the reluctant witness.

## THE BATTLE

In a superhero trial, the most common complication is that a battle breaks out. Neil Gaiman once described fight scenes in comic books as having the same importance as musical numbers in a musical or sex scenes in a porn film — they're the quintessential moment that defines the genre. So even though a trial provides great drama in its own right, there needs to be a way to integrate superbattles into the proceedings. Some possibilities include:

**The Rescue:** Sometimes a supervillain on trial may display extreme arrogance toward the proceedings; his defense essentially boils down to: “wait until my friends show up, then all of you will pay!” At some point in the scenario, it happens — the villains launch a full scale assault on the courthouse so they can grab their friend and get away.

**The Infiltration:** A more clever way of dealing with the supervillain attack problem is the infiltration. The villains know the heroes and the authorities will be there to stop them, so instead of just storming the courtroom, they maneuver themselves into position by taking the place of jurors, bailiffs, reporters, or even the judge, and then planting explosives and other booby traps where the superheroes are expected to sit. Once the boobytraps go off, the villains drop their disguises and attack.

**The Takeover:** A classic comic book scenario is for a villain and his gang to storm the courtroom and take control of the trial. The lead villain becomes the judge, another plays the role of the prosecutor, and the other bad guys form the jury. This is a hostage scenario, because the spectators will be shot if the heroes don't play along with whatever buffoonery the villains have in mind. As with most hostage scenarios, the heroes have to stall for time, play along with the bad guys and wait for the ideal moment to make their move.

The “supervillains knock the superhero unconscious, kidnap a defense lawyer, and put the hero on trial” plot is a variation on this scenario.

## And The Verdict Is...

...whatever the story needs it to be. In the American legal system, the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty; his guilt must be proven *beyond a reasonable doubt* — a much higher standard of proof than the probable cause required to make an arrest. However, it's not hard for the GM to manipulate events a little to ensure whatever outcome works best for the campaign.

### DOUBLE JEOPARDY

If the jury finds the defendant not guilty, he's free to go and is completely absolved of responsibility for that crime. The state that tried him cannot try him again — that would be *double jeopardy*, which is forbidden by the Fifth Amendment. Even if new evidence comes to light that proves his guilt, the state cannot try him again for the same crime. However, in some cases another state or the federal government could try the defendant for the same crime.

## Sentencing

A defendant who's found guilty proceeds to sentencing. In some cases the sentence is imposed by the jury when it announces the verdict, in others it's set by the judge. In some types of cases, particularly capital ones, after the guilty verdict there's a separate “sentencing phase” of the trial in which the prosecution presents evidence and arguments to justify the punishment it seeks, and the defense provides evidence and argument in mitigation to try to obtain a lesser sentence.

Depending on the nature of the crime, a defendant may be sentenced to pay a fine, to a term in prison, and/or to death. Some supervillains can also be sentenced to hot sleep. This raises the question of the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution.

### THE EIGHTH AMENDMENT

The Eighth Amendment prohibits “cruel and unusual punishments.” “Cruel and unusual” doesn't have a set definition, but depends, in part, on “the evolving standards of decency that mark the progress of a maturing society.” *Trop v. Dulles*, 356 U.S. 86, 100-101 (1958). Furthermore, a punishment must not be “excessive,” which means two things: first, a punishment must not be grossly disproportionate to the severity of the crime for which it's given; second, a punishment must not needlessly inflict pain. For example, the death penalty may only be imposed for murder (because death is a disproportionate penalty for other crimes) and the method of execution used must not be unnecessarily painful.

The basic case on the Eighth Amendment as it affects superhumans is *James “Smasher” Aronson v. United States*, 390 U.S. 1420 (1968). *Aronson* was a challenge to Illinois's proposed method of incarcerating Smasher, a superhuman criminal capable of lifting 100 tons. The state, aware that no conventional prison cell could hold him, proposed to keep Smasher in a drugged state of weakness. It would be possible for a therapist to exercise him, and for a nurse to feed him, but Smasher would not be able to use his strength to break free. The dosage was to be precisely based on Smasher's metabolism and capabilities. After reviewing current Eighth Amendment standards, and stating the “different strokes” doctrine (see above), the Court held, 390 U.S. at 1432:

*Regarding Eighth Amendment considerations, it is obvious that the powers of many superhumans make it impossible to incarcerate them by normal means ... Thus, certain methods of incarceration that are unconstitutional when used on normal human criminals are constitutional when used to restrain superhuman criminals. The methods a state may use on a particular superhuman criminal must be as narrowly tailored as possible to restrain that individual, so that his rights will not be infringed.*

### Prisons And Restraints

The case of *Wilson v. Seiter*, 501 U.S. 294 (1991), establishes a two-pronged standard for judging whether prison conditions violate the Eighth Amendment. First, prison officials must have a culpable state of mind toward a prisoner or prisoners — they must be “deliberately indifferent” to their welfare. Second, a prisoner claiming an Eighth Amendment violation based on prison conditions must show actual unconstitutional conditions denying at least one human need. See also *Helling v. McKinney*, 509 U.S. 25 (1993) (Eighth Amendment requires “reasonable safety” for prisoners; prison officials cannot ignore conditions that are currently unharmed but are sure or very likely to cause harm in the future).

Stronghold has repeatedly withstood challenges to its conditions under the *Wilson* and *Helling* doctrines in state and federal courts, including two that have reached the Supreme Court. For example, in *Morgaine “Morgaine the Mystic” Drury v. United States*, 539 U.S. 1687 (2003), the mystic supervillainess filed a broadly-worded lawsuit challenging many aspects of Stronghold’s confinement system and procedures, including its use of power-negation devices. Although she had some success in the lower courts, the Supreme Court flatly rejected all of her claims. Several court opinions have positively described Stronghold’s practices and indirectly commended Warden Wildman and his staff for respecting prisoners’ rights while still ensuring public safety.

### Eligibility For Stronghold

The issue of who’s eligible to be incarcerated in Stronghold has been litigated on several occasions. The landmark 1980 federal case of *New Mexico v. Hsien “Jade Master” Peng* established a “reasonableness” standard for courts to apply, one that’s since been adopted by every jurisdiction in the United States. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals stated:

*There is no reason why a paranormal, who is fundamentally no different from any other inmate, cannot be held in a regular prison — it merely requires that the prison take extra precautions to prevent his escape. Stronghold may only be used to incarcerate a criminal if the state shows by clear and convincing evidence that the felon’s powers and capabilities are such that only Stronghold is reasonably capable of containing him (or that ordinary prisons are not reasonably capable of doing so), and only if the felon represents a clear and present danger to society’s well-being and safety.*

A second federal case from California in 1993, *John “Utility” Doe v. Kowalski*, clarified the “reasonableness” standard to be applied in super-prison cases. The court held that if a paranormal has proven so adept at escaping from normal facil-

ities that it was reasonably unlikely such a facility could ever contain him for the length of his sentence, incarceration in Stronghold was permissible. Cases following *Hsien* and *Utility* have almost always found in favor of allowing incarceration in Stronghold.

### Power-Dampening Systems

Over the years, many supervillains have challenged the use of “power-dampening” restraints on various Eighth Amendment grounds, often analogizing them to forcibly blinding a normal human prisoner or denying him the use of his legs. In the past some liberal lower courts were at least slightly sympathetic to such claims. But since the Supreme Court handed down the *Morgaine the Mystic* decision (see above) in 2003, its ruling that such devices do not violate the Eighth Amendment has become the controlling law of the land. In light of that decision, even jurisdictions that in some way restricted such technologies have reversed themselves, giving police officials a much more robust capability to keep supervillains prisoner.

### Hot Sleep

The issue of restraints for superpowered criminals was further complicated by the introduction of *hot sleep*, a controversial form of “induced coma” invented for use at Stronghold in 1983. It allows unrestrainable criminals, such as Firewing or Sunburst, to be kept “asleep” and on life support for the duration of their sentence. (See page 53.) In *Sydney “Grond” Potter v. Wildman*, 109 S.Ct. 3386 (1989), the Supreme Court held:

*If it is reasonably likely that no other form of restraint will suffice to keep the individual in prison for the duration of his sentence, “hot sleep” or similar methods which do not permanently injure the individual do not violate the Eighth Amendment’s proscription of cruel and unusual punishment.*

Though the Supreme Court mentioned only hot sleep by name, by analogy other specialized high-tech restraints (such as psionic interference helmets and fatigue handcuffs) are also constitutional. See *Teresa “Firecracker” Rodriguez v. Muench*, 676 F. Supp.1597 (N.D. Tex. 1987) (use of fireproof restraining suit on fire-manipulating supervillainess upheld).

### APPEALS

A defendant may *appeal* his sentence in an attempt to get it reversed or reduced, or to get a new trial. This means he asks a higher-ranking court to find that the trial court committed some error (admitted evidence it should have excluded, for example) that justifies a reduced sentence or new trial. Pending the hearing of his appeal, the defendant usually remains confined (assuming he was sentenced to prison), but in some cases may be released on his own recognizance.

## Aftershocks

The consequences of a trial scenario are obvious. If a villain was rightfully convicted, he'll want to escape prison and seek revenge on the PCs who put him there. If an innocent man was convicted, eventually the heroes find out and have to work to clear his name, typically by tracking down the real culprit and getting him to confess. Hopefully they can do it before the wrongfully convicted man becomes so bitter that he turns into a supervillain himself...

If a PC was convicted, the consequences are more severe. There's a good chance he'll lose his secret identity (see page 13, and also *Ten Plots For When A Secret Identity Is Blown in Villainy Amok*). Since the odds are he has enemies in Stronghold, he's probably going to have to spend his sentence in solitary confinement (*i.e.*, entirely in his cell). Of course, the whole thing may be a ruse to let the PC get close enough to an inmate to pump him for information, in which case he has to mingle with the prison population and take his chances.

If a guilty person is found innocent, it should redouble the PCs' resolve to bring him to justice. But if you've run a big trial scenario for a villain and he's gotten off once, don't stage a second trial. Instead, nudge the PCs into finding conclusive evidence on the bad guy, and when they do, summarily lock him away for good.

Of course, when a villain is locked away, that doesn't mean he's gone from the campaign. The Superhero genre is notorious for villains escaping from prison, even prisons like Stronghold that are specifically designed for superhumans. But if you've gone to all the trouble to put a villain on trial and made the PCs go to extra effort to convict him, freeing him via an escape may seem like a slap in the face. The GM should tread cautiously. At the very least, leave him there for a few months of play time.

On the other hand, the "escaped con goes after the jury that convicted him" is a time-honored classic, so if you feel inclined to release a villain from prison, make sure he does something interesting. A supervillain who's released from prison might try to go straight, only to be spotted close to several other criminal operations (Unluck can create generate a lot of painful misunderstandings); if the heroes overreact and hound the ex-villain, it's possible he'll "fall off the wagon" and return to crime.

## RANDOM TRIAL SCENARIO GENERATOR

**TABLE 1: VILLAIN GUILT**

Roll 1d6, roll on any indicated sub-table, then roll on Table 2

- 1-3 Villain was caught by the heroes performing the criminal act
- 4-5 Villain is guilty (roll on Table 1-1, Unusual Circumstances, Guilt)
- 6 Villain is innocent (roll on Table 1-2, Unusual Circumstances, Innocence)

**Table 1-1 Unusual Circumstances, Guilt**

Roll 1d6, roll on any indicated sub-table, then roll on Table 2

- 1-3 No complications. It's an open and shut case.
- 5-6 Complications (roll on Table 1-1-1)

**Table 1-1-1 Unusual Circumstances, Complications**

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2

- 1 Villain performed the crime under duress (blackmail, telepathic instruction, was drugged...)
- 2 Villain did not mean to commit the crime, it was an accident (reroll if inappropriate)
- 3 Villain performed the crime to protect a loved one
- 4 Villain was tricked into performing the crime by a third party
- 5 There was no crime — the villain and the victim are colluding as part of a publicity stunt, insurance scheme, or other plot
- 6 Villain performed the crime as part of a deep cover operation — he's working for the good guys!

**Table 1-2 Unusual Circumstances, Innocence**

Roll 1d6, roll on any indicated sub-table, then roll on Table 2

- 1-3 No complications. It's a simple misunderstanding.
- 5-6 Complications (roll on Table 1-2-1)

**Table 1-2-1 Unusual Circumstances, Complications**

Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 2

- 1 Villain was framed — probably by another villain, but sometimes by a hero or the police
- 2 Villain was framed by a superhero looking to boost his reputation
- 3 Villain was targeted by police who willfully ignored the possibility of other suspects
- 4 Villain was committing a different crime at the time
- 5 There was no crime — the crime is meant as a cover to protect an innocent person from other villains
- 6 Villain performed the crime as part of a deep cover operation — he's working for the good guys!

## TEN UNUSUAL SUPERHUMAN TRIAL SCENARIOS

**1. Body Switch/Mindgames:** They're saying it's an insanity defense: at the trial of one of the world's most maniacal supervillains, the defendant claims he's really one of the world's greatest superheroes — and he's switched bodies (accidentally, or as the result of an attack) with the villain. Telepathy doesn't prove his contention, but the hero with whom he's allegedly switched bodies *is* acting a little odd....

**2. I Wasn't Anywhere Near There, Your Honor:** A villain on trial produces what seems to be an airtight alibi. The prosecution believes he has teleportation powers and used them to set up the alibi, even though he's never previously displayed such abilities. The DA asks the PCs to investigate and find out the truth *fast* before a guilty man goes free.

**3. Dude, Where's My Exhibit A?:** A notorious supervillain is caught on film killing several guards with an alien death ray pistol. Unfortunately, when the murder weapon is presented to the jury, it morphs into an alien creature and flies away. The defense argues for dismissal, claiming that if the murder weapon's an alien creature, it was responsible for the murder, not the defendant. Someone needs to recapture the weapon and prove it had no free will (or was morphed by an outside source) so a murderer doesn't go free.

**4. Hanging Justice:** At a preliminary hearing where a PC's being questioned about a villain's actions, Captain Chronos appears out of nowhere and addresses the courtroom, telling everyone that something horrible will happen unless the judge releases the supervillain *immediately*. Naturally, his concerns are ignored, but a few minutes later, the villain's powers flare up, the courthouse is moved backward through time, with everyone's appearance and abilities altered to fit the new milieu. The PCs are now heroes in the Old West — outstanding physical and mental specimens with no superhuman powers. The PC who was being questioned at the hearing is now a notorious gunslinger who's on trial for murder, his lawyer is the town drunkard, and the judge is a hanging judge (and he's in a baaaad mood). The heroes must prevent the PC from being sentenced to death and figure out how to reverse the temporal transposition.

**5. His Honor, Judge Black Harlequin:** While one of the PCs is in court, a team of insane superpowered agents infiltrates the courtroom and takes everyone hostage. Then the new judge arrives: Black Harlequin! The only way he'll allow the hostages to leave is if the PC agrees to stand trial for his crimes (these "crimes," of course, consist of interfering with the plans of Black Harlequin). Can anyone win in a trial when guns are being held to the jury's heads and the judge is one of the world's craziest supervillains?

**6. Judge Not, Lest Ye Be Judged:** A telepathic vigilante has found an intriguing way to use others to carry out his mission: if a criminal who's accused of a serious crime gets off on a technicality, a gun automatically teleports into the hands of the judge, who follows a mental command to shoot the criminal. Three villains are already dead, and the careers of three respected jurists are in ruins. The authorities ask the PCs to find out what's going on. But how will they feel when a crimelord who's avoided the law for years becomes the next target?

**7. Not In My Back Yard:** Tired of destructive battles on their doorstep, supervillains crashing through their windows at all hours of the night, and cleaning up collateral damage, a team of superheroes with a publicly known HQ are the recipients of a civil suit from their neighbors. They want the PCs to move their headquarters as far away from their property as possible — now!

**8. Personal Responsibility:** A duplicating villain named Multiplex killed a cop and is facing a death sentence. However, the villain on trial swears he's not the duplicate that killed the cop and that he actually opposed the murder. He wants the PCs to honestly evaluate his case and get him off if he convinces them he's innocent. Can they? Worse, Multiplex's duplicates involuntarily recombine every fourteen days! How does the law handle someone who's *partially* a killer?

**9. Today's Copyright Laws Are Murder:** Former minor league pro athlete Burton Davis has trademarked one of the PCs' identities and sues him for copyright infringement. Normally, this sort of case would get thrown out of court, but because of some tricky legal maneuvering the judge is willing to hear the case. Davis has a real gift for being obnoxious and bringing out the worst in anyone, even superheroes. The person who's really behind the lawsuit — a villainous telepath — is counting on this to provoke the PCs. The mentalist intends to telepathically enflame Davis's insults in court, and once the PC's gotten mad enough, he'll mind control the PC into attacking, and (he hopes) killing Davis in open court. The only thing standing in the way of his manipulations are the other PCs.

**10. The Dead Walk:** A criminal who was given the death penalty has come back to life. His lawyer claims he should go free since he's already been executed by the state (and therefore has legally served his sentence). The PCs have been asked to find evidence that he faked his death... but what if the execution wasn't faked?

**TABLE 2: VILLAIN CRIME**

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 3 |   |
| 1                              | Murder  |
| 2                              | Willful Destruction of Property <i>or</i> Arson |
| 3                              | Blackmail                                       |
| 4                              | Kidnapping                                      |
| 5                              | Robbery   |
| 6                              | Assault   |

**TABLE 3: PROSECUTOR STYLE**

|                                |                             |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 3 |                             |
| 1                              | Competent But Quiet         |
| 2                              | Corrupt                     |
| 3                              | Incompetent Newbie          |
| 4                              | Self-Righteous Skill        |
| 5                              | Silver-Tongued Charmer      |
| 6                              | Vengeful, Take No Prisoners |

**TABLE 4: DEFENSE ATTORNEY**

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 5 |   |
| 1                              | Attack Dog  |
| 2                              | Burned out, overworked veteran who always tries to plea bargain |
| 3                              | Grandstanding speechmaker                                       |
| 4                              | Gloryhound  |
| 5                              | Incompetent Newbie  |
| 6                              | Mob Mouthpiece  |

**TABLE 5: JUDGE**

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Roll 1d6, then roll on Table 6 |   |
| 1                              | Bland Pushover                                  |
| 2                              | Folksy Southern Boy With Knives Under His Robes |
| 3                              | High Priest of the Law                          |
| 4                              | The Insane Ol' Coot                             |
| 5                              | The Liberal Activist                            |
| 6                              | The Relentless Harpy                            |

**TABLE 6: NUMBER OF TRIAL COMPLICATIONS**

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Roll 1d6, if there are complications, roll on Table 6-1 |      |
| 1   | None |
| 2-3   | 1    |
| 4-5   | 2    |
| 6   | 3    |

**Table 6-1: Common Trial Complications**

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Roll 1d6 |   |
| 1        | Courtroom proceedings are disrupted by a tantrum (the defendant, a distraught relative of the victim, superhero groupie...) |
| 2        | Evidence is contaminated  |
| 3        | Stubborn juror refuses to acknowledge the possibility of error  |
| 4        | Friendly witness is caught perjuring his testimony  |
| 5        | Gossipmongers besmirch the PCs' testimony (and reputation)  |
| 6        | Roll on Table 6-1-1, Special Complications  |

**Table 6-1-1: Special Trial Complications**

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Roll 1d6 |   |
| 1        | A jury member has a heart attack  |
| 2        | One of the people in the gallery is an assassin who tries to kill someone |
| 3        | Someone's dark secret is revealed   |
| 4        | Someone else comes forward and takes credit for the crime                 |
| 5-6      | Supervillains attack the courtroom  |

## OTHER SUPERLAW ISSUES

While most superlaw pertains to crimes and trials, some important aspects are more general. They include:

### The Second Amendment

The Second Amendment provides: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." It prevents Congress or the national government from taking away this right. It does not apply to the states, which may regulate weapons possession. *United States v. Cruikshank*, 92 U.S. 542 (1876). However, many states have state constitutions with amendments that duplicate the Second Amendment, thus preserving the right to keep and bear arms at the state level.

To some extent, the Second Amendment protects a character's right to own super-tech weapons such as blasters, laser pistols, and powered armor. However, all states require any such weapons to be registered and licensed, just like ordinary firearms; failure to do so constitutes a crime.

### The Thirteenth Amendment

The Thirteenth Amendment prohibits any and all forms of slavery or compulsory or involuntary servitude. The courts have unanimously held that "mental control of another person is a violation of that person's Thirteenth Amendment rights, and the controller is liable for an infringement of those rights." *Jane "Esper" Doe v. Claxton*, 480 U.S. 1356, 1361 (1987). Several courts have developed a "law enforcement" exception for superheroes, but that exception is very limited — it only covers the arrest of a criminal. Sanctioned heroes cannot use mental control for interrogation or other purposes without violating a defendant's Thirteenth Amendment rights... though in a case of immediate, desperate need, the odds of a villain getting a large monetary recovery from a hero who's just saved the city (or the world) from the villain's evil scheme are, to put it mildly, slim.

## SUING SUPERHEROES

In the Champions Universe and other settings which use a legal framework like the one in this chapter — *i.e.*, settings that allow superheroes to testify in their costumed identities without revealing their true identities — it's possible for a superhero to conduct business, sign contracts, open bank accounts, and sue or be sued in his costumed identity. Different types of businesses may use specific safeguards when dealing with someone whose true identity they don't know, such as requiring a superhero to post a bond to cover related expenses.

However, despite the fact that superheroes *can* be sued in their costumed identities, they rarely are. Realistically speaking, if the GM allows people to freely sue superheroes, every hero will routinely labor under dozens of multi-million-dollar lawsuits because of the destruction their crimefighting causes, the injuries they inflict on their opponents, and so forth. The GM either has to establish some reason why lawsuits against superheroes are rare, or simply has to rule as a matter of campaign management that they don't occur very often (in other words, except when they're an integral part of one of his plots). Otherwise boring legal matters tend to intrude on every game.

Continued on next page

## The Fourteenth Amendment

The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees due process of law and equal protection of the law to all persons in the United States. The courts and Congress have used it to justify a whole panoply of rights, many of which are not specifically mentioned in the Constitution. Two important issues concerning superhumans have arisen under this Amendment.

The first is the "right to maintain a secret identity." The Supreme Court has held that there is no such right, at least for criminal purposes. *Robert "King Cobra" Hamilton v. New Jersey*, 395 U.S. 1603 (1969).

The second and more important issue is the rights of so-called "non-humans": alien and extra-dimensional life-forms; artificially intelligent computers, androids, and robots; human mutants; the undead; clones and genetic constructs; and so forth. The Supreme Court dealt with this question in 1978 in six consolidated cases: *One Unnameable Alien Life-Form From Tau Ceti 11 v. United States* (alien being), *Mechanoid-5 v. New York* (artificially intelligent android), *Ohio v. Julesz the Kind* (vampire), *Gordon "Powermonger" Lowder v. California* (mutants), *Phillip "Infrared" Cowling v. United States* (mutates), *United States v. The Lizard-Thing* (extradimensional beings), and *Number 32 v. Central Intelligence Agency* (human clone with genetic enhancements), 428 U.S. 1471 (1976) (collectively, *Tau Ceti II*). The Court stated:

*The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees of due process and equal protection extend to all persons within the United States or its territories. But ... the term "persons" means humans. Neither alien and extra-dimensional life forms, nor artificial intelligences, nor the undead are "persons," and hence they have no rights under the Fourteenth Amendment.*

*Mutants, mutates, clones, and genetic constructs from human stock are a different matter. Essentially, they are "subspecies" of humanity. In many cases, even the most thorough examination of them cannot differentiate them from humans. They are so close to being human that there is no legal justification for considering them not to be human. We hold that free-willed mutants, mutates, clones, and genetic constructs, from human stock, are "persons" under the Fourteenth Amendment and are possessed of all rights thereunder.*

*Id. at 1480-1483 (citations omitted).*

In response, Congress passed the Android, Artificial Intelligence, and Alien Life-Form Rights Act of 1979 (usually known as the "Triple-A Act"). The Triple-A Act grants civil rights to most "sentient" beings who can prove that they are independent and free-willed. The law defines "sentience" in various ways, usually relating to the capacity for creative and philosophical thought, not just problem-solving capability. Most states have also enacted laws or passed their own constitutional amendments granting "alternate sentiences" various civil rights. However, this law and all related laws, state and federal, make one exception: the undead do not have civil rights. The legal ramifications of that, particularly the question of who owns the formerly deceased's property, combined with the typically evil or destructive nature of such beings, has kept them outside the ambit of the laws.

## Jurisdiction Over The Divine

Since some superhumans claim to be divine beings (and at least in some cases seem to be able to prove that, at least to the satisfaction of some people), the issue of whether the courts have jurisdiction over them has arisen. A number of fanciful claims involving deities or divine beings have been filed in the courts, and are usually rejected on various grounds. For example, in *U.S. ex rel. Mayo v. Satan And His Staff*, 54 F.R.D. 282 (1971), the plaintiff sued Satan in federal court, alleging that the defendant had tempted him and brought about his downfall, therefore violating his civil rights under the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The court rejected the claim on three grounds: first, it was unclear whether the federal courts have jurisdiction over the Prince of Darkness; second, if the case were to go forward, it should probably be a class action, and plaintiff provided no information regarding whether he met the requirements to be the class representative; third, plaintiff provided no instructions for the U.S. Marshal on how to serve process on Lucifer.

However, for the most part, if a being commits a crime in the United States, the appropriate state or federal court will accept jurisdiction over him regardless of any assertion of divinity or divine status. *United States v. Raven*, 517 U.S. 1446 (1996) (federal courts have jurisdiction over a man claiming to be the American Indian god and trickster spirit, Raven, to try him for fraud and related crimes).

# AFTER THE TRIAL



**A**fter a supervillain is convicted and sentenced to prison, the state can petition Stronghold to incarcerate him there. (Typically the state starts this process long before the trial ends so that a decision has already been made by the time of conviction.) Assuming that (a) the *Hsien* and *Utility* doctrines indicate the defendant is eligible for Stronghold (see above), and (b) that Warden Wildman and his Board of Admissions approves, Stronghold agrees to take custody of the prisoner.

## SUPERHUMAN PRISONER TRANSPORT

When it was first founded, Stronghold was just a prison. It didn't have the means to transport prisoners to and from the prison; it relied on the states to bring prisoners to Devil's Head Mesa. It soon became apparent this wasn't a good idea. Few states were equipped to transport supervillain prisoners, and few places in the criminal justice process are as suitable for an escape or rescue attempt as when the prisoner is in transit.

In 1980, Charles Wildman petitioned Congress for funding to establish the Stronghold Superhuman Prisoner Transport System (SSPTS), a superhuman prisoner transportation service available to all states for a minimal fee. Congress approved the request, and Wildman implemented the program. This actually took some significant effort, since the early Stronghold used broadcast power to run its Negation Cuffs and other devices not directly connected to its power grid. Obviously that wouldn't work for prisoner transport, so Wildman had Stronghold personnel and outside contractors design new versions of those devices that ran on small, extremely powerful batteries. (This technology eventually became the basis for the modern Stronghold arsenal, which does not require broadcast power.)

In a courtroom security situation, Stronghold prefers to have a minimum of two of its guards per superhuman defendant (more for particularly powerful villains, and sometimes just one guard for weak villains). The same applies to escorting prisoners from, say, a jail cell to a vehicle. However, circumstances and budget restraints don't always allow this ideal to be met. Once Stronghold feels it has the prisoner under control (such as on one of its SSPTS-3s, see below), it maintains a much lower guard-to-prisoner ratio.

If Stronghold personnel are already at a trial providing or assisting with security (see above), when a supervillain is convicted and sentenced to Stronghold they simply take custody of him right away and begin the trip to New Mexico. Otherwise a retrieval crew equipped with all necessary restraining devices is sent from Stronghold to pick up the new inmate. In either case the preferred vehicle for Stronghold prisoner transport is the SSPTS Type 3 "hoverbus."

### SSPTS TYPE 3 PRISONER TRANSPORT

| Val | Char | Cost | Notes                                    |
|-----|------|------|--|
| 8   | Size | 40   | 6.4" x 3.2"; mass 25 tons; -8 KB; -5 DCV |
| 50  | STR  | 0    | Lift 25 tons; 10d6 HTH [0]               |
| 14  | DEX  | 12   | OCV: 5/DCV: 5                            |
| 18  | BODY | 0    |  |
| 8   | DEF  | 18   |  |
| 4   | SPD  | 26   | Phases: 3, 6, 8, 12                      |
|     |      |      | <b>Total Characteristic Cost: 96</b>     |

**Movement:** Ground: 0"/0"  
Flight: 30"/480"

#### Abilities & Equipment

| Cost                      | Power  | END   |
|---------------------------|--|-------|
| <i>Propulsion Systems</i> |  |       |
| 47                        | <i>Hover System:</i> Flight 30", x16 Noncombat, No Turn Mode (+¼); OIF Bulky (-1)  | 0     |
| -12                       | <i>Hover Only:</i> Running -6" (0" total)  |       |
| -2                        | <i>Hover Only:</i> Swimming -2" (0" total)   |       |
| <i>Tactical Systems</i>   |  |       |
| 200                       | <i>Internal Power Negation Field:</i> Suppress 20d6, all Powers simultaneously (+2), all Special Effects simultaneously (+2), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Uncontrolled (deactivated by removing victim from SSPTS-3; +½); OIF Bulky (-1), No Range (-½), Self Only (only applies to persons inside vehicle; -½)   | 0     |
| 13                        | <i>Built-In Restraints:</i> Entangle 5d6 (standard effect: 5 BODY), 8 DEF; OIF Bulky (-1), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), Set Effect (see text; -½), May Not Prevent Use Of Accessible Foci (see text; -0), No Range (-½), Must Follow Grab Or Target Must Be Willing (-½), 1 Recoverable Charge (recovered by letting a restrainee out and putting someone in his place; -1¼) | [1rc] |
| 15                        | <i>Built-In Restraints:</i> Up to 4 more Restraints (total of 5)   | [1rc] |

For example, in the Champions Universe, two factors prevent frequent lawsuits against superheroes. First, in recognition of the extraordinary good heroes do, and the split-second decisionmaking their actions often require, the courts have set extremely high bars that potential plaintiffs must clear. Basically, someone who wants to sue a hero has to prove that he acted with "extreme negligence, deliberate indifference to the possibility of harm, or with direct intent to cause harm." Second, the federal government subsidizes inexpensive "superhuman insurance" that protects people from injury or loss of property due to superhuman activity, and mandates that anyone who seeks to recover under such a policy cannot also sue the superhumans in question in court. Since most people and businesses in the Champions Universe are covered by enormous amounts of superhuman insurance, they don't even need to sue superheroes at all.

# SSPTS-3 Prisoner Transport

## Pilot Area

- 1: Pilot Seat
- 2: Co-Pilot Seat  
(Shown in Flight Position)
- 3: Seat Track
- 4: Raised Flooring (Grate)

## Main Access Area

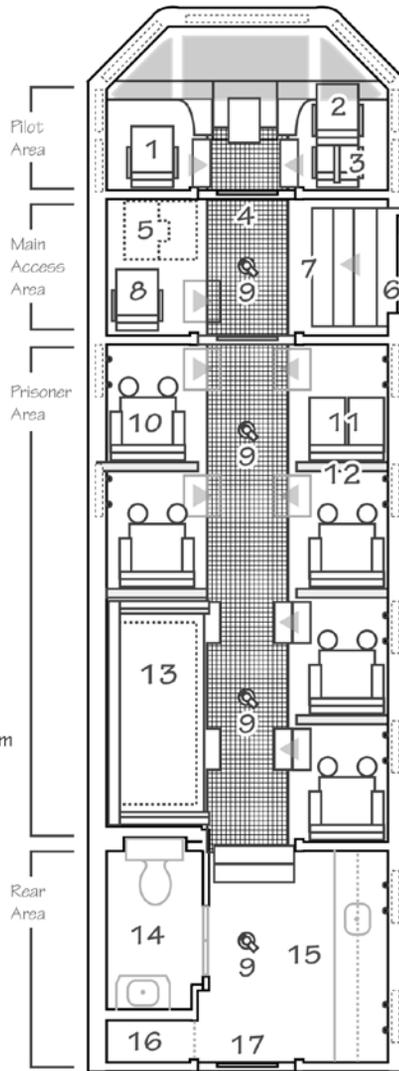
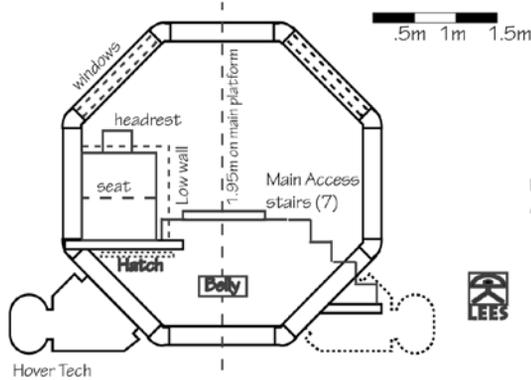
- 5: Hatch to Belly
- 6: Primary Exterior Hatch (DEF 8/Body 8)
- 7: Main Access Stairs
- 8: Guard Seat
- 9: Ceiling Mounted Camera

## Prisoner Area

- 10: Standard Containment Chair
- 11: Bench Seat (no Suppression)
- 12: Low Wall
- 13: Hot Sleep Coffin

## Rear Area

- 14: Restroom
- 15: Galley
- 16: Storage
- 17: Rear Exit Hatch (DEF 8/Body 8)



**Description:** Built using the latest in hovercraft technology combined with Stronghold's superpower-suppression and prisoner restraint systems, the SSPTS Type 3 is the most advanced prisoner transport ever fielded by the super-prison. The earlier Type 1 and 2 models, which were smaller and less efficient, have been retired from service and scrapped.

Twelve meters long and six wide, the SSPTS-3 is suitable for both local and long-distance prisoner transport. The standard model can hold up to five superhuman prisoners of up to twice human size, plus an additional prisoner in hot sleep. Some versions replace the hot sleep coffin and bench seat with three more restraint seats so the transport can carry eight prisoners. If Stronghold has to transport from two to four highly dangerous prisoners at once, it uses a model that replaces most of the seats and thus has a total of four hot sleep coffins. Any model can maintain a speed of approximately 700 miles per hour.

The SSPTS-3 is basically a hex-shaped cylinder with hoverpads along the bottom sides. It's divided into four areas (Pilot, Main Access, Prisoner, and Rear). Two pilots sit in front in an area closed off

from the rest of the vehicle by a reinforced door. The wall and door have DEF 8, BODY 8, like the rest of the vehicle's walls, and are not transparent. Immediately to the rear of the pilot's compartment is the Main Access area, where prisoners enter the vehicle and a guard sits during the trip. This area also has a hatch to the storage compartment in the belly of the vehicle.

Prisoners (and in most models, two guards) sit in the chairs in the Prisoner compartment behind the Main Access area (it's separated from that area by another DEF 8, BODY 8 wall and door made of transparent super-plastic). A metal grating runs down the center of the prisoner compartment, and the seats are in sunken "wells" running along each side of the grating. Each seat is DEF 8, BODY 8, and the ones for prisoners have two built-in restraints. First, there are rigid foot manacles set into the legs of the seat and the floor. Anytime a prisoner is seated in a chair, these are locked so he cannot stand up. They can be unlocked from the pilots' control panel, or by electronic keys held by indi-

### Operations Systems

- 5 **Communications System:** HRRP (Radio Group); OIF Bulky (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Groups As Well As Radio Group (-½)
- 2 **Cameras:** Eidetic Memory; OIF Bulky (-1), Only Visual Images Inside Vehicle (-1)
- 12 **Radar:** Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Telescopic (+10 PER versus Range Modifier); OIF Bulky (-1)

**Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 280**

**Total Vehicle Cost: 376**

### Value Disadvantages

None

**Total Disadvantage Points: 0**

**Total Cost: 376/5 = 75**

vidual guards; each key is biometrically linked to a specific guard and can only be used by him. Second, prisoners' hands and arms can also be restrained. Typically a seated prisoner is allowed to keep his hands and arms free. However, if a prisoner is unruly or considered especially dangerous, there are manacles on the arms of each seat that can lock down his hands and arms.

In addition to all these restraints, the entire vehicle is protected by a standard Stronghold power negation field that prevents superpowers from functioning. (See page 55 for more information.) Cameras mounted into the ceiling of each compartment allow both the pilots and guards back at Stronghold itself to keep a constant watch on the prisoners.

The Rear area of the vehicle includes a rest-room, a galley, and a small storage area. It also has a rear access door (DEF 8, BODY 8).

## Other SSPTS Technology

For the most part, SSPTS personnel are standard Stronghold guards. They use the same uniforms and equipment (though they do have an "SSPTS" marker on their uniforms to clearly distinguish them from local law enforcement personnel). Some of the specific devices they use for transporting prisoners and assisting with courtroom security include:

### POWER NEGATOR HANDCUFFS

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Effect:</b>       | <b>Entangle 12d6 (standard effect: 12 BODY), 18 DEF, Takes No Damage From Attacks plus Suppress All Powers 14d6</b> |
| <b>Target:</b>       | <b>One character</b>  |
| <b>Duration:</b>     | <b>Instant/Constant</b>   |
| <b>Range:</b>        | <b>No Range</b>   |
| <b>END Cost:</b>     | <b>0</b>  |
| <b>Breakability:</b> | <b>20 DEF</b>   |

**Description:** Specially designed to hold superhuman prisoners, the Stronghold Power Negator Handcuffs (also available as legcuffs) serve two functions. First, they restrain the prisoner. They cover the entire hand so the captive can't use Accessible Foci, or employ Contortionist or Lockpicking to take them off. (The downside is, unless the guards are willing to take them off a prisoner at certain times, they have to feed him by hand, help him go to the bathroom, and so on.) Second, they negate the captive's powers using Stronghold's standard power negation technology. (As usual, the Absolute Effect Rule applies here; see page 56.)

Power Negator Handcuffs are too large and bulky for a guard to carry on a routine basis. (If they want to carry restraints for other uses, they usually rely on Mechalene Zipcuffs; see page 86.) An SSPTS-3 sent into the field usually has a total of 16 of them on board: one for each prisoner, plus one backup unit for each prisoner in the event of failure.

The leg-restraining version of the Handcuffs looks like a set of high-tech boots linked by a high-

tech cable. Unlike a standard Entangle they do not prevent the wearer from walking entirely; they just restrict him to a maximum of Running 2".

**Game Information:** *Entangle 12d6 (standard effect: 12 BODY), 18 DEF, Takes No Damage From Attacks (+½) (225 Active Points); OAF (-1), Fragile (only 20 DEF; -0), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), Set Effect (hands only; -½), No Range (-½), Must Follow Grab Or Target Must Be Willing (-½), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼) (total cost: 45 points) plus Suppress 14d6, all Powers simultaneously (+2), all Special Effects simultaneously (+2), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Uncontrolled (deactivated by removing cuffs from victim; +½) (420 Active Points); OAF (-1), Fragile (only 20 DEF; -0), No Range (-½), Linked (-¼) (total cost: 153 points). Total cost: 198 points.*

### POWER NEGATOR COLLAR

|                      |                                 |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Effect:</b>       | <b>Suppress All Powers 15d6</b> |
| <b>Target:</b>       | <b>One character</b>            |
| <b>Duration:</b>     | <b>Constant</b>                 |
| <b>Range:</b>        | <b>No Range</b>                 |
| <b>END Cost:</b>     | <b>0</b>                        |
| <b>Breakability:</b> | <b>90 DEF</b>                   |

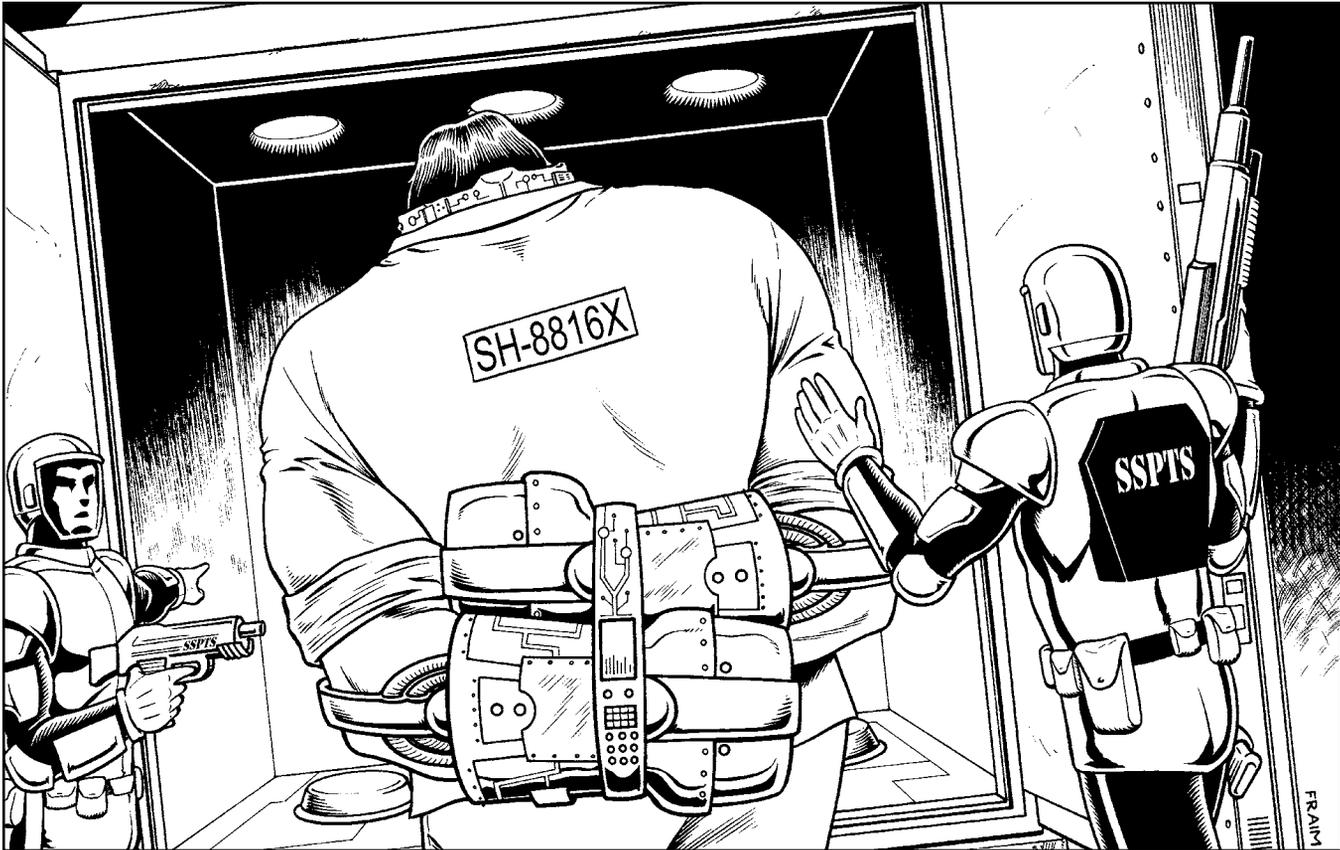
**Description:** Just to be on the safe side, SSPTS guards often also place a Power Negator Collar on a prisoner in addition to his Power Negator Handcuffs. The Collar is also used when the guards have to free a captive's hands for some reason (such as to let him use the bathroom).

A Power Negator Collar is more massive and durable than Power Negator Handcuffs (hence its higher DEF). The wearer is mostly unable to turn his head; he has to turn his whole body if he wants to see something outside his current line of sight. Many prisoners also complain that the weight of the Collar is very tiring, even painful for long periods, but neither the guards nor the courts have paid much attention to such claims.

**Game Information:** *Suppress 15d6, all Powers simultaneously (+2), all Special Effects simultaneously (+2), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Uncontrolled (deactivated by removing collar from victim; +½) (450 Active Points); OAF (-1), No Range (-½), Only Works On Manacled/Restrained Subjects (-¼). Total cost: 164 points.*

#### Options:

**1) Courtroom Power Negator Collar:** Law and courtroom procedure generally require that defendants be as unrestrained as possible during a trial. If a defendant has to sit at the defense table in handcuffs (or even worse, full shackles), it tends to prejudice the jury against him. However, when supervillains are on trial there's still a need for courtroom security and to prevent them from using their powers to escape. To fill this niche Stronghold developed a "Courtroom" version of its Power Negator Collar. Though weaker than the



standard Collar, it's also much smaller and lighter (and weaker; it only has 20 DEF). While it's not invisible, it's not nearly as blatant and potentially prejudicial as the standard Collar (never mind Power Negator Handcuffs). Change to: Suppress 12d6, all Powers simultaneously (+2), all Special Effects simultaneously (+2), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Uncontrolled (deactivated by removing cuffs from victim; +½) (360 Active Points); OAF (-1), Fragile (only 20 DEF; -0), No Range (-½), Only Works On Manacled/Restrained Subjects (-¼). Total cost: 131 points.

**2) Eyelock:** If a prisoner has powers that originate from his eyes (typically eyebeams like those of Oculon), guards often enclose his eyes with a device that looks like a large metallic ring. It fits around the prisoner's head, totally negating any eye-based powers he has. It also completely blocks his eyesight, rendering him blind. This is just like the standard Power Negator Collar, but add the Limitation *Only Affects Eye-Based Powers* (-2). Total cost: 95 points.

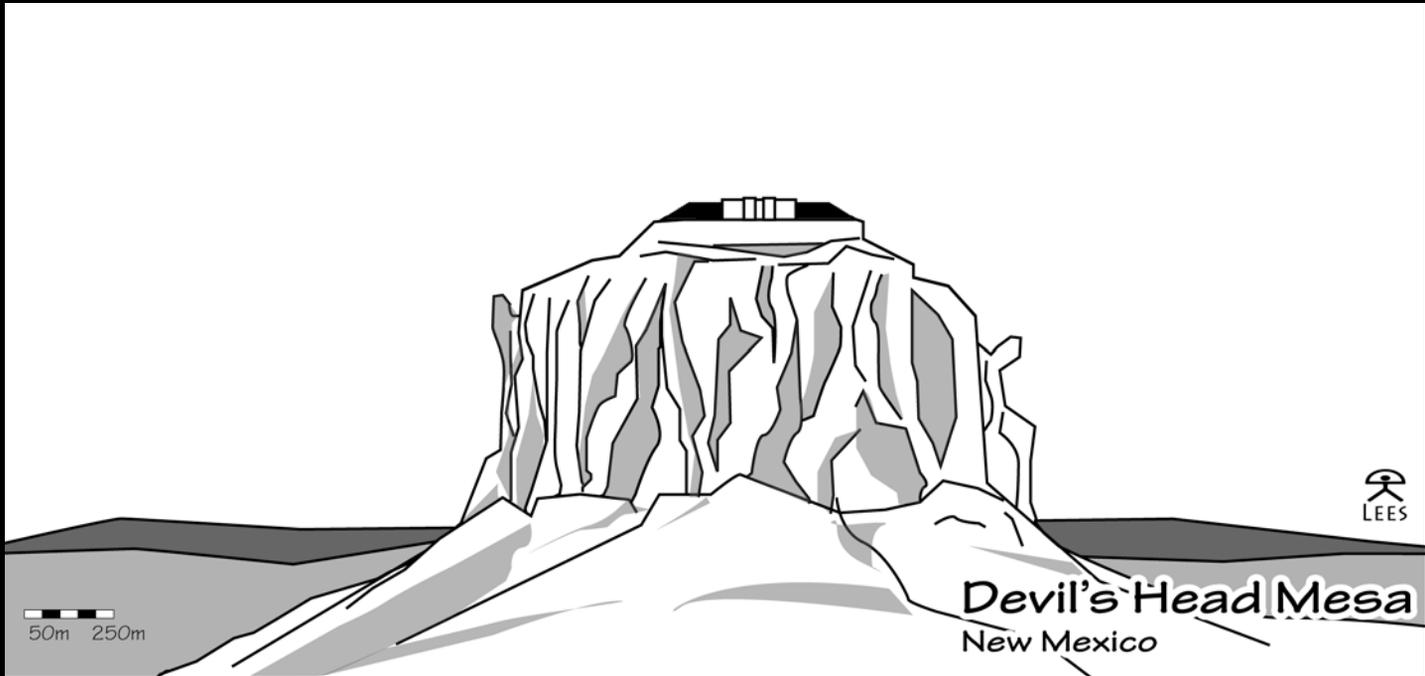
**3) Mouthlock:** A Mouthlock is just like an Eyelock, but it blocks mouth-based powers (including many sonic abilities, spittle powers, and the like). It also prevents the wearer from speaking. This is just like the standard Power Negator Collar, but add the Limitation *Only Affects Mouth-Based Powers* (-2). Total cost: 95 points.

#### RESTRAINT PATCH

|                      |                              |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Effect:</b>       | Entangle 8d6, 8 DEF, Trigger |
| <b>Target:</b>       | One Hex radius               |
| <b>Duration:</b>     | Instant                      |
| <b>Range:</b>        | No Range                     |
| <b>Charges:</b>      | 1 Charge                     |
| <b>Breakability:</b> | 8 DEF                        |

**Description:** As an extra anti-escape measure, Stronghold guards can put a Restraint Patch on a captive. It looks like a large, thick cloth patch, and comes in a variety of colors so it can blend in with a defendant's clothing to some degree. If a defendant tries to escape, any Stronghold guard can activate the Patch with a special radio signal. When this happens the patch explodes into a blob of glue that stops the defendant from moving. The only downside is that the glue also catches anyone near the defendant.

**Game Information:** *Entangle 8d6, 8 DEF, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Trigger (special radio signal from any Stronghold guard; +¼) (140 Active Points); OAF (-1), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), No Range (-½), 1 Charge (-2). Total cost: 29 points.*



# WELCOME TO STRONGHOLD

# STRONGHOLD



## LIFE INSIDE

I REMEMBER THE LAST TIME I SAW THE OUTSIDE.

IT WAS NEARLY TWENTY YEARS AGO AFTER ADRIAN AND I WERE CONVICTED IN THAT FARCE OF A TRIAL. WE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A CHANCE TO SAY GOODBYE TO MOTHER - THEY CLAMPED THEIR SUPER-CUFFS ON US AND LED US OUT TO A WAITING TRANSPORT. IT WAS JUST SITTING THERE, READY FOR US, LIKE THEY'D KNOWN IN ADVANCE ALL ALONG WE'D BE CONVICTED. AS I SAY, A FARCE.

THOSE FEW HOURS IN THE AIR WERE SORT OF A BLUR. I HADN'T FULLY PROCESSED WHAT HAD HAPPENED YET; I WAS SEETHING WITH RAGE AND ALREADY THINKING ABOUT WAYS TO ESCAPE. I COULDN'T EVEN TALK TO ADRIAN; THE COWARDLY FOOLS HAD LOCKED A HELMET ON ME THAT PREVENTED ME FROM OPENING MY MOUTH AT ALL. BUT I SNAPPED OUT OF IT ONCE WE GOT CLOSER. AS THE TERRAIN CHANGED FROM THE PLAINS TO THE SOUTHWESTERN DESERT, I REALIZED, LIKE SOME JOYCEAN EPIPHANY, THAT I MIGHT NEVER GET TO SEE THE OUTSIDE WORLD AGAIN. LIKE A MAN SAVORING HIS LAST MEAL BEFORE EXECUTION, I BECAME INTENSELY FOCUSED ON THE DETAILS, SEEING THE LANDSCAPE BELOW ME WITH PRECISION. TO THIS DAY I CAN CLEARLY RECALL THAT LAST HOUR - EVERY FEATURE IN THE WRINKLED LANDSCAPE, EVERY CHANGE IN THE COLOR OF THE ROCKS.

BUT IT'S THOSE LAST FEW MINUTES, WHEN THE MESA FINALLY CAME INTO VIEW, THAT TRULY STAND OUT IN MY MIND. IT ROSE OUT OF THE DESERT LIKE THE PROW OF A SHIP, TOWERING OVER THE DESOLATION AROUND IT. AS WE GOT CLOSER, ON THE TOP I COULD SEE THE SILVER GLIMMERING OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDINGS - AND LOTS OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS SCURRYING ABOUT, SINCE THEY WERE STILL REBUILDING AFTER THE SO-CALLED "GREAT STRONGHOLD BREAKOUT" (CURSE OUR LUCK THAT IT DIDN'T HAPPEN JUST A FEW MONTHS LATER!). BIGGER AND BIGGER IT LOOMED IN THE WINDOW, UNTIL IT FILLED ALL MY VISION...

...AS IT STILL DOES, TO THIS DAY - JUST FROM A LOWER, DARKER PERSPECTIVE.

## — REQUIEM

## LOCATION

Stronghold occupies the Devil's Head, a large, isolated mesa located in Lincoln County, New Mexico. It juts high into the air and commands an excellent view of the surrounding valley. It's nearly a dozen miles to the nearest inhabited area, a small town called Burns on State Highway 247 (which is the nearest major road). Approximately sixty miles to the southeast is the city of Roswell, famed in UFO lore. Eighty miles to the south and west is the northern part of the White Sands Missile Range, and in between them is the Lincoln National Forest.

Critics sometimes complain about the super-prison's proximity to White Sands, and conspiracy theorists and the Exoplanetary Society often remark on how close it is to Roswell, but overall the location seems to have been well-chosen. On those rare occasions when a supervillain escapes, he's often caught wandering around the desert on foot, dehydrated. However, that same isolation means Stronghold has to bring all its supplies in by truck on a regular basis (particularly water — water deliveries occur almost daily). Several businesses in Burns have become quite prosperous serving the prison, and the town's bars and movie theaters do a steady business with Stronghold guards and staff on evening or weekend passes.

## HISTORY

Beginning in the mid-to-late 1960s, the number of superhumans in America, and consequently the amount of supervillain crime, began to rise significantly. By the mid-Seventies supervillains were stealing billions of dollars' worth of property every year, and destroying billions more (either on their own, or during fights with the superheroes who opposed them). One reason why was that it was often difficult to keep captured supervillains incarcerated. No matter how many times a hero fought and defeated a villain, it wasn't long before that villain escaped from police custody or broke out of prison. The prison system just wasn't set up to handle criminals who could bench-press dozens of tons or fire destructive beams of energy. Prison officials did their best and often came up with novel solutions to the problem... but even the best solutions often failed in the long run.

Enter noted penologist Dr. Charles Wildman. A former federal prison warden turned criminology professor, Wildman had developed something of a reputation as a maverick and an eccentric. He didn't care much for bureau-

crats or official procedure, he was concerned with results, and between his attitude and often extreme theories he wasn't exactly taken seriously in all parts of the criminology world. Nevertheless, even his strongest detractors couldn't deny that he was brilliant, and often insightful.

In 1976 Wildman approached Congress with a proposed solution to the super-prisoner problem: a super-prison. Drawing on his experiences as a warden and his studies of superhuman criminals as a professor, he used his own money to commission an architect to prepare concept drawings of a prison specifically designed to hold supervillains and nothing but supervillains. With plans in hand, he began privately lobbying government officials and Congressmen, spending so much time in Washington that he put his professorship in peril. But his dedication and diligence paid off — after several months of hard work he drummed up enough “buzz” to get a hearing in front of a Congressional committee, where he had the chance to make his case to the nation:

**Wildman:** *In summary, what I propose as a solution to this problem is the creation of a prison specifically designed and constructed to hold superhuman criminals: a prison that can not only withstand their powers, but within which those powers won't work; a prison in an isolated location, to protect the people of the United States with distance as well as walls; a prison that uses the latest in technology and penological techniques to ensure humane treatment of superhuman prisoners while still ensuring the true goal of any prison, to keep society safe. The Committee has the further details of my proposal in the report I distributed before beginning my testimony. I am now glad to take questions.*

**Chairman Angell (R-Kansas):** *The Committee would like to thank Dr. Wildman for his testimony and the thoroughness of this... rather large report he prepared. If I may, I'd like to open the questioning with some inquiries as to costs. Doctor Wildman, let me refer you to Part C of your report, listing a proposed budget for this project.*

**Wildman:** *Yes, I have that here. As you can see, the projected budget includes all aspects of running the prison on an annual basis, from basics like power and water to salaries for the guards.*

**Chairman Angell:** *It's not the thoroughness of the budget that I'm questioning, Dr. Wildman, but the projected amount. You're suggesting that this super-prison of yours...*

**Wildman:** *Stronghold. I call it Stronghold.*

**Chairman Angell:** *“Stronghold,” yes. This Stronghold of yours has a budget nearly ten times as large as that of any other federal prison! And yet it's only intended to hold a fraction of the number of inmates as other federal penitentiaries.*

**Wildman:** *That's correct, Mr. Chairman, but I believe it's important to keep in mind the nature of the inmates involved. We're not talking about your average burglar, or street-corner drug pusher, or even drug kingpin. Stronghold is designed to hold supervillains, criminals who threaten not just a city block or neighborhood but entire cities, or countries, or even the entire planet. You can't just lock them up in any prison, we've seen time and time again what happens when you do — they break out and go on committing crimes. They have powers far beyond those of ordinary criminals, and that means a prison intended to hold them has to go beyond a normal prison... it has to be a super-prison. And that takes money.*

**Brubaker (D-Minnesota):** *I'm less concerned about the cost — though it's troublesome — than I am about the human rights implications. Doctor Wildman, you seem to be proposing to strip the inmates of their powers temporarily, correct?*

**Wildman:** *Yes, that's correct. Power negation technology will keep the inmates from using their powers within the prison, thus minimizing the chance of escape or of injury to prison personnel.*

**Brubaker:** *I understand that, but what you're proposing seems inhumane, like a technological pillory. We don't force ordinary prison inmates to wear blindfolds all day, even though that would make them a lot easier for guards to handle.*

**Wildman:** *True, but an ordinary prisoner can't use his eyesight to hurt anyone or smash down a wall. It's not at all uncommon for prison to gag a prisoner who tries to bite guards, or to restrain a physically dangerous prisoner with a straitjacket or solitary confinement until he calms down. What I'm proposing is really just an extension of that — and, I think, absolutely necessary if we're to keep these superpowered men and women incarcerated for the duration of their sentences. Power negation technology doesn't deprive them of any of their basic human abilities or faculties... it just negates the superhuman powers that make them such an escape risk.*

**Terrell (R-Ohio):** *Is that even possible, Dr. Wildman? What you're describing sounds like a technological fairy tale.*

**Wildman:** *Ten, or even five, years ago it would have been. But recent scientific advances have brought power negation technology forward from the theoretical and experimental into the realm of the possible and practical. It takes a lot of electricity and maintenance, but I must stress again that I think it's absolutely necessary to make Stronghold a success.*

**Chairman Angell:** *Thank you again for your testimony, Dr. Wildman. This committee will now adjourn to consider your proposal.*

After considerable debate, the committee voted to move the “Stronghold proposal” forward. Working closely with Dr. Wildman, Rep. Angell prepared a bill authorizing and funding the construction and operation of a prison exclusively for superhuman criminals.

Debate about the bill in the full House of Representatives was, if anything, even more contentious. At first it looked as if it would pass, but as the arguments wore on it became clear that enough Congressmen had questions about the cost, technological feasibility, and civil rights issues to put Dr. Wildman’s dream in jeopardy. But an unfortunate tragedy soon shifted the Congressional mood in the other direction.

As debate continued on the Stronghold Bill, events developing at the federal prison at Terre Haute, Indiana took center stage. A supervillain known as Crusher had been sentenced to life imprisonment for a series of violent robberies. Despite heavier walls, bars, and shackles intended to compensate for his superhuman strength, he broke free and smashed his way out of the prison, killing five guards in the process. He went on a crime spree across Indiana that left three people dead and caused millions in property damage before being surrounded and shot by the police.

Its eyes now opened to the dangers posed by superhuman prisoners, Congress reacted swiftly. The Stronghold Bill passed by a three-fourths majority and the Bureau of Prisons got right to work on the project. Unsurprisingly it appointed Dr. Wildman to head the project and be Stronghold’s first warden.

The formal design and construction of Stronghold took two years — a surprisingly short time for such a major undertaking, but by now Wildman had extensive support in Congress, the Bureau, and the community. The first group of inmates, superhumans collected from various other penitentiaries in the federal prison system, arrived in July 1978.

### **THE EIGHTIES**

By December of that year Warden Wildman was confident enough to begin accepting inmates from the states, but he required the states to transport the prisoner to Stronghold in the New Mexico desert. It soon became obvious that this was an untenable situation; over half the time the prisoner found a way to escape during transport, or was rescued by his supervillainous colleagues.

In an effort to eliminate this problem, in 1980 Warden Wildman got Congress to authorize and fund the creation of the Stronghold Superhuman Prisoner Transport System (SSPTS), a superhuman prisoner transport service available to all states for a minimal fee. Setting up the program involved making technological advances in some of Stronghold’s restraint devices, though those changes did not filter back to the prison’s built-in technology right away — in fact, they weren’t fully incorporated until the major rebuilding and redesign of 1991-92 (see below) made that possible.

The early Eighties were a learning period for Dr. Wildman and his staff. No one had ever created a super-prison before, so they were constantly breaking new ground and sometimes

made mistakes. The worst of these was a 1982 security oversight that led to the first major escape from Stronghold, a breakout that let half a dozen prisoners go free (though two were quickly recaptured). This led to some wavering of confidence in the warden and his prison, but Wildman calmed Congressional fears and proceeded to make Stronghold better and more secure.

In 1986 Stronghold incorporated a new technology — *hot sleep*, a method of inducing what amounted to a coma to keep certain prisoners restrained. It had become apparent to Warden Wildman and his staff that some supervillains were so powerful that even Stronghold couldn’t be expected to hold them for long. Hot sleep was developed for just such prisoners, since it in effect “put them to sleep” for the duration of their sentences, making it impossible for them to cause trouble. The prisoners’ rights community reacted with outrage to this development, in part out of concerns that it might become standard practice in the federal prison system generally. In 1989 the Supreme Court ruled that in appropriate circumstances hot sleep did not violate the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition on cruel and punishment (see page 26).

### **1990: THE GREAT STRONGHOLD BREAKOUT**

As the Nineties dawned, Stronghold suffered the worst disaster in its history, an episode now known simply as “the Great Stronghold Breakout.” Although some have described it as a failure in the general concept or execution of the Stronghold project, most indicators are that it was the result of a series of unfortunate coincidences and mishaps.

On the evening of October 16, 1990 Stronghold was in the grip of a mini-epidemic. Nearly half the guards and other personnel were laid up with a virulent strain of the flu that had spread quickly through the prison population. Warden Wildman, himself stricken with the illness, had contacted the Bureau of Prisons for temporary reinforcements, but preparing guards to work at the super-prison and then get them there was not an overnight task.

To make matters worse, a freak thunderstorm rolled in, pelting the Stronghold region with heavy rain. The rain itself wouldn’t have caused any problems, but at 8:17 PM the facility took a direct hit from a lightning bolt powerful enough to short out most of its electrical systems. In some cases this left prisoners locked in cells or rooms whose doors would no longer open... but in others it caused those same doors to open spontaneously. Even worse, the power negation systems began to work sporadically; somehow the power outage had affected parts of that subsystem even though it had its own power supply.

Things soon began to get out of hand. Controlling the prisoners would have been difficult enough with a full staff, but the guards were on a skeleton crew due to the flu epidemic. By 8:45 PM the inmates achieved their first major gain, taking over two wings of Delta Level altogether. Warden Wildman issued a call for superhero assistance, but due to damage from the lightning bolt and interference from the storm his request only reached the California Patrol, which assembled and headed toward New Mexico.

Things went from bad to worse fifteen minutes later. Wildman and his staff might have contained the situation long enough for help to arrive, since Level 1 and the aboveground facility were locked down and still under official control. But at 9:00 PM an arriving prisoner transport, unable to see the facility due to the blackout and buffeted by the intense winds of the thunderstorm, crashed into the aboveground facility. The six prisoners on the transport were able to escape immediately...

...and were soon followed by over three dozen from within the prison itself. The crash stressed the already-strained systems and personnel to the point of failure, allowing the villains who'd massed on Delta Level to regain full use of their powers and make a break for it. Loosely led by Blackstar of the Ultimates, on the way they freed whoever else they quickly could. Once they made it outside, the group soon split up, with villains making their own way back to civilization in ones, twos, and threes. The California Patrol arrived in time to prevent the breakout from becoming worse, but the unfortunate truth of the matter was that over 40 hardened supervillains were on the loose once more.

The aftermath of the Great Stronghold Breakout was not kind to Charles Wildman. While many of the events that contributed to the Breakout, such as the flu and the thunderstorm, were totally beyond his control, the American public wanted a scapegoat. A Senate investigation committee faulted him for what it labeled "errors" and "mis-judgments," including a general failure to better oversee the design and maintenance of the prison's electrical systems. The disgraced Wildman, bewildered at this turn of events and deeply saddened by the tragedy, was forced to resign.

### 1991 AND BEYOND

The Bureau of Prisons appointed a twenty-year veteran prison administrator, Peter Kennedy, to take control of Stronghold. The first item on Warden Kennedy's agenda was rebuilding. Since much of the prison had been damaged or destroyed during the Breakout, Kennedy saw an opportunity to redesign key systems, implement technological advances, and expand the facility. Congress approved his request for new funding and work began. Because of the need to keep prisoners (including some escapees, who were captured by superheroes when they returned to their old ways) secure, the work took longer than it otherwise would have. But by 1995, Stronghold was a new place — larger, stronger, and more efficient than ever.

Compared to the intelligent and firm-but-compassionate Charles Wildman, Warden Kennedy was strict, often harsh in his judgments, and not well-liked. He thought discipline and procedures had become lax under his predecessor and set out to correct the problem. The result was not popular with either the staff or inmates, but it seemed to get Stronghold back on track and moving forward.

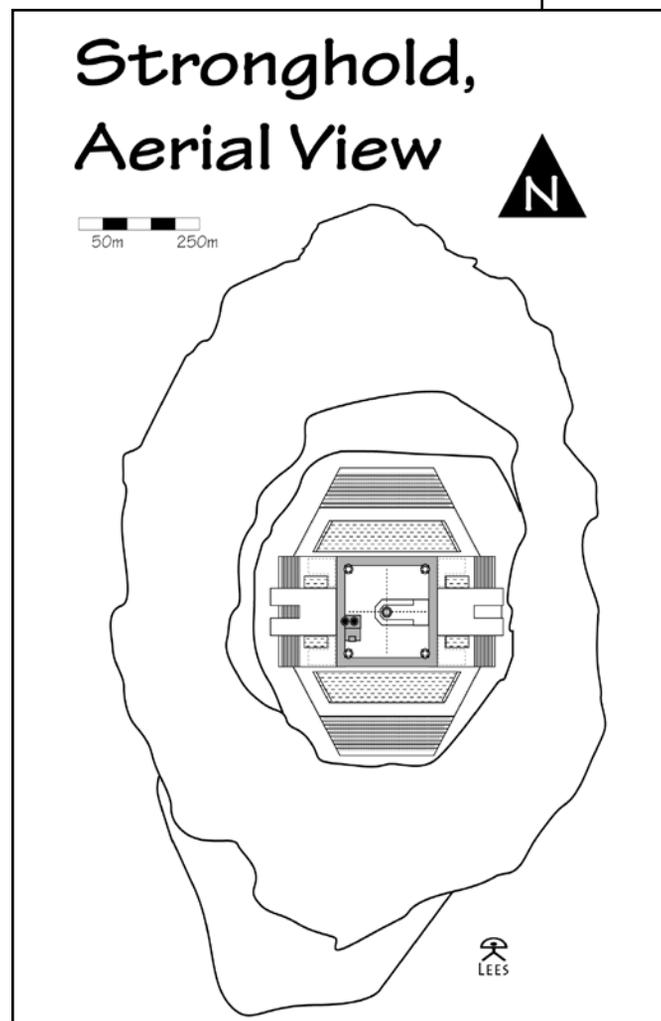
Kennedy ran afoul of his own methods in 2001. A disgruntled guard named Ted Waldrop, on job probation and expecting to be fired soon, went down to Level Eight, used a knockout drug-laced bottle of water to render the guard uncon-

scious, and turned off Grond's hot sleep coffin.

The enraged, unthinking brute killed Waldrop and smashed his way out of Stronghold before enough guards could be mobilized to stop him. Thanks to fast work by the guards on duty, only two other inmates were able to escape at the same time. Although he vigorously defended his administration of the prison, Kennedy was removed from his position by higher-ups at the Bureau of Prisons.

To get Stronghold back on track, the Bureau turned to a familiar name: Wildman. But this time it was the prison's founder's son, Arthur Wildman, who took the helm. The choice was politically unpopular in some circles, but no one could deny Arthur Wildman's stellar track record as an academic and prison administrator. As his first duties the new Warden Wildman revised several security procedures so that no one else could do what Waldrop had done, and revamped the psychological screening procedures used as part of the guard hiring process.

Since then, Stronghold has run on an even keel under Warden Wildman's supervision. There have been no other breakouts (though two villains did escape from SSPTS vehicles at separate times), and other disturbances (such as riots and hostage situations) have been minimal and easily resolved. Wildman has plans to upgrade the prison's facilities and technologies over the coming half-decade, and has won Congressional approval for the necessary budget increases. The future of Stronghold seems assured.



# LAYOUT



**V**iewed from overhead, the overall shape of the Stronghold is a stretched hexagon, with the lengthened sides oriented north-south. The outer section, known simply as the Outer Ring, contains the facilities support areas and is not covered by Stronghold's power negation systems. The central area, called the Inner Court, is covered by power negation fields. It's the closest thing Stronghold has to a prison yard, though prisoners don't get to walk around in it freely — they see it mainly during their arrival and intake. Beneath the open yard are underground levels extending deep into the mesa which house the prison proper.

## THE ABOVEGROUND FACILITIES

### The Outer Ring

The Outer Ring is divided into the North and South Annexes and the East and West Hubs (though the latter are commonly known as the Transportation Hub and Administration Hub, respectively).

#### THE ANNEXES

The annexes are trapezoidal in shape, and terrace in a downward slope at the outer ends; they're 11 stories high at their tallest point. A central "well" in each annex is open to the sky, providing fresh air, natural light, and a place for prison personnel to enjoy the outdoors without having to leave the prison.

The annexes contain the living quarters, recreation areas, accommodations, and amenities that allow the staff of the prison to live in such an isolated location (though some prison personnel choose to live with their families in the nearby town of Burns and commute to work). Staff housing units (single-person apartments) are located at the outer edges of the annexes. The annex's interiors contain diversions for off-duty personnel — a gymnasium, a theater, classrooms, and a few commercial shops. There's even a Scarlet Archer's restaurant here, along with a handful of smaller eateries (a couple of which are run part-time by prison staff).

The annexes are self supporting communities, much like small towns. Over time they've developed a healthy rivalry (the Northies versus the Southies) that plays out in sports competitions, friendly mockery, and the like.

#### THE HUBS

The hubs are more rectangular in shape, and slope on the outer edges (to east and west) at a steep angle. They also rise slightly higher than the annexes to 13 stories. The hubs have open sections within them like the ones in the annexes, but which are also used to circulate air into the prison's underground levels.

The hubs are the support facilities for the prison. The western hub, better known as the Administration Hub, contains Stronghold's administrative offices, temporary housing for VIP visitors, and the like. The eastern hub, or Transportation Hub, is where staff, visitors, and supplies enter the facility, and so on. It also includes a hangar for the prison's vehicles, and the majority of the prison's storage rooms, fabrication facilities, and infrastructure support systems (such as water storage and circulation equipment).

### The Inner Court

The Inner Court is located in the center of the Outer Ring and is surrounded by a ring of power negation systems and similar devices that's known as "the Perimeter Fence." At the four corners of the Perimeter fence are 16-story tall Weapons Array Platforms, colloquially known as "Zap Towers" by the prison population. The Zap Towers can fire a powerful bolt of pulson energy (Energy Blast 24d6, 600" range, No Range Modifier) anywhere within the Inner Court or for over a kilometer outside the prison. They're primarily intended to prevent escapes, but can also be fired at supervillains trying to break a friend out. They're unmanned; guards control them from Main Security. (See map, page 56.)

Aside from the Main Power facility, the sole building in the Inner Court is Main Security, which connects to the Outer Ring primarily by elevated walkways. Atop Main Security is the Intake/Processing Center (see page 63).

Set into the ground of the Inner Court are small squares of transparent material (the same material used for the prison cell doors). They allow natural light into parts of Level One.

# STRONGHOLD PROPER

The actual prison portions of Stronghold is underground, in ten compartmentalized levels, each of which is isolated from the others by no less than four meters of solid rock. The levels were designed to prevent the prisoners from being able to work together to escape, not for increased efficiency. This makes Stronghold an unusual prison with a high staff to prisoner ratio, but the goal of keeping supervillains securely locked away is worth the expense and effort.

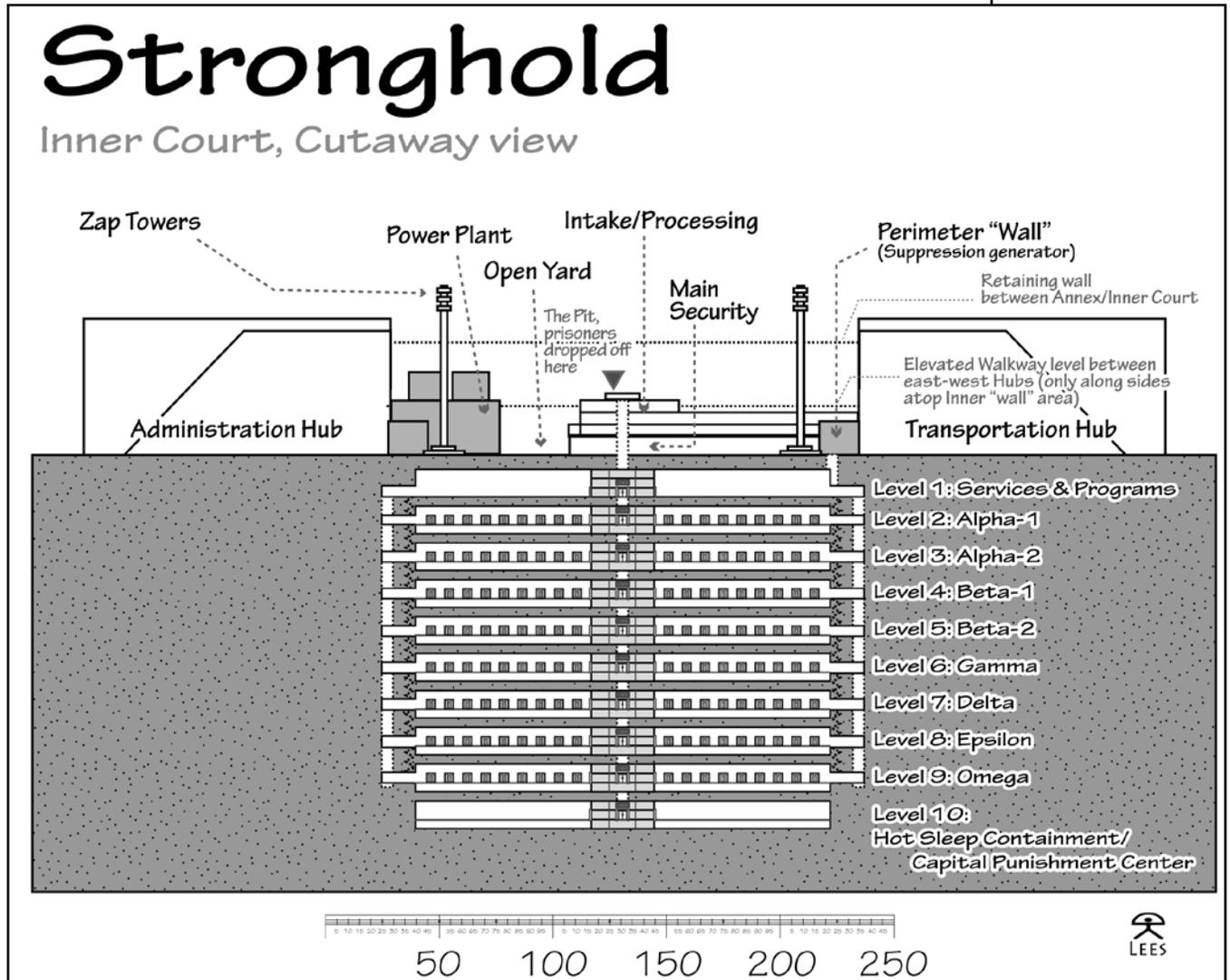
## Level One

Level One is six meters below the surface of the Inner Court. It contains all the facilities required for prisoner services, including: the Sports and Activity Center; the Medical Facility; the Visitation Center; various classrooms and meeting areas; the Dining Hall and the kitchen; and three other auditorium-style halls. Level One is two stories tall, thus allowing for catwalks in the auditorium and dining areas from which guards can watch the prisoners; a few areas (such as the Kitchen) use elevated shelving with stairways to increase their amount of storage space.

All Level One areas are accessed from either the Main Corridor or the "Block" Corridors. The Main Corridor is a square corridor around the center area, with each of its four component hallways referred to as a "Leg" named for the appropriate cardinal direction (North, East, South, West). The Block Corridors branch off from the Legs in the four cardinal directions and are named for the cellblocks they connect with (A, B, C, D). For example, the Dining Hall is in the northeastern corner of the main area, and the entrance to it is on the East Leg near where it intersects the North Leg; the entrance to Classroom Alley is on the east side of Block Corridor A.

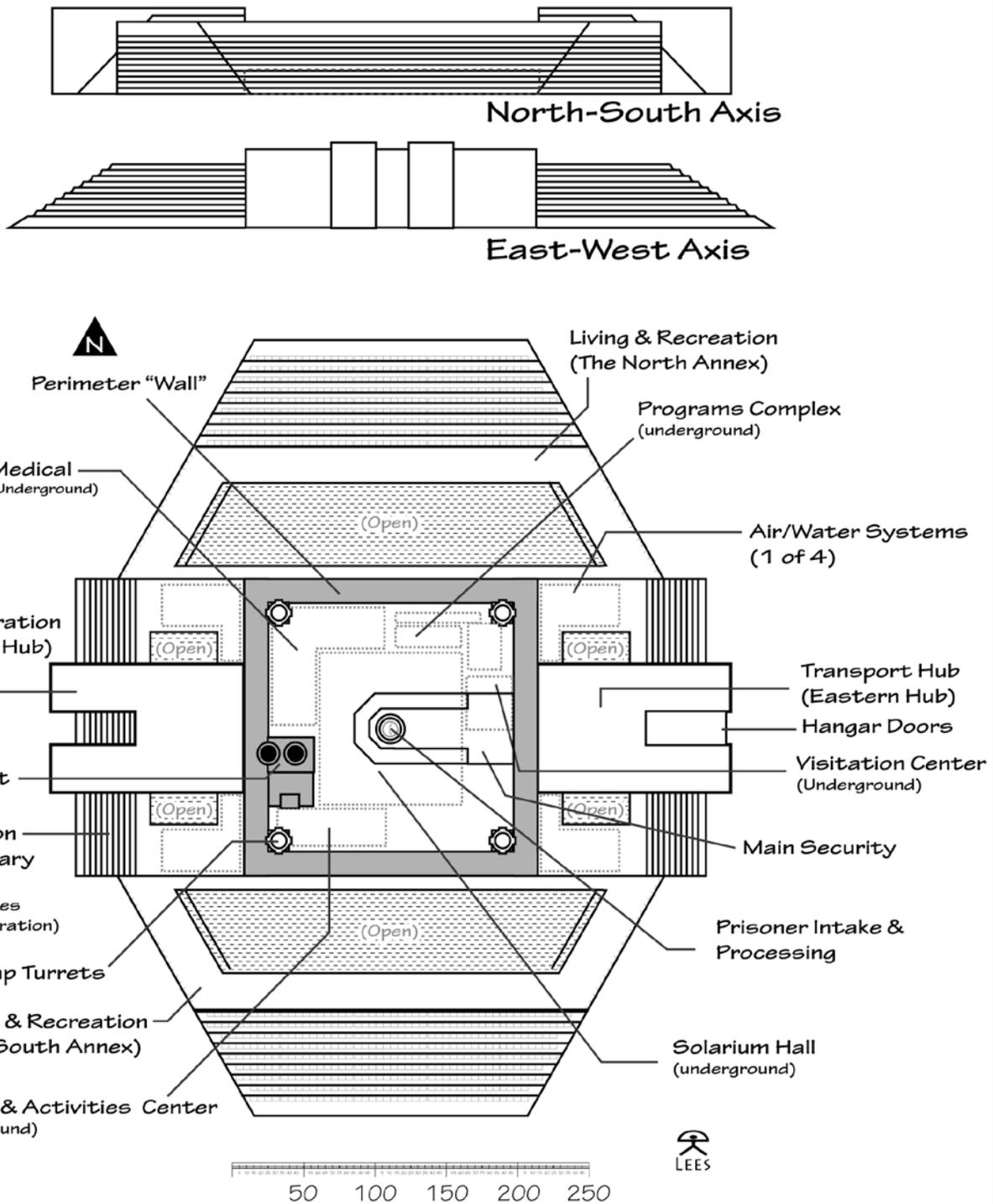
## THE AUDITORIUMS

Level One features three Auditoriums. The largest (at nearly 100 by 50 meters) is Solarium Hall, so called because the plastic inserts in the ground of the Inner Court allow sunlight into this room at certain times of the day (though inmates are rarely in the room at those times). It's at the center of Level One's prisoner-accessible areas and is directly in front of the Guard Tower. One catwalk runs through the upper center of the room north-south, and three equidistantly spaced run east-west. Solarium Hall is where any large gathering of prisoners takes place, such as when



# Stronghold

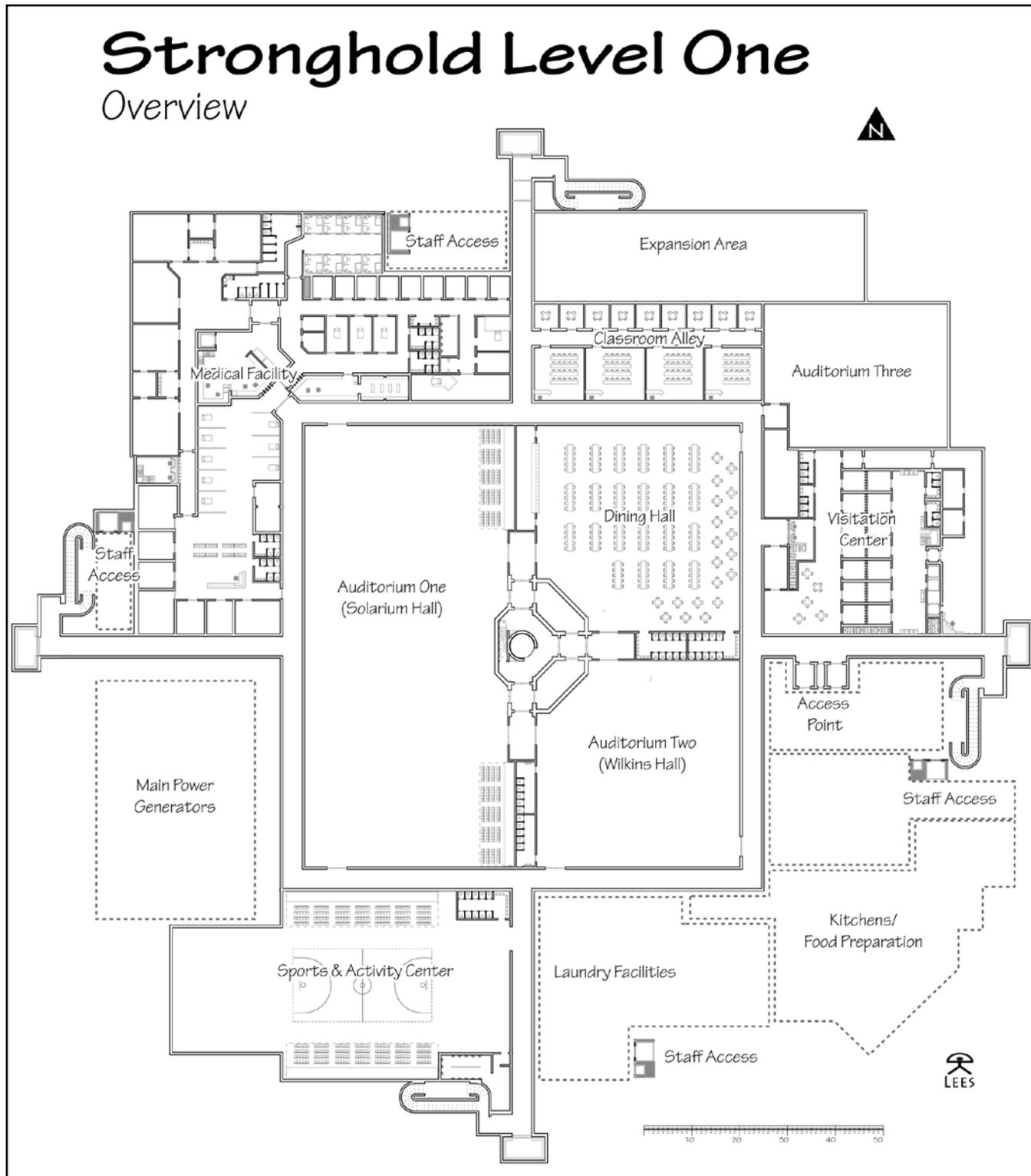
## Main Building



someone puts on a concert or play for the inmates. It features retractable auditorium seating that can hold 200 inmates. The auditorium was made famous by Jack Remington's 1996 live album *Rocking the Solarium* (on which Bulldozer can infamously be heard booing the country singer during his performance of a new song, "The Long Walk").

Well-known rapper JuJu B is said to be negotiating to perform here sometime in 2008.

Level One also features two smaller auditoriums, Wilkins (named after a beloved staff member who passed away in 2001) and a mostly vacant one simply known as Auditorium Three. Both are typically used for smaller or more informal gather-



ings, such as classes too large for Classroom Alley or certain worship services.

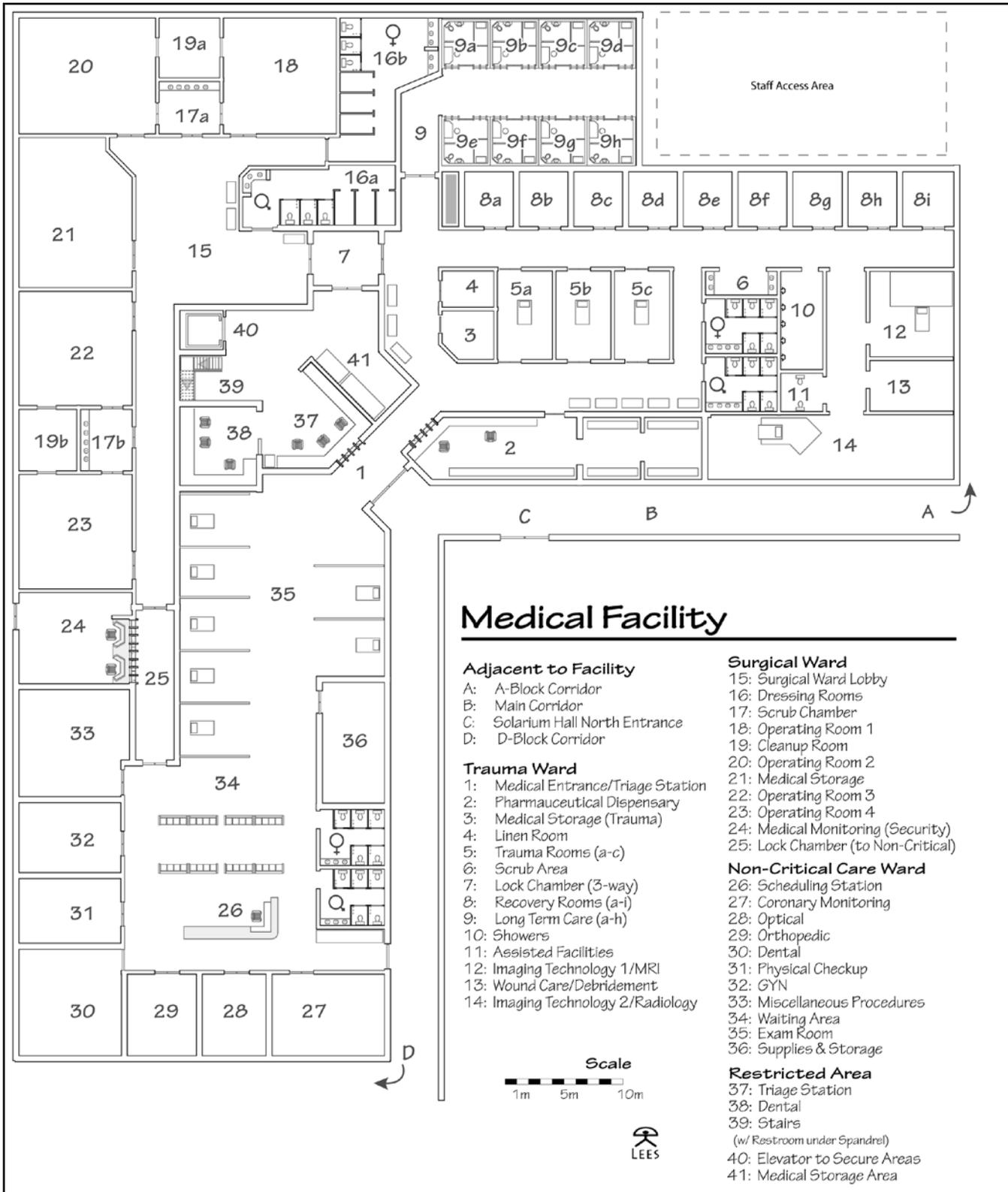
**SPORTS AND ACTIVITY CENTER**

The Sports and Activity Center provides the prisoners with a way to bleed off some aggressive feelings through intra-prison competition between quad teams. Any use of the Center has to be scheduled in advance, and usually involves tournament brackets drawn up by the prison staff. The main sport is basketball, though there's some room for other forms of athletic competition. Inmates' requests for a boxing or

martial arts tournament have been flatly denied by Warden Wildman on several occasions.

**THE MEDICAL FACILITY**

The Medical Facility is situated in the A-D Quadrant of Level One, and unlike most parts of Level One it's only a single story tall in most areas. Security is a special consideration here, since inmates needing medical care often can't be restrained as easily as they can in lower levels, and some of the more intelligent inmates could make deadly weapons out of the various chemicals and devices here. If possible, every inmate seeking immediate medical care

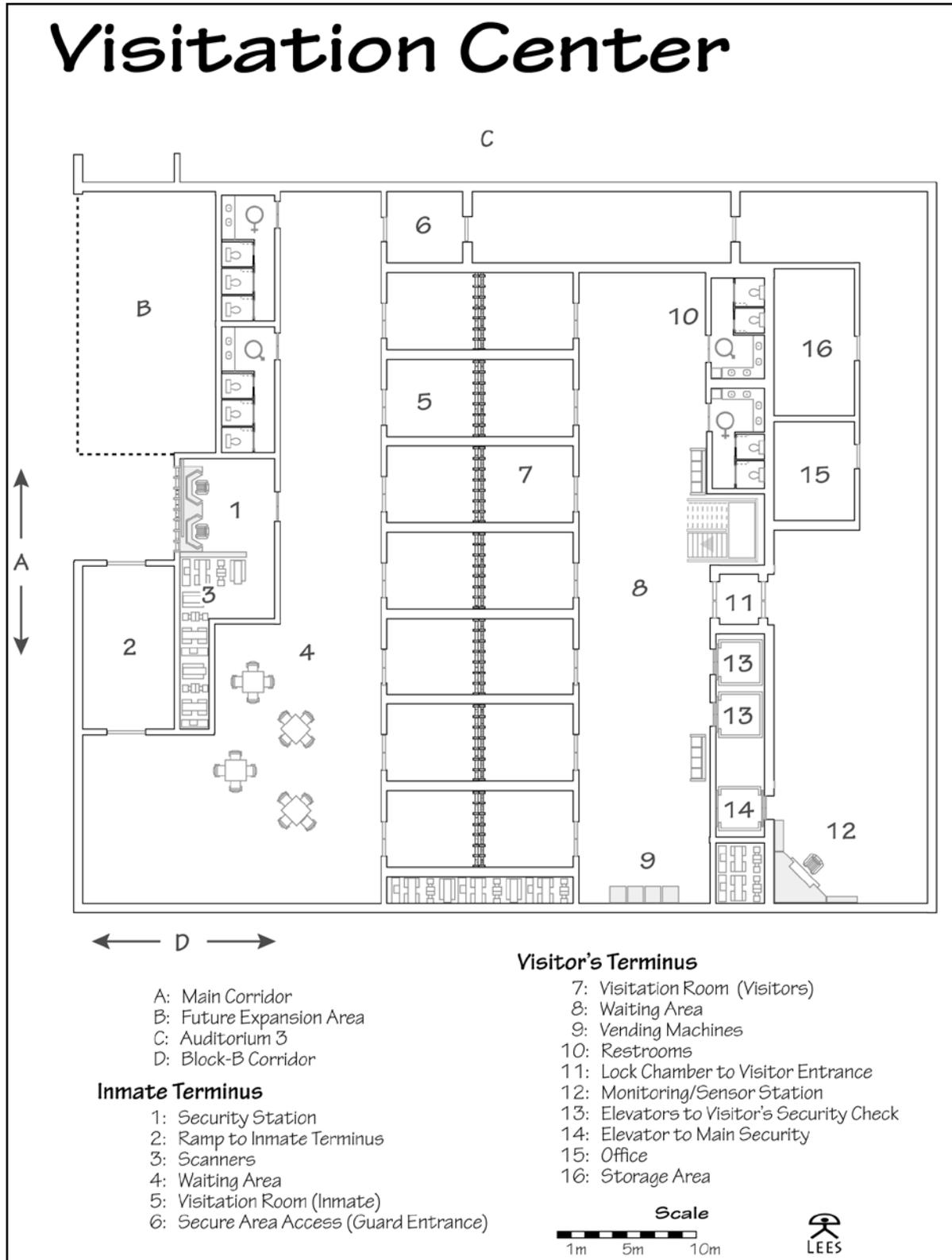


is accompanied at all times by a single guard who stays with him during the entire treatment process. Once it's determined that an inmate requires longer-term care he can be put in one of the recovery rooms, which are similar to cells in many respects.

The Medical facility has three sections: the Trauma Ward, which is used for trauma (cuts and severe illnesses) and recovery from trauma; the Non-Critical Ward, which is for patients with scrapes, breaks, and other largely non-life-threatening injuries and illnesses; and the Restricted Area, where the

medical staff works and much of the chemical and pharmaceutical supplies are located.

If an inmate needs immediate assistance, the guards bring him to the entrance at the north-northwest corner of the Main Corridor, which leads into the Triage Area. The nurses there direct the patient into either the Trauma Ward (to the right/north) or the Non-Critical Care Ward (to the left/south). At least one guard is stationed here at all times, with replacements summoned immediately when one of them has to leave.



**The Trauma Ward**

Severe injuries go immediately into the Trauma Ward. Trauma has its own nurse station at the entrance of this ward, and another on-duty guard at all times. Traumatic injury patients are taken immediately to the Trauma Rooms across from the Nurse station. If the injury is too serious for the Trauma Room, the nurses sedate and stabilize the patient and then send him directly to the operating room.

Behind the trauma rooms are recovery rooms where inmates stay during short-term

recovery. "Short term" generally means "less than a day" — the administration and corrections staff are leery of allowing prisoners to remain outside their cells for long periods of time. If a patient's recover requires more time than this (as in the current case of Cybermind, who's in a deep coma), he's taken to the adjacent Long Term Care area, where the rooms are very similar to cells. This is still not considered desirable by the administration and corrections staff as the cells do not have the full structural containment

advantages of the cellblocks. The medical staff must notify the administration of its desire to put anyone in Long Term Care and receive approval to do so. This occasionally leads to clashes between the doctors and the Warden's staff.

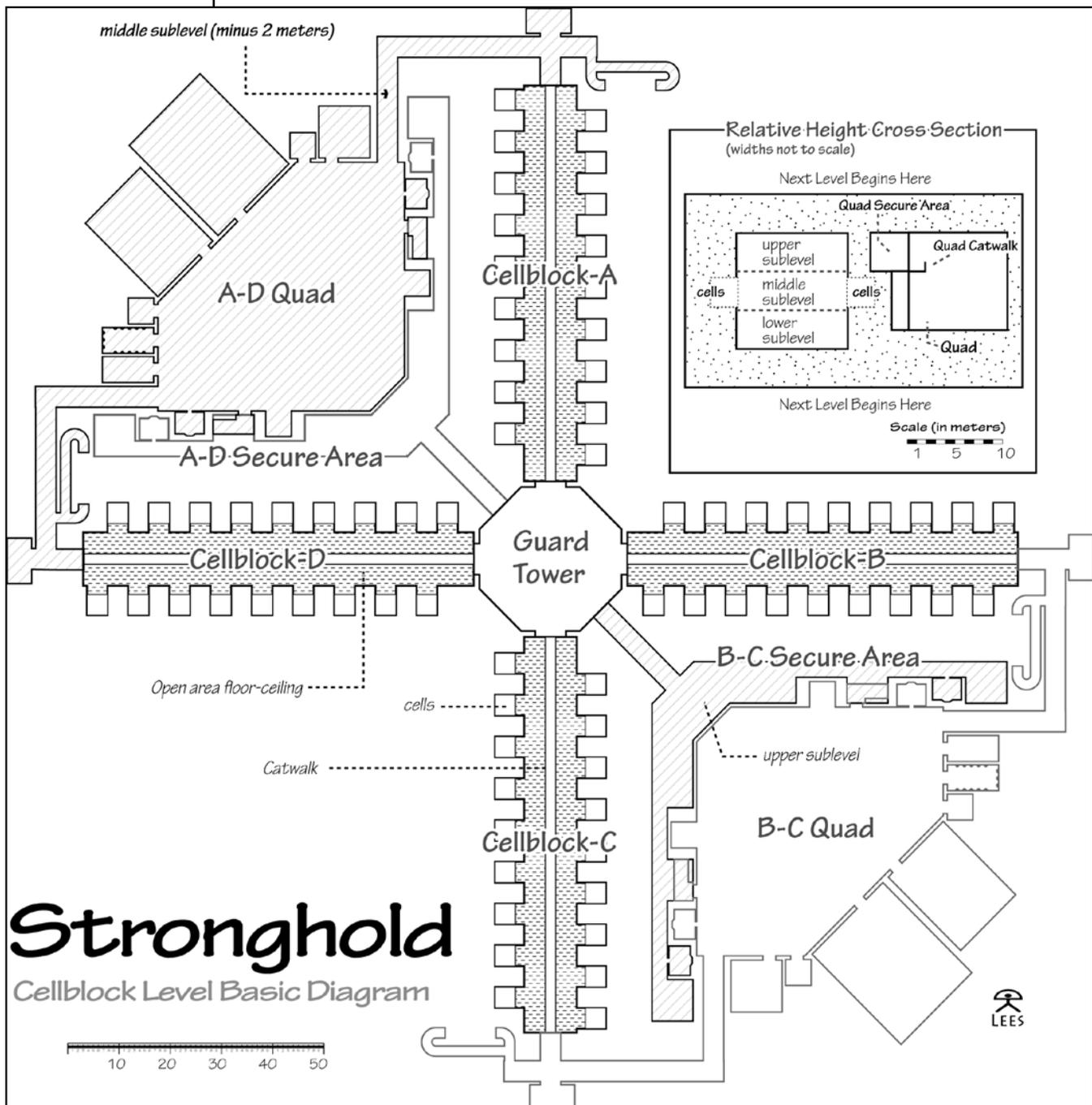
Further into the Trauma Ward are facilities designed with the long-term care of the inmates in mind. This includes a shower area and assisted restroom facilities (with enough room for guards to stabilize prisoners). There are also two imaging rooms (an MRI ring and a "radiology" department that uses non-radioactive alternatives due to obvious issues with superhumans and radiation) and a wound-care station where any debridement takes place.

**Non-Critical Care**

If a medical problem doesn't qualify as a trauma (such as sprains and some breaks, bac-

teriological infections, most illnesses, and the like), a patient is sent to an examination rooms in the Non-Critical Care Ward. These rooms are, like their equivalents in civilian hospitals, merely screened off from one another by curtains but still have ample room for staff, patient, and guard. Most injuries and other medical conditions are treated here and the patient sent back to his cell or quad quickly.

Inmates who schedule medical or dental procedures, such as annual check-ups or coming in for sick call, also go to the Non-Critical Care area, but through a door off the West Leg that leads into a waiting room. (This door is locked in the standard Stronghold fashion and thus not guarded.) This area is pressed into service to handle patient overflow in the event of emergencies. Off of the examination room



**Stronghold**  
Cellblock Level Basic Diagram

are rooms assigned to the various specialties: Optical, Dental, Gynecology, Coronary Care, Physical Examination and the aptly-named Miscellaneous Procedures.

**The Restricted Area**

Behind the Trauma and Non-Critical Care Wards is the Restricted Area, connected by lock chambers (similar to the lock chambers on the cellblock levels). It contains a lounge, two lab areas, and a preparation area for the medical staff. Behind a transparent wall on the western face of the corridor that leads into the Non-Critical Care Lock is a security station that monitors all cameras and passcard telemetry data from in the Medical Facility.

**Psychiatric Care**

Generally speaking Stronghold is not set up to provide long-term care for patients with severe mental illness (but any villain *that* disturbed can probably be cared for at a standard psychiatric hospital using drugs that render him unable to harm anyone). Counseling and therapy sessions can be held in the classrooms as needed.

**CLASSROOM ALLEY**

Classroom Alley is a section of Level One off of the Block-A Corridor where inmates can take various educational classes periodically offered by the prison, including GED classes for inmates who don't have high school diplomas. On rare occasions the Warden has allowed an inmate to give a one-session class or provide the lecture for one meeting of an ongoing class. When the classrooms aren't in use no guard is stationed here; any class in session has at least one guard present.

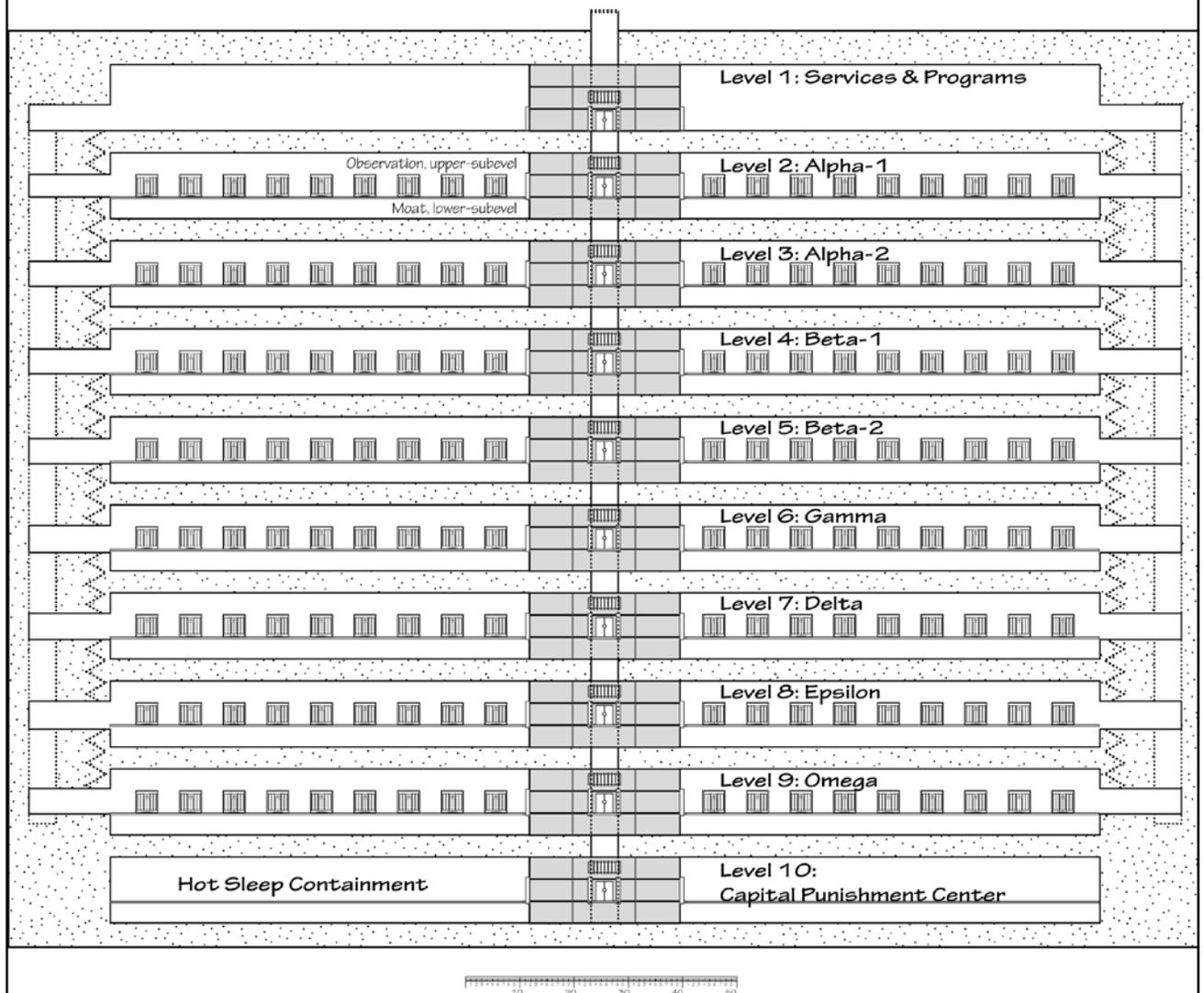
**THE DINING HALL**

Stronghold's Dining Hall can accommodate a maximum of 300 prisoners, which is usually more than sufficient (overcrowding is handled by establishing a dining rotation). A catwalk rings the room so guards can watch the inmates both from above and at ground level.

**THE VISITATION CENTER**

Due to Stronghold's isolated locations, most inmates don't get many visitors. But when

# Underground Level Cutaway



someone does come to see a prisoner, they get to interact at the Visitation Center. A DEF 8, BODY 8 wall divides the Center into two areas: the Inmate Terminus and the Visitor's Terminus. Inmates enter their part of the Center from Level One; they're escorted there by a guard and must pass through a security booth. At the booth the inmate is "checked in" to confirm that he has a scheduled visit. At least one guard is present in the booth (which is soundproofed) during any visit and can watch (but not overhear) the inmate and his visitor; guards are not allowed in the Inmate Terminus itself because of attorney-client confidentiality. Visitors enter via a stairway from the Transportation Hub.

The dividing wall prevents any physical contact between an inmate and his visitors and forces them to communicate via phone; Stronghold does not allow conjugal visits or anything similar. If someone has the pull (political or otherwise) to come into physical contact with an inmate, that sort of meeting is held in the inmate's cell or some other highly secure area.

### **NON-PRISONER FACILITIES**

Level One features several facilities or resources that prisoners are not allowed access to. These include the kitchen, the laundry, parts of the main power plant, and some staff-only stairways and elevators.

## **The Cellblock Levels**

Below Level One are the cellblock levels, Two to Nine, though they're usually referred to by a Greek letter designation (Alpha-1, Alpha-2, Beta-1, Beta-2, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon, and Omega, respectively). Unlike Level One, which sprawls across the entire area under the Inner Court, the cellblock levels are designed in a "cross" pattern, with four arms projecting in the cardinal directions away from a central hub, the Guard Tower. Each leg of the cross is lined with cells. The north-facing cellblock is designated Cellblock A, and the others (in clockwise rotation) are B, C, and D. Between cellblocks A and D and B and C are the irregularly shaped areas known as "quads," where prisoners spend much of their recreation time (see below).

Each of the cellblock levels is 12 meters (6") in height and can be thought of as divided into three sublevels: an upper one two meters (1") tall, where guard observation areas are located; a middle or "floor" one six meters (3") tall, where the cells and quads are; and a lower one four meters (2") tall, sometimes known as the "moat," that's a part of the containment strategy in the wings themselves.

The cellblock levels are organized according to Danger level and Escape Risk (see page 64), with inmates of similar ratings grouped together (and of course some wings are female-only). Stronghold tries to group prisoners to fill the cellblocks and avoid half-occupied blocks, but based on the current inmate population this isn't always possible. The level arrangements are:

**Level Alpha-1 (2):** Blue and Green-level Danger inmates of no more than Level 2 Escape Risk

**Level Alpha-2 (3):** Green and Yellow-level Danger inmates of no more than Level 2 Escape Risk

**Level Beta-1 (4):** Yellow-level Danger inmates of no more than Level 3 Escape Risk

**Level Beta-2 (5):** Yellow-level Danger inmates of no more than Level 4 Escape Risk

**Level Gamma (6):** Yellow-level Danger inmates of Level 5 Escape Risk

**Level Delta (7):** Orange-level Danger inmates of no more than Level 3 Escape Risk

**Level Epsilon (8):** Orange-level Danger inmates of Levels 4-5 Escape Risk

**Level Omega (9):** Red-level Danger inmates of any Escape Risk level

### **THE GUARD TOWER**

The Guard Tower is the central hub of each of the cellblock levels. While "the" Guard Tower runs through all of the levels in the exact same configuration and is generally referred to in the singular, it's compartmentalized, with one level kept separate from the others (though they're connected by stairs and an elevator).

Generally the only time a prisoner gets into the Guard Tower is when he takes the Long Walk to his cell during his intake. Otherwise prisoners are kept out of the Guard Tower; they use the stairways at the ends of the cellblock wings to go up and down. Exceptions are sometimes made when the guards need to move large numbers of inmates quickly, such as during an escape attempt when there's a lockdown (see page 75), but even then guards prefer only to let Green- and Yellow-rated inmates into the Tower.

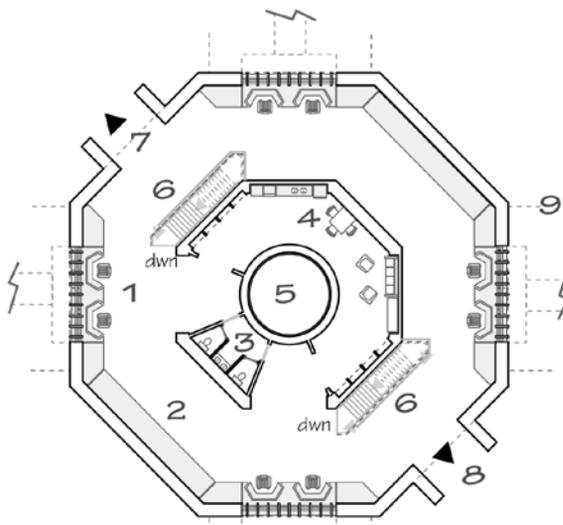
#### **The Sublevels**

Each level of the Tower has three "floors" or sublevels, as discussed above and shown on the accompanying map. The upper sublevel includes consoles from which the guards monitor cameras on that level and control the opening and closing of cell doors (and from which they can look out over the cellblock via a window), a lounge and restrooms for the guards working on that level, and access corridors leading to the "secure areas" overlooking that level's quads.

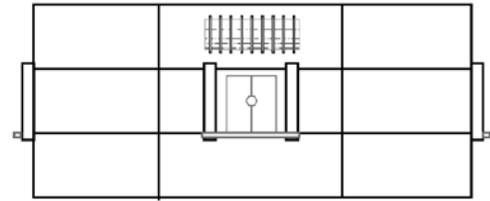
The upper sublevel doesn't have any access to the cellblock wings themselves; those are found only on the middle sublevel, which includes the elevator entrance and two "isolation rooms" that can be used for prisoner interrogation or similar purposes. Access to and from the cellblock wings requires a guard to pass through a "lock chamber" that requires him to open two electronically-locked doors using his electronic card-key (each level's doors can also be opened from the upper sublevel control console, or a master control console in Main Security).

The lower sublevel is mainly an "infrastructure" level. It includes backup power generation, life support, and communications/monitoring systems for that level.

# Guard Tower



Upper sublevel

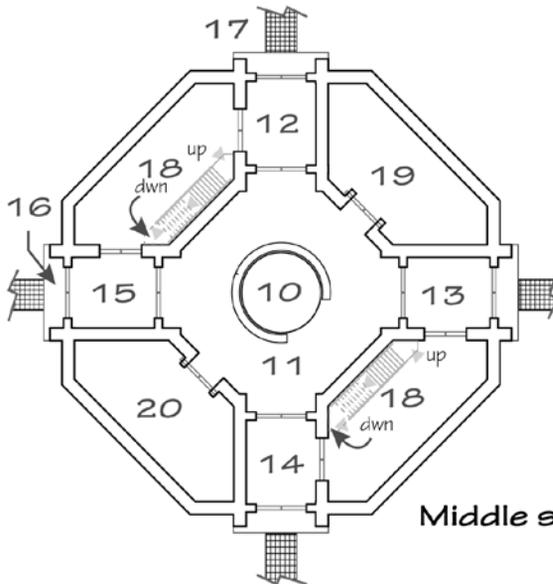


Exterior View

## Map Key

### Upper sublevel

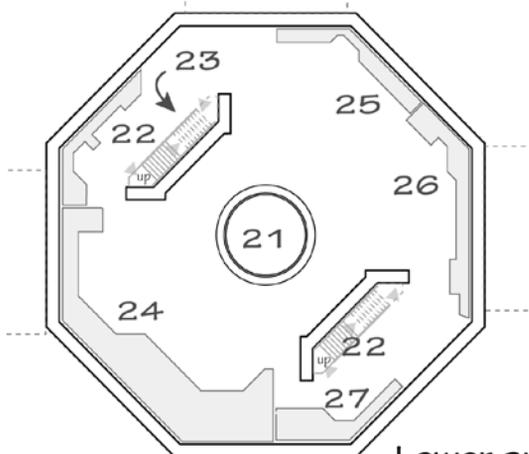
- 1: Observation Console (typical)
- 2: Monitor Banks
- 3: Restroom
- 4: Lounge Area
- 5: Elevator Shaft (no Access)
- 6: Stairway (down only)
- 7: Access to Secure Quad Area A-D
- 8: Access to Secure Quad Area B-C
- 9: Rock facing



Middle sublevel

### Middle sublevel

- 10: Elevator Shaft, with Access Doors
- 11: Entryway
- 12: Lock Chamber for Cellblock A
- 13: Lock Chamber for Cellblock B
- 14: Lock Chamber for Cellblock C
- 15: Lock Chamber for Cellblock D
- 16: Catwalk Ledge (typical)
- 17: Catwalk (typical)
- 18: Stairs (Up/Down)
- 19: Isolation Room 1
- 20: Isolation Room 2

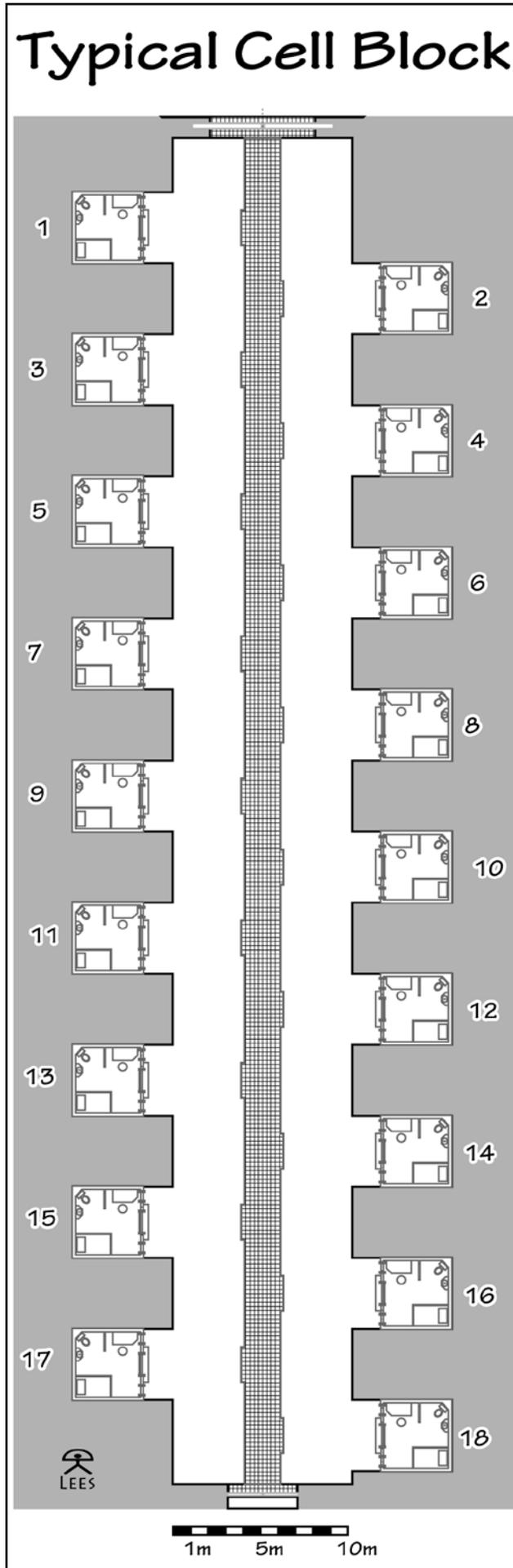


Lower sublevel

### Lower sublevel

- 21: Elevator Shaft (no access)
- 22: Stairs (Up Only)
- 23: Restroom (in spandrel)
- 24: Backup Power Generator
- 25: Backup Communications & Monitoring
- 26: Backup Life Support
- 27: Backup Suppression Field





## THE CELLBLOCKS

The cellblocks, not surprisingly, contain the prisoners' cells. Each cellblock is a roughly rectangular cylinder approximately 10 meters (5") wide by 76 meters (38") long and as tall as the level (12 meters [6"]). A two meter-wide catwalk, known as the "main catwalk," runs from the middle sublevel of the Guard Tower down the entire length of the cellblock. The cells are set directly into the rock-face in a staggered orientation and are level with the main catwalk.

Most of a cellblock's space is open air, part of the "proximity protocol" originally developed by Charles Wildman to enhance security by keeping inmates separated as much as possible. A cell is not directly connected to the main catwalk most of the time; if an inmate somehow got his cell door open he'd either have to jump to the catwalk (requiring a jump of four meters [2"]) or drop to the cellblock floor below (a fall of four meters [2"]). When the guards want to let an inmate out of his cell, a guard at the control console in the Guard Tower extends a catwalk from the main catwalk directly to that inmate's cell so he can safely walk out.

The "moat" — the empty space below the main catwalk and the floor of the cells — is generally featureless and has no entries or exits. If an inmate jumps, falls, or is knocked off a catwalk, the guards have to use a ladder or a rope to get him out.

The cells are numbered 1 through 18, with odd numbers on the right hand side and even numbers on the left as one looks down the cellblock from the Guard Tower. See page 57 for more information about the cells. On some levels one or more cellblocks have one or more cells that are larger than normal to accommodate villains of greater than human size.

## THE REAR CORRIDORS

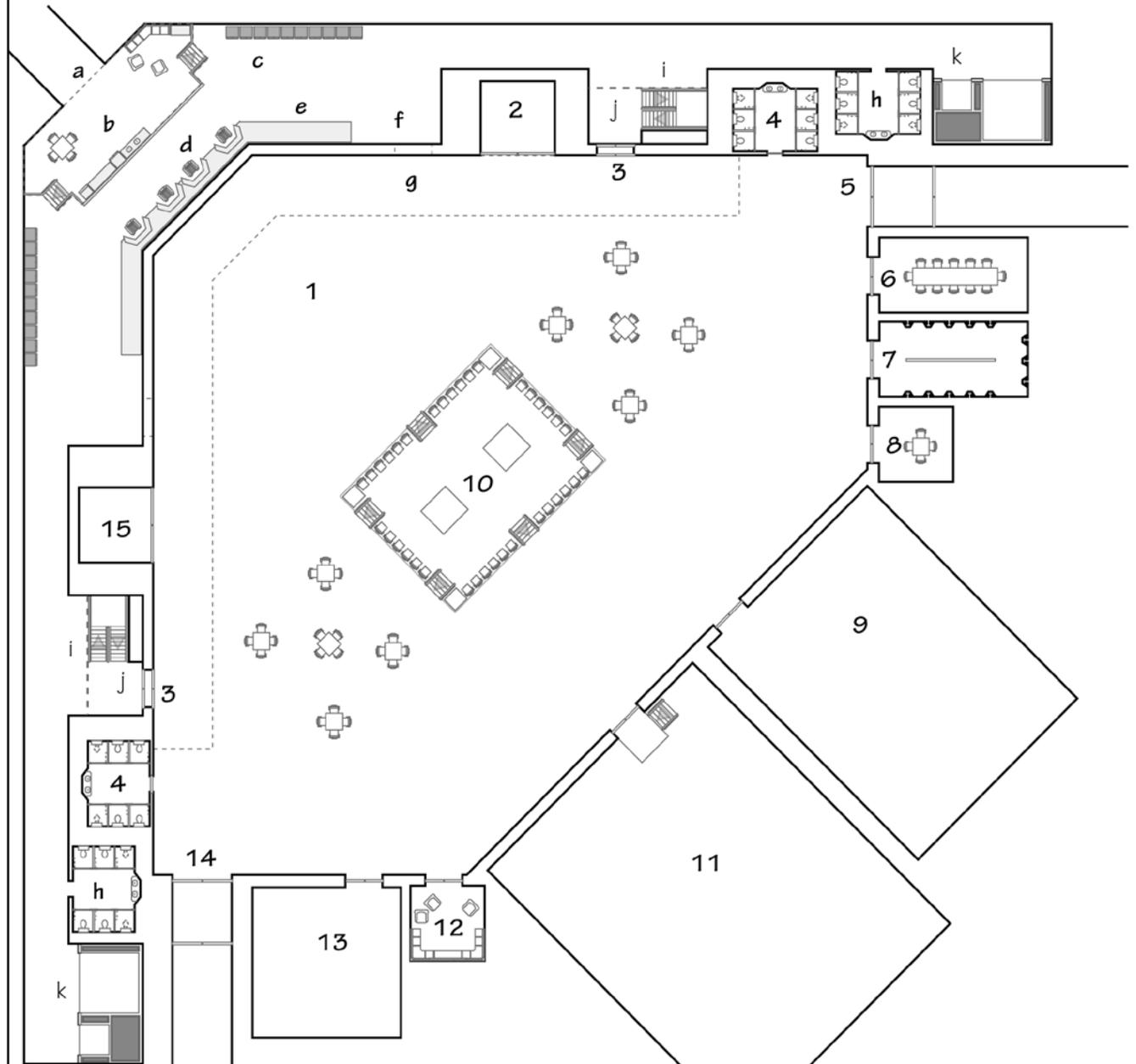
Beyond each cellblock is a rear corridor that grants access to the cellblock elevator (which only the guards can use), the cellblock stairwell (actually a circular ramp, not true stairs), and the cellblock's quad.

## THE QUADS

The quads, or dayrooms, are where the prisoners spend much of their time. Each cellblock level has two quads, one serving cellblocks A and D, the other serving cellblocks B and C. The quads are accessed from the rear corridor of the cellblocks; they're not connected to one another on the same level or from level to level. Structurally a quad has two sublevels: the upper sublevel, with a secure area where the guards watch over the activities of the inmates; and a lower sublevel whose floor is six meters (3") below the secure area's floor.

In the center of a quad is a raised area with two large televisions; the guards control what's shown on the TVs, and usually try to avoid anything too violent or lewd. Arranged around the raised area are tables (one-, two-, and four-person

# Typical Quad (B-C)



**Ward Floor Areas**  
(All located on middle sublevel)

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1: Main Quad Floor  | 8: Meeting Room B              |
| 2: Prisoner Isolation Cell #1   | 9: Large Session Room          |
| 3: Ward Guard Entrance<br><small>(see j, use dotted line for room dimension on Ward Floor only)</small> | 10: Entertainment Area         |
| 4: Restroom (secured)   | 11: Gymnasium                  |
| 5: Hallway to B-Block   | 12: Meeting Room C             |
| 6: Conference Room  | 13: Medium Session Room        |
| 7: Showers  | 14: Hallway to C-Block         |
|   | 15: Prisoner Isolation Cell #2 |

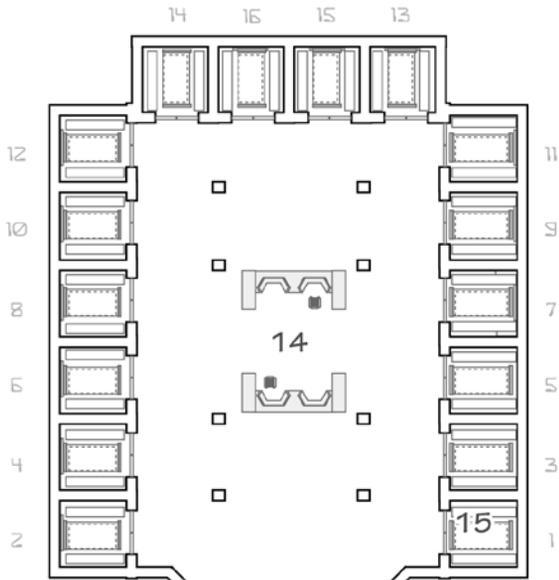
**Secure Floor Areas**  
(All but area j on upper sublevel)

- a: Guard Entrance
- b: Guard Lounge
- c: Staff Equipment Lockers
- d: Central Monitoring
- e: Monitoring banks (table)
- f: Catwalk Entrance
- g: Catwalk
- h: Restroom
- i: Stairwell (ignore dotted line for this floor)
- j: Ward Floor Entrance  
(on Ward sub-Level)
- k: Staff Elevators



# Level Ten:

## Hotsleep Containment Area & the Capital Punishment Center



### Level Ten Tower, main level

- 1: Elevator Shaft
- 2: Entryway
- 3: Secure Area Lock Chamber
- 4: Hot Sleep Lock Chamber
- 5: Capital Punishment Center Lock Chamber
- 6: Interrogation Area: Secure
- 7: Interrogation Area: Inmate
- 8: Stairs (up/down)

### Capital Punishment Center

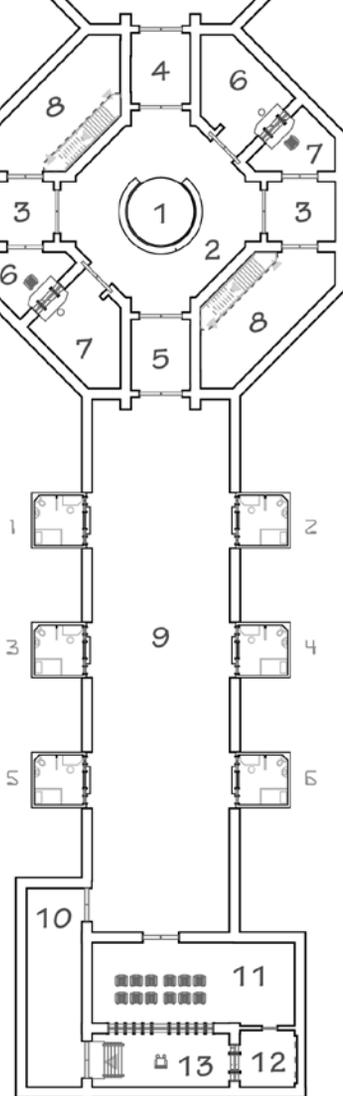
- 9: Death Row  
(cells 1-6)
- 10: Condemned Entrance
- 11: Observation Area
- 12: Control Room
- 13: Death Chamber

### Hot Sleep Containment Area

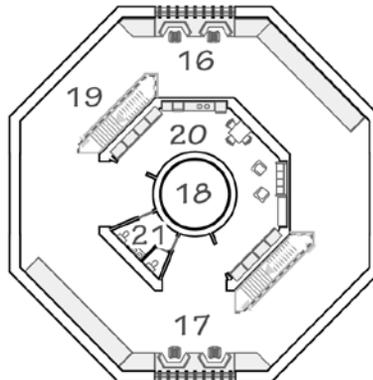
- 14: Hot Sleep Monitoring Console
- 15: Hot Sleep Chambers  
1-16 (13 reserved for Grand)  
maximum sized coffins shown

### Level Ten Tower, upper level

- 16: Hot Sleep Control Center
- 17: Death Row Observation
- 18: Elevator Shaft (no access)
- 19: Stairwell (down)
- 20: Guard Lounge
- 21: Restroom



main level



upper level



sizes) where inmates can sit and read, play board or card games, or talk. Many quads have long-running poker games where inmates win or lose vast sums of imaginary money (though according to some underworld legends, losers have to pay up to winners after they both get out of prison).

Arranged around the periphery of a quad's main room are several smaller rooms. These include meeting rooms where classes, therapy sessions, and the like can be held (inmates have to get permission to use them for other activities), the showers for the two cellblocks served by the quad, and a gymnasium featuring a basketball court and weightlifting equipment.

## Level Ten

Unlike the other underground levels, Level Ten is a small level with just two areas: Hotsleep Containment and the Capital Punishment Center. The Guard Tower extends down to this level, but is only half the size it is on upper levels and consists of just two floors rather than three sublevels. No guards are normally present on this level; it remains dim, quiet, and sealed off from the rest of the prison most of the time.

### CAPITAL PUNISHMENT CENTER

While Stronghold has rarely been called upon to carry out a death sentence, the original design of the prison provided for that possibility, and the "CPC" (as it's known in the prison community) has been used several times.

The CPC basically consists of four areas. The first is a block of six cells where prisoners awaiting execution stay for their last 48 hours. (Never in Stronghold's history have more than two of them been occupied at a time.) The cells are just like the ones on the cellblocks, but there's no catwalk or "moat" controlling access to them.

Beyond the cells is a block of three rooms. The first is an observation room where people called upon or asked to witness the execution sit and watch it through a transparent window made of the same material as the cell doors. The second is the room from which the guards control the death chamber equipment; it's set up so that three people have to trigger the equipment and no one can tell which one actually committed the execution.

The third and final room is the death chamber itself, which features both a chair and a table into which inmates can be strapped. Typically

Stronghold executes prisoners by lethal injection, but sometimes more unusual methods are needed when superhumans are involved. If necessary Stronghold's scientists can prepare other devices, such as lasers, for this purpose.

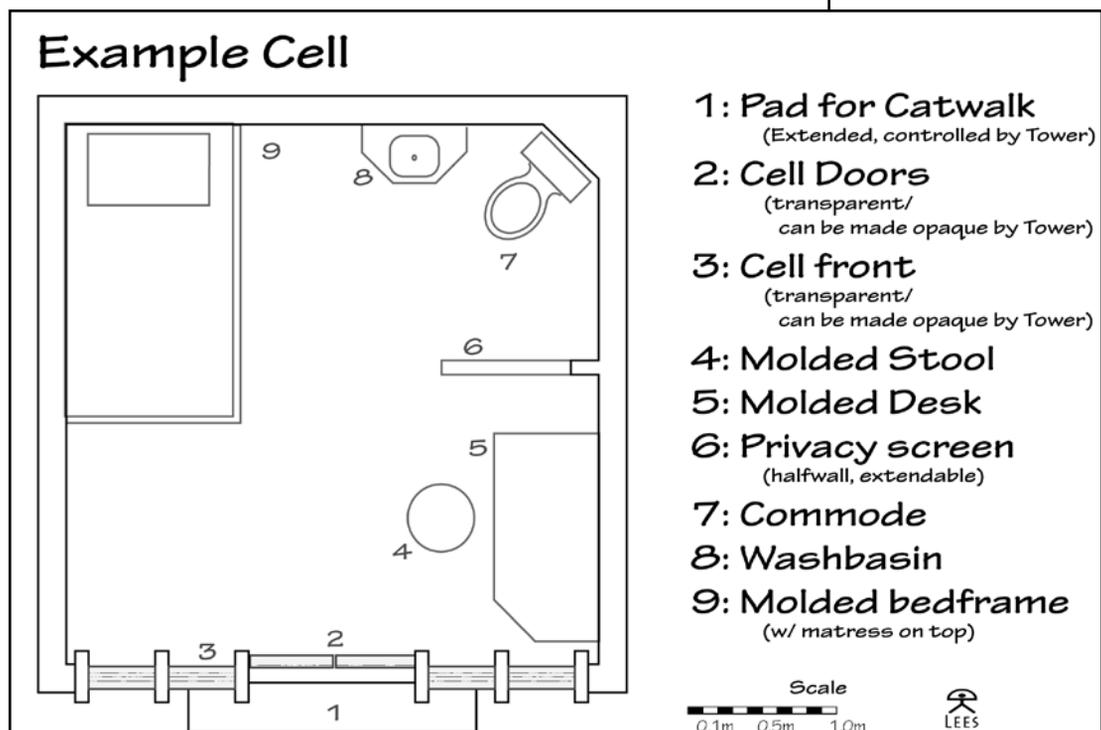
### HOT SLEEP CONTAINMENT

Perhaps the most legendary area of Stronghold is the Hot Sleep Containment facility, where some of the most dangerous supervillains in the world — villains so dangerous they can't be held prisoner in any other way — are kept in "hot sleep," a sort of induced coma, for the duration of their sentences. Prior to the development of hot sleep this was a "Maximum Containment" area with ultra-high security.

The "HSC" has 16 "vaults" (small rooms that were formerly cells) that can hold one hot sleep chamber, colloquially known as a "coffin." The vaults and their doors are the same as those of the cells on the levels above. The coffin maintains the induced coma and sees to the occupant's other needs, such as life support. It slides out of the cell on a track and opens from the top (just like a coffin, hence the nickname). If necessary larger than normal coffins can be prepared for larger than normal villains — for example, Stronghold has a special coffin for Grond that's kept in storage pending his next "arrival."

The monitoring console in the center of the HSC allows the staff to keep watch over the inmates and correct any problems before they reach the point of letting an inmate get free. A guard comes down to check the console once each shift, and the console is also linked to Stronghold's primary control console in Main Security.

As of January 2008, occupants of the Hot Sleep Containment facility include Eclipse, Geothermal, Glacier, Interface, Menton, and Valak the World-Ravager.



# SECURITY



**T**he foremost concern on the minds of everyone associated with Stronghold, from Warden Wildman all the way down to the janitorial staff, is security. The purpose of Stronghold is to keep hundreds of very powerful, very dangerous superhumans locked up so society is safe from them, and that requires security. As with an ordinary prison, to a large extent Stronghold's security measures focus on keeping inmates inside and as harmless as possible. But since supervillains are sometimes the subject of efforts to break them out of prison, Stronghold also has to keep itself secure from break-*ins*. Stronghold's external security measures mainly apply to the latter threat, its internal security measures to the former.

Naturally, Stronghold's guards are an important part of its security as well. See page 82 for more information about them.

## EXTERNAL SECURITY

Stronghold primarily relies on four types of external security monitoring: guards; radar; sonar; and motion/vibration sensors.

### GUARD STATIONS

Stronghold's simplest external security measure is stationing guards outside with high-powered binoculars to keep an eye on the surrounding region. In addition to guards posted at the doors of the facility, Stronghold has built four small guard stations on the edge of Devil's Head Mesa, one at each cardinal point of the compass. Each can accommodate two guards comfortably, is equipped with a kitchenette and a bathroom, and is linked to the prison proper by telephone and an audio-video closed-circuit television system. The guards use large, tripod-mounted binoculars that allow them to see clearly for a kilometer (Telescopic: +14 versus the Range Modifier for the Sight Group). Each guard station is DEF 5, BODY 15.

### RADAR

To detect incoming aircraft, flying or tunneling superhumans, or the like, Stronghold has a powerful linked radar system that combines both standard aerial radar and ground-penetrating radar to surround the prison in a 720-degree sensory sphere. It's most accurate within two kilometers but can still perceive objects with acceptable accuracy at much further distances. The aerial radar is located in Stronghold itself, while the GPR depends on a series of concealed ground-based units built in a perimeter on and around Devil's Head Mesa.

**Stronghold Linked Radar System:** *Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Telescopic (+16 versus Range Modifier) (28 Active Points); IIF Immobile (aerial radar equipment is Obvious; -1¼), Affected As Sight Group As Well As Radio Group (-½). Total cost: 10 points.*

### SONAR

Because some superhumans can evade radar, Stronghold also has a sonar net. However, the sonar only covers the aboveground areas; it cannot penetrate into the earth like the radar can.

**Stronghold Sonar System:** *Sonar (Hearing Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Telescopic (+16 versus Range Modifier) (28 Active Points); OIF Immobile (-1½). Total cost: 11 points.*

### Electronic Countermeasures

Stronghold's radar, sonar, and communications systems are hardened against interference or jamming.

**Electronic Hardening:** *Power Defense (15 points) (15 Active Points); IIF Immobile (-1¼) (total cost: 7 points) plus Radio Group Flash Defense (15 points) (15 Active Points); IIF Immobile (-1¼) (total cost: 7 points). Total cost: 14 points.*

### MOTION/VIBRATION SENSORS

As if the ground-penetrating radar weren't enough of a problem for anyone trying to break into Stronghold, the prison has placed motion/vibration sensors in a two-kilometer perimeter around the facility. They not only register when a vehicle comes driving along the one ground road that leads to the prison, they're sensitive enough to detect things like a burrowing badger. The ground units that are a part of the system are well-concealed.

**Stronghold Motion/Vibration Detection System:** *Detect Physical Vibrations (INT Roll +6) (Touch Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Range, Targeting, Telescopic (+16 versus Range Modifier) (49 Active Points); IIF Immobile (-1¼), Affected As Sight Group As Well As Touch Group (-½). Total cost: 18 points.*

## INTERNAL SECURITY

Of far more interest to most of the inmates are the internal security measures that keep them confined and powerless. More than one Stronghold “resident” has vowed to track down the man who invented power negation technology and kill him.

### LIFE INSIDE

EVERYTHING IS BLUE HERE.

I DON'T MEAN SAD, THOUGH I SUPPOSE A FEW PEOPLE FEEL THAT WAY. I MEAN, LITERALLY, BLUE. THE POWER NEGATION GENERATORS ARE MOUNTED ALONGSIDE THE LIGHTING UNITS. SOMEHOW THEIR ENERGY CHANGES THE COLOR OF THE FLUORESCENCE EVER SO SLIGHTLY, GIVING IT A BLuish TINT IN PLACE OF THE USUAL WHITE-YELLOW. ADRIAN'S SKIN LOOK LIKE IT'S REALLY MADE OF ICE IN HERE, AND THE BLUE MAKES SOME OF THE JUMP-SUITS, PARTICULARLY THE ORANGE ONE, LOOK HIDEOUS. SOMETIMES IT'S DIFFICULT TO REMEMBER WHAT PROPER LIGHTING LOOKS LIKE ANYMORE.

### —REQUIEM

## WALLS AND DOORS

At its most fundamental, a prison is all about thick walls and heavy doors. In Stronghold the walls are primarily made from a super-tech metal-and-ceramic composite that's highly resistant to impact, cutting, burning, and blasting. To some people it has a distinctive feel, a sort of mild oily slickness when one runs one's fingertips along it; to other it feels more or less like ordinary granite.

Besides the strength of the walls themselves, in the underground parts of Stronghold many walls (including all cell walls) are backed up by solid rock (possibly dozens or hundreds of feet of it). Just being able to smash “through” a wall doesn't necessarily benefit a supervillain if he doesn't have a way to tunnel through rock.

Most non-cell doors in Stronghold are metal, with heavy hinges, though some in the above-ground level are the more typical sort of wooden office door. Typically their use is controlled by an electronic card-key system to prevent unauthorized access. They can also be opened from the control console in each Guard Tower or the master security office in Main Security. Some doors leading into highly-secured areas (such as the vault where villains' Foci are stored) also require a fingerprint or retina print scan to open.

In game terms, Stronghold's standard walls are DEF 10, BODY 10. Each door is DEF 10, BODY 5. Bypassing a door's lock requires a Lock-picking roll at -4 at the lock itself, or a Computer Programming roll at -4 from a central security station such as the Guard Tower. Electronics serves as a Complementary Skill for either roll.

## THE POWER NEGATION SYSTEM

Unquestionably Stronghold's most important security measure, and the one most hated by the inmates, is the power negation system. The prison's current power negation technology is a couple of generations beyond what was first installed when the prison was built. Its design is primarily credited to an Angelstone Laboratories physicist, Dr. Quentin Cross. For that reason it's sometimes referred to as a “Cross device,” though the list of superhero scientists who also contributed to the development project is far too long to include here.

Every single part of the underground levels of Stronghold, and many areas in the above-ground level (including the intake facility and any other part where a supervillain might be taken) is covered by the power negation devices. They're typically built next to the ceiling lighting units and give the light coming from them a slight bluish tinge. If a villain needs to be taken into an area without power negators installed, temporary units that create a 25 foot (4") radius of power negation can be used in that area. Stronghold guards monitor the power negation system every day using small handheld sensors to make sure there are no “dead spots” or malfunctioning units.

### How The Power Negators Work

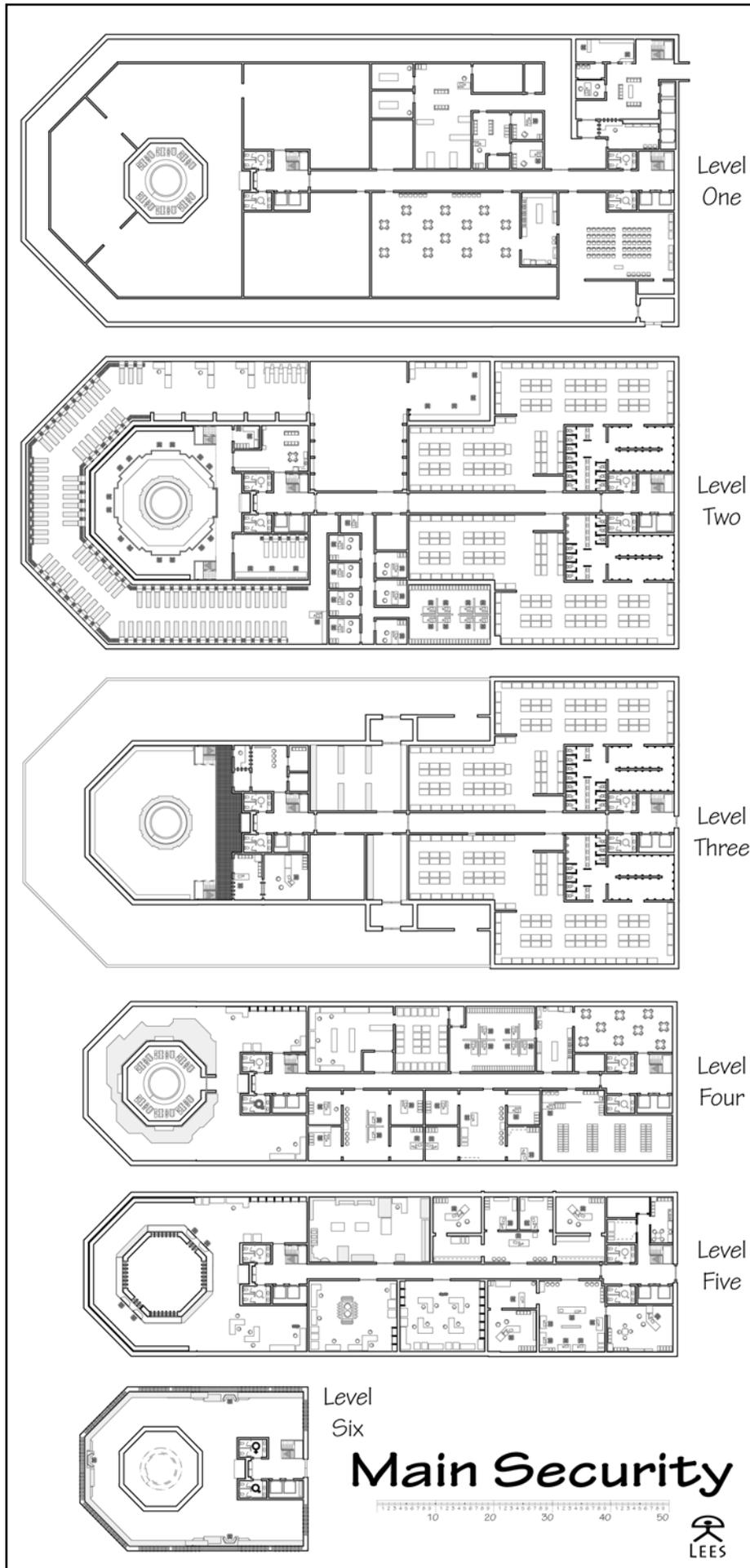
Described simply, Stronghold's power negation system prevents the use of any superpowers within the area it covers. Understanding exactly how it does this requires several advanced degrees in physics, but in layman's terms a negator works simultaneously on two levels. First, it affects superhumans neurologically, preventing them from “accessing” or “triggering” their powers even though they know they have them. Second, it somehow alters the fabric of reality such that even if a superhuman could access/trigger his powers, they would not function. Thus, it could be said that a Cross device affects both the “source” and “manifestation” of a superpower at once.

### LIFE INSIDE

SOME DAYS I CAN FEEL THE POWER SUPPRESSION FIELD LIKE A WEIGHT ACROSS MY SHOULDERS. I KNOW IT'S JUST ENERGY, NOT EVEN VISIBLE ENERGY OR ENERGY THAT BURNS, BUT IT SURROUNDS ME AND SMOTHERS ME - HOW COULD I NOT FEEL IT?

SOMETIMES I PUSH BACK AGAINST THE WEIGHT. I STRAIN AND STRAIN, REACHING THROUGH IT TRYING TO GRASP THE POWER THAT ONCE WAS MINE, AND ONE DAY WILL BE AGAIN. BUT NO MATTER WHAT I TRY, IT'S STILL THERE, LIKE A PILE OF WET BLANKETS I CAN'T LIFT OFF OF ME OR WRIGGLE OUT FROM UNDER. I CANNOT ESCAPE IT; IT'S AS OMNIPRESENT AS AIR, AND JUST AS EASY TO PUNCH.

### —REQUIEM



**Additional Measures**

Of course, not every superpower is susceptible to the power negation system because it doesn't involve consciously accessing a superpower or performing an action. The classic example are bestial supervillains with horns or claws. In that case Stronghold devises whatever other security measures it must, always remaining aware of the Eighth Amendment implications. For instance, a supervillain with horns would have them capped and padded so they're as harmless as possible.

**Power Negation In Game Terms**

In *HERO System* terms, a Stronghold power negator works something like this:

*Suppress 20d6, all Powers simultaneously (+2), all Special Effects simultaneously (+2), Area Of Effect (50" Radius; +1); OIF Immobile, No Range (-½).*

The device's END cost is paid by the prison's power system; if it can't get electricity for some reason, it stops working. Due to the size of the Area Of Effect, in most parts of Stronghold two or more power negation fields overlap.

Technically a 20d6 effect may not be enough to fully Suppress every superpower that every inmate possesses. However, for dramatic purposes Stronghold gets to take advantage of the Absolute Effects Rule: by definition the power negators are strong enough to completely shut off any superpowers within their affected area... unless and until the GM rules otherwise.

For purposes of the power negators, here's what qualifies as a "superpower":

- anything an average person would consider a "superpower," such as Esper's psionic abilities, Catran's super-strength, Cybermind's cyberkinetic powers, Zephyr's ability to fly, or Firewing's energy bolts

- all physical Primary Characteristic above 15, PD and ED above 8, or SPD above 3. (An inmate's INT, EGO, PRE, and COM are generally not affected unless they represent some sort of superpower instead of an innate capability.) The power negators automatically reduce these Characteristics to those levels.

The power negators do not affect knowledge, Skills, or Skill Rolls, except (a) where those Skills represent powers or innate super-abilities rather than learned abilities, and (b) insofar as reducing a high Characteristic affects a person's Skill Rolls. They do, however,

affect Powers defined as “learned abilities,” such as a martial artist’s Find Weakness “skill” of hitting his targets with pinpoint accuracy.

### Power Negator Weak Spots

No system, technological or human, is perfect. Stronghold’s power negators, as powerful and well-maintained as they are, still have some flaws that inmates periodically try to exploit:

■ **Magic:** Magic by its very nature defies and warps reality. That means no device, no matter how well-designed, can always fully cope with the possibilities of the arcane. Stronghold frequently consults with mystic superheroes, such as Witchcraft, and has them place wards and guards on the prison to keep magically-powered supervillains under control, but even so about half of the escapes and escape attempts that have occurred during the life of the prison have involved magical power in one way or another.

■ **Overloading The System:** Even a device as powerful as a power negator can be overloaded, given the right circumstances. In short: depending on the needs of the story, it might be possible for one villain, or a group of villains acting in concert, to find a way to try to activate their powers that would eventually “short out” a negator. (See page 113 for more information.)

■ **Acclimatization:** Just like a drug addict can, over time, become used to (and even require) doses of a drug so powerful that they would have killed him if he’d taken them when he first started using that drug, it may be that some supervillains can “get used to” the effects of a power negator over long periods of time. Eventually their powers wouldn’t be affected by it, or would be affected at a lower level.

■ **Resistance:** There aren’t many villains out there with enough resistance to power negation effects (in game terms: Power Defense) to put a dent in how the Stronghold power negators affect them... but they do exist. If Stronghold believes an inmate has, or is developing, a higher than normal degree of resistance to the power negators, it may also require him to wear a Power Negator Collar (see page 33) or other restraints to make sure he doesn’t become dangerous.

### CAMERAS

In many cases, the best security is just to keep a close eye on inmates so they can’t start trouble (or so the guards can respond to the trouble they do start as quickly as possible). In Stronghold, every cell, every public area used by the prisoners in the underground levels, and most public areas in the aboveground level are monitored by cameras. Very little goes on in Stronghold that isn’t watched, directly or indirectly, by the guards.

### CELLS

The most secure areas in Stronghold tend to be the cells in which individual defendants are incarcerated. Each defendant has his own cell; there’s no double-bunking or sharing of cells. Cells provide security in several ways:

#### Walls And Doors

The back and side walls of Stronghold cells are made of the same super-tech metal-and-ceramic composite as the standard walls, but in an even stronger form. Each cell is surrounded by solid rock; cells do not share a common wall with each other.

Stronghold’s cell doors and cell front walls are made of a thick, clear super-tech plastic that’s as tough as the material used to make the walls. This allows the guards to see into the cells easily. Cell doors can only be opened from the Guard Tower, or by an individual guard using an authorized key-card. The guards in the Guard Tower can also polarize the front wall and door, rendering it opaque so the inmate inside cannot see out (but, conversely, the guards cannot see in).

In game terms, Stronghold cell walls have DEF 20, BODY 12. The door itself is DEF 12, BODY 6.

#### Standard Power Negation

Every cell in Stronghold has a standard power negator built into it. These devices are checked daily to ensure that they’re functioning properly.

#### Customized Power Negation

In addition to the built-in power negator, if appropriate a cell can be customized to specifically counteract or negate the powers of the inmate assigned to it. The tailored negation technology typically has its own short-term backup power supply, so it continues to function for up to one hour even if Stronghold suffers a general power failure that affects the standard power negation system. The accompanying text box describes some of the customization packages.

#### Cell Limitations

Stronghold isn’t always able to accommodate prisoners with unusual physiologies. Supervillains who are extra-dimensional beings, who require a full-time special environment (e.g., water-breathers and methane-breathers), who are made of pure energy, or the like may require special containment facilities dedicated entirely to them — particularly since it may not be possible to subject them to total power negation without killing them. In these situations the federal government either builds a special prison just for that being, or arranges for UNTIL to imprison them in the Guardhouse (see below), which does have a limited capacity to imprison “unusual” supervillains.

### STRONGHOLD CELL CONFIGURATIONS

Here are just a few of the possible configurations of Stronghold cells. For game purposes many of them are defined using the *Suppress Power*, but they may not literally stop various other Powers from working; instead they may simply make such powers useless for purposes of escaping from the cell. For example, the *Anti-Alteration Cell* doesn’t make it impossible for the cell’s occupant to use *Shrinking* — it just surrounds the entire cell with an interior force-field that a *Shrunken* character can’t find any holes in to walk through.

**Anti-Alteration Cell** (uses a force-field to counteract such powers as *Stretching*, *Shrinking*, and assuming gaseous form): *Suppress Body Alteration Powers 10d6*, all *Body Alteration Powers* simultaneously

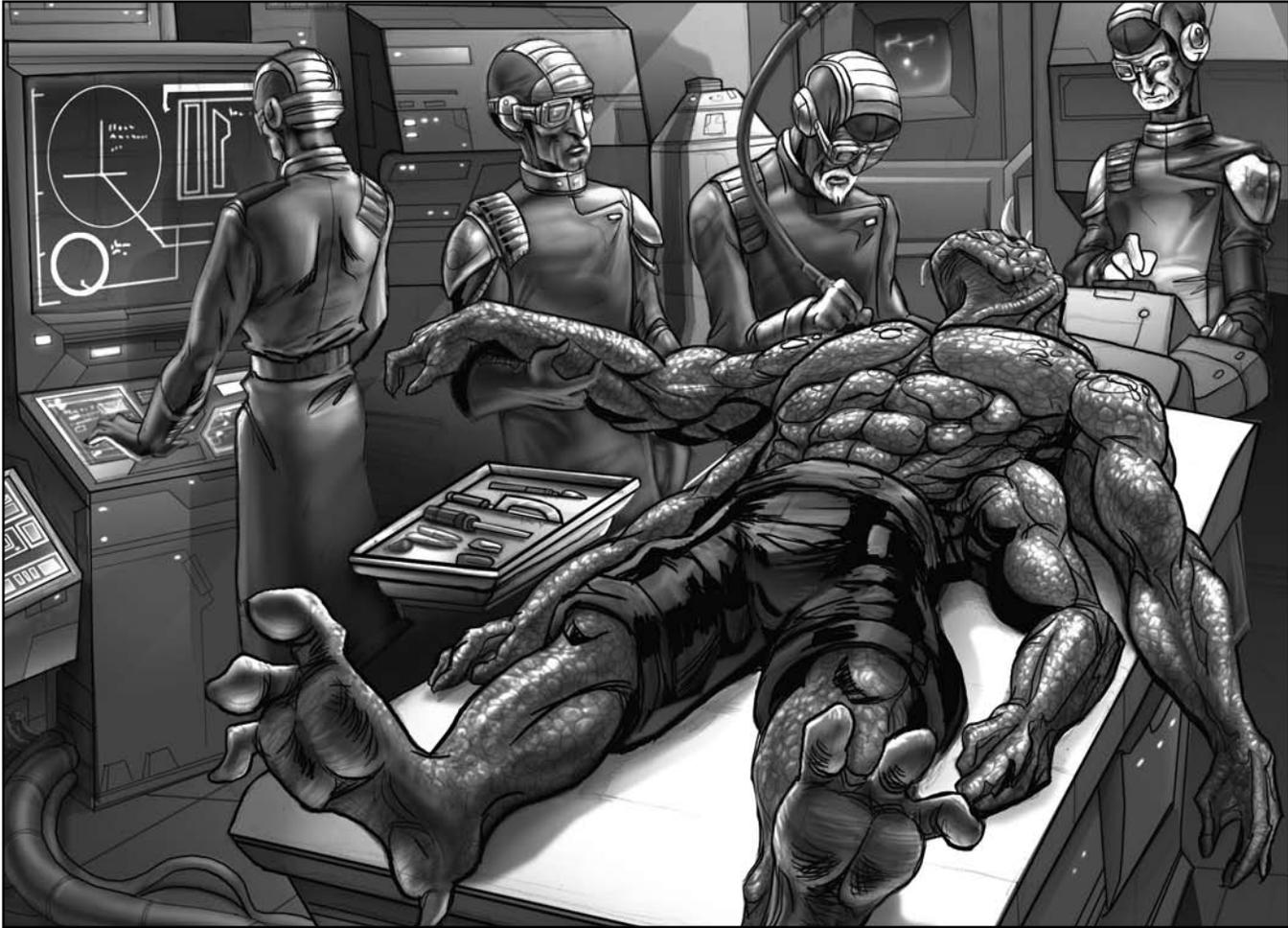
**Anti-Clinging Cell** (a.k.a. “Teflon cell”): *Suppress Clinging 8d6*

**Anti-Energy Cell:** Some cells are designed to be particularly resistant to a specific form of energy, such as *Fire/Heat*, *Electricity*, or *Ice/Cold*. This is bought as +10 DEF with an appropriate *Limitation*.

**Anti-Intangibility Cell:** Affects *Desolidified* (+½) for DEF 20

**Anti-Invisibility Cell:** *Suppress Invisibility 10d6*

**Anti-Psionic Cell:** *Mental Defense* (30 points)



Continued from last page

**Anti-Teleport Cell:** Cannot Be Escaped With Teleportation (x2; +½) for DEF 20

**Clairsentience-Blocking Cell:** Suppress Clairsentience 10d6

**Dimensionally-Anchored Cell:** Suppress Dimensional Manipulation Powers 12d6, all Dimensional Manipulation powers simultaneously

**Reinforced Cell:** +10 DEF

**Warded Cell:** Suppress Magic 12d6, all Magic powers/spells simultaneously

## OTHER SUPER-PRISONS

While Stronghold is the premier super-prison in the Champions Universe — the first one built, and the one that all other nations study when they decide to construct a super-prison of their own — it's not the only one. Some of the others include:

### UNTIL: THE GUARDHOUSE

A small island in the North Atlantic between Scotland and Iceland houses the International Superhuman Correctional Facility, better known as the Guardhouse — UNTIL's version of Stronghold. Opened (in a much smaller form than the current facility) in 1980, the ICSF was built along the same lines as its more famous sister prison, substituting hundreds of miles of open ocean for Stronghold's desolate desert. The facility has its own generators sunk into a sublevel beneath the island's bedrock; food, fresh water, and supplies are brought by ship every two weeks.

The Guardhouse has five major areas. The first is the Outer Wall, a large wall ringing the entire island to prevent rescue attempts by outsiders; it's well-lit and -monitored. The only entrance through the wall is the main dock where ships land. The second is the Inner Wall, which surrounds the prison buildings themselves; it's even better lit and watched, and protected by concertina wire, motion detectors, and other security devices.

The other three areas are all sections of the prison itself. The Men's Facility, the largest of the three, holds male supervillains and any genderless entity UNTIL captures. It's five stories tall, with a varying number of cells on each level because the cells themselves are configurable to handle superhumans of different sizes, powers, and needs. The Women's Facility is only three stories tall, but equally secure. Linking the two is the Administrative Building, where the warden, Major Katalin Szabo (Hungary), and her staff have their offices, living quarters, and the like. Warden Szabo is a stickler for precise security procedures; she realizes the slightest slip could unleash the inmates on an unsuspecting world, and she makes sure her guards realize it as well. The number of guards and other UNTIL personnel depends partly on the number of inmates, but usually there are at least 200 agents present, all heavily armored (and those outside the cell areas are heavily armed, too).

Any member of the United Nations can petition UNTIL to send a prisoner to the Guardhouse. The prison's Board of Directors votes on all requests, usually granting them unless it feels the prisoner is inappropriate for the potential inmate or due to overcrowding. Once a prisoner is approved, a squad of UNTIL agents picks him up and transports him to the facility.

### AUSTRALIA: HOUSE TAIPAN

The Australian super-assassin Taipan was tried and convicted in that country for dozens of brutal murders all over the world, including many of superheroes. When the court sentenced him to hot sleep confinement for the duration of his life, the Australian government decided it needed a special facility just to hold him due to the enormous danger he presented. To that end, with the help of consultants from Stronghold it constructed a special prison in the Outback a hundred miles from anything. It holds just one prisoner: Taipan.

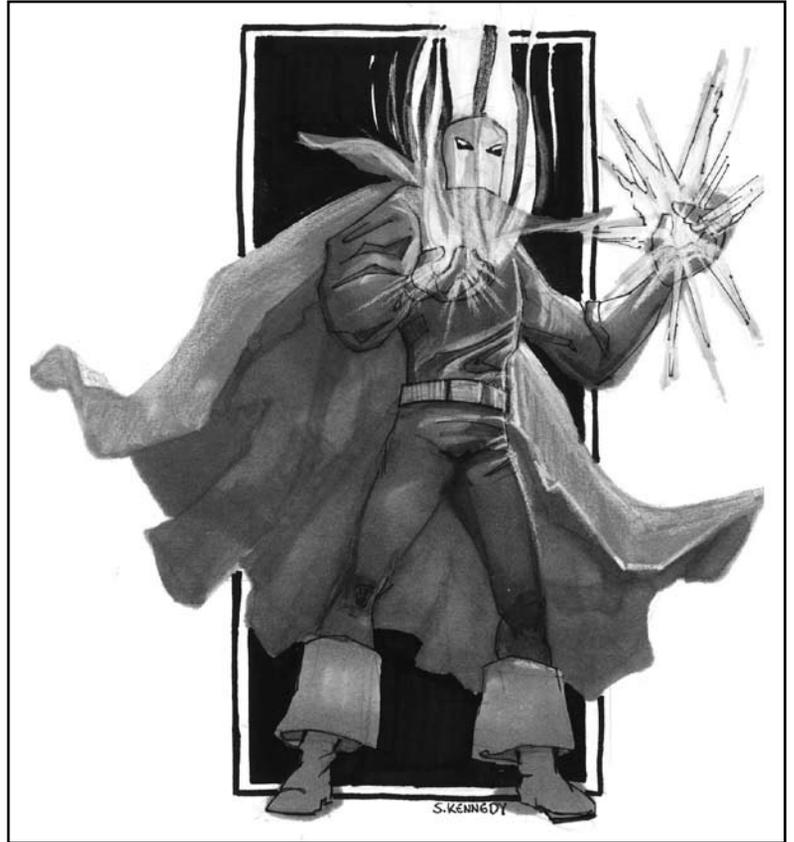
The facility itself is small and simple; after all, it doesn't need to be very large to hold one hot sleep coffin. The coffin itself is kept in a chamber four stories underground which can only be reached by a single staircase (much to the guards' chagrin). At each "story" there's a heavy door, similar to a bank vault door, that requires a guard's electronic card key and retina scan to open. Above "the Crypt" (as the guards call it) is a small building where a squad of five highly-paid guards with full UNTIL training and weaponry watch Taipan's hot sleep coffin via two different closed-circuit television systems, do their other work, and live.

A few Australians officials have suggested expanding "House Taipan" (as the press has dubbed the facility) to accommodate additional super-prisoners, both from Australia and from other nations (for a hefty fee). So far this suggestion has mostly fallen on deaf ears.

### CANADA: STRONGHOLD NORTH

The newest true superprison in the world was built by the Canadian government in 1999. Stronghold North (as it was christened with permission of the United States) is located in northern Ontario, not far from the Winisk River. This gives it the benefits of relative isolation but makes it a fairly quick trip by air from anywhere in eastern Canada.

Due to Canada's lesser supercrime problem, Stronghold North is significantly smaller than its southern cousin, though designed along similar lines and using much of the same technology. It consists of an aboveground facility where prison personnel work and live, and two underground levels. More dangerous prisoners are kept on the lower level, which also features two hot sleep coffins that have never been used (yet). Urban legends claim one of the coffins already has the name "Borealis" on it.



### CHINA: THE ZAMTANG DETENTION CENTER

China is home to the world's largest superhero team, and for good reason: it has a large, active population of supervillains. When the Tiger Squad captures a superpowered criminal, the malfasant is sent to the Zamtang Detention Center, located near the city of the same name in Sichuan province. Very little is known in the West about the ZDF. Experts presume the prison functions similarly to Stronghold in most respects. However, based on some information that's leaked out many scholars believe the prison administrators rely as much on medication to keep dangerous supervillains docile as on power negator technology or the like. These same experts suspect that ZDF officials essentially use the less dangerous supervillains as slave labor on various public works and for-profit projects. Among other clues, satellite photos of work on the Three Gorges Dam seem to indicate the presence of superhuman workers wearing what appear to be prison uniforms.

## EUROPE: THE PAN-EUROPEAN SUPERHUMAN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTE

As yet another move toward a united Europe (but in this case one decidedly *not* favored by Eurostar), the European Union established the Pan-European Superhuman Correctional Institute (PESHCI, typically pronounced “PESH-shee”) in 1997. New member (at that time) Sweden agreed to provide land for the facility as part of the price of its admission to the EU.

Located on the Gulf of Bothnia, on the coast of the Swedish province of Västerbotten, PESHCI differs from Stronghold in several respects. First, it’s an entirely aboveground facility. It consists of four concentric circles linked by enclosed corridors; some commentators have remarked that it looks something like the Pentagon, only circular and much smaller. The outermost ring contains living and working quarters for the prison’s guards and personnel, and serves as the last line of defense in the event of an escape. The inner two rings and the inner-

## LIFE INSIDE

I’VE NEVER SEEN LEVEL 10; I DON’T BELIEVE ANY INMATE HAS. THEY LIKE TO KEEP THAT LEVEL SECRET, AS IF THEY’RE SOMEHOW ASHAMED OF IT. INMATES ONLY GET TO GO DOWN THERE IF THEY’RE NOT COMING BACK UP.

THE INMATES TELL ALL SORTS OF STORIES ABOUT THE PLACE. SOME OF THEM STRIKE ME AS RIDICULOUS, LIKE THE ONE THAT THEY’VE GOT A TORTURE CHAMBER DOWN THERE WHERE THEY USE PAIN AND TELEPATHY TO FORCE PRISONERS TO DIVULGE USEFUL INFORMATION. OTHERS ARE HARDER TO DISMISS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE INMATES LIKE TO SPECULATE ABOUT HOW THEY EXECUTE SUPERVILLAINS. THE WARDEN CLAIMS IT’S LETHAL INJECTION, BUT A LOT OF INMATES BELIEVE IT’S A QUESTIONITE-BLADED GUILLOTINE. THAT WOULD CERTAINLY EXPLAIN WHY THEY NEVER LET ANYONE PHOTOGRAPH THE DEATH CHAMBER....

## REQUIEM

most circular building house the prisoners. The further in one goes, the more dangerous the prisoners and the tighter the security.

Second, PESHCI lacks any hot sleep facilities. The European Union considers hot sleep a violation of basic human rights, akin to the death penalty, and refuses to use it. This has caused some serious problems for the staff (who have to try to keep the likes of Durak imprisoned without it), and has arguably been the direct cause of two major escapes from the prison, but the EU remains adamant in its refusal to adopt hot sleep. It prefers to rely primarily on power negation technology similar to that used in Stronghold.

Third, as the designation “Correctional Institute” indicates, PESHCI places greater emphasis on rehabilitation than Stronghold. Stronghold’s unalloyed purpose is to lock supervillains away to protect society from them; rehabilitation programs are relatively minimal. PESHCI, on the other hand, works hard to try to reform its inmates. They have available to them a wide range of classes, counseling, and other services intended to help them help themselves become productive members of society. PESHCI’s administrators have worked hard to try to find legitimate jobs for superhumans, and have had a little success persuading European industry to take a chance on some former villains, but there’s only so much they can do given the extreme personalities of many super-criminals.

## RUSSIA: MESTO ZAKLYUCHENIYA

The Russian government imprisons captures supervillains in *Mesto Zaklyucheniya*, which literally means “Detention Facility.” The drabness of the name matches that of the place, and hints at Russia’s desire to call as little attention to it as possible. A former Soviet gulag located in Siberia, Mesto Zaklyucheniya is a harsh and unforgiving place where guards wearing simple but effective powered armor use drugs and powerful electric shock weapons to keep the inmates in line. Some power negation is supposedly used, but from all reports the staff generally relies on cruder, more brutal methods much of the time. The Russian government discourages inquiry about the place and refuses to let outsiders visit it.



# Life Behind Bars

# ...AND THROW AWAY THE KEY



**A**s former Warden Kennedy once observed, “Life in Stronghold is a lot like life in any other prison... just turned up to 13.” Like living in any other prison, day-to-day existence in Stronghold involves extreme isolation, deep humiliation, mind-numbing boredom, and dull routine, all spiced up with danger and the fear that surrounds it like an aura. And since the inmates are superpowered criminals reduced to the status of mere mortals, all these highs and lows often become intensified.

## WHO GOES TO STRONGHOLD?

Not everyone who’s labeled a “supervillain” is destined for a cell in Stronghold once he’s caught and convicted, for two reasons: first, Stronghold only has so much space (though it rarely runs at 100% capacity); second, and more importantly, not everyone who puts on a costume and commits crimes is eligible for the super-prison.

As mentioned on page 26, under the *Hsien* and *Utility* federal court cases, to convince a court that a supervillain should be imprisoned in Stronghold (as opposed to an ordinary prison), the state must prove both of the following:

1. By “clear and convincing evidence” that the felon’s powers and capabilities are such that only Stronghold is reasonably capable of containing him, or that ordinary prisons are not reasonably capable of doing so, *or* that he’s so skilled at escaping from normal prisons that it’s reasonably unlikely such a facility could ever imprison him for the length of his sentence.
2. By “clear and convincing evidence” that the felon represents a clear and present danger to society’s well-being and safety.

In practical terms, that has led to the following general guidelines. In most cases the answers to these questions are so obvious that defendants don’t even bother to litigate the issue; most legal disputes on the issue of “Stronghold eligibility” involve paranormals who claim that they’re not so skilled at escaping that ordinary prisons can, in fact, hold them.

1. If a prisoner has actual, innate superpowers, he’s eligible for incarceration in Stronghold. Examples of villains like this include Blackstar, Bulldozer, Firewing, Fleshtone, Grenadier, Grond, Holocaust, Ogre, Photon, Shadowdragon, Shrinker, Tachyon, Talisman, Teleios, and Thorn.

Of course, defining what constitutes an

“actual, innate superpower” is sometimes difficult. For example, does having high Characteristics count? That’s a judgment the court has to make based on all the evidence. Characteristics can sometimes be so high that they’re unquestionably superpowers (as with any “brick”). But just having a few Characteristics in the 20s (*i.e.*, above the typical human maximum of 20) doesn’t inherently make someone “superhuman.”

2. If a prisoner is a paranormal but does not seem to possess skills or training that would make it easy for him to escape from an ordinary prison, and he does not have a history of such escapes, he is not eligible for incarceration in Stronghold. Villains like this aren’t that common; examples include Foxbat and Green Dragon.

3. If a prisoner is a paranormal who seems to possess skills or training that would make it easy for him to escape from an ordinary prison, and/or he has a history of such escapes, he is eligible for incarceration in Stronghold. Examples of villains like this include Mechassassin, Scorpia, Utility, and Vixen.

4. If a prisoner is a paranormal whose powers derive entirely or primarily from gadgets, devices, or weapons (in game terms, Foci), such that removing such devices from him makes him a more or less ordinary prisoner, he is not eligible for incarceration in Stronghold. Examples of villains like this include Ankylosaur, Armadillo, Binder, Blowtorch, Devastator, Lady Blue, Lash, Lazer, Mantisman, Mirage, and Ultrasonique.

However, Category 4 includes two important exceptions. First, a villain who’s proven so adept at creating new gadgets or weapons from objects he can obtain in an ordinary prison actually belongs in Category 3. Wayland Talos is an example of such a villain. Second, if a villain’s gadgets or devices are necessary to keep him alive and cannot be safely removed from him or neutralized, he qualifies for Category 1 instead. For example, if the United States were to capture Dr. Destroyer, he would qualify for this exception because (a) it’s unlikely even a superheroic gadgeteer could figure out how to remove or neutralize his armor, and (b) the armor effectively serves as a life support system for a man who’s now 90 years old, and removing it would probably cause such a shock to his system that he’d soon die.

Pure eligibility alone doesn’t decide the issue, of course. A ruling on eligibility simply entitles the state to petition Stronghold to accept a prisoner. The final decision is in the sole discretion

of Warden Wildman and the prison's Board of Governors, which meets via satellite communications as necessary. In many cases, such as with most Category 1 prisoners, accepting the prisoner is obviously the best course of action and Warden Wildman exercises his discretion without even bothering to call the Board to a meeting. A state may appeal a denial from Stronghold to the Bureau of Prisons, but the Bureau rarely overrules the Board's decision.

## PRISONER INTAKE

Prisoners are not brought into the facility through the Transportation Hub, which is used for supplies, visitors, and the like. Instead, the Stronghold Superhuman Prisoner Transportation System delivers them directly to the Inner Court by transport vehicle (the SSPTS-3, see page 31). As the vehicle arrives, a rooftop hatch in the Intake/Processing Center at the top of Main Security opens. The vehicle lands and its passengers are led one at a time a specialized containment chamber known colloquially as "the Pit" by staff and prisoners alike. The Pit is one of the most well-protected and secure areas in the entire prison, with force-field enhanced walls (DEF 24) and Stronghold's

## LIFE INSIDE

MY MEMORIES OF BEING "PROCESSED INTO STRONGHOLD," AS THEY PUT IT, ARE NO MORE PLEASANT THAN THOSE OF MY TRIAL OR JOURNEY TO THIS GODFORSAKEN PLACE. I SPENT MUCH OF THE TIME IN SHACKLES, WITH A SPECIAL RESTRAINT OVER MY MOUTH TO PREVENT ANY ACCIDENTAL OR OPPORTUNISTIC USE OF MY POWERS - AS IF I HAD ANY CHANCE OF GETTING OUTSIDE OF THEIR POWER NEGATION BLANKET. THEY ONLY TOOK THE HIGH-TECH GAG OFF WHEN THEY NEEDED ME TO ANSWER QUESTIONS OR TEST SOME OF MY POWERS.

AFTER THE PETTY NONSENSE OF PAPERWORK AND IDENTITY CONFIRMATION, THEY PUT ME UNDER A HIGH-TECH MICROSCOPE AND HAD A LOOK. BY THE TIME THEY WERE DONE MONITORING AND TESTING ME, THEY SUPPOSEDLY KNEW MORE ABOUT MY POWERS THAN I DID MYSELF - AS IF THAT WERE POSSIBLE. AT ONE POINT THEY EVEN SELECTIVELY TURNED OFF THE POWER NEGATION SO I COULD DEMONSTRATE SOME OF MY ABILITIES. I WATCHED CAREFULLY FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO ESCAPE, BUT THEY WATCHED ME EVEN MORE CLOSELY. IN THE END I WAS JUST A SUPERHUMAN GUINEA PIG RUNNING ON THEIR SUPER-TECH WHEEL. ONE DAY THEY WILL PAY FOR THAT INDIGNITY, AS FOR SO MANY OTHERS.

## — REQUIEM

standard power negation devices.

The actual intake procedure is a detailed affair involving five distinct teams of specialists (Monitoring, Science, Fabrication, Destination, and Orientation) and can take hours. If enough personnel aren't available when a prisoner arrives, or if a prisoner requires particularly careful handling, other prisoners may have to remain on the transport, locked into their seats, until Stronghold can process them. The prison administration assigns a team of intake personnel to each inmate based on qualifications and job experience (*i.e.*, similar cases they've handled in the past), and appoints one member of the team as leader. Typically one team member, known as the "kibitzer," is assigned to a team specifically because of his *lack* of knowledge of and experience with that type of prisoner. Not only does this train personnel, history shows that the kibitzer often catches mistakes from the others because he has fewer pre-conceptions about the prisoner.

After the initial intake — signing the prisoner over, confirmation of his identity, receipt of his personal property, and so on — a prisoner is placed in the Monitoring Chamber next to the Pit so the Monitoring team can analyze him. The Monitoring team uses the Chamber, which contains some of the most sophisticated sensor systems in the world, to catalog and analyze the prisoner's superhuman powers. It compares its readouts to existing case files, readouts, and even video footage of the prisoner to ensure that Stronghold knows as much as possible about what the prisoner can do. If a prisoner's been thoroughly studied in the past this may only take a few minutes; if he hasn't been studied much (or at all), it may require hours.

During and after this procedure, the Science team does its work. Before the prisoner is taken to his cell, the Science team uses existing data and data obtained by the Monitoring team to devise any special power negation systems or devices necessary to keep the prisoner safely powerless. The team has access to three small but advanced labs in the Main Security area: one for chemistry; one for energy physics; and one "multi-lab" useful for a variety of scientific procedures. Once it's satisfied with its work, the Science team passes its plans to the Fabrication team, which uses them to build any required devices. Sometimes its small (but technologically advanced) machine shop in the Main Security area can't make everything it needs, but 95% of the time it can handle the job without having to go to outside suppliers or contractors.

After the first three teams have finished their work and any new security devices have been installed in the cell the prisoner will occupy, the Destination team takes over. It consists of two or more guards assigned to the cell-block the prisoner will live in. They take him to his cell, a trip the prisoners call "the Long Walk." If all goes as planned for a prisoner's sentence, the beginning of the Long Walk is the last time

## ELIGIBILITY FOR HOT SLEEP

Included in Category 1 is a list of villains the federal government deems eligible for hot sleep when they're captured (though many never have been). The issue would have to be decided by a court, but the government feels (and correctly so) that convincing the courts to authorize hot sleep wouldn't be difficult. The list includes:

Dark Seraph  
Dr. Destroyer  
Firewing  
Gargantua  
Gravitar  
Grond  
Holocaust  
Kanrok the Acquisitioner  
Mechanon  
Menton  
Momentum  
The Monster  
Ripper  
The Slug  
Valak the World-Ravager  
Vector

he'll be above ground until he's served his time.

After a prisoner's been placed in his cell and had a few minutes to make his bunk and arrange his personal items, the final intake team, Orientation, visits him there. Two Orientation personnel (one of whom may be, in the case of particularly important prisoners, Warden Wildman or Assistant Warden Rothschild) explain prison procedures to him and answer any questions he has about life in Stronghold. Until a prisoner completes Orientation he's not allowed to leave his cell (even for meals).

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## PRISONER CLASSIFICATION

To help manage prisoners properly and ensure the safety of the guards, Stronghold uses a two-axis classification system for sorting prisoners. One axis measures Escape Risk; the other measures Danger (or, to put it another way, hostility and the likelihood the inmate will attack guards or other inmates).

### ESCAPE RISK

A prisoner's Escape Risk category depends on several factors: intelligence; skills and general aptitude; history of escape attempts; and the inmate's superhuman abilities, among other things. Compared to Danger, it's a much more subjective judgment, and in many cases more likely to be revised up or down over the course of an inmate's stay in Stronghold. However, since it looks at an inmate's superhuman powers in the absence of power negation, it's often fairly easy to predict.

#### Level One: Nominal Risk

Level One prisoners have a relatively low probability of escaping a standard Stronghold cell. Most Level One inmates are relatively low-powered paranormals, or have superpowers that aren't likely to help them escape; sometimes this category also applies to inmates who have such powers but lack any motivation to use them or have absolutely no history of escape attempts. Any inmate in this category is placed in a standard cell, with no customized power negation features or extra security precautions.

#### Level Two: Minimal Risk

These prisoners can escape one of Stronghold's standard cells given sufficient opportunity. Most of them possess superpowers that aren't directly useful for escaping, but which might make an escape easier (for example, Telekinesis). They aren't likely to merit customized power negation systems, but might depending on the nature and extent of their powers and their proclivity for escaping.

#### Level Three: Moderate Risk

Level Three is the standard Escape Risk category for Stronghold prisoners. It indicates that he has powers or abilities that would tend to make it easy for him to escape a standard

Stronghold cell, or an otherwise lower-category inmate whose history of repeated escape attempts means he requires close supervision. The use of customized power negation systems in a Level Three inmate's cell is more likely than not, and Level Three prisoners are monitored more closely than normal by the guards.

#### Level Four: Significant Risk

Level Four prisoners constitute a constant risk of escape even from the fortified cells of Stronghold, either because they possess superpowers that make escape easy or more likely (such as Desolidification, Invisibility, Mind Control, or Teleportation), or because they have a history of successful or semi-successful escapes. Level Four inmates always have customized power negation technology in their cells.

#### Level Five: Extreme Risk

Level Five prisoners are considered "certain to escape" if escape is not prevented, usually because they possess massive superhuman power. Except in the rarest of cases they are sentenced to hot sleep regardless of their Danger rating.

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### DANGER

An inmate's Danger rating indicates the potential for violent action on his part. Case histories play a major role in determining an inmate's Danger rating, but there are also batteries of tests trained staff psychologists perform to assist in classification. While an inmate's Danger level helps Stronghold to determine the extent of privileges he receives and the way the guards generally treat him, every Stronghold employee is constantly reminded that *any* Stronghold inmate is capable of killing. Desperation drives normal humans to commit heinous acts, and the potential for superhumans to do so (or to, by accident, cause a tragedy) tends to be even greater. Smart guards treat every prisoner as if he were an Orange, regardless of his actual classification.

The Danger categories were revised after the Great Stronghold Breakout and again in 2002 when the original system (which used Roman numerals) became too cumbersome after numerous additions and modifications. The present system has worked well without changes for five years, but some staffers complain that it doesn't provide enough information (which, ironically, is why the previous system was scrapped — it had become *so* detailed that it was difficult to learn and use).

#### Blue: Low Threat

Prisoners categorized as Blue level of Danger constitute a minimal threat to others. They have no history of violence and no known inclination toward violence. Stronghold has few inmates who belong to this category. In game terms, any villain with a standard Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Killing probably falls into this category (or if not, into Green).

Blue inmates enjoy all the privileges Stronghold's willing to extend to inmates. They can eat with the other inmates, visit their quad freely

during recreation time, and attend classes and events without special permission. To the extent any Stronghold guard trusts any inmate, Blues are the most likely inmates to be trusted.

#### **Green: Medium Threat: Non-Fatal**

Inmates categorized as Green level of threat are capable of using violence if necessary, but usually try to avoid it and are unwilling or unable to kill their victims. Many greed-driven supervillains and super-thieves who resort to violence only to escape capture are classified as Green.

Green inmates enjoy the same privileges as Blues, with one exception: they must request special permission from Warden Wildman to attend classes or special events. Whether they receive permission generally depends on their recent behavior.

#### **Yellow: Medium Threat: Violent**

Yellow-level inmates pose at least a moderate risk of violence to others, and often a serious risk. They've demonstrated a willingness to use violent means to achieve their ends, but are not deliberately homicidal or unnecessarily brutal. Yellows are "roughhousers" guilty of manslaughter (fatalities as the unintended result of their actions) or numerous acts of assault and battery.

Yellow inmates have the same privileges as Greens, *provided* they maintain a clean record in Stronghold. If they're ever caught hurting a Guard or another inmate, committing a crime, or the like, all special privileges are revoked. At that point they're only allowed to mingle with other inmates while eating; they must remain in their cells during recreation time, are escorted to the showers by a guard, and cannot attend classes or special events. They can regain their standard level of privileges by maintaining a clean record for six months.

#### **Orange: High Threat**

Orange inmates, also referred to as "Homicidals," have shown a marked tendency toward using violence and/or a disregard for human life, but not necessarily a callous disregard or an inclination to engage in wholesale slaughter. Most of them have at least one first degree murder charge in their records. This category includes many "principled" assassins and mercenary villains.

Orange inmates enjoy few privileges. They are individually escorted to the dining hall for meals and seated with other Oranges so the guards can keep an especially close eye on them; in some cases they're forced to eat in their cells. Unless they've had a clean record for at least six months, they cannot leave their cells during recreation time and are escorted to the showers daily by at least two guards. They cannot attend classes or special events (though in *rare* cases Warden Wildman may grant an exception to this rule).

#### **Red: Intense Threat**

Inmates rated at a Red level of Danger have shown a tendency to use violence (often just "for fun," without any real need for it) and a callous disregard for human life. Most of them actively seek to kill on a regular basis, or have demon-

strated a willingness to slaughter many people at once. Almost all inmates classified as Red automatically qualify for hot sleep; if not, Warden Wildman can impose hot sleep (subject to court review) if the inmate attacks any Stronghold personnel or otherwise puts prison workers at risk.

Red inmates have almost no privileges. If not in hot sleep, they are rarely allowed out of their cells and cannot mingle with other inmates. Guards bring their meals to their cells, and they are individually escorted to the showers once per day by at least two guards. They may not attend classes or special events.

### **USING THE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM**

Stronghold designates each inmate with a designation that lists his Danger level first, Escape Risk level second. For example, Cheshire Cat would be a Green-4, Bulldozer a Yellow-3, and Blackstar an Orange-4. Prison staff incorporate this designation into a prisoner's Inmate Code (see below).

Any inmate rated as Level 5 Escape Risk is placed in hot sleep (subject to court review if that's not a sentence already handed down by a court). Most inmates rated as Red Danger are also placed in hot sleep. The Warden may also invoke hot sleep for any inmate rated as Orange-4.

## **Uniforms And Inmate Codes**

Stronghold's inmates wear uniforms that help the guards monitor and control them. They are not allowed to wear their own clothing.

The basic Stronghold uniform is a one-piece jumpsuit colored to match the inmate's Danger designation: blue, green, yellow, orange, or red. On the back of the jumpsuit in large letters is the inmate's real name (if known, "Doe, John" [or Jane] if not) and supervillain name. No one associated with Stronghold particularly likes including the villain name, since it reminds the inmate of his life and powers outside the prison, but it's the quickest, easiest way to identify many inmates and let the guards know what powers they possess. On the blue and green jumpsuits the lettering is white; on the others it's black.

On the left breast of the jumpsuit is printed the inmate's name and villain name again, and beneath that his *Inmate Code* — a string of letters and numbers that tells the guards all about him. The code includes, in order, the following information: Danger rating; Escape Risk rating; prison level, wing, and cell; and five-digit personal identification number. For example, if Cheshire Cat (a Green-4) is in Stronghold on Level Gamma, he would wear a green jumpsuit, and his Inmate Code would be: Green/4-Gamma/C/8-57631.

Additionally, sewn into the collar of each uniform is an electronic tracking device. The guards can quickly key up any inmate on their computer systems and see where he (or, more accurately, his tracking device) is, which doors he's recently passed through, other inmates he's been near, and so forth. The inmates loath the trackers, which

# THE DAILY GRIND



## LIFE INSIDE

IT'S THE SAME DAMN THING, DAY AFTER DAY AFTER DAY.

WAKE UP, GET DRESSED IN THAT IDIOTIC JUMPSUIT

THEY MAKE ME WEAR. GO TO BREAKFAST. COME BACK AND SPEND THE MORNING IN THE QUAD PLAYING CHESS OR WATCHING TV - OR, FOR A RADICAL CHANGE OF PACE, STAY IN MY CELL AND READ OR WRITE. GO TO LUNCH. COME BACK AND SPEND THE AFTERNOON JUST LIKE THE MORNING. GO TO DINNER. COME BACK AND SPEND THE EVENING JUST LIKE THE MORNING, MAYBE WITH A DECENT MOVIE IF I'M LUCKY. THE ONLY THING THAT CHANGES IS WHICH GUARD'S "ESCORTING" ME WHERE.

THERE ARE SOME DAYS WHEN I COULD ALMOST PRAY FOR A RIOT, JUST TO BREAK THE MONOTONY.

## REQUIEM

they refer to as "dog tags."

**L**ife in Stronghold is a life of schedules and routine. To keep things functioning as efficiently and safely as possible, Warden Wildman and his staff maintain a strict schedule that governs what inmates can do and where they are every minute of the day.

### GUARD THIRD SHIFT BEGINS

Stronghold's day technically begins at 1:00 AM, when the third shift of guards comes on duty, taking over from the second shift. Most guards detest working the third shift, since it's boring and throws off their sleep patterns, but some love it because it's the quietest, safest shift.

### LIGHTS ON

For the inmates, Stronghold's day begins at 6:00 AM when the lights are turned on. While the guards take the daily headcount, the inmates have an hour to get dressed and get ready for the day. Inmates who don't need that much time can sleep in if they want, though the lights and noise may make that difficult.

### SICK CALL

If any inmate is sick, he's supposed to be standing at the door to his cell at 6:30 AM. A guard asks him what the problem is, and if necessary escorts him to

the Medical Facility for an examination (depending on a prisoner's Danger or Escape Risk rating, more than one guard may be assigned to escort him). Guards usually err on the side of letting a prisoner go see the doctors; they don't want to be sued if an inmate really is sick and they turn down his request.



### BREAKFAST

At 7:00 AM sharp prisoners are released from their cells to go to the dining hall for breakfast. One wing at a time the guards extend all the walkways, open the cell doors, and escort the prisoners to the dining hall. Since this takes time, no prisoner gets the full time to eat, and some get as little as 30 minutes. The guards rotate which wings get let out first to ensure equal treatment.

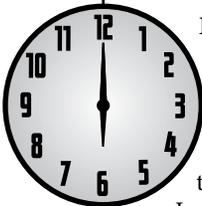
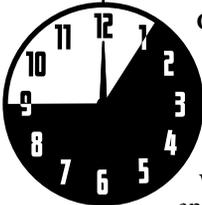
During breakfast, inmates are segregated by Danger rating and guards keep a watchful eye on them. Since this is one of the few opportunities during the day for all the inmates to be in the same place at once, the chances for violence, passing contraband, and the like go up dramatically. Breakfast is over promptly at 8:30.

### MORNING RECREATION TIME



After breakfast, prisoners are returned to their wings in the same order they were released. Morning recreation time now begins, and prisoners have two options. First, a prisoner can choose to return to his cell. If he does so, he is not allowed to leave the cell until lunchtime, unless given special permission. Second, he can choose to remain outside his cell and spend time in his wing's quad. This allows him to take a shower, play cards with other inmates, attend classes, watch television, buy things from the pushcart (see page 71), and so on. (Stronghold does not have any sort of "work program" for inmates; that would be logistically difficult and very dangerous.) Generally speaking, an inmate in a quad can choose to return to his cell for the rest of the morning, but once he does so isn't allowed to leave it again until lunch.

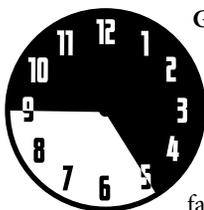
Of course, the guards can make common-sense exceptions to these rules. For example, most prisoners shower during morning recreation time, and they're allowed to return to their cells, undress for a shower, put on their robes, go take a shower, return to their cells, get dressed, and then go to the quad for the rest of the morning. This creates a



lot of traffic and can make a wing difficult to monitor, so if necessary the guards may restrict who can shower when, grouping prisoners into “shower shifts” for an hour or so.

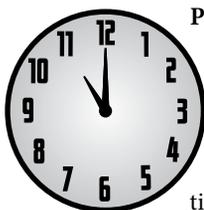
Morning recreation time is when most intra-prison basketball tournament games and other uses of the facilities on Level One are scheduled. The guards have to carefully monitor the comings and goings of the prisoners and their interaction to prevent incidents, but the prison administration believes these sorts of activities provide a healthy outlet for inmates and actually reduce the overall number of incidents.

Morning recreation time also includes visitors’ hours on Wednesdays and Fridays. On those rare occasions when an inmate has a visitor, he gets permission to meet his loved one in the Visitation Center and is escorted there by a guard. Visits are usually restricted to half an hour.



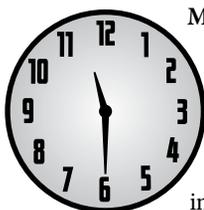
**GUARD FIRST SHIFT BEGINS**

At 9:00 the first shift guards come on and replace the third-shifters. They get an update on what’s happened so far that morning, who’s on sick call, any problems that have arisen, trouble that seems to be brewing, and so forth. Despite the guards’ general efficiency, any shift change is something of a “weak spot” in the schedule, and inmates participating in the prison’s black market or planning to cause trouble often try to take advantage of it.



**PRISONER DELIVERIES**

For security reasons Stronghold tries to restrict when new prisoner are brought to the prison. Due to flight times and other logistical concerns it can’t always dictate when a new prisoner will arrive, but if possible it arranges things so that any new prisoners arrive at one of two specific times of day. The first of these is 11:00 AM.



**MID-DAY HEADCOUNT**

At 11:30 AM all prisoners must return to their cells for the mid-day headcount. The guards make sure that everyone is where he should be, that inmates who went to the Medical Facility have been returned (unless they require hospitalization), and so on.



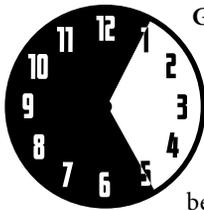
**LUNCHTIME**

Stronghold’s mid-day meal is served at noon. The procedure is the same as for breakfast.



**AFTERNOON RECREATION TIME**

After lunch, the inmates get another four hours of recreation time. Since they’re not allowed to have jobs in the prison, finding ways to fill all this “free time” every day becomes a major preoccupation — and the potential for violence brought on by boredom and frustration becomes a concern for the guards.

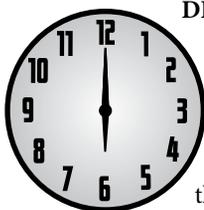


**GUARD SECOND SHIFT BEGINS**

The second guard shift comes on duty at 5:00 PM. Just like at 9:00 AM, the current shift briefs the newcomers before getting off work.

**5:30 PM: DINNER TIME HEADCOUNT**

At 5:30 PM all prisoners must once again return to their cells for a headcount.



**DINNER**

The inmates eat their evening meal from 6:00 to 7:30 PM. This is usually the most substantial meal of the day, and the one the cooks devote the most effort to. Breakfast is pretty much the exact same choices every day, and lunch is usually lighter fare like sandwiches, soups, and salads, but the kitchen staff has a large enough cookbook that predicting the three dinner entree choices is something of a game for the inmates. Usually there’s one chicken or turkey dish, one other meat (typically pork or beef), and one seafood selection, plus enough sides and salads to satisfy any vegetarians or dieters. A dessert choice plus ice cream and cookies awaits prisoners with a sweet tooth.

On holidays and special occasions the cooks prepare dinners to match the occasion (such as turkey and stuffing on Thanksgiving). The kitchen can also cope with the dietary restrictions of Muslim prisoners or inmates with medical conditions that affect their diet (though Stronghold has few of the former).



**EVENING RECREATION TIME**

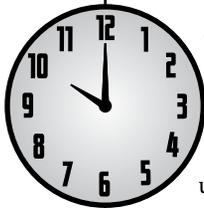
The Stronghold day winds down with another two and a half hours of free time for the prisoners. Nearly all prisoners choose to go to the quads at this time, particularly on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays when the guards show a movie on the quad TVs from a central DVD player in the guard tower. Saturdays is usually a double feature with a theme, such as “James Bond Movies” or “movies starring Tom Hanks.” Warden Wildman’s staff has to approve the movie choices in advance; nothing worse than a mild R-rated movie is allowed. Simi-



larly, if there's a special event — such as a musician coming to Stronghold to put on a concert — it's usually scheduled during evening recreation time.

#### **8:00 PM: PRISONER DELIVERIES**

This is the second standard time for prisoner deliveries.



#### **EVENING WIND-DOWN**

At this time prisoners are supposed to finish up their evening activities and start getting ready for lights out. Inmates who haven't showered earlier in the day usually do so now.

#### **10:30 PM: EVENING HEADCOUNT**

By 10:30 PM all prisoners are to be in their cells for the final headcount of the day.



#### **LIGHTS OUT**

At 11:00 PM on the dot the guards kill the main lights and the inmates go to sleep. There's still enough soft lighting for the guards to see in the cellblocks, but the cells themselves are plenty dark.

# INMATE RELATIONS



**B**eing confined to Stronghold doesn't mean a villain becomes totally isolated from the rest of humanity. He still has plenty of people to interact with — but they're all just like him, incarcerated villains stripped of their superpowers. The result is that an unusual “community” develops, one similar to but unlike those at other high-security prisons.

## GETTING ALONG INSIDE

Adapting to a term in Stronghold means more than just learning the routine and making one's cell as comfortable as possible. A prisoner also has to learn who's who in the inmate community, who are the alpha males and who the cringing followers, who he can push around and who he does *not* want to mess with. As Craig “Mechassassin” Vandersnoot once observed, “It's sort of like being a supervillain on the outside... but most of the wolves have had their fangs pulled.”

## LIFE INSIDE

THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE WORTH HATING IN HERE. TOP OF THE LIST HAS GOT TO BE KRAIT, WHO'S AN ARROGANT BASTARD TO BEAT ALL ARROGANT BASTARDS. THE SMUG IDIOT THINKS HE KNOWS EVERYTHING, CAN GET ANYONE ANYTHING, THAT HE'S BETTER THAN ANYONE. IF WE HAD OUR POWERS BACK HE WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST ME.

## — REQUIEM

## Housing Policy

Stronghold applies the following general rules when determining which cellblock and cell to assign an inmate to:

1. General cellblock and cell assignments will be made on the basis of assessed Escape Risk and Danger threat levels (see pages 64-65).
2. Male inmates and female inmates will be housed in separate cellblocks so that they do not share a quad.
3. If at all possible, supervillains who are on the same team together, belong to the same criminal organization, or are known to work together frequently will not be housed so that they share the same quad during recreation times.

4. If two inmates have a physical altercation or otherwise seem to be causing trouble by being together, one of them will be transferred to a new cell so that they no longer share a quad.

Despite these rules, Stronghold prefers not to move prisoners around from cell to cell any more than it has to. Changing an inmate's cell means altering his Inmate Code and issuing him a new set of uniforms.

## Prison Rules

Not surprisingly, Stronghold's inmates are subject to an extensive list of rules that restrict their conduct in many ways. Some of the more significant ones include:

1. **Obedience And Respect:** Inmates are to obey all orders given by a guard or prison official as quickly as possible without any questions, back-talk, or resistance. They are to respect the authority of the guards at all times.
  - a. If a guard or prison official refuses an inmate permission for something, the inmate is to accept the refusal without arguments or discussions, though he may politely ask the reason for the denial.
2. **No Fighting:** Inmates are not to engage in confrontations — physical, verbal, or otherwise — with other inmates. If a dispute arises, they must ask a guard to settle it, and must abide by the guard's decision. If necessary, prison administrators will get involved in the situation, but that usually means *everyone* involved will receive some sort of disciplinary action.
3. **No Fraternalization:** Inmates are not allowed to engage in sexual relations with one another, or with prison personnel.
4. **Personal Property:** Inmates are allowed to keep a small amount of specific types of personal property in their cells (see below). Possessing or obtaining other types of property, or engaging in any sort of commercial transaction, is forbidden.
5. **No Weapons:** Inmates may not possess weapons of any sort. Matches or other means of starting a fire are considered a “weapon.”

## PUNISHMENT FOR INFRACTIONS

Stronghold's guards and administrators have plenty of ways to enforce the prison's rules with disciplinary measures. These include, in approximate order of severity:

- confiscation of contraband items
- denial of permission to attend special events

## CURRENT INMATES

Here's a *partial* list of Stronghold inmates in the Champions Universe as of January, 2008. (Naturally, individual GMs should modify this to suit their specific campaigns.)

| <b>Inmate</b>                      | <b>Rating</b> | <b>Notes</b>  |                     |          |   |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---|---------------------|----------|---|
| Alchemica                          | Yellow-4      | See page 96   | McCall, Red Jack    | Red-2    | Scottish serial killer with shapeshifting powers          |
| Amnesia                            | Orange-3      | A member of Cirque Sinister                           | Megavolt            | Yellow-4 |   |
| Aquiline                           | Yellow-2      | Has powers of bird control                            | Mechassassin        | Orange-3 | Now has a Public Identity                                 |
| Arc                                | Yellow-3      | Limited-range electrical powers; follower of Neutron  | Menagerie           | Yellow-2 |   |
| Arrowhead                          | Orange-3      | Archer with superhuman hand-eye coordination and aim  | Menton              | Red-5    | In hot sleep  |
| Berserk                            | Red-2         | Brutal super-strong villain                           | Minimax             | Red-5    | A member of Cirque Sinister; in hot sleep                 |
| Black Dog                          | Red-2         | Mystic brick with some bestial powers                 | Neanderthal         | Yellow-2 | The so-called "Living Caveman," a low-powered brick       |
| Black Paladin                      | Orange-3      |   | Neutron             | Orange-4 | Magnetic and electrical powers; aged and weak             |
| Bloodstone                         | Red-3         | One of the Crowns of Krim                             | Overdrive           | Yellow-4 |   |
| Boomslang                          | Yellow-3      | A member of King Cobra's "Inner Circle"               | Psimon              | Orange-5 | Now has a Public Identity                                 |
| Broadcast                          | Green-3       | Cyberkinetic/mentalist with "television powers"       | Pulsar              | Yellow-2 | Now has a Public Identity                                 |
| Brute                              | Orange-3      | A member of VIPER's Dragon Branch                     | Redblade            | Orange-2 | A DEMON Morbane   |
| Brain Drain                        | Yellow-3      | Low-powered mentalist specializing in Mind Control    | Redclaw             | Yellow-4 | Animal powers, including some animal control              |
| Buzzard, the Cauldron              | Green-3       | Low-powered villain who can fly                       | Requiem             | Yellow-3 | Leader of Deathstroke, brother of Frost; see page 94      |
| Cheshire Cat                       | Orange-4      | A member of Cirque Sinister                           | Riptide             | Green-3  |   |
| Covington, Rodney                  | Green-4       | A member of GRAB                                      | R Kayne             | Yellow-4 | "Street sorcerer" with minor mystic powers and spells     |
| Crossfire                          | Red-4         | Brother of Sentinels member Proteus                   | Rot                 | Red-3    | Biokinetic who can corrupt and wither flesh               |
| Cybermind                          | Yellow-4      | Energy projector                                      | Scarlet Scarab, the | Orange-2 | Would-be master villain with mystic Egyptian powers       |
| Darkmoon                           | Yellow-3      | In a seemingly permanent coma in the Medical Facility | Slick               | Green-3  | A member of the Ultimates                                 |
| Darkmoon                           | Orange-4      | A DEMON Morbane with minor darkness powers            | Slither             | Orange-3 | A member of King Cobra's "Inner Circle"                   |
| Draconis                           | Orange-4      | A member of VIPER's Dragon Branch                     | Spartan             | Orange-3 | Weaponmaster with specialized weapons; martial artist     |
| Dragonfly                          | Yellow-2      | See page 98   | Stiletto            | Yellow-4 | Weaponmaster and martial artist                           |
| Eclipse                            | Red-5         | In hot sleep  | Stormfront          | Yellow-3 | Now has a Public Identity                                 |
| Esper                              | Yellow-4      |   | Thorn               | Orange-3 |   |
| Firedrake                          | Green-2       | A member of King Cobra's "Inner Circle"               | Thunderstrike       | Yellow-3 | Lightning and weather control powers; rival of Stormfront |
| Flow                               | Yellow-3      | A member of Cirque Sinister                           | Tombstone           | Red-2    | Villain with necromantic powers                           |
| Fossil                             | Orange-2      | A biokinetic with bone powers                         | Tornado             | Orange-4 | A member of VIPER's Dragon Branch                         |
| Freakshow                          | Red-3         |   | Valak the           |          |   |
| Frost                              | Yellow-3      | A member of Deathstroke; brother of Requiem; page 95  | World-Ravager       | Red-5    | In hot sleep  |
| Galeforce                          | Orange-2      | Air/wind-controlling supervillainess                  | Verity              | Green-4  | A member of VIPER's Dragon Branch                         |
| Geothermal                         | Orange-5      | In hot sleep; see page 100                            | Venomous            | Yellow-3 | A VIPER Nest Leader with minor "venom touch" powers       |
| Glacier                            | Red-5         | In hot sleep; see page 103                            | Whitefire           | Yellow-4 | A member of VIPER's Dragon Branch                         |
| Gorgon                             | Yellow-3      | A member of King Cobra's "Inner Circle"               | Wildeye             | Orange-3 | Claws, enhanced senses and reflexes, vicious temper       |
| Hand of Satan, the Human Bomb, the | Orange-3      | A DEMON Morbane                                       | Windfist            | Yellow-4 | Martial artist with super-fast reflexes                   |
| Interface                          | Yellow-5      | Mercenary villain who creates energy explosions       | Xtreme              | Green-4  | Athlete/martial artist, adept at escapes                  |
| Krait                              | Orange-5      | In hot sleep  |                     |          |   |
|                                    | Yellow-3      | A member of King Cobra's "Inner Circle"               |                     |          |   |

- denial of permission to visit the quad during recreation time except to shower (inmate is confined to his cell during these times, but is still let out for meals)
- confinement to one's cell, except to shower
- confinement to one's cell (except to shower) and temporary confiscation of items not essential to personal hygiene (*e.g.*, books, writing materials, posters)
- placing the inmate in hot sleep for a period of up to one month. Only Warden Wildman can make the decision to impose this punishment, which is subject to immediate review by a court. He uses it only when no other form of discipline can correct a problem, and so far has had his decision upheld by the courts every single time.

Additionally, there are occasionally incidents where guards punish a difficult inmate with a quick and dirty beating (after somehow disabling the cameras, of course). When the prison administrators find out about this they thoroughly investigate what happened, and usually several guards get fired. But since most inmates don't want to look "weak" by running to another guard and snitching, word of this sort of thing rarely reaches administrators' ears.

## Personal Property

The rule most commonly violated by many inmates concerns the types of personal property an inmate can possess while in Stronghold. Typically inmates store their personal possessions in clear plastic drawers underneath their bunks.

### APPROVED ITEMS

Inmates are allowed to own the following:

1. Clothing issued to them by the prison. This includes seven jumpsuits (one per day), seven sets of undergarments, two bath towels, one washcloth, two pairs of soft-soled laceless shoes, and one Terry cloth robe.
2. Personal hygiene items: toothbrush, toothpaste, towel, soap, depilatory cream, and so on.
3. Books and magazines that don't violate any prison policies (see below). Inmates are allowed to subscribe to approved magazines if they can afford to pay for the subscription.
4. Writing materials, envelopes, and stamps. Since pens and pencils can be used as weapons, any inmate who abuses this privilege may be restricted to soft-tip felt pens, crayons, or something similar.
5. Simple decorations for a cell, such as a poster.

### CONTRABAND ITEMS

Besides weapons, Stronghold forbids inmates to have any of the following items in the prison:

1. Clothing not issued by the prison.
2. Tobacco products: inmates aren't allowed to have cigarettes. This leads to more complaints than any other policy, and to plenty of smuggling

and black market activity. Inmates with cigarettes most often smoke in the showers, where there are no cameras and it's easy to dispose of the evidence.

3. Contraband reading materials. This include pornography, books with information that might assist in an escape, and the like.
4. Razors.
5. Electronic devices of any sort.
6. Cash. After cigarettes, paper money with which to buy contraband is the most smuggled item.

### OBTAINING PERSONAL PROPERTY

Inmates have two ways to get personal property. First, it can be sent to them by a loved one or friend on the outside.

Second, if they have money in their prison account, they can buy approved items. Since there are no jobs for inmates in Stronghold, the only way to have money in one's personal account is for someone on the outside to send it. If an inmate has his own money which hasn't been forfeited to the government to compensate his victims, prison officials can arrange for however much he wants to be placed in his prison account. Some inmates can earn money by writing a book, giving a paid interview to a website, or the like. Otherwise an inmate has to rely on someone outside, such as a family member or a fan, to give him money to spend.

Inmates with money have two ways to buy things. First, they can order them through the mail. More commonly, every day a prison employee named Michael Watkins, universally known as "Mick," brings a "pushcart" to each quad. His pushcart sells various small items inmates might want to have: magazines, candy bars, bars of soap, chewing gum, postage stamps, and so on. When the pushcart arrives, most activity in a quad usually ceases so everyone can gather around, make purchases, and hear the latest prison gossip. (See page 92 for more about Watkins.)

And then of course there's the black market.

### STRONGHOLD'S BLACK MARKET

Like every other prison throughout history, Stronghold has its own underground economy through which the prisoners exchange goods and services. It's a lot harder to make it work than in most prisons due to the level of security and the general prison layout, but a black market still exists. Typically the black market deals in small, easily-hidden items the prisoners tend to place a high value on. The most common black market commodity is cigarettes and matches, but pornographic pictures, narcotics, and many other items get bought and sold in secret.

The black market starts on the outside, where someone obtains the goods a prisoner desires. The easiest and safest way for a prisoner to handle this is to come to an arrangement with a corrupt guard or prison worker, though this only works if the prisoner has money or some way to influence prison personnel. More than a few guards see nothing wrong with making some extra bucks smuggling in packs of cigarettes, a bag of mari-

juana, or other “harmless” items, though few are venal enough to bring inmates anything dangerous. Sometimes inmates can get family members to bring contraband to a meeting at the visitor’s center or send it as part of a “care package” of food and books, but since visitors and incoming packages are thoroughly searched, this rarely works. Some villains have had more luck getting unethical attorneys to bring them contraband as part of privileged materials the prison has only a limited right to look through.

Once an item makes it into Stronghold, an inmate has a whole other set of problems to deal with. First he has to keep it concealed from the guards. Most black market items are small enough to be concealed inside the standard prison jumpsuit for a little while, though there’s always the risk of a suspicious guard conducting an impromptu search. An item’s more likely to remain concealed if an inmate can get it to his cell. There he has plenty of hiding places to take advantage of, though none of them are even close to foolproof: among his clothes and personal items; in, underneath, or behind the toilet or sink; between the pages of a book; and so on.

After clearing that hurdle, an inmate has to find a buyer for something he wants to sell. Inmates who work the system most efficiently arrange a buyer in advance so they know what to smuggle in when. Others simply end up with extra contraband they want to dispose of, get desperate for cash, or what have you. Most transactions involve either cash or cigarettes as a medium of exchange, though bartered deals and trading goods for services (such as beating up another inmate) occur often.

Black market exchanges typically take place during meals or recreation time, the main times when inmates mingle. Guards watching over the dining hall and the quads keep a careful eye out for black marketeering, but there are dozens of ways to conceal a trade (ranging from a literally “under the table” deal to staging an incident to distract the guards). Once items exchange hands, the two participants in the deal are bound by the general code of prisoners’ honor not to say where they got them; ratting out another prisoner is a good way to find one’s self shut out of the black market in the future.

## The Prisoners’ Code

A big part of getting along inside Stronghold is knowing what “the prisoners’ code” is, and following it. Over the years Stronghold’s inmates have developed their own personal code of conduct, similar to those found in other prisons in some ways but unique in others. An inmate who follows the code will find life inside a lot easier; one who doesn’t may find every prisoner’s hand turned against him.

Among other things, the Prisoners’ Code says:

1. Never rat on anyone. A rat is the lowest form of life there is.
2. Don’t rely on the guards or the warden’s staff for anything. If you’ve got a beef with someone, handle it yourself.
3. Always call other cons by their costumed names, unless one of them tells you otherwise. Using a prisoner’s real name is disrespectful.

## PRISON GANGS

Within Stronghold, just like in any prison, inmates tend to band together into gangs to protect themselves from other inmates, exert influence, control the black market, run smuggling operations, and so on. However, gangs in Stronghold tend to differ from those in ordinary prisons. In most prisons gangs form along either or both of two lines: based on outside criminal associations (e.g., all members of a Mafia family in a prison form a prison gang); and based on race (e.g., all the black Muslims form a gang; all white inmates are forced to join the Aryan Brotherhood for protection against other ethnic gangs).

In Stronghold, outside associations don’t play much of a factor. The prison administration does the best it can to separate inmates who work for the same organization (such as VIPER), who are on the same villain team, or who frequently work together on the outside. They can’t always keep everyone apart, and during some times of the day (such as meals) prisoners have more ability to mingle with one another, but usually they can “break up” villain teams and keep them apart most of the day.

Race is also much less of a factor in Stronghold. For various reasons still studied and debated by scientists, most supervillains in the United States are white. In standard prisons, black and

## LIFE INSIDE

WHEREVER YOU GO, YOU NEED FRIENDS TO WATCH YOUR BACK AND HELP YOU OUT. THAT’S DOUBLY TRUE IN PRISON, TRIPLY TRUE IN STRONGHOLD. OUTSIDE I ALWAYS HAD ADRIAN, BUT IN HERE I ONLY GET TO SEE HIM DURING MEALS AND SPECIAL EVENTS. WITHOUT HIM I’VE HAD TO TURN TO OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT, AS I’M SURE HE’S HAD TO AS WELL. LACKING MARTIAL ARTS TRAINING OR OTHER USEFUL SKILLS, NOT TO MENTION MY SONIC POWERS, BASICALLY ALL I HAVE TO OFFER IS CHEAP MUSCLE. GANGS COME AND GANGS GO; I CAN ALWAYS FIND ONE LOOKING FOR ANOTHER ALLY, ANOTHER PAIR OF FISTS.

IT’S ALL A QUESTION OF WHAT PRICE I’M WILLING TO PAY FOR THAT SUPPORT.

## —REQUIEM

Hispanic prisoners can comprise as much as 90% of the prison population. Stronghold shows almost the exact opposite racial breakdown: about 85% of the inmates are white. Since the small number of non-whites is scattered throughout the various levels, there are rarely more than two or three in any given quad — not nearly enough to form an effective gang, though they may gravitate together for whatever personal protection they can afford one another.

Instead, in Stronghold the formation of gangs results from other pressures and perceptions. First and foremost of these is: who can still do something useful? Most Stronghold inmates find themselves in the uncomfortable position of being weak and powerless. But some inmates do still retain some of their capabilities. This includes: bricks and other inmates with high physical Characteristics (who still tend to have 15s across the board, making them pretty tough compared to Joe Average); inmates who have Martial Arts or other useful Skills; and inmates who are highly intelligent, clever, and/or socially adept. Thus, the more powerful gangs tend to have one or more bricks at their core, and paranormal inmates often tend to have more influence than one would expect. During his times as an inmate, Utility in particular has developed a fearsome reputation as a gang leader. Between his martial arts prowess, his courage, his intense training in many other disciplines, and his in-depth knowledge of superhumans, he's better at enforcing his will than pretty much anyone. And he loves it, since for once he has absolutely no trouble showing superhumans who's boss.

Second, gangs often coalesce around common power types, since like attracts like. Gangs mostly composed of bricks and brawlers, of energy projectors and other ranged combatants, of scientifically- and technologically-skilled villains, and mystics have all been a part of the Stronghold scene at one time or another.

Third, a villain whom other villains perceive as being potentially powerful or useful on the outside can often become the leader of a gang, or join a gang he otherwise couldn't get into. Master villain types, for example, are widely regarded as always having some sort of escape plan in the works, so other villains try to attach themselves to a master villain in the hopes of going along for the ride or becoming a part of his team once they're all on the outside. Similarly, a villain with a lot of money in his personal account, or who has a lot of friends who can send him things, may command a lot more respects in Stronghold than he otherwise would.

### **THE CURRENT GANG SITUATION**

As of early 2008, some of the most powerful gangs in Stronghold include:

#### **Mechassassin And His Boys**

If you asked most inmates who the top dog in Stronghold is these days, most would answer, "Mechassassin" (or, less respectfully, "Vander-snoot"). Battle-hardened, highly trained, strong, and an expert at hand-to-hand combat, he's known for not backing down from any sort of challenge even if he knows he'll earn himself a few

days confined to his cell. Backing him up are several other villains including Arrowhead, Megavolt, Overdrive, and Thorn.

#### **The Brute Squad**

Mechassassin's main competition as Stronghold's toughest inmate is probably Brute, a VIPER Dragon Branch agent who runs a gang known as "the Brute Squad." Other members include Boomslang, Stiletto, Whitefire, Slick, and perhaps most disturbingly Redblade (since VIPER and DEMON aren't exactly on the best of terms outside). They do a little smuggling, but mostly make money as muscle for hire; the gang's real purpose is protection, not earning.

The Brute Squad is wisely considered "the VIPER gang" since it has two Dragon Branch members among its ranks and other Dragon Branch inmates have been known to help it out from time to time. This puts it in opposition to the Smugglers, and to a lesser extent Demonfist, though that doesn't mean the Brutes can't do business with either gang from time to time, if the money's right.

#### **Demonfist**

A relatively recent arrival to Stronghold, a DEMON Morbane known as the Hand of Satan, is making a bid for power inside. He calls his gang "Demonfist," though the inmates have a lot of other, much less flattering, names for it. His hangers-on include Cauldron, Pulsar, and Slither. So far Demonfist has mostly been pushing gently at the power structure, trying to find a niche it can take over without too much trouble. If something doesn't give soon, the Hand will almost certainly escalate things.

#### **The Freak Parade**

A group of villains who are all considered bizarre-looking or particularly weird have banded together, relying on their reputation to keep others at bay. Sometimes an inmate hires them to "put a scare into" a rival. Members include Rodney Covington, Freakshow, and Wildeye. Slither used to be a member until the Hand of Satan somehow lured him into Demonfist; the two gangs are now bitter enemies.

#### **The Smugglers**

As its name indicates, this gang is mostly about making money, though its founder and leader — Krait — initially put it together to give himself more protection against VIPER inmates. Using the connections and skills he developed as COIL's logistics manager, he's been able to establish what's currently the best smuggling operation in Stronghold; he and his people control nearly 40% of the prison's underground economy. Other members include Arc, Cheshire Cat, and Psimon.

Mechassassin's gang has a working alliance with the Smugglers. It provides protection for Krait and his people in exchange for a discount from the gang and a small cut of Krait's income. The Smugglers don't much like the arrangement, but it's necessary to ensure that other gangs, particularly the Brute Squad, keep their distance.

# ESCAPE!



**T**he purpose of a prison is, of course, to keep dangerous persons locked up inside to protect other people from them. But in a *Champions* game, like in a comic book or movie, the actual *dramatic* purpose of a prison is to provide a place for criminals to break out of... or sometimes, for heroes to break into.

While Stronghold has an excellent record overall, it's not perfect. From time to time a villain (or several villains) has found a way to escape, or someone has gotten into the prison illicitly. The worst of these incidents was the Great Stronghold Breakout of 1990, but every year or two there tends to be at least one serious escape attempt. Superpowers are never entirely predictable, so there's no way for Stronghold's personnel to anticipate or prevent every possible method of escape. And that gives an enterprising GM plenty to work with.

See the *Escape From Stronghold* section of Chapter Five for more information about Stronghold's vulnerabilities and the possibilities for an escape.

## Riots And Hostage Situations

Escapes aren't the only form of major trouble Stronghold experiences. Other types include riots and hostage situations.

Riots in Stronghold are more or less like riots at any prison — so many inmates defy authority and commit violent acts that the guards simply can't hold back the tide. But Stronghold has a much higher guard-to-inmate ratio than most prisons, so riots are relatively rare and usually short-lived. The worst one in Stronghold history occurred in 1998 when the inmates briefly took over Levels Beta-2 and Gamma, separating the administration-controlled areas of the prison. Some of the rioters sent out a list of demands (ranging from better food to conjugal visits), while others threatened to make their way down to Level 10 and free the hot sleep prisoners. The smart ones worked on trying to disable the power negators, but before they could succeed a squad of heavily-armed guards assaulted the rioting levels and used tear gas to bring the situation to a swift conclusion.

Aside from periodic attempts at escape (see above), hostage situations in Stronghold usually occur when one inmate gets into a fight with another and uses a homemade knife (or other weapon) to take him hostage. The usual goal is to force the administration to give him something he wants. This never works out; eventually the guards find a way to overpower the hostage-taker and return him to his cell.

## THREAT RESPONSE

Stronghold's guards and administrators don't sit idly by when an inmate attempts to escape or starts a riot. Their plans for coping with and defusing these situations fall into several stages.

### STAGE ONE: ALERT AND ANALYSIS

When the guards realize one or more inmates are trying to escape, that a riot is brewing, or that a hostage situation has arisen, they have two immediate tasks. First, they must alert the rest of the prison staff about the incident. Since every guard has a Communications Unit (see page y86yy) mounted at his shoulder, this usually isn't too difficult (though sometimes inmates can overpower a guard and prevent him from turning his walkie-talkie on).

Once prison officials hear about what's going on, they have to decide how to respond to the situation beyond the standard operating procedure (see below). This may take some time and/or require more information, so a decision often isn't reached until Stage Two. Even after that, Warden Wildman and his people continue to monitor the event and respond as needed with new orders. If necessary the Warden calls in all guards not currently on duty to help with the situation.

### Calling For Help

At any point during these deliberations, Warden Wildman (or the ranking member of the administration present) may decide to call for outside assistance. If the guards have lost control of even one level or major area of the prison, if it appears that a major breakout (one involving more than three inmates) is possible, or if the staff believes there's a serious risk of death or destruction, Warden Wildman will almost certainly call for help.

Depending on the severity of the situation, Warden Wildman has four levels of help he can call for:

1. Local and state police and/or New Mexico National Guard units. If he has to call for help at all, Warden Wildman will definitely alert local authorities; he usually prefers to bypass them for direct assistance, though, since supervillains pose a real risk to ordinary cops.
2. PRIMUS and/or UNTIL. If Warden Wildman feels this level of assistance is required, he typically alerts both organizations so that whoever has personnel closest to the prison can respond. (In 2001 PRIMUS established a field office in Albuquerque in part to help with such matters, but it's too small to be of much assistance by itself.)



3. The United States military. By law the US military is not supposed to engage in activities like law enforcement on US soil, but no one has ever complained on the rare occasions when Warden Wildman thought military assistance was necessary. While most incidents that would justify it are dangerous enough that he just goes straight to Option Four, in many cases the military — such as fighter jets scrambled from Kirtland Air Force Base or soldiers from Fort Bliss near El Paso, Texas — can get to Stronghold quicker than superhero teams.

4. Superheroes. As a last resort Warden Wildman can call on helpful hero teams, including the Champions, the Sentinels, the Peacekeepers, the Justice Squadron, the California Patrol, the Alliance, or the Hero Corps. The latter two (based in Denver and Houston, respectively) are the closest major hero teams, but unfortunately neither has a teleporter on the roster who can get the team to Stronghold quickly. Unless the Stronghold staff can contain the incident for several hours, the odds of a team without a teleporter arriving in time to be of any real assistance are slim; the best they can hope for is to deal with the aftermath. And even if one team can arrive in time (for example, the Champions, if Witchcraft has a teleportation spell ready), one group of half a dozen or so superheroes may not be enough to stop a mass breakout.

#### STAGE TWO: LOCKDOWN

Regardless of the extent or severity of an escape attempt, riot, or similar situation, the guards' first order of business after alerting the rest of the prison is containment. The prison term for this is *lockdown*. Guards on duty immediately order all inmates back to their cells. If an inmate doesn't respond without delay or trouble, the guards use force to get him into his cell, since they don't have time to talk things through or wait for stubborn prisoners. Unfortunately, that instinctive response, combined with trying to move a lot of inmates around at once, may cause other incidents (or make the crisis spread if the inmates find out what's going on).

In most crisis situations, Stronghold's security robots (see page 90) are activated during Stage Two to assist with the procedure and help to maintain order.

Typically Stage Two of the response takes at least 10 minutes; it may take more. If there's no time to get all the inmates back to their cells, the guards settle for moving them into designated "lockdown zones" (typically in the quads and other large rooms) and then rely on the electronic locks on all the doors to keep them from rampaging through the facility.

**STAGE THREE: REACTION  
AND CONTAINMENT**

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Simultaneously with Stage Two (if possible) or immediately afterward (if not), one or more groups of guards attempts to deal with the situation directly by recapturing escapees, stopping riots, rescuing hostages, and the like. They (and if necessary, any other guard) are issued weapons, and usually Warden Wildman authorizes the use of the SPARC suits (see page 88) to give the main squad more protection and firepower.

The time required for Stage Three varies depending on the nature of the crisis and how many attempts Wildman is willing to make to solve the problem directly; it may be a quarter of an hour, or it may last several hours. If the guards' initial attempt to handle the crisis fails, Warden Wildman calls in all off-duty guards and also sends out a call for assistance (if he has not done these things already). For most incidents, this is the most likely point at which PC superheroes will be contacted by Stronghold and asked to provide assistance.

**STAGE FOUR: NEGOTIATION  
OR RECAPTURE**

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If Stronghold's direct efforts to contain and riot, hostage situation, or other incident fail, Warden Wildman shifts gears to a less confrontational mode and opens negotiations with the inmates involved. For the most part what he's really doing at this point is stalling for time until superheroes or other help arrives. He doesn't want to give the inmates anything for fear of encouraging more such incidents. However, if he has to as part of his play for time, he may make some "concessions" that are either meaningless or easily revoked.

If any inmates do, in fact, escape, they have to be recaptured. Since Stronghold's not equipped to conduct manhunts, at this stage (if not before) it alerts all law enforcement authorities and superheroes to be on the lookout for any escapees and leaves the job to them. Many inmates who make it past the walls don't get out of the New Mexican desert before being picked up, hungry and dehydrated, by local authorities.



# Personnel

# STAFF



**W**hile Stronghold's inmates and high-tech security systems tend to attract the most media attention, it's the people who work there — from Warden Wildman on down to the cleaning staff — that make the place run so efficiently and so well. No computer program or robot, no matter how advanced or well-designed, can learn to “read” and react to Stronghold's inmates the way a trained guard can.

## MAIN STAFF

Stronghold's “main staff” are the administrators and other primary personnel — the bosses, so to speak. Each of them has an office in the above-ground level, though depending on the events of any given day may have to descend into the prison one or more times.

### WARDEN ARTHUR WILDMAN

|        |         |        |        |
|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| 8 STR  | 8 DEX   | 10 CON | 8 BODY |
| 13 INT | 10 EGO  | 15 PRE | 8 COM  |
| 3 PD   | 3 ED    | 2 SPD  | 4 REC  |
| 20 END | 19 STUN |        |        |

**Abilities:** Bureaucratics 12-; Computer Programming 8-; Deduction 12-; KS: American Prison System 11-; KS: Penological Law 11-; KS: Stronghold 16-; KS: The Superhuman World 8-; KS: Supervillains 14-; SS: Anthropology 8-; SS: Criminology 16-; SS: Penology 16-; SS: Sociology 11-; Fringe Benefit: Membership (warden of Stronghold)

**25+ Disadvantages:** Hunted: Bureau Of Prisons 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)

## LIFE INSIDE

I'VE NEVER MET WARDEN WILDMAN, NOT EVEN WHEN HE FIRST CAME TO THE PRISON. FOR THAT MATTER, I NEVER MET WARDEN KENNEDY EITHER, BUT FROM WHAT I HEAR HE WAS A POMPUS FOOL. WILDMAN'S SUPPOSED TO BE SOME SORT OF HUMANITARIAN OR SOMETHING THE WAY PEOPLE TELL IT, BUT HE NEVER EVEN BOTHERS TO INTRODUCE HIMSELF TO HIS PRISONERS. I'VE SEEN HIM ON STAGE SEVERAL TIMES WHEN HE ADDRESSED THE ENTIRE PRISON POPULATION, BUT THAT'S AS CLOSE AS I'VE GOTTEN. I GUESS IN HIS OWN WAY HE'S AS MUCH A JERK AS KENNEDY.

## REQUIEM



**Notes:** The son of Stronghold's founder, Arthur Wildman has largely lived a life shaped by his relationship to his father. He was just starting college when Stronghold was being built, and listening to his father talk about the project every day inspired him to become a criminologist. After obtaining his Ph.D with a thesis analyzing Stronghold's history, methodology, and results to date, he became an assistant professor. He soon earned a reputation as a fun but tough teacher who demanded a lot from his students but gave them a lot in return. He wrote a book about Stronghold, *Capes Behind Bars*, that briefly made the bestseller list, and often published articles in scholarly journals about the superprison.

After the Great Stronghold Breakout in 1990, Arthur Wildman was called in as a consultant by the groups investigating the incident. His findings placed virtually no blame on his father, pointing to circumstances beyond his control such as the storm and the flu epidemic. Unfortunately his conclusions were harshly criticized by his father's enemies as being biased, and thus were largely rejected.

Wildman vowed then and there to have the last laugh by becoming warden of Stronghold himself and proving his father's detractors wrong. Leaving academia behind, he became an assistant warden at an Illinois penitentiary. A stellar record there let him transition into the federal prison system, where he continued to shine. When it came time to install a new warden of Stronghold in 2001, his experience and knowledge about Stronghold made him the obvious candidate. Some of his father's old adversaries raised red

flags, but he campaigned hard for the job and had more than a few influential friends who spoke up on his behalf as well.

Since 2001, Arthur Wildman has served as Warden of Stronghold during one of the quietest periods in the superprison's history. His emphasis on incorporating new technologies into the security systems and on expanded training for the guards has kept "incidents" and escapes to a minimum. A firm but fair man, Dr. Wildman keeps a careful eye on his "charges" and ensures not only that they don't escape, but that they aren't abused. As something of an optimist, he does his best to rehabilitate them, though it's usually a losing battle.

Warden Wildman is known among his staff for his perfectionist nature and attention to detail; they often wish he wasn't quite so "hands-on" and that he'd learn to delegate better. He used to approach problems in a very "academic" sort of way, but years of experience as a prison administrator have tempered his native intelligence with an appreciation for practical considerations and the (super)human factor. Legitimate superheroes who deal with him find him to be intelligent, knowledgeable, and willing to work with them to the extent he can. Rumor has it he's writing a book about superheroes and welcomes the opportunity for contact with them so he has even more to put in it.

Now in his early 50s, Warden Wildman still has the good looks that turned so many women's heads when he was younger. He's got a firm, almost angular face with black hair that's greying at the temples, green eyes, glasses, and no facial hair. He usually wears a typical men's suit at work. He's married and has three children, though for security and practical reasons they live in Albuquerque and he only gets to see them periodically.

ASSISTANT WARDEN  
REBECCA ROTHSCHILD

|        |         |        |        |
|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| 8 STR  | 8 DEX   | 8 CON  | 8 BODY |
| 10 INT | 10 EGO  | 13 PRE | 10 COM |
| 2 PD   | 2 ED    | 2 SPD  | 4 REC  |
| 16 END | 16 STUN |        |        |

**Abilities:** Bureaucratics 12-; KS: American Prison System 8-; KS: Penological Law 11-; KS: Stronghold 12-; KS: Supervillains 14-; Language: Yiddish (basic conversation); PS: Play Guitar 8-; SS: Criminology 8-; SS: Penology 12-; Fringe Benefit: Membership (assistant warden of Stronghold)

**25+ Disadvantages:** Hunted: Bureau Of Prisons 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)

**Notes:** Rebecca Rothschild's route to Stronghold is very different from that of her boss, Dr. Wildman. Growing up in Brooklyn she ran with something of a rough crowd and got in minor trouble with the law a time or three. Despite the odds against her she pulled herself together and attended secretarial school after dropping out of high school. Ironically, she got a job as the secretary for the warden of a New York prison.

After several years of taking dictation and filing memos, Rothschild decided she could do better. In fact, she also decided she could do her boss's job better than he could. She got her high school equivalency and then started taking college classes at night. In time she earned a degree in Criminal Justice Studies, then applied for and obtained a job as assistant warden in a Delaware prison. She eventually worked her way up to warden of that same penitentiary, though more than one person she met on her way up doubted that a woman could do the job. She soon proved them wrong by defusing a hostage situation before it turned into a deadly riot.

Rothschild met Arthur Wildman at a penology conference in 1998, where the two of them were on a panel and got into an intense (but friendly) debate on prisoners' rights and prison administration. After being appointed Warden of Stronghold, Wildman decided to "clean house" and bring in an all-new staff of head administra-



tors. He remembered Rothschild, decided she'd be perfect for the job, and persuaded her to move to New Mexico and take it.

Compared to Warden Wildman, Rothschild is the “battleaxe” who raises all sorts of practical objections to his more academic ideas and pooh-poohs his notions about rehabilitation. She's been around the block about a hundred times (from both sides of the jail cell door) and doesn't think anyone's ever going to reform. Although she's always willing to compromise in the best interests of the superprison, she tends to take a hard line when dealing with administrative matters, often tempering Wildman's more optimistic approach.

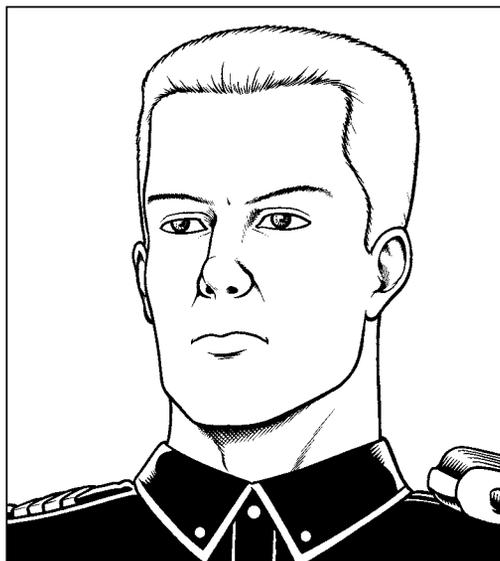
For relaxation Assistant Warden Rothschild reads, scrapbooks, and plays the guitar. One of the biggest thrills of her life was when famed Seventies singer-songwriter Andy McKinley came to Stronghold to put on a concert for the inmates and she got to play a song with him on stage.

A “stereotypical New York Jew” (as she puts it), Rebecca Rothschild is a Caucasian woman in her early 40s with a curly black hair and dark brown eyes. She's just a touch on the plump side, but still plenty attractive in her own way. Brassy, sassy, feisty, and willing to put up with no back-talk from any inmate regardless of how powerful and feared he is on the outside, she wears typical woman's business attire and sensible shoes.

#### CHIEF OF SECURITY FREDERICK GRASSE

|        |         |        |         |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 13 STR | 14 DEX  | 14 CON | 12 BODY |
| 13 INT | 10 EGO  | 15 PRE | 8 COM   |
| 5 PD   | 5 ED    | 3 SPD  | 6 REC   |
| 30 END | 30 STUN |        |         |

**Abilities:** Martial Arts: Stronghold Guard Training (see below); Running +1” (7” total); +1 with Stronghold Guard Training; Bureaucratics 12-; Concealment 12-; KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 11-; KS: Penological Law 11-; KS: Stronghold Inmates 11-; KS: US Army History And Customs 11-; PS: Prison Guard 12-; PS: Soldier 12-; Tactics 12-; WF: Small Arms, Knives; Fringe Benefit: Membership (head of guards at Stronghold)



**50+ Disadvantages:** Hunted: Warden Wildman 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

**Notes:** Frederick Grasse is the son of a military veteran whose father was also a vet, and his father before him. There wasn't much doubt what Frederick would grow up to do; it was just a question of which service he'd join. He went into the Army and excelled. But after putting in over 20 years he decided it was time for a change of pace. He retired from the military and began looking for a job that would let him use his experience but not make quite so many demands on his family. After deciding he was too old for police work, he found a position as a guard officer in a federal penitentiary.

In his several years as a federal prison guard officer, Grasse distinguished himself with his professionalism, attention to detail, and no-nonsense attitude. He came to national attention — and the attention of Dr. Wildman — in 2000 when he singlehandedly stopped four prisoners, two of them hardened killers, from escaping. In 2004, when the current Chief of Security (*i.e.*, commander of the guards) at Stronghold chose to retire, Grasse applied for the job. Wildman remembered his name, and after several grueling interviews gave him the job in early 2005.

Although Chief Grasse has been at Stronghold only three years, far less than many of the guards who work for him, he's become a mainstay of the prison administration. His views on criminal justice and treatment of prisoners are far harsher than Dr. Wildman's, but Grasse has become one of the Warden's chief advisors, a man he trusts and relies upon for an unvarnished opinion of any issue.

Grasse would never, ever admit it to anyone, but he kind of gets a kick out of keeping a bunch of oh-so-powerful supervillains helpless and under control. He tries hard not to let this attitude color his work, but sometimes he just can't help taking a troublesome inmate down a peg or two with a well-timed snide comment... or, for the unruly ones, a good, hard smack in the face. His file has more than one inmate complaint in it, and a couple have even been serious enough to spark investigations, but he's never been brought up on charges or successfully sued.

Chief Grasse has the hardbitten look of a career military man from a military family. He keeps his reddish-blond hair high and tight, remains observant and alert at all times, and stays in excellent physical condition despite being in his mid-thirties. He wears a standard Stronghold guard's uniform (black button-down shirt and pants with gold buttons and trim and rank insignia on the shoulders and left breast), broad black leather belt, black boots, walkie-talkie worn on the shoulder), always doing his best to keep it in immaculate condition. He's white with green eyes.

## FATHER RICHARD PASTORELLI

|        |         |        |        |
|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| 7 STR  | 8 DEX   | 9 CON  | 8 BODY |
| 13 INT | 10 EGO  | 15 PRE | 10 COM |
| 2 PD   | 2 ED    | 2 SPD  | 3 REC  |
| 18 END | 17 STUN |        |        |

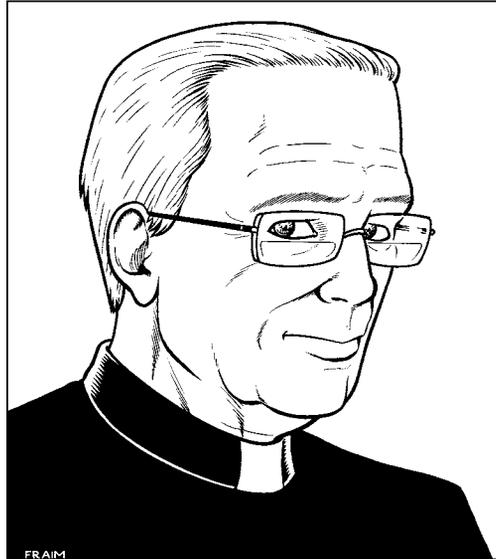
**Abilities:** Animal Handler (Bovines) 8-; Bureaucrats 12-; Conversation 12-; Deduction 12-; KS: Roman Catholic History And Culture 12-; KS: Roman Catholic Theology 12-; Oratory 12-; Persuasion 12-; TF: Horses, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles; Fringe Benefits: Membership (Stronghold prison chaplain), Religious Rank (priest), Right To Marry; Money (Wealthy)

**25+ Disadvantages:** Hunted: Warden Wildman 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching); Psychological Limitation: Devout Roman Catholic; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

**Notes:** Every prison needs a spiritual advisor, and Stronghold is fortunate enough to have Father Richard Pastorelli on staff. Pastorelli grew up on a Nebraska dairy farm and had a pretty ordinary childhood. While attending college he felt a religious calling and chose to go to seminary after graduation. In time he became a priest and served in a variety of parishes around the United States.

In 1993 Father Pastorelli decided he wasn't really doing Christ's work in seeing to the downtrodden and unfortunate. He began a ministry to prison inmates, visiting local prisons every week to bring the word of God to the inmates. He found this work so fulfilling that he eventually applied for and received a job as a chaplain at an Arizona prison.

Father Pastorelli's life took another unexpected turn in 1997 when he was driving to a religious conference in Texas. Unbeknownst to him two inmates had escaped from Stronghold, and as luck would have it they came across him on the road and took him hostage. Things might have gone badly when the police cornered the escapees in Taos, but Father Pastorelli was able to talk them down and resolve the whole matter peacefully. From them he learned that Stronghold didn't have a prison chaplain, and he decided that was intolerable. He pestered Warden Kennedy to create such a position until Kennedy did... and then by way of revenge offered the job to Pastorelli himself. The good Father has worked at the super-prison ever since, seeing to the spiritual needs of incarcerated supervillains.



As Stronghold's chaplain, Father Pastorelli is primarily responsible for holding Sunday religious services for the prison's Christian population, providing advice to inmates who need spiritual counseling, and acting as "the voice of conscience" on Warden Wildman's staff. Although he's unwavering in his faith and the opinions it generates, Father Pastorelli tries not to be overtly judgmental when on the job — he's found that it's completely counterproductive. Instead he listens intently to other people, using his *Conversation* Skill to discern what they're *really* talking about, and then offers advice based on his insight and beliefs. Nor is he a humorless stick-in-the-mud; even among the inmates he's considered friendly, personable, good humored, and something of a joker. On a couple of occasions he's used his good relations with the inmates and his diplomatic skills to defuse incidents that might have become riots if not properly handled.

Unbeknownst to anyone, Father Pastorelli comes from a very wealthy family and is quite well off. He doesn't flaunt his money — if anything, he ignores it — but he does have the capability to buy just about anything he wants if the need arises. His one indulgence is that he spoils his beloved pet cat, Roberto, with gourmet cat food and a steady stream of new toys.

Father Pastorelli is an avuncular white man in his early sixties, but still quite hearty and hale despite his advancing years. In the best of times he's usually got a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye, but the circumstances of his job often make him somber and contemplative. His hair has mostly gone grey from its original brown, and he wears bifocals.

**COMMANDER MIKE MITCHELLSON**

|        |         |        |         |
|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 13 STR | 13 DEX  | 13 CON | 10 BODY |
| 13 INT | 10 EGO  | 15 PRE | 8 COM   |
| 5 PD   | 5 ED    | 3 SPD  | 6 REC   |
| 26 END | 24 STUN |        |         |

**Abilities:** Martial Arts: Stronghold Guard Training (see below); Running +1" (7" total); +1 with Stronghold Guard Training; Bureaucratics 12-; Combat Driving 12-; Combat Piloting 12-; Concealment 12-; KS: Penological Law 11-; KS: Stronghold Inmates 11-; Mechanics 8-; PS: Prison Guard 11-; WF: Small Arms; Fringe Benefit: Membership (head of SSPTS)

**25+ Disadvantages:** Hunted: Warden Wildman 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching); Psychological Limitation: Thinks He Knows Prisoner Security Better Than Anyone (Common, Moderate); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

**Notes:** Mike Mitchellson is the head of the Stronghold Superhuman Prisoner Transport System (SSPTS, see page 31). He first came to Stronghold in 1992 as a guard, one of the first to have gone through the new, expanded training program instituted in the wake of the Great Stronghold Breakout. His early record wasn't among the best — by his own admission, he was still young and full of pride, which meant he got in more confrontations with inmates than he should have — but after a couple years he straightened up and began to do better. In fact, he did so well he started to rise through the ranks. In 1999 he was assigned to the SSPTS, and when the program's commander retired in 2002 he got the call.

Mitchellson has learned from his mistakes and takes his job seriously — some would say *too* seriously. He's got a tendency to charge right into a situation and take over, which the local courtroom and prison personnel might not appreciate (even though what he does is "right," in that it increases safety and decreases the chances of a prisoner escaping). He's totally professional, and willing to cooperate fully with anyone who knows as much about superhuman prisoner



transport and security as he does. It's just that as far as he's concerned, not many people outside of Stronghold meet his standards.

Commander Mitchellson's not a big fan of superheroes in general. In his experience most heroes are amateurs who get by on raw power and luck rather than intelligence, planning, or skill, and they often do as much harm as good. He works with them when he has to, but he avoids "capes" who haven't earned his trust through displays of competence.

Mitchellson is a thirty-something black man with close-cropped hair. He usually wears the standard SSPTS blue jumpsuit, though he'll suit up in the same body armor and weapons as the guards who work for him if he has to. He's married with two young children; his family lives in the nearby town of Burns. In his spare time he likes to fix up and race cars.

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## THE GUARDS

The backbone of Stronghold is the guard staff — the men and women who control the prisoners, deal with dangerous supervillains on a daily basis, and keep some of the prison's most important functions operating smoothly.

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### RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

For about the first decade of Stronghold's existence, its guards weren't that different from guards at any maximum-security penitentiary. The administration only hired guards with previous experience or other strong qualifications, and of course they had access to special equipment in certain situations, but aside from a brief introductory training course that was about it.

Things changed after the Great Stronghold Breakout in 1990. New Warden Kennedy decided Stronghold's guards needed more advanced training to deal with the specific problems that might arise on the job. He also wanted better qualifications — not just prior experience but a college degree or time in the military. He wanted his guards to be the *creme de la creme* of prison guards, and that meant training them from the ground up. He instituted a twelve-week training course that covered physical fitness, basic and advanced handling of prisoners, knowledge of the inmates and their powers, and simple dispute resolution and crisis negotiation techniques.

The results of Kennedy's training program were noticeable. The new guards who began serving in 1992 were far better equipped to handle the job than veteran guards. As time went on Kennedy, and later Arthur Wildman, refined the program, adding or changing things as needed and creating a "continuing education" series of seminars to keep the guards up-to-date on the latest information.

The accompanying Package Deal represents the effect of the current Stronghold training program on guards.

## STRONGHOLD GUARD TRAINING PACKAGE DEAL

### Abilities

| Cost | Ability   |
|------|---|
| 3    | +3 STR  |
| 9    | +3 DEX  |
| 6    | +3 CON  |
| 3    | +3 INT  |
| 5    | +5 PRE  |
| 3    | +3 PD   |
| 3    | +3 ED   |
| 7    | +1 SPD  |
| 3    | +1 with Stronghold Guard Training                             |
| 3    | Concealment   |
| 2    | KS: Penological Law 11-                                       |
| 2    | KS: Stronghold Inmates 11-                                    |
| 34   | Martial Arts: Stronghold Guard Training (see character sheet) |
| 2    | PS: Prison Guard 11-  |
| 2    | WF: Small Arms  |

### Equipment

| Cost | Power                         |
|------|-------------------------------|
| 12   | Stronghold Body Armor         |
| 21   | Stronghold Helmet             |
| 41   | SH-1-7 Pulson Rifle           |
| 19   | Mechalene Zipcuffs (Standard) |
| 90   | Lightning Stick Taser         |
| 7    | Grab-Chain                    |
| 5    | Communications Unit           |

**Total Cost Of Package Abilities And Equipment: 282**

### Disadvantages

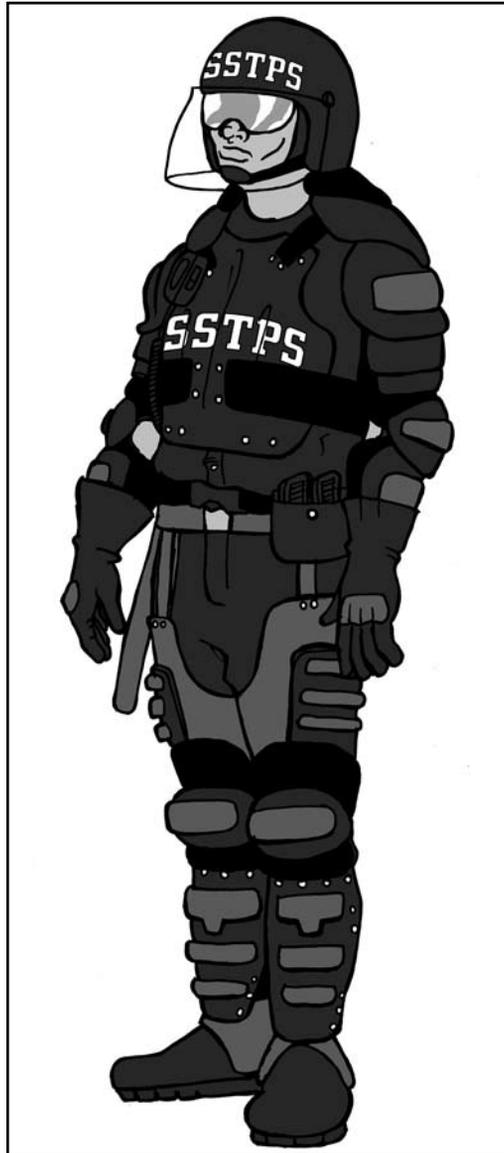
| Value | Disadvantage   |
|-------|--|
| 5     | Distinctive Features: Uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable) |
| 15    | Hunted: Stronghold Administrators 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)              |
| 20    | Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)              |

**Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 40**

## RANKS

The Stronghold guards use a simple rank system that represents the amount of authority an individual has. Most simply hold the lowest rank, Guard. Each cellblock has one guard in charge of the others working that area; he's a Sergeant. Of the two Sergeants overseeing a given quad, one will be put in charge of that quad by the Lieutenant, who's in command of an entire level. Every two levels have a Captain, who reports directly to the Chief of Security, Frederick Grasse. Guards in charge of some specialized functions, such as the SSPTS, hold the rank of Commander and are equivalent to Captains. Similarly, there's a Commander in charge of each shift.

(In game terms, being a Stronghold guard or guard officer doesn't involve any sort of Perk. It's too limited a thing to be worth paying for. Administrators such as Warden Wildman do have a *Membership* Fringe Benefit to represent their overall authority.)



## WORK SHIFTS

Stronghold has three guard shifts. The first shift comes on duty at 9:00 AM and stays on until 5:00 PM. Most guards prefer this shift since it approximates a standard working day, giving them more time with their families (if their families live nearby).

At 5:00 PM the second shift replaces the first; it stays on duty until 1:00 AM. Some guards like this shift because the inmates tend to be quieter during this time of day, especially if there's a movie during evening recreation time.

1:00 AM to 9:00 AM is the "graveyard shift." This tends to be the quietest shift of all since the inmates sleep through a lot of it. On the other hand, getting them roused and to breakfast in the morning is sometimes a chore, and nighttime is often the time chosen for escape attempts from within or without.

## Guard Character Sheet

### STRONGHOLD GUARD

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes                                 |
|-----|------|------|------|---------------------------------------|
| 13  | STR  | 3    | 12-  | Lift 150 kg; 2½d6 [2]                 |
| 13  | DEX  | 9    | 12-  | OCV: 4/DCV: 4                         |
| 13  | CON  | 6    | 12-  |                                       |
| 10  | BODY | 0    | 11-  |                                       |
| 13  | INT  | 3    | 12-  | PER Roll 12-                          |
| 10  | EGO  | 0    | 11-  | ECV: 3                                |
| 15  | PRE  | 5    | 12-  | PRE Attack: 3d6                       |
| 8   | COM  | -1   | 11-  |                                       |
| 6   | PD   | 3    |      | Total: 6 PD (0 rPD)                   |
| 6   | ED   | 3    |      | Total: 6 ED (0 rED)                   |
| 3   | SPD  | 7    |      | Phases: 4, 8, 12                      |
| 6   | REC  | 0    |      |                                       |
| 26  | END  | 0    |      |                                       |
| 24  | STUN | 0    |      | <b>Total Characteristics Cost: 38</b> |

**Movement:** Running: 6"/12"

#### Cost Powers

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 36 | <i>SH-1-7 Pulson Rifle:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve, 2 clips of 30 Charges each for entire reserve (+½); all OAF (-1), Two-Handed (-½)   |
| 2u | 1) <i>Standard Beam:</i> Energy Blast 12d6; OAF (-1), Two-Handed (-½)   |
| 1u | 2) <i>Intensified Beam:</i> RKA 3d6; OAF (-1), Two-Handed (-½), Requires 3 Charges Per Use (-½)   |
| 2u | 3) <i>Stunner Beam:</i> Energy Blast 6d6, NND (defense is ED Force Field; +1); OAF (-1), Two-Handed (-½)  |
| 75 | <i>Lightning Stick Taser:</i> Multipower, 120-point reserve, 30 Charges for entire reserve (+¼); all OAF (-1)   |
| 4u | 1) <i>HTH Taser:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, NND (defense is insulated ED; +1); OAF (-1), No Range (-½), Requires Multiple Charges (1 Charge for 8d6, +1 Charge for every +1 DC thereafter; -¼)              |
| 5u | 2) <i>Ranged Taser:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, NND (defense is insulated ED; +1); OAF (-1), Limited Range (12"; -¼), Requires Multiple Charges (1 Charge for 8d6, +1 Charge for every +1 DC thereafter; -¼) |
| 6  | <i>Lightning Stick Taser:</i> HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)   |

Martial Arts: Stronghold Guard Training

|   | Maneuver | OCV | DCV | Notes                                   |
|---|----------|-----|-----|---|
| 5 | Block    | +1  | +3  | Block, Abort                            |
| 4 | Disarm   | -1  | +1  | Disarm, 23 STR                          |
| 4 | Dodge    | —   | +5  | Dodge all attacks, Abort                |
| 4 | Escape   | +0  | +0  | 28 STR vs. Grabs                        |
| 4 | Hold     | -1  | -1  | Grab Three Limbs, 23 STR for holding on |

|    |   |    |    |   |
|----|---|----|----|---|
| 4  | Joint Lock/Throw  | +1 | +0 | Grab One Limb; 1d6 NND(7); Target Falls |
| 4  | Punch   | +0 | +2 | 4½d6 Strike                             |
| 3  | Takedown  | +1 | +1 | 2½d6 Strike; Target Falls               |
| 2  | Use Art with Clubs, Chain And Rope Weapons  |    |    |   |
| 19 | <i>Standard Mechalene Zipcuff:</i> Entangle 5d6 (standard effect: 5 BODY), 10 DEF, Takes No Damage From Attacks (+½); OAF (-1), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), Set Effect (hands or feet only; -1), Does Not Prevent Use Of Accessible Foci (-1), No Range (-½), Must Follow Grab Or Target Must Be Willing (-½), Vulnerable (special cutting tool, see text; -¼), 12 Charges (-¼) [12] |    |    |   |
| 7  | <i>Grab-Chain:</i> +15 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), Only To Grab (see text; -1) 0  |    |    |   |
| 12 | <i>Stronghold Body Armor:</i> Armor (10 PD/10 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (covers all but head and hands; -½), Half Mass (-½) 0  |    |    |   |
| 7  | <i>Stronghold Helmet:</i> Armor (10 PD/10 ED) (30 Active Points); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (covers Hit Locations 3-5; -2), Half Mass (-½)   |    |    |   |
| 7  | <i>Stronghold Helmet:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points); OIF (-½)   |    |    |   |
| 7  | <i>Stronghold Helmet:</i> Hearing Group Flash Defense (10 points); OIF (-½)   |    |    |   |
| 5  | <i>Communications Unit:</i> HRRP (Radio Group); OAF (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½) 0   |    |    |   |

#### Skills

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 3 | +1 with Stronghold Guard Training  |
| 3 | Concealment 12-  |
| 2 | KS: Penological Law 11-  |
| 2 | KS: Stronghold Inmates 11-   |
| 2 | PS: Prison Guard 11-   |
| 2 | WF: Small Arms   |
| 6 | KSs, PSs, or other Background Skills representing hobbies, previous jobs, and the like |

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 249**

**Total Cost: 287**

#### 50+ Disadvantages

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 5   | Distinctive Features: Uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable) |
| 15  | Hunted: Stronghold Administrators 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)              |
| 20  | Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)              |
| 197 | Experience Points  |

**Total Disadvantage Points: 287**

**Description:** Stronghold's guards wear grey pants, matching grey buttondown shirt, black leather boots, black gloves, and a black leather belt. When necessary, over the shirt they wear a black high-tech ballistic vest with a communicator unit (a high-tech walkie-talkie, basically) on the right shoulder; they also have pads of the same ballistic material strapped to their thighs, lower legs/knees, and lower arms/elbows. The armored materials are clearly protective gear, but are not bulky or heavy and don't significantly impede movement. Guards do not routinely wear helmets, though they do during riots, escape attempts, and the like. Similarly, they *do not* carry weapons of any sort while mixing with the inmate population; they're issued high-tech blaster rifles during crisis situations.

### **NOTEWORTHY GUARDS**

Some of the guards are definitely above (or below) average. A few of the more notable include:

#### **Commander Tisha Carmichael**

Stronghold has very few female guards — basically only enough for the female-only cell-blocks. Tisha Campbell, a tall black woman with nearly 20 years' experience in corrections, is in charge of all the female guards. If a female guard has some specific complaint, it usually gets passed up to Carmichael, who takes it to Chief Grasse if it's serious enough.

Commander Carmichael has a reputation for being tough as nails, and strong enough to beat most of the male guards at arm-wrestling. But despite her sometimes harsh nature she has a softer side that sometimes shines through, especially when she's looking after "her girls." Sometimes she sees the promise of reform in one of the female prisoners and tries to bring that out; right now her current project is Alchemica. Others she regards as useless trash who should remain locked up for life; right now she particularly feels that way about Gorgon, who's made no secret of how much she hates Carmichael.

Commander Carmichael is married and has two children; her family lives in nearby Burns.

#### **Tim Grice**

Now in his fourth year at Stronghold, Tim Grice works on Delta level, among some of the most dangerous inmates in the superprison. He started on Level Beta, but his excellent job performance has slowly but surely earned him the dubious privilege of working on lower and lower levels. The odds are that next time there's an opening for sergeant, he'll get chosen.

Blonde-haired and blue-eyed, Grice still looks a lot like the high school football star he used to be. If not for an arm injury he'd probably have

gone on to play college and then pro ball, but he's not usually too bitter about it — that's just the way things go. What really upsets him is that he doesn't often get to see his daughter Haley, who lives in Maryland with her mother (Grice's ex-wife). He arranges his vacation time each year so he can be with her, and stays in touch on an almost-daily basis via cell phone.

#### **Sergeant Calvin Murdoch**

Currently assigned to Level Epsilon, Cellblock D, Sergeant Murdoch is considered "the toughest screw in Stronghold" by most of the inmates. Six and a half feet tall with shoulders as wide as his home state of Montana and the muscular build of a dedicated weightlifter (STR 15, CON 16, BODY 13), he's totally fearless and doesn't back down from any inmate, no matter how powerful that inmate is on the outside. He's a little too quick to use violence to solve problems for the administration's taste, but he never, ever throws the first punch so he rarely gets in much trouble because of it.

#### **Commander Robert Rudd**

All the guards on the first shift are commanded by Robert Rudd, who worked at some of the toughest federal and New York state prisons before taking a job at Stronghold. He's an expert at finding hidden objects and weapons (Concealment 15-) and has written several articles about prison weapons. He's considering writing a book about his experiences as a prison guard, drawing on the extensive journals he's kept throughout his career for material.

Commander Rudd is six feet tall with dark hair and eyes. His left upper arm, left side, and left thigh have extensive burn scarring from an escape attempt by Whitefire a couple years ago (fortunately the flame-blasts didn't hit him in the face). Much to his family's aggravation he refuses to look into getting plastic surgery treatment for the scars, claiming they don't interfere with his movements at all so he doesn't want to go to all that trouble.

#### **Vic Tisdale**

Not every guard at Stronghold is a paragon of professionalism and virtue. Witness Vic Tisdale, who's been there nearly ten years but never advanced much; he's currently assigned to Cellblock C on Level Beta-5. Angry about "being ignored," for the past several years he's supplemented his income by smuggling things to prisoners and participating in the superprison's black market. Cigarettes are his specialty, but he can get all kinds of small things an inmate might want. He draws the line at weapons or other dangerous objects, though.

## Guard Gear

Besides their uniforms, Stronghold guards have access to many different types of gear designed to make their job easier and safer — though a lot of it is only used during escape, riot, and hostage scenarios. In addition to the devices described on pages 33-34, any of which could be used in Stronghold as well as during courtroom or transport situations, here's some of the equipment Stronghold guards use:

### EVERYDAY EQUIPMENT

#### COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

|                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Effect:</b>       | <b>HRRP</b>       |
| <b>Target:</b>       | <b>Self</b>       |
| <b>Duration:</b>     | <b>Persistent</b> |
| <b>Range:</b>        | <b>Self</b>       |
| <b>END Cost:</b>     | <b>0</b>          |
| <b>Breakability:</b> | <b>2 DEF</b>      |

**Description:** Attached to the right shoulder of every Stronghold guard's uniform (and to the clothing of many non-guard personnel, including Warden Wildman) is a Communications Unit — basically a high-tech walkie-talkie that also has video capability. To talk on it, a guard has to use one hand to press a button and open a channel; to see the video screen he has to detach it from his shoulder so he can look at it. It runs on a high-powered battery good for 72 hours of use; each guard has two batteries so he can recharge one while the other's in use.

**Game Information:** *HRRP (Radio Group) (12 Active Points); OAF (-1), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½). Total cost: 5 points.*

#### GRAB-CHAIN

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Effect:</b>       | <b>+15 STR, Only To Grab (see text)</b> |
| <b>Target:</b>       | <b>One character</b>                    |
| <b>Duration:</b>     | <b>Constant</b>                         |
| <b>Range:</b>        | <b>Touch</b>                            |
| <b>END Cost:</b>     | <b>0</b>                                |
| <b>Breakability:</b> | <b>4 DEF</b>                            |

**Description:** A grab-chain is a device used to restrain uncooperative (or potentially uncooperative) prisoners. It consists of a length of metal chain about a foot long with a T-shaped metal handle on each end; the handles can lock together to form one unit. The guard simply wraps the chain around one of a prisoner's limbs (something he's taught to do in a fight as part of his hand-to-hand combat training) and locks the handles together (or simply grasps both in the same hand). This gives an enormous amount of extra leverage and makes it harder for the prisoner to break free.

In game terms, a grab-chain is defined as extra STR, Only To Grab. The extra STR only applies to Grabbing a single limb (even if it's used when Grabbing two limbs) and cannot be used to Squeeze or Throw.

**Game Information:** *+15 STR, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (22 Active Points); OAF (-1), Only To Grab (see text; -1). Total cost: 7 points.*

#### MECHALENE ZIPCUFFS

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Effect:</b>       | <b>Entangle 5-10d6, 10-20 DEF, Takes No Damage From Attacks</b> |
| <b>Target:</b>       | <b>One character</b>  |
| <b>Duration:</b>     | <b>Instant</b>  |
| <b>Range:</b>        | <b>No Range</b>   |
| <b>Charges:</b>      | <b>12 Charges</b>   |
| <b>Breakability:</b> | <b>10-20 DEF</b>  |

**Description:** The "second stage" of Angelstone Laboratories's Supercriminal Restraint System (SCRS) devices are the Mechalene Zipcuffs. (See *Cops, Crews, And Cabals* for more information on Angelstone and its technologies.) Made of a special plastic developed from technology recovered from the murderous sentient robot Mechanon, they're capable of holding even the strongest superhumans. Each one consists of a strip of plastic (of varying thickness depending on strength) with one end molded so that the rest of the strip can be pulled through it one way, but not back out again. It's the work of seconds to loop one around a held or restrained criminal's wrists or feet and then pull it tight (which causes a "zip" sound that gives the cuffs their name).

Mechalene Zipcuffs come in three basic types. The *Standard* model suffices for any criminal with ordinary human strength up to superhumans who can lift as much as about 25 metric tons. The *Heavy-Duty* and *Extra-Strength* versions are intended for even stronger supervillains, up to and including the likes of Grond, Ripper, and Gargantua.

Once they're attached, the only easy way to remove Mechalene Zipcuffs from someone is with a special cutting tool, also manufactured solely by Angelstone Laboratories. An ordinary knife or pair of tinsnips can do the trick, but that takes a lot more time and elbow grease. Angelstone sells Zipcuffs in packs of 12, boxed ten packs to the case; each case comes with one cutting tool.

#### Game Information:

- 19 *Standard Mechalene Zipcuff:* Entangle 5d6 (standard effect: 5 BODY), 10 DEF, Takes No Damage From Attacks (+½) (112 Active Points); OAF (-1), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), Set Effect (hands or feet only; -1), Does Not Prevent Use Of Accessible Foci (-1), No Range (-½), Must Follow Grab Or Target Must Be Willing (-½), Vulnerable (special cutting tool, see text; -¼), 12 Charges (-¼)
- 27 *Heavy-Duty Mechalene Zipcuff:* As Standard, but Entangle 7d6 (standard effect: 7 BODY), 14 DEF (157 Active Points)
- 39 *Extra-Strength Mechalene Zipcuff:* As Standard, but Entangle 10d6 (standard effect: 10 BODY), 20 DEF (225 Active Points)

**EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT**

These devices are issued to guards only during crisis situations or when otherwise necessary; they're not carried or used on an everyday basis.

**STRONGHOLD BODY ARMOR**

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Effect:</b>       | <b>Armor (10 PD/10 ED), Activation Roll 14- (see text)</b> |
| <b>Target:</b>       | <b>Self</b>  |
| <b>Duration:</b>     | <b>Persistent</b>  |
| <b>Range:</b>        | <b>Self</b>  |
| <b>END Cost:</b>     | <b>0</b>   |
| <b>Breakability:</b> | <b>10 DEF</b>  |

**Description:** Stronghold's administrators want to keep the guards safe, and one way of doing that is to issue them protective body armor for use during crisis situations (such as escapes or riots). Stronghold guards do not wear body armor on a daily basis.

**Game Information:** *Armor (10 PD/10 ED) (30 Active Points); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (covers all but head and hands; -½), Half Mass (-½). Total cost: 12 points.*

**STRONGHOLD HELMET**

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Effect:</b>       | <b>Armor (10 PD/10 ED), Activation Roll 8- (see text); HRRP; Sight and Hearing Group Flash Defense (10 points)</b> |
| <b>Target:</b>       | <b>Self</b>  |
| <b>Duration:</b>     | <b>Persistent</b>  |
| <b>Range:</b>        | <b>Self</b>  |
| <b>END Cost:</b>     | <b>0</b>   |
| <b>Breakability:</b> | <b>8 DEF</b>   |

**Description:** When necessary, Stronghold guards wear helmets to protect their heads. The helmet features a clear, full-face protective plate. The wearer attaches his Communications Unit (see below) to the left side of the helmet and can then speak into it without having to use his hands and see video data and pictures that it projects directly onto the upper left corner of the faceplate.

**Game Information:**

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>Cost</b> | <b>Power</b>  |
| 7           | <i>Protective Helmet:</i> Armor (10 PD/10 ED) (30 Active Points); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 8- (covers Hit Locations 3-5; -2), Half Mass (-½) |
| 7           | <i>Sight Protection:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points); OIF (-½)  |
| 7           | <i>Hearing Protection:</i> Hearing Group Flash Defense (10 points); OIF (-½)  |

**Total cost: 21 points.**

**SH-1-7 PULSON RIFLE**

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Effect:</b>       | <b>Energy Blast 12d6; RKA 3d6; Energy Blast 5d6, NND</b> |
| <b>Target:</b>       | <b>One character</b>                                     |
| <b>Duration:</b>     | <b>Instant</b>   |
| <b>Range:</b>        | <b>300" or 225"</b>                                      |
| <b>Charges:</b>      | <b>2 clips of 30 Charges each</b>                        |
| <b>Breakability:</b> | <b>18 DEF</b>  |

**Description:** When Stronghold's guards need to use force to prevent an escape, quell a riot, or deal with a similar emergency, the armory issues them SH-1-7 Pulson Rifles. The SH-1-7 fires a tuneable pulson beam that can impact, cut, or stun depending on the needs of the shooter. Guards are supposed to rely on settings 1 and 3, avoiding setting 2 (lethal) unless it's absolutely required or they're ordered to use it by a commander.

In situations where the goal is to stun and incapacitate an inmate, guards often prefer the Lightning Stick Taser, which packs a stronger punch. However, the SH-1-7 has a much longer range and more energy, making it invaluable in some situations.

**Game Information:**

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>Cost</b> | <b>Power</b>  |
| 36          | <i>SH-1-7 Pulson Rifle:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve, 2 clips of 30 Charges each for entire reserve (+½); all OAF (-1), Two-Handed (-½) |
| 2u          | 1) <i>Standard Beam:</i> Energy Blast 12d6; OAF (-1), Two-Handed (-½)   |
| 1u          | 2) <i>Intensified Beam:</i> RKA 3d6; OAF (-1), Two-Handed (-½), Requires 3 Charges Per Use (-½)   |
| 2u          | 3) <i>Stunner Beam:</i> Energy Blast 6d6, NND (defense is ED Force Field; +1); OAF (-1), Two-Handed (-½)                                    |

**Total cost: 41 points.**

**LIGHTNING STICK TASER**

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Effect:</b>       | <b>Energy Blast 12d6, NND; HA +3d6</b>    |
| <b>Target:</b>       | <b>One character</b>                      |
| <b>Duration:</b>     | <b>Instant</b>                            |
| <b>Range:</b>        | <b>Touch/12"/Touch</b>                    |
| <b>END Cost:</b>     | <b>30 Charges for entire Multipower/0</b> |
| <b>Breakability:</b> | <b>30 DEF</b>                             |

**Description:** During crisis situations, Stronghold guards carry the "Lightning Stick" taser developed by Angelstone Laboratories. A combination of taser and nightstick, it has several functions. First, the user can touch a target with the metal prongs on the end to deliver a stunning shock. The user can control the amount of volts delivered with a simple thumb switch in the handle, from 2,000 (the amount in a standard taser, and thus suitable for ordinary humans) to 18,000 (upper-end ranges are only for the toughest superhumans). In game terms 2,000 volts is an Energy Blast 8d6, NND; every 2,000 volts beyond that adds +½d6.

Second, the user can fire the metal prongs toward a target up to 12" away, delivering the same sort of stunning shock. Third, a Lightning Stick can function as an ordinary nightstick.

**Game Information:****Cost Power**

- 75 *Lightning Stick Taser*: Multipower, 120-point reserve, 30 Charges for entire reserve (+¼); all OAF (-1)
- 4u 1) *HTH Taser*: Energy Blast 12d6, NND (defense is insulated ED; +1); OAF (-1), No Range (-½), Requires Multiple Charges (1 Charge for 8d6, +1 Charge for every +1 DC thereafter; -¼)
- 5u 2) *Ranged Taser*: Energy Blast 12d6, NND (defense is insulated ED; +1); OAF (-1), Limited Range (12"; -¼), Requires Multiple Charges (1 Charge for 8d6, +1 Charge for every +1 DC thereafter; -¼)
- 6 *Combat Baton*: HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)

**Total cost: 90 points.**

## SPARC Armor

In 2002, Stronghold was budgeted for and commissioned the design of a suit of powered armor suitable for the guards to wear during emergencies. Designated SPARC — Stronghold Powered Armor for Restraint and Control — the suits are intended to help recapture escaping felons and defuse dangerous incidents. So far Stronghold has taken possession of less than a dozen SPARC suits due to cost overruns, technological problems, and the like — but at times those suits have proven invaluable. The accompanying character sheet describes a guard wearing a SPARC suit.

### GUARD IN SPARC ARMOR

| Val   | Char | Cost   | Roll    | Notes                                 |
|-------|------|--------|---------|---------------------------------------|
| 13+20 | STR  | 3+10*  | 12-/16- | Lift 150/2,400 kg; 2½d6/6½d6 [1/3]    |
| 13+7  | DEX  | 9+10*  | 12-/13- | OCV: 4/7/DCV: 4/7                     |
| 13+7  | CON  | 6+7*   | 12-/13- |                                       |
| 10    | BODY | 0      | 11-     |                                       |
| 13    | INT  | 3      | 12-     | PER Roll 12-                          |
| 10    | EGO  | 0      | 11-     | ECV: 3                                |
| 15+10 | PRE  | 5+7 †  | 12-/14- | PRE Attack: 3d6/5d6                   |
| 10    | COM  | 0      | 11-     |                                       |
| 6     | PD   | 3      |         | Total: 26 PD (20 rPD)                 |
| 6     | ED   | 3      |         | Total: 26 ED (20 rED)                 |
| 3+2   | SPD  | 7+13 † |         | Phases: 4, 8, 12, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12     |
| 6     | REC  | 0      |         |                                       |
| 26    | END  | 0      |         |                                       |
| 24    | STUN | 0      |         | <b>Total Characteristics Cost: 86</b> |

\*: OIF (-½) and No Figured Characteristics (-½)

†: OIF (-½)

**Movement:** Running: 11"/22"  
Leaping: 6½"/13"

### Cost Powers END

- 70 *Gauntlet Pulson Blasters*: Multipower, 70-point reserve, 64 Charges for entire reserve (+½); all OIF (-½)
- 5u 1) *Standard Beam*: Energy Blast 14d6; OIF (-½)
- 3u 2) *Intensified Beam*: RKA 4d6; OIF (-½), Requires 3 Charges Per Use (-½)
- 5u 3) *Stunner Beam*: Energy Blast 7d6, NND (defense is ED Force Field; +1); OIF (-½)
- 50 *Gauntlet Tangleweb Projectors*: Entangle 6d6, 9 DEF; OIF (-½), 16 Charges (-0) [16]
- 120 *Built-In Lightning Stick Taser*: Multipower, 120-point reserve, 60 Charges for entire reserve (+½); all OIF (-½)
- 5u 1) *HTH Taser*: Energy Blast 12d6, NND (defense is insulated ED; +1); OIF (-½), No Range (-½), Requires Multiple Charges (1 Charge for 8d6, +1 Charge for every +1 DC thereafter; -¼)
- 6u 2) *Ranged Taser*: Energy Blast 12d6, NND (defense is insulated ED; +1); OIF (-½), Limited Range (12"; -¼), Requires Multiple Charges (1 Charge for 8d6, +1 Charge for every +1 DC thereafter; -¼)

|   |   |            |            |  |
|---|---|------------|------------|--|
| 7 | <i>Built-In Lightning Stick Taser:</i> HA +3d6; OIF (-½), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)  |            |            |  |
|   | Martial Arts: <i>Stronghold Guard Training</i>  |            |            |  |
|   | <b>Maneuver</b>   | <b>OCV</b> | <b>DCV</b> | <b>Notes</b>                               |
| 5 | Block   | +1         | +3         | Block, Abort                               |
| 4 | Disarm  | -1         | +1         | Disarm, 23/43 STR                          |
| 4 | Dodge   | —          | +5         | Dodge all attacks, Abort                   |
| 4 | Escape  | +0         | +0         | 28/48 STR vs. Grabs                        |
| 4 | Hold  | -1         | -1         | Grab Three Limbs, 23/43 STR for holding on |
| 4 | Joint Lock/Throw  | +1         | +0         | Grab One Limb; 1d6 NND(7); Target Falls    |
| 4 | Punch   | +0         | +2         | 4½d6/8½d6 Strike                           |
| 3 | Takedown  | +1         | +1         | 2½d6/6½d6 Strike; Target Falls             |
| 2 | Use Art with Clubs, Chain And Rope Weapons  |            |            |  |
| 7 | <i>Leg Servoes:</i> Running +5" (11" total); OIF (-½)   |            |            |  |
| 6 | <i>Communications System:</i> HRRP (Radio Group); OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½) |            |            |  |
| 3 | <i>Thermal Sensors:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OIF (-½)   |            |            |  |
| 3 | <i>Nightsight:</i> Nightvision; OIF (-½)  |            |            |  |

**Skills**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 3 | +1 with Stronghold Guard Training  |
| 3 | Concealment 12-  |
| 2 | KS: Penological Law 11-  |
| 2 | KS: Stronghold Inmates 11-   |
| 2 | PS: Prison Guard 11-   |
| 2 | WF: Small Arms   |
| 6 | KSs, PSs, or other Background Skills representing hobbies, previous jobs, and the like |

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 344**

**Total Cost: 430**

**50+ Disadvantages**

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 5   | Distinctive Features: Insignia (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable) |
| 15  | Hunted: Stronghold Administrators 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)               |
| 20  | Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)               |
| 340 | Experience Points   |

**Total Disadvantage Points: 430**

**Description:** The SPARC powered armor is colored dark green and gold: green chestpiece (except for a T-shaped section across the shoulders/neck and down the front and back center), "trunks," legs, and arms; gold boots, gloves, T, and helmet. The helmet is a large, dome-shaped device that is most easily fitted to the armor by someone other than the wearer; the gauntlets are also unusually large due to their built-in weapons.

## Robots

To augment the standard guard corps Stronghold has a small force of security robots in various configurations. They're expensive to operate (and even costlier to replace), so they aren't used in everyday situations.

### STRONGHOLD GUARD ROBOT, TYPE I

| Val  | Char  | Cost | Roll | Notes                                 |
|--|---|------|------|---------------------------------------|
| 0  | STR   | -10  | 9-   | Lift 25 kg; 0d6 [0]                   |
| 25   | DEX   | 45   | 14-  | OCV: 8/DCV: 8                         |
| 10   | CON   | 0    | 11-  |                                       |
| 12   | BODY  | 4    | 11-  |                                       |
| 15   | INT   | 5    | 12-  | PER Roll 12-                          |
| 0  | EGO   | —    | 11-  | ECV: 3                                |
| 10   | PRE   | 0    | 11-  | PRE Attack: 2d6                       |
| 10   | COM   | 0    | 11-  |                                       |
| 10   | PD  | 30   |      | Total: 10 PD (10 rPD)                 |
| 10   | ED  | 27   |      | Total: 10 ED (10 rED)                 |
| 4  | SPD   | 5    |      | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12                   |
| 2  | REC   | 0    |      |                                       |
| 0  | END   | -10  |      |                                       |
| —  | STUN  | —    |      | <b>Total Characteristics Cost: 96</b> |
| <b>Movement:</b> Running: 0"/0"<br>Flight: 20"/80"               |   |      |      |                                       |
| <b>Cost Powers</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>END</b></span> |   |      |      |                                       |
| 100  | <i>Multiphasic Pulson Blaster:</i> Multipower, 100-point reserve  |      |      |                                       |
| 9u   | 1) <i>Standard Pulson Blast:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)   | 0    |      |                                       |
| 10u  | 2) <i>Interphasic Pulson Blast:</i> Energy Blast 10d6, Affects Desolidified (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)   | 0    |      |                                       |
| 10u  | 3) <i>Wide Pulson Blast:</i> Energy Blast 10d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)   | 0    |      |                                       |
| 10u  | 4) <i>Intense Pulson Blast:</i> Energy Blast 10d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)   | 0    |      |                                       |
| 10u  | 5) <i>Stunning Pulson Blast:</i> Energy Blast 8d6, NND (defense is ED Force Field/Wall; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)  | 0    |      |                                       |
| 10u  | 6) <i>Enervating Pulson Blast:</i> Drain STUN 5d6, Ranged (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)   | 0    |      |                                       |
| 15   | <i>Robot Body:</i> Does Not Bleed   | 0    |      |                                       |
| 45   | <i>Robot Body:</i> Takes No STUN  | 0    |      |                                       |
| 1  | <i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on 0 STR   | 0    |      |                                       |
| 30   | <i>Robot Body:</i> Damage Resistance (10 PD/10 ED)  | 0    |      |                                       |
| 45   | <i>Robot Body:</i> Life Support: Total  | 0    |      |                                       |
| 79   | <i>Hoverpads:</i> Flight 20", x4 Noncombat, No Turn Mode (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)  | 0    |      |                                       |
| -12  | <i>No Legs:</i> Running -6" (0" total)  | 0    |      |                                       |
| -2   | <i>No Legs:</i> Swimming -2" (0" total)   | 0    |      |                                       |
| 9  | <i>Encrypted Radio Link:</i> Mind Link (with up to four other Stronghold robots and/or SIMON); Affected As Radio Group As Well As Mental Group (-¼), Only With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1) | 0    |      |                                       |

|    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 5  | <i>Visual Sensors:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)                              | 0 |
| 5  | <i>Visual Sensors:</i> Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)                           | 0 |
| 10 | <i>Visual Sensors:</i> Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) for Sight Group      | 0 |
| 15 | <i>Visual Sensors:</i> Microscopic x1000 (Sight Group)                                | 0 |
| 9  | <i>Visual Sensors:</i> Telescopic (+6 versus Range Modifier) for Sight Group          | 0 |
| 20 | <i>Sonar:</i> Active Sonar (Hearing Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) | 0 |
| 3  | <i>Auditory Sensors:</i> Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)                        | 0 |
| 12 | <i>Radio Sensors:</i> HRRP (Radio Group)  | 0 |
| 20 | <i>Radar:</i> Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees)          | 0 |
| 6  | <i>Sensor Enhancements:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups                              | 0 |

### Talents

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 3 | <i>Onboard Computer Systems:</i> Absolute Range Sense |
| 3 | <i>Onboard Computer Systems:</i> Absolute Time Sense  |
| 3 | <i>Onboard Computer Systems:</i> Bump Of Direction    |
| 3 | <i>Onboard Computer Systems:</i> Lightning Calculator |

### Skills

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 12 | +4 with <i>Multiphasic Pulson Blaster</i> Multipower |
| 20 | +4 DCV   |
| 7  | Stealth 16-  |

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 525**

**Total Cost: 621**

### 200+ Disadvantages

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 5   | <i>Physical Limitation:</i> Affected By Cyberkinesis (has EGO 25 for purposes of cyberkinetic powers, and can be affected by cyberkinesis-based Presence Attacks) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing) |
| 25  | <i>Psychological Limitation:</i> Must Obey Programmer's/Owner's Commands (Very Common, Total)  |
| 391 | Experience Points  |

**Total Disadvantage Points: 621**

**Description:** The Type I guard robot is sometimes referred to as the "UFO" by prison guards and inmates alike. It's a largely featureless disk about two feet in diameter, six inches thick in the center, and two inches thick at the outer edges. Mounted on the bottom side are four small hoverpads that allow it to fly. Built into its rim is a Multiphasic Pulson Blaster that emits a variety of phased pulson beams able to hurt most targets (even intangible ones). Type Is also come with a wide suite of sensory devices, including 360-degree sonar and radar. They also maintain an encrypted radio link to up to four other robots and or SIMON (Stronghold Interphasic Memory Online Neuronet, the prison's supercomputer).

**STRONGHOLD GUARD ROBOT, TYPE II**

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes                                  |
|-----|------|------|------|--|
| 50  | STR  | 40   | 19-  | Lift 25 tons; 10d6 [0]                 |
| 18  | DEX  | 24   | 13-  | OCV: 6/DCV: 6                          |
| 10  | CON  | 0    | 11-  |  |
| 20  | BODY | 20   | 13-  |  |
| 15  | INT  | 5    | 12-  | PER Roll 12-                           |
| 0   | EGO  | —    | 11-  | ECV: 3                                 |
| 10  | PRE  | 0    | 11-  | PRE Attack: 2d6                        |
| 10  | COM  | 0    | 11-  |  |
| 12  | PD   | 27   |      | Total: 12 PD (12 rPD)                  |
| 12  | ED   | 33   |      | Total: 12 ED (12 rED)                  |
| 4   | SPD  | 12   |      | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12                    |
| 12  | REC  | 0    |      |  |
| 0   | END  | -10  |      |  |
| —   | STUN | —    |      | <b>Total Characteristics Cost: 151</b> |

**Movement:** Running: 11"/22"

| Cost | Powers  | END |
|------|---|-----|
| 100  | <i>Multiphasic Pulson Blaster:</i> Multipower, 100-point reserve  |     |
| 9u   | 1) <i>Standard Pulson Blast:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)   | 0   |
| 10u  | 2) <i>Interphasic Pulson Blast:</i> Energy Blast 10d6, Affects Desolidified (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)   | 0   |
| 10u  | 3) <i>Wide Pulson Blast:</i> Energy Blast 10d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)   | 0   |
| 10u  | 4) <i>Intense Pulson Blast:</i> Energy Blast 10d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)   | 0   |
| 10u  | 5) <i>Stunning Pulson Blast:</i> Energy Blast 8d6, NND (defense is ED Force Field/Wall; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)  | 0   |
| 10u  | 6) <i>Enervating Pulson Blast:</i> Drain STUN 5d6, Ranged (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)   | 0   |
| 100  | <i>Neurophasic Ray:</i> Drain 4d6, any two Characteristics at once (+½), Ranged (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)   | 0   |
| 120  | <i>Glue Projector:</i> Entangle 6d6, 6 DEF, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)   | 0   |
| 15   | <i>Robot Body:</i> Does Not Bleed   | 0   |
| 45   | <i>Robot Body:</i> Takes No STUN  | 0   |
| 25   | <i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on 50 STR  | 0   |
| 11   | <i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on Running   | 0   |
| 5    | <i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on Leaping   | 0   |
| 1    | <i>Tireless:</i> Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) on Swimming  | 0   |
| 36   | <i>Robot Body:</i> Damage Resistance (12 PD/12 ED)  | 0   |
| 45   | <i>Robot Body:</i> Life Support: Total  | 0   |
| 10   | <i>Robot Legs:</i> Running +5" (11" total)  | 0   |
| 9    | <i>Encrypted Radio Link:</i> Mind Link (with up to four other Stronghold robots and/or SIMON); Affected As Radio Group As Well As Mental Group (-¼), Only With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1) | 0   |
| 5    | <i>Visual Sensors:</i> Infrared Perception  | 0   |

|    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
|    | (Sight Group)   | 0 |
| 5  | <i>Visual Sensors:</i> Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)                           | 0 |
| 10 | <i>Visual Sensors:</i> Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) for Sight Group      | 0 |
| 15 | <i>Visual Sensors:</i> Microscopic x1000 (Sight Group)                                | 0 |
| 9  | <i>Visual Sensors:</i> Telescopic (+6 versus Range Modifier) for Sight Group          | 0 |
| 20 | <i>Sonar:</i> Active Sonar (Hearing Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) | 0 |
| 3  | <i>Auditory Sensors:</i> Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)                        | 0 |
| 12 | <i>Radio Sensors:</i> HRRP (Radio Group)  | 0 |
| 20 | <i>Radar:</i> Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees)          | 0 |
| 6  | <i>Sensor Enhancements:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups                              | 0 |

**Talents**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 3 | <i>Onboard Computer Systems:</i> Absolute Range Sense |
| 3 | <i>Onboard Computer Systems:</i> Absolute Time Sense  |
| 3 | <i>Onboard Computer Systems:</i> Bump Of Direction    |
| 3 | <i>Onboard Computer Systems:</i> Lightning Calculator |

**Skills**

|    |                    |
|----|--------------------|
| 32 | +4 with All Combat |
|----|--------------------|

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 730**

**Total Cost: 881**

**200+ Disadvantages**

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 5   | Physical Limitation: Affected By Cyberkinesis (has EGO 25 for purposes of cyberkinetic powers, and can be affected by cyberkinesis-based Presence Attacks) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing) |
| 0   | Physical Limitation: Human Size   |
| 25  | Psychological Limitation: Must Obey Programmer's/Owner's Commands (Very Common, Total)  |
| 651 | Experience Points   |

**Total Disadvantage Points: 881**

**Description:** The Type II guard robot is a hulking humanoid form seven feet tall; to many people it looks a lot like the powered armor worn by the supervillain Armadillo, except that (a) its plating is smooth, without a "scales" motif, and (b) there are no "eyes" or other features on its roughly cylinder-shaped "head" (which gives them a somewhat disturbing appearance as far as most people are concerned).

In addition to servos that can lift up to 25 tons, the Type II is armed with several weapons. Built into its right arm is a Multiphasic Pulson Blaster like the one in the Type I robot (see above). Its left arm has a Glue Projector that it can use to restrain most supervillains. Built into its chest is a neurophasic ray that can interfere with the neural systems of living beings (or the circuitry of machines) for a variety of offensive effects. Type IIs also come with the same sensor package as Type Is.

## OTHER STAFF

Not everyone at Stronghold is an administrator or a guard. Since inmates aren't allowed to have jobs, the superprison requires a substantial workforce to keep everything running smoothly — secretaries, cooks, janitors, technicians, and plenty of others. Some of them include:

### IVIDIO AGAZA

Ovidio Agaza is just one of the dozens of janitors who help keep Stronghold clean. He's usually assigned to the Alpha and Beta levels. What sets him apart is that he actively participates in the superprison's black market. In his cleaning supplies and loose-fitting coverall he can smuggle in all sorts of small objects and carry them from one inmate to another... all for a "small fee," of course. He'll lose his job if he ever finds out, but the money's so good he can't resist taking the chance. About half of his illicit earnings feed his gambling habit; the rest go to his wife for family needs.

### DONNIE "GRAY" GRAYSON

Few people in Stronghold are as hated as "Gray" Grayson, the superprison's head chef ("head executioner is more like it," as Freakshow once said). The truth is that Stronghold's cuisine isn't bad as institutional food goes, but many inmates are used to gourmet fare and find having to eat cafeteria food intolerable. And they blame it all on the cooking staff in general, and Grayson in particular. The truth is Gray is a kind-hearted man who has no idea how universally he's reviled by the people he serves; he'd be deeply hurt to find out, since he does his best to prepare good, nutritious food. He even created a program to donate most of Stronghold's unused food to various New Mexico charities.

### CAROLINE MOSEBY, M.D.

Young, pretty, and vivacious, Dr. Caroline Moseby is one reason why many male inmates who feel even the slightest touch of the sniffles put themselves down for sick call. A dyed-in-the-wool liberal, she began working at clinics helping the poor and disadvantaged after completing her internship. This led to some work with local prisons. When she heard about a job opening at Stronghold's medical facility, she couldn't resist the opportunity to work with supervillains (many of whom she feels are unfairly victimized by the

criminal justice system) because of the unique medical challenges they often present. She often complains to Warden Wildman about how various inmates are treated and argues for greater leeway in addressing their medical problems. The Warden and Chief Grasse (whom she does *not* get along with at all) consistently reject her more extreme suggestions on the grounds that they involve a risk of escape or danger to prison staff.

### MICHAEL "MICK" WATKINS

Mick Watkins is possibly the most beloved member of the Stronghold staff, since he's the one who brings the daily pushcart around to sell snacks, toiletries, and similar non-dangerous items to the staff and inmates. A local who grew up in Banks, he suffers from some mild learning disabilities that make it difficult (if not impossible) for him to hold most jobs. A family friend got him the job at Stronghold, where he's thrived. Friendly and outgoing, he seems to get along with even the most reserved or disturbed inmates. His arrival on a quad usually results in a flurry of buying and the chance to hear the latest gossip, since Mick loves to talk, talk, talk about anything interesting that's going on in the prison.

The other reason the inmates likes to see Mick so much is that he's a linchpin in the Stronghold black market. He secretly transports goods back and forth among inmates for a fee. He won't touch anything dangerous or illegal (like narcotics), but he's got no problem making a few extra bucks carrying cigarettes around.

### PETE WILLIS

Peter "Pete" Willis is one of the many technicians who keep Stronghold's security and monitoring devices in tip-top shape. Unlike most of his colleagues, who enjoy their jobs, Pete can't stand his. He hates New Mexico, he hates his boss, he hates being "ordered around" by "pompous jerks, and he hates having to be around supervillains. He'd much rather work somewhere else... but the money is *really* good and he's got a mountain of credit card debt to pay off, so he can't afford to quit. But if something doesn't change, sooner or later... probably sooner... he's going to change from "irked" employee to "disgruntled" employee — and he's in a position to cause a *lot* of trouble, perhaps even precipitate another Great Stronghold Breakout, if he put his mind to it.

# INMATES



## Deathstroke

**Background/History:** Damian and Adrian DuMorte were born and raised in Alaska. When they were nine and seven, respectively, their father, a kindly man, died of an unexpected heart attack. Two years later their mother remarried, but the man she thought would make a good father for her boys turned out to be an ogre. Abusive and cruel, he imposed strict rules on the household and beat the boys for even the slightest acts of disobedience.

Things got worse when the boys were in their early teens and their mutant powers — Damian's control of sound, Adrian's control of ice and cold — manifested. Now their stepfather had one more thing to hate them for. Fearing that other people would turn on the whole family if they found out the boys were "muties," he ordered them not to use their powers at all. Whenever he caught them breaking this rule, the beatings they got were particularly savage. But this didn't stop them from practicing with their powers; it just made them bitter and angry, with an intense hatred for authority figures.

By the time they were in their late teens, the brothers' powers had become strong enough, and they'd learned enough about using them, to stand up for themselves. The next time their stepfather came after them, Adrian froze him in a block of ice. He swore and struggled, saying he was going to "kill both of you to protect real people from freaks!" That was the final straw for Damian, who unleashed a sonic scream that broke half the bones in the man's body and ruptured his lungs. They left him to die in agony and fled Alaska forever.

Immensely proud of their powers and certain they could become fabulously rich as supervillains, they designed costumes and chose the names "Deathsinger" and "Frost." They enjoyed some early successes, though nothing major. They fought superheroes several times, and were caught on more than one occasion, but somehow they always managed to escape before they wound up in Stronghold.

In 1989 Deathsinger decided they needed to "hit the big time" and launch some *major* schemes. That meant recruiting other villains and forming a team under his leadership; there was only so much the two of them could do on their own. He put out some feelers in the underworld and soon had a team of five. The three new additions were: Shockwave, a super-strong enforcer from Jersey; Stinger, whose insect powers were often eclipsed by his intellectual vanity and arrogance; and Death

Commando, a military veteran with a suit of light powered armor, a blaster rifle, and a bad attitude.

Christening his team "Deathstroke," Deathsinger set out to make a mark on the underworld. Unfortunately his overconfidence and ambition weren't matched by his team's competence. None of them were underpowered or inexperienced... but somehow nothing seemed to go their way. The few successes they achieved were more than offset by the jobs they botched or the times they had to flee from superheroes. Despondent, Deathsinger actually hired a publicist to try to change the team's image. The publicist created new costumes for the team, convinced Deathsinger to change his name to the more ominous "Requiem," and added a new member, a female mentalist named Scatterbrain, to the team. It seemed like a good start on a new stage of their criminal careers.

Requiem thought things had finally turned around in 1993 when Deathstroke teamed up with a scientific genius named Strangluff Draconis (no relation to the VIPER villain Draconis) in a scheme to take over the world. Doctor Draconis wore powered armor that made him a match for any member of Deathstroke, and when properly seeded throughout the world his secret robot armies would allow him and his allies to become rulers of the Earth. But it turned out he was using Deathstroke for his own ends. When Requiem realized what was going on, he and his teammates turned on Dr. Draconis and helped the Sentinels defeat him. They paid a high price — one of Draconis's energy bolts blew a hole the size of a fist through Death Commando's chest — but because they were instrumental in saving the world, the Sentinels didn't turn them in.

That proved to be a mistake, since Requiem, despite his arrogance, was no fool. He took gigabytes of Dr. Draconis's scientific data with him when he left and immediately started working with underworld scientists to put it to use. The plan he came up with was to extort ransoms from Earth's governments after putting a massive energy cannon, nicknamed "the Dagger," into orbit around the planet. For once, the scheme was actually working as planned, and the world trembled at Deathstroke's feet! But then the Justice Squadron found the team's secret headquarters and attacked. The battle raged long and hard... and then a punch from Brawler knocked Requiem into one of the control consoles for the orbital laser cannon, changing its target from Washington, DC to the battlefield. It fired, and before the Squadron could shut it off Shockwave, Stinger, and Scatterbrain had been vaporized.

This time Requiem and Frost weren't so lucky. They were arrested, tried, and convicted of dozens of crimes, including manslaughter counts for the deaths of their teammates. Life sentences in Stronghold followed... and they've been there ever since.

**Campaign Use:** Requiem and Frost still think of themselves as being part of the "team" Deathstroke, though at this point it's just the two of them so it's not really a team. Their mutant physiologies give them long lifespans, so they could be in Stronghold for decades... or could be ready anytime for an opportunity to escape. Their status as lifers and the fact that they've always got each other's backs makes them something of a force to be reckoned with in the prison community.

**Appearance:** Requiem and Frost are twin brothers; they're both white men, 5'11" tall, with athletic but not overly muscular builds, brown hair, and hazel eyes (though when Frost uses his powers his eyes change to an icy blue-white). However, compared to his brother (or any other human), Frost is noticeably pale-skinned. When they were still active supercriminals, they brother wore costumes of similar design: boots, gloves, belt, central chest, and raised collar of a main color; and a half-face mask, side panels, and legs of a secondary color. For Requiem, the primary color was red, the secondary color black. For Frost, the primary color was an icy blue, the secondary color white. Their belt buckles were a distinctive skull.

## DEATHSTROKE PLOT SEEDS

Doctor Draconis wasn't captured when his scheme came to an end — the Sentinels thought he was killed in the explosion that destroyed his secret laboratory, but he escaped. It took years for him to recover and rebuild his operation, but now he's ready to strike again! But before he launches his next scheme, he intends to get revenge on the two surviving villains who betrayed him....

Determined to rebuild his team, Requiem begins "sounding out" villains in Stronghold about joining up. Since he's already got two energy projectors, he's looking for bricks, speedsters, and criminals with technical and fighting skills. Once he's got three or four more people on board, escape planning will begin.

A musical entertainer known to the PCs is coming to give a concert at Stronghold. Requiem believes that if he and Frost can gain access to the sound amplification equipment, even for just a few seconds, Frost can use his powers to enhance the performance of the electronic devices and then Requiem can "amp up" his powers to the point where he can blow out the power negators and escape.

## REQUIEM

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes                                  |
|-----|------|------|------|--|
| 15  | STR  | 5    | 12-  | Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]                   |
| 20  | DEX  | 30   | 13-  | OCV: 7/DCV: 7                          |
| 23  | CON  | 26   | 14-  |  |
| 13  | BODY | 6    | 12-  |  |
| 15  | INT  | 5    | 12-  | PER Roll 12-                           |
| 14  | EGO  | 8    | 12-  | ECV: 5                                 |
| 20  | PRE  | 10   | 13-  | PRE Attack: 4d6                        |
| 10  | COM  | 0    | 11-  |  |
| 8   | PD   | 5    |      | Total: 20 PD (12 rPD)                  |
| 12  | ED   | 7    |      | Total: 24 ED (12 rED)                  |
| 5   | SPD  | 20   |      | Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12                |
| 10  | REC  | 4    |      |  |
| 80  | END  | 17   |      |  |
| 33  | STUN | 0    |      | <b>Total Characteristics Cost: 143</b> |

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

| Cost | Powers  | END |
|------|---|-----|
| 60   | <i>Deathsinging:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve   |     |
| 6u   | 1) <i>Sonic Scream I:</i> Energy Blast 12d6   | 6   |
| 6u   | 2) <i>Sonic Scream II:</i> RKA 3d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)   | 2   |
| 6u   | 3) <i>Sonic Scream III:</i> Energy Blast 6d6, NND (defense is Hearing Group Flash Defense or being deaf; +1)                | 6   |
| 3u   | 4) <i>Glass-Shattering Scream:</i> RKA 1d6, Area Of Effect (8" Radius; +1½), Personal Immunity (+¼); No Range (-½)          | 4   |
| 4u   | 5) <i>Deafening Scream:</i> Hearing Group Flash 8d6, Area Of Effect (6" Radius; +1¼), Personal Immunity (+¼); No Range (-½) | 6   |
| 20   | <i>Sonic Control:</i> Find Weakness 11- with Sonic Screams I-II   | 0   |
| 24   | <i>Armored Costume:</i> Armor (12 PD/12 ED); OIF (-½)   | 0   |
| 6    | <i>Fast:</i> Running +3" (9" total)   | 0   |
| 3    | <i>High-Range Hearing:</i> Ultrasonic Hearing (Hearing Group)   | 0   |
| 1    | <i>Mutant Lifespan:</i> Life Support (Longevity: twice normal lifespan)   | 0   |

### Skills

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 12 | +4 with <i>Deathsinging</i> Multipower |
| 2  | KS: History 11-                        |
| 2  | KS: Literature 11-                     |
| 3  | Stealth 13-                            |
| 3  | Streetwise 13-                         |
| 3  | Teamwork 13-                           |

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 164**

**Total Cost: 307**

### 200+ Disadvantages

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 10 | Distinctive Features: Mutant (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses) |
| 20 | Hunted: Stronghold 14- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)  |
| 15 | Psychological Limitation: Overconfidence (Very Common, Moderate)                                  |
| 15 | Psychological Limitation: Loyal To His Brother Frost (Common, Strong)                             |
| 25 | Social Limitation: Prisoner (Very Frequently, Severe)   |

- 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Damian duMorte) (Frequently, Major)
- 10 Unluck 2d6
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from others' Sonic Attacks (Uncommon)

**Total Disadvantage Points: 320**

**Personality/Motivation:** Requiem is known as an overconfident, arrogant blowhard — and the truth is there was a time, in his early Deathsinger days, when that reputation was entirely deserved. Since growing older and switching to “Requiem” he’s become a lot more serious and practical; for the most part his long-winded soliloquies and pronouncements of doom and destruction are a thing of the past.

Requiem’s always been smart, smarter than a lot of people gave him credit for, and he’s taken advantage of his time in Stronghold to read and study. He’s even developed literary ambitions and begun keeping a detailed journal of life in super-prison. If he ever gets out, his increased maturity and insight will make him a far more clever and dangerous criminal than ever before... though it remains to be seen if cleverness can overcome his perpetual bad luck.

**Quote:** “Any man can overcome his own worst qualities — given insight, time, and willpower.”

**Powers/Tactics:** Requiem has sonic powers. His shouts and screams are powerful enough to smash down walls, send opponents flying, and even kill people. They don’t have any applications beyond the offensive, though — try as he might, he never learned to create sonic force-fields or adapt his powers for other uses the way some sonic villains can.

In combat, Requiem prefers to open with a strong offense since he’s not very well protected. Unless he has to make a Half Move for some reason, he usually Finds Weakness and then attacks every Phase. He most often relies on his Energy Blast; he won’t resort to the RKA unless he can’t hurt his opponent any other way or gets really angry.



| FROST |      |      |      |  |  |
|-------|------|------|------|--|--|
| Val   | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes                                  |  |
| 15    | STR  | 5    | 12-  | Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]                   |  |
| 20    | DEX  | 30   | 13-  | OCV: 7/DCV: 7                          |  |
| 23    | CON  | 26   | 14-  |  |  |
| 13    | BODY | 6    | 12-  |  |  |
| 10    | INT  | 0    | 11-  | PER Roll 11-                           |  |
| 12    | EGO  | 4    | 11-  | ECV: 4                                 |  |
| 15    | PRE  | 5    | 12-  | PRE Attack: 3d6                        |  |
| 10    | COM  | 0    | 11-  |  |  |
| 8     | PD   | 5    |      | Total: 20 PD (12 rPD)                  |  |
| 15    | ED   | 10   |      | Total: 27 ED (12 rED)                  |  |
| 5     | SPD  | 20   |      | Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12                |  |
| 10    | REC  | 4    |      |  |  |
| 70    | END  | 12   |      |  |  |
| 35    | STUN | 2    |      | <b>Total Characteristics Cost: 129</b> |  |

**Movement:** Running: 18”/36”

| Cost | Powers  | END |
|------|---|-----|
| 30   | <i>Frost Powers:</i> Elemental Control, 60-point powers   |     |
| 30   | 1) <i>Ice Blast:</i> Energy Blast 12d6  | 6   |
| 30   | 2) <i>Frost Blast:</i> Energy Blast 6d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: Intense Cold]; +1)   | 6   |
| 30   | 3) <i>Ice Dart:</i> RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)   | 0   |
| 15   | 4) <i>Ice Bonds:</i> Entangle 4d6, 6 DEF, Stops A Given Sense (Hearing Group); Vulnerable (Fire/Heat; -1)   | 6   |
| 30   | 5) <i>Icy Fog:</i> Change Environment 8” radius, -3 to Sight Group PER Rolls, -3 Temperature Levels, Multiple Combat Effects, Personal Immunity (+¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)                                   | 2   |
| 21   | 6) <i>Ice Barrier:</i> Force Wall (8 PD/6 ED, up to 7” long and 2” tall), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Cannot Move (-¼), Vulnerable (fire/heat have 2x effect for purposes of determining whether FW collapses; -¼) | 0   |
| 19   | <i>Ice Slides:</i> Running +12” (18” total); Physical Manifestation (-¼), Side Effects (leaves big chunks of ice around the environment; -0)  | 2   |
| 24   | <i>Armored Costume:</i> Armor (12 PD/12 ED); OIF (-½)   | 0   |
| 2    | <i>Used To The Chill:</i> Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Cold)   | 0   |
| 5    | <i>See Heat Patterns:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)   | 0   |
| 1    | <i>Mutant Lifespan:</i> Life Support (Longevity: twice normal lifespan)   | 0   |

**Skills**

- 9 +3 with *Frost Powers* Elemental Control
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 3 Streetwise 12-
- 3 Teamwork 13-

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 255**

**Total Cost: 384**

**200+ Disadvantages**

- 10 Distinctive Features: Mutant (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
- 20 Enraged: by insults, sarcasm, or not being taken seriously (Common), go 11-, recover 11-
- 20 Hunted: Stronghold 14- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Impetuous (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Loyal To His Brother Requiem (Common, Strong)
- 25 Social Limitation: Prisoner (Very Frequently, Severe)
- 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Adrian duMorte) (Frequently, Major)
- 10 Unluck 2d6
- 20 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Fire/Heat (Common)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Fire/Heat (Common)
- 14 Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 384**

**Personality/Motivation:** Unlike his brother, Frost has never entirely grown up. He's still the same greedy, immature, insulting jerk with poor impulse control that he's always been. He's the one who's constantly getting in trouble somehow, forcing Requiem to bail him out (even though Requiem knows, rationally, that Frost will never learn anything until he has to deal with the consequences of his actions).

**Quote:** "Hey Ogre — is your butt as ugly as your face? Wait... it *couldn't* be."

**Powers/Tactics:** Frost has the power to control ice and cold. He can project blasts of cold energy, form blocks of ice around his foes, move quickly on ice slides, or erect ice walls to protect himself and his brother. Despite his impetuousness, he fights pretty intelligently, and is quite skilled at working with his brother to take down an enemy.

In combat, Frost usually tries to incapacitate one or more foes with Entangles, then he and his brother go to work on anyone else. Since he can move around the battlefield much more quickly than Requiem, it falls to him to chase fleeing opponents.

**Independent Villains****ALCHEMICA**

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes                                 |
|-----|------|------|------|---------------------------------------|
| 10  | STR  | 0    | 11-  | Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]                  |
| 16  | DEX  | 18   | 12-  | OCV: 5/DCV: 5                         |
| 14  | CON  | 8    | 12-  |                                       |
| 10  | BODY | 0    | 11-  |                                       |
| 13  | INT  | 3    | 12-  | PER Roll 12-                          |
| 10  | EGO  | 0    | 11-  | ECV: 3                                |
| 13  | PRE  | 3    | 12-  | PRE Attack: 2½d6                      |
| 14  | COM  | 2    | 12-  |                                       |
| 4   | PD   | 2    |      | Total: 12 PD (8 rPD)                  |
| 4   | ED   | 1    |      | Total: 12 ED (8 rED)                  |
| 4   | SPD  | 14   |      | Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12                   |
| 5   | REC  | 0    |      |                                       |
| 28  | END  | 0    |      |                                       |
| 30  | STUN | 8    |      | <b>Total Characteristics Cost: 59</b> |

**Movement:** Running: 6"/12"

| Cost | Powers   | END |
|------|--|-----|
| 25   | <i>Transmutation:</i> Major Transform 1d6 (anything into anything; heals back through another application of this or a similar power, or being touched with a piece of Philosopher's Stone), Improved Results Group (anything; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½) | 0   |
| 45   | <i>Chunk Of Philosopher's Stone:</i> Major Transform +3d6; just like above power but with OAF (-1)   | 0   |
| 30   | <i>Combat Transmutations:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve; all OAF (chunk of Philosopher's Stone; -1)   |     |
| 3u   | 1) <i>Air Into Knockout Gas:</i> Energy Blast 4d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing]; +1), Area Of Effect (4" Radius; +1); OAF (-1), Does Not Work In High Winds Or Rain (-¼)  | 6   |
| 2u   | 2) <i>Air Into Poisonous Gas:</i> RKA 1d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing]; +1), Does BODY (+1), Area Of Effect (4" Radius; +1); OAF (-1), No Knockback (-¼), Does Not Work In High Winds Or Rain (-¼)   | 6   |
| 2u   | 3) <i>Acid Rain:</i> RKA 1d6, Continuous (+1), Penetrating (+½), Indirect (always from above; +¼), Uncontrolled (see USPD; +½); OAF (-1), Limited Range (8"; -¼)   | 5   |
| 1u   | 4) <i>Mind Control Drug:</i> Mind Control 8d6; OAF (-1), Based On CON (-1), Limited Range (4"; -¼), Does Not Work Versus Targets with Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing) (-¼), Not In High Winds, Rain, Or Water (-¼)   | 4   |
| 16   | <i>Armored Costume:</i> Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-½)  | 0   |

**Skills**

- 4 +2 OCV with Transmutation
- 10 *Chunk Of Philosopher's Stone*: +4 OCV with Transmutation; OAF (-1)
- 3 Deduction 12-
- 2 KS: Alchemy 11-
- 2 SS: Geology 11-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 1 Streetwise 8-

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 122**

**Total Cost: 181**

**200+ Disadvantages**

- 10 Distinctive Features: Mutant (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
- 20 Hunted: Stronghold 14- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 25 Social Limitation: Prisoner (Very Frequently, Severe)
- 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Nikki Wilcox) (Frequently, Major)

**Total Disadvantage Points: 270**

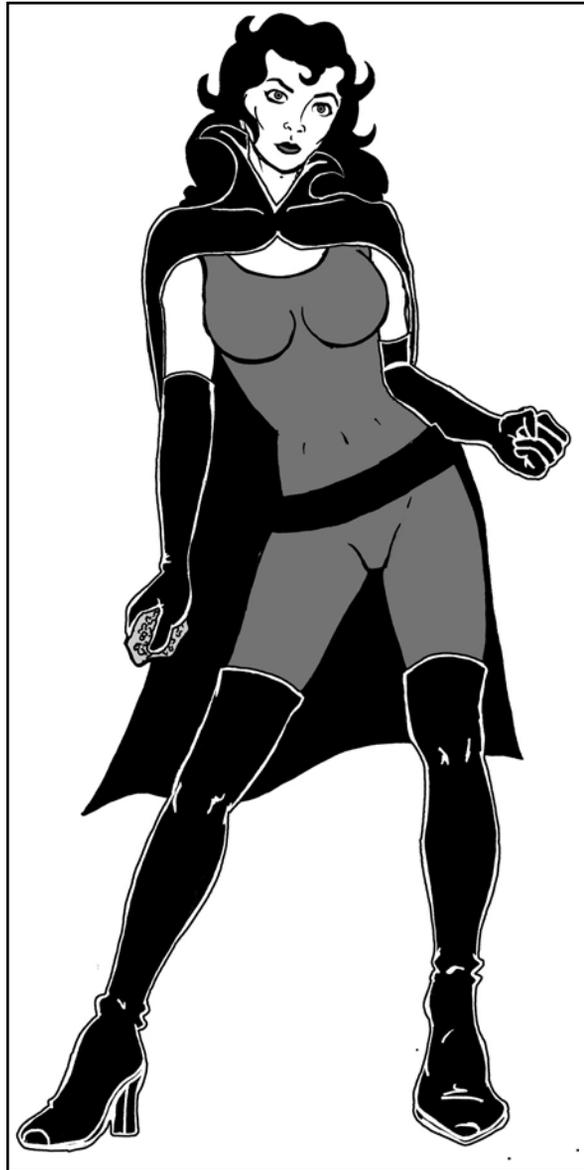
**Background/History:** Nikki Wilcox was born a mutant with the power to transmute matter — but a power so weak she didn't even know about it until one day in college. She was studying to be a geologist, and one of her professors was puzzling over a strange piece of stone he couldn't identify. She decided to take a crack at it when he was out of the lab, hoping to figure out what it was and impress him.

When she touched the rock, something happened to her. It was as if she felt a *flash* through her entire body, and her head swam. She passed out at the lab table. When she awoke just a few seconds later, her hand casually brushed against a glass jar — and it suddenly transformed into a lump of coal!

Wilcox instinctively realized what had happened. There was *power* within her, the power to remake and transmute things. And it was all because of that lump of rock. Her mind awash with visions of what she could do with her newfound powers, she took the rock — which she later learned was a piece of the fabled Philosopher's Stone, though she's never found out where it came from or how her professor got it — and left college for good.

She soon discovered that her powers were relatively weak unless she used the Stone to augment them. A responsible person could have found all sorts of legitimate ways to make a fortune with transmutation powers, but the Stone must have affected Wilcox's mind, too. All she could think of was everything she'd ever been denied in her life, everyone who'd ever done her wrong, and people who had far more money and things than they ever needed when she didn't have anything. It wasn't long before a new supervillainess calling herself *Alchemica* had hit the streets.

Unfortunately, the Philosopher's Stone's effect on her didn't extend to making her superhuman in other ways. She was definitely a little strong, tougher, and faster than the average human, but



compared to many superhumans she was a weakling. Her first few crimes, which mostly involved transmuting doors into air so she could go into jewelry stores and rob them, went well, but then she had a few very narrow escapes when heroes began looking for her. Eventually one caught up with her and she was quickly captured.

Since 1999 Alchemica has been incarcerated in Stronghold, and for the most part has been a model prisoner. She's rated Yellow-3 due to her powers, but she's never made any effort at escaping as far as prison officials know. She just wants to serve the remainder of her 10-year sentence and then find something productive to do with her life.

**Personality/Motivation:** Several years in Stronghold have been... educational for Alchemica. She's had a lot of time to think about her powers and how she can use them to make a better life for herself. She's thought of lots of things she can do with them other than commit crimes, and has even corresponded with Jeff Baker of Trans-City Construction (see *Cops, Crews, And Cabals*) about what he does with his own similar powers.

Unfortunately, her time in prison has also

## ALCHEMICA PLOT SEEDS

Alchemica's chunk of Philosopher's Stone is actually a piece of a Lemurian super-weapon called the Mandragalore (see *Hidden Lands*). As a result, if she gets out and the authorities give it back to her, both Zorran the Artificer and King Arvad of Lemuria are likely to come after her....

Somehow, perhaps with the help of a gadgeteer inmate, Alchemica finds a way to weaken the power negation devices in her cell *just enough* to let her use a tiny trickle of her power. She becomes an economic mainstay of the Stronghold black market, able to create cigarettes or whatever else someone wants... though so far she's turned down any requests to make weapons or other dangerous objects.

Alchemica gets out of Stronghold and gets a job working alongside Jeff Baker at Trans-City Construction. But then someone begins blackmailing her, threatening to reveal some unpleasant facts about things she did, or had done to her, in prison. Since she doesn't know who her blackmailer is (though she has some guesses) and doesn't want to anger him by taking any action, she decides to trick the PCs into taking care of the matter for her.

made her a little bitter. She's seen and had done to her some very unpleasant things, and she thinks it's very unfair that she got such a long sentence even though she only committed a few crimes and never hurt anyone. It probably wouldn't take much in the way of aggravation, frustration, or bad luck to get her to revert to her villainous ways once she's back on the outside — though unless someone trains and equips her better she's not likely to succeed this time, either.

**Quote:** ::looks at tray of prison food:: “Not even my powers could change this slop into something edible.”

**Powers/Tactics:** Alchemica possesses broad (but weak) powers of transmutation. She can, literally, change anything into anything else: a steel door into a pile of cotton balls; a human being into a frog; a pocket comb into a four-carat diamond. Unfortunately, her powers are so weak and work so slowly that they're mostly useless in combat, though she has learned a few combat-effective ways to employ them (such as instantaneously Transforming air into clouds of gas around an opponent's head). Her piece of Philosopher's Stone enhances them to the point where she could be a very dangerous opponent — if she had any tactical sense and if she weren't so weak she usually goes down with one punch. With some proper training and a few pieces of equipment she could become a deadly combatant.

**Campaign Use:** To make Alchemica tougher, remove her dependence on the Philosopher's Stone — just give her Major Transform 4d6 straight up. To weaken her, get rid of her Combat Transmutations.

Alchemica doesn't Hunt anyone.

**Appearance:** Alchemica is a pale-skinned white woman 5'9" tall with black hair reaching to the center of her back and brown eyes. In Stronghold she wears the standard jumpsuit, but during her criminal career she typically wore a green costume with black belt, boot, gloves, and cape (but no mask); she carried in her right hand a fist-sized chunk of Philosopher's Stone that augmented her natural powers.

## DRAGONFLY

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes                                  |
|-----|------|------|------|--|
| 45  | STR  | 35   | 18-  | Lift 12.5 tons; 9d6 [4]                |
| 20  | DEX  | 30   | 13-  | OCV: 7/DCV: 7                          |
| 28  | CON  | 36   | 15-  |  |
| 15  | BODY | 10   | 12-  |  |
| 7   | INT  | -3   | 10-  | PER Roll 10-                           |
| 14  | EGO  | 8    | 12-  | ECV: 5                                 |
| 20  | PRE  | 10   | 13-  | PRE Attack: 4d6                        |
| 3   | COM  | -3   | 10-  |  |
| 15  | PD   | 6    |      | Total: 15 PD (8 rPD)                   |
| 15  | ED   | 9    |      | Total: 15 ED (8 rED)                   |
| 5   | SPD  | 20   |      | Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12                |
| 15  | REC  | 0    |      |  |
| 56  | END  | 0    |      |  |
| 60  | STUN | 8    |      | <b>Total Characteristics Cost: 166</b> |

**Movement:** Running: 6"/12"  
Flight: 20"/40"

| Cost | Powers  | END |
|------|---|-----|
| 25   | <i>Pincer:</i> Multipower, 25-point reserve   |     |
| 2u   | 1) <i>Cutting:</i> HKA 1½d6 (3d6+1 with STR)  | 2   |
| 2u   | 2) <i>Grasping:</i> +25 STR; Only To Grab (-½)                                      | 2   |
| 10   | <i>Hideous:</i> +20 PRE; Only For Fear-/Intimidation-Based Presence Attacks (-1)    | 0   |
| 8    | <i>Chitinous Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (8 PD/8 ED)                                | 0   |
| 9    | <i>Insectile Right Side:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED); Activation Roll 11- (-1)            | 0   |
| 40   | <i>Wings:</i> Flight 20", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Restrained (-½)            | 0   |
| 5    | <i>Multifaceted Eyes:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)                         | 0   |
| 10   | <i>Multifaceted Eyes:</i> Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) for Sight Group | 0   |
| 10   | <i>Wallcrawling:</i> Clinging (normal STR)  | 0   |

### Talents

25 *Insect Senses:* Danger Sense (self only, out of combat, Sense) 13-

### Skills

10 +2 HTH  
2 KS: Insects 11-  
3 Stealth 13-

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 161**

**Total Cost: 327**

### 200+ Disadvantages

20 Distinctive Features: half-insect (Not Concealable; Causes Major Reaction [fear/disgust])  
20 Hunted: Stronghold 14- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)  
25 Psychological Limitation: Hates/Hunts Hornet (Very Common, Total)  
25 Social Limitation: Prisoner (Very Frequently, Severe)  
15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Rick Griswold) (Frequently, Major)  
20 Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Chemicals/Poisons/Drugs (Common)  
2 Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 327**

**Background/History:** Rick Griswold used to be pretty much just another bargain-basement thug — tough, street-smart, willing to do just about anything for money. What set him apart was that he had a little more brains than most. He knew, he just *knew*, that if he kept his ears and eyes open and worked hard, an opportunity would come his way that would make his fortune.

He thought he'd gotten his big break when the supervillain Hornet hired him. Working for a villain was dangerous at times, but it meant a lot more money and you never knew what might happen. Unfortunately for Rick, it turned out that Hornet wanted more than just some extra muscle and a lab assistant. He tricked Rick, sealed him into an experimental "Enthro-Mutation Chamber," and threw the switch.

Agonizing pain, like nothing he'd ever felt, lanced through Rick. He doubled over and fell to the floor of the chamber. He underwent such torture that he didn't even realize he was changing — changing into a man-insect hybrid like Hornet himself!

Gratified to see that his experiment had worked, and certain that the genetic changes he'd inflicted on his minion would ensure his undying loyalty as he'd calculated, Hornet confidently opened the door of the Chamber... only to have Rick attack him! The pain had been so great it had burned through the "loyalty" part of the treatment, and now Rick wanted nothing so much as to kill Hornet with his bare hands. Battle ensued, totally trashing the lab; Hornet barely escaped with his life, and Rick likewise fled just before the cops arrived.

Since he now had insectile eyes and wings, Rick knew he couldn't go back to his ordinary life. Like it or not, the only thing left was to become a supervillain. He chose the name *Dragonfly* and was soon making more money than ever before... though even ten times as much wouldn't have been enough to compensate for what Hornet did to him.

For over half a decade Dragonfly worked for himself, as part of impromptu villain teams, and as a villain-for-hire by master criminals. He noticed his insect features becoming a little more pronounced, here and there, over time, but shrugged it off. In 1996 he was captured by the Liberty League, convicted of multiple violent crimes, and sentenced to life imprisonment in Stronghold.

In the ten years since he arrived at Stronghold, the fact that Dragonfly is continuing to mutate has become undeniable. For some reason the changes begin on the right side of his body, which is now more insect-like than human, and slowly work their way across his form. It's reached the point where his mind is often affected; he doesn't always know that he's human. Stronghold's doctors have been unable to do anything to stop or slow down the changes, and Warden Wildman is concerned about what to do with him once he devolves into nothing but a monster.



**Personality/Motivation:** At present Dragonfly's just this side of bestial; his human mind remains in control, though it slips occasionally. One day soon it's likely to lose control for good. The only emotion that both his "personalities" share is a total hatred of Hornet and a desire to kill him as painfully as possible.

**Quote:** None. Dragonfly rarely speaks to anyone these days.

**Powers/Tactics:** There was a time when Dragonfly's powers were more like Hornet's — in particular, he used to have a "Sting Blast" ranged attack. As he's continued to mutate, he lost that ability, but in the process became more hideous, strong, and tough. At this point he's basically a low-powered brick with a few extra, quirky abilities. He no longer has the intelligence to fight with tactics or skill; he simply selects an opponent and smashes and cuts at him until he dies, then moves on to the next target.

Dragonfly's bizarre human-insect physiology makes him particularly susceptible to the effects of chemicals, drugs, and the like. No one (not even him) knows this, though as he's become more

## DRAGONFLY PLOT SEEDS

The classic Dragonfly plot: Dragonfly mutates to the point where he's an immensely powerful man-insect monster, smashes out of his cell, and starts a general escape because of all the damage he's causing. Stronghold calls the PCs in to keep things under control.

In one of his (increasingly rare) moments of lucidity, Dragonfly contacts the PCs and begs them to find a cure for his condition. He thinks Hornet's blood might be an effective antidote... but is he just trying to trick the heroes into hurting his hated foe?

Dragonfly develops the ability to mutate ordinary insects into puppy-sized, flesh-eating monsters. Not even Stronghold is totally pest-proof....

insect-like he's developed a quasi-instinctual fear about such things.

**Campaign Use:** Aside from using Dragonfly as a possible catalyst for a major breakout (assuming he eventually changes into something *very* powerful and totally uncontrollable), the best plot hook you can create with him is for a Stronghold-based campaign: put Hornet in Stronghold, sit back, and wait for something to happen.

To make Dragonfly tougher, give him more insect powers: a "Cocoon Projection" Entangle; a Sting Touch poison with various effects; the ability to summon swarms of insects. To weaken him, reduce his STR to 30-35, or remove his humanity altogether, making him nothing but an instinct-driven monster who still retains its hatred for Hornet.

Dragonfly doesn't Hunt heroes... but he will Hunt Hornet, if he ever escapes.

**Appearance:** There was a time, shortly after Hornet mutated him, when Dragonfly still looked mostly human. He had the compound eyes of an insect, and some insectile facial features (including small antennae), and dragonfly-like wings projecting from his shoulderblades, but that was it.

Those days are long past. In the succeeding years Dragonfly began to mutate more and more, though for some reason the changes have occurred primarily on the right side of his body. His right half is now mostly insectile — his skin has become a thicker chitinous armor; his hand is now a sort of scorpion-like pincer; his right antenna is larger, longer, and heavy enough to droop; his right leg is more grasshopper-like than human. In short, his right half is hideously insectile. His left half still remains mostly human, though some changes can be seen there as well: the left antenna is larger, and he has only two fingers and a thumb on his left hand. Both his eyes remain compound, though they're now larger and more bulging than before. He wears a standard Stronghold orange jumpsuit, though on his right side his insectile form creates odd rips and bulges.

## GEOHERMAL

| Val | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes                                  |
|-----|------|------|------|--|
| 30  | STR  | 20   | 15-  | Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 [3]                 |
| 28  | DEX  | 54   | 15-  | OCV: 9/DCV: 9                          |
| 40  | CON  | 60   | 17-  |  |
| 20  | BODY | 20   | 13-  |  |
| 20  | INT  | 10   | 13-  | PER Roll 13-                           |
| 20  | EGO  | 20   | 13-  | ECV: 7                                 |
| 30  | PRE  | 20   | 15-  | PRE Attack: 6d6                        |
| 14  | COM  | 2    | 12-  |  |
| 30  | PD   | 24   |      | Total: 30 PD (30 rPD)                  |
| 30  | ED   | 22   |      | Total: 30 ED (30 rED)                  |
| 7   | SPD  | 22   |      | Phases: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12          |
| 30  | REC  | 32   |      |  |
| 120 | END  | 20   |      |  |
| 80  | STUN | 25   |      | <b>Total Characteristics Cost: 361</b> |

**Movement:** Running: 12"/24"  
Tunneling: 20"/40"

| Cost | Powers   | END |
|------|--|-----|
| 114  | <i>Geocontrol:</i> Multipower, 114-point reserve   |     |
| 10u  | 1) <i>Lava Blast:</i> Energy Blast 16d6, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)   | 4   |
| 10u  | 2) <i>Wide Lava Blast:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)  | 4   |
| 9u   | 3) <i>Lava Eruption:</i> Energy Blast 18d6, Indirect (always comes from the ground beneath the target; +¼); Only Versus Targets On Or Within 8" Of The Ground (-¼), Side Effects (always causes environmental damage; -0)                      | 11  |
| 9u   | 4) <i>Wide Lava Eruption:</i> Energy Blast 13d6, Explosion (+½), Indirect (always comes from the ground beneath the target; +¼); Only Versus Targets On Or Within 8" Of The Ground (-¼), Side Effects (always causes environmental damage; -0) | 11  |
| 8u   | 5) <i>Igneous Lance:</i> Energy Blast 12d6, Indirect (see text; +¾); Target Must Be Within 8" Of Earth/Rock (-¼)   | 10  |
| 8u   | 6) <i>Igneous Spear:</i> RKA 4d6, Indirect (see text; +¾); Target Must Be Within 8" Of Earth/Rock (-¼)   | 10  |
| 10u  | 7) <i>Igneous Incarceration:</i> Entangle 8d6, 8 DEF, Stops A Given Sense (Sight and Hearing Groups)   | 10  |
| 7u   | 8) <i>Heatwave:</i> Energy Blast 9d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: Intense Heat]; +1), Explosion (+½); No Range (-½)  | 11  |
| 7u   | 9) <i>Geokinesis:</i> Telekinesis (60 STR), Affects Porous; Only Versus Earth/Rock/Lava (-½)   | 10  |
| 30   | <i>Resilience Of The Earth:</i> Damage Resistance (30 PD/30 ED)  | 0   |
| 120  | <i>Resilience Of The Earth:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, 75%, Resistant   | 0   |
| 15   | <i>Eyes Of Lava:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (15 points)   | 0   |
| 15   | <i>Resilience Of The Earth:</i> Power Defense (15 points)  | 0   |

- 65 *Resilience Of The Earth: Life Support* (Total, including Immunity to all poisons, chemical weapons, diseases, and biowarfare agents) 0
- 125 *Lava's Passage: Tunneling 20"* through DEF 20 materials, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) 5
- 8 *Geo-Riding: Running +6"* (12" total); Side Effect (RKA 1½d6 to ground in an Area Of Effect (Line) equal in size to the distance the character moves, automatically occurs, only affects environment; -½) 1
- 24 *Sense Vibrations: Detect Physical Vibrations 13-* (Touch Group), Discriminatory, Range, Targeting; Only When In Contact With The Ground (-¼) 0

**Perks**

- 15 Money: Filthy Rich

**Talents**

- 3 Bump Of Direction

**Skills**

- 18 +6 with *Geocontrol* Multipower
- 3 SS: Geology 13-
- 1 SS: Physics 8-
- 3 SS: Vulcanology 13-

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 637**

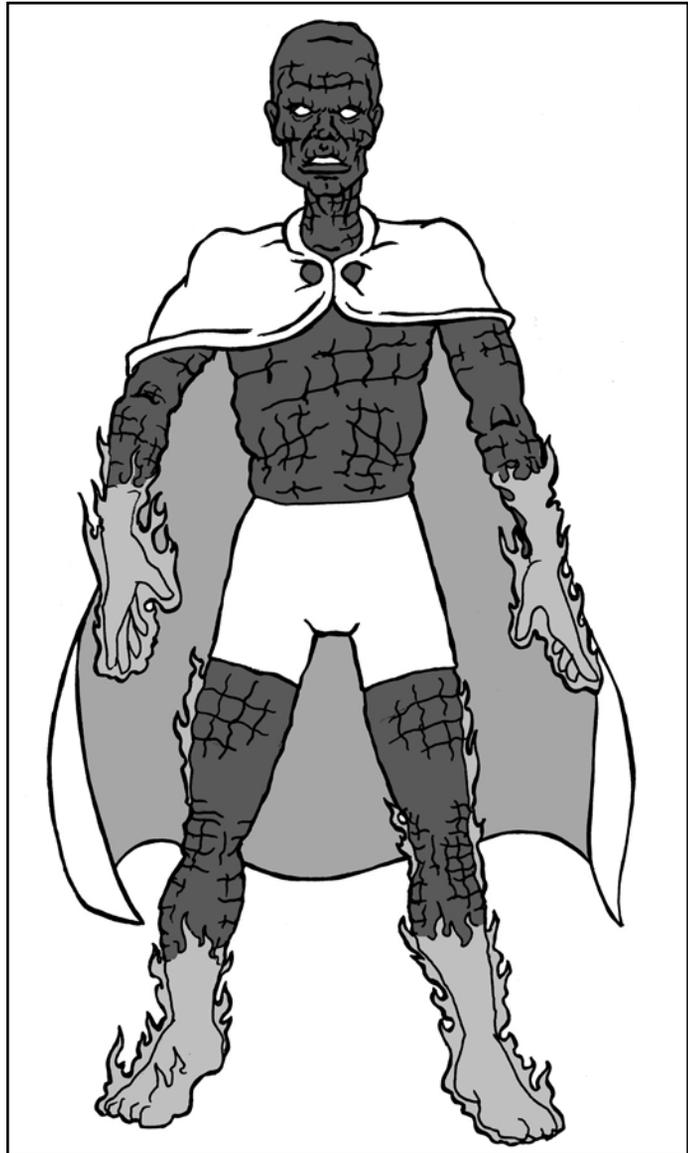
**Total Cost: 998**

**200+ Disadvantages**

- 25 Enraged: if insulted, mocked, or a soliloquy interrupted (Common), go 14-, recover 11-
- 20 Hunted: Stronghold 14- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 10 Hunted: ARGENT 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Determined To Rule Earth And Cleanse Most Of Humanity From It (Very Common, Total)
- 25 Social Limitation: Prisoner (Very Frequently, Severe)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Frequently, Major)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Magnetic and Gravitic Attacks (Uncommon)
- 668 Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 998**

**Background/History:** Jason Dixon was a geologist with a driving ambition: to become the first scientist to take samples of Earth's mantle. Previous attempts to drill down to the mantle had failed, so Dixon had something else in mind: he would build a special suit that would (a) render him intangible so he could get down there, and (b) protect him when he re-solidified to take samples. But suits like that were expensive, and he wasn't having any luck raising funds until he spoke with GeoMax, a company involved in oil drilling and similar pursuit. Unfortunately, what Dixon didn't know was that GeoMax as mostly a front for ARGENT... and ARGENT was willing to sponsor him simply to use him as a guinea pig.



It took over a year, but finally Dixon finished building his suit in 1985. With GeoMax's blessing, he "took off" from their facility near Detroit and began "walking" down toward the mantle. The suit worked perfectly! Eventually he reached his destination, turned solid again, and began taking samples.

That's when the disaster occurred. His GeoMax handlers couldn't understand his radio transmissions; they were too garbled by static and his own terrified screams. But eventually the screams stopped. Assuming he'd been roasted or crushed to death, ARGENT declared the project a failure.

Two days later, a new superhuman announced his existence by causing a volcano to grow up right in the middle of the GeoMax building. Rising from it like a phoenix was a humanoid shape that looked like it was made of igneous rock and fueled by internal lava. "HUMANS!" he shouted in a voice that could be heard for miles. "Your stewardship of this planet has been found wanting. The Earth will be cleansed of your infestation!" Then he began destroying every human structure he could see and killing anyone who

## GEOTHERMAL PLOT SEEDS

The people who worried about imprisoning Geothermal within the Earth were right to be concerned. Over the past decade or so his “connection” with the Earth has slowly but surely been awakening him. Now it’s time for him to break free, destroy this wretched little prison, and continue his mission....

Geothermal’s powers come from his having merged with a member of a species of “lava people” who live in Earth’s mantle. Now they’re ready to invade the surface world... and the first thing they want to do is free their trapped brother from prison....

Geothermal’s powers come from his having somehow been “mystically linked” with the Earth. Some mystics believe that the process can work in reverse — they can cast spells on him to correct global warming and other ecological problems. Is it worth the risk of waking him up? And just who are these mystics anyway?

didn’t get away from him fast enough.

Local Detroit superheroes responded, but were unable to withstand the being’s power. But they held the line long enough for the Sentinels to get there. The Sentinels fought *Geothermal*, as the press christened him, to a standstill; when he was unable to defeat them he fled back into the Earth, to depths where none of the heroes could follow.

Three times after that, in 1987, 1990, and 1992, Geothermal attacked major cities, declaring once more his intention to wipe Humanity off the face of the Earth. Each time he was narrowly defeated by a superhero team... and that last time, the Justice Squadron and Sentinels working together finally managed to knock him out before he could escape. Stronghold personnel were called in to insure he could be held pending trial. He was found guilty of dozens of counts of murder and other violent crimes. His sentence: hot sleep for life.

Since that day in early 1993, Geothermal has been a resident of Level Omega at Stronghold. Some people have questioned the wisdom of placing him so deep within the Earth, but so far he hasn’t even twitched in his sleep.

**Personality/Motivation:** Jason Dixon’s former personality — fun-loving but intense, dedicated to his work, gregarious — has been totally lost. Geothermal doesn’t even know he used to be someone called “Jason Dixon.” All that’s left is an abiding desire to rule the world, largely by eliminating around 90% of Humanity to save Earth from their “infestation.” He’s been adopted as a cause by certain radical environmentalists, who consider him a “political prisoner,” but he doesn’t care for the members of the ecology movement any more than he does for any other human.

**Quote:** “The purity of Earth shall prevail over the corruption of Humanity!”

**Powers/Tactics:** Geothermal possesses tremendous superhuman power involving lava and rock. He can fire blasts of lava, cause mini-eruptions of

lava to spurt up from the ground, and even make finger-like spars of rock lance out of the ground to hit or impale anyone within 8”. He can also tunnel through the ground at high speed and “run” quickly by riding a “wave” of earth and stone. Add to that the fact that he’s enormously resilient, able to withstand damage that would knock most supervillains out cold, and you’ve got one major source of destruction and chaos.

Geothermal likes to open battle with a long-winded Presence Attack that proclaims his purpose and invites his opponents to surrender. If that doesn’t work, he attacks the most powerful-looking foe (or group of foes) with one of his Lava Blasts. If someone interrupts him or makes fun of him, he responds by smashing that foe with the biggest attack he can muster.

**Campaign Use:** Geothermal represents a major risk to Stronghold. If he ever gets out of hot sleep, the destruction he can wreak against an underground installation is inestimable. Just the fact that he could Tunnel right out of the mesa means he’d leave an escape route for dozens of other villains.

To make Geothermal tougher, keep increasing his defenses and STUN (and if necessary, the DCs in his attacks) until he’s a major threat to your entire group of PCs — that’s the level of power he should have. To weaken him, reduce his Damage Reduction to 50%.

**Appearance:** Geothermal is a human male whose skin is the color (and to some extent, consistency) of burnt brown cinders. His eyes have the color and glow of lava, and that same glow can be seen in his mouth when he opens it. He has no hair anywhere on his body. During his villainous career his costume was a pair of trunks and a cloak that matched the color of his eyes; now in “hot sleep” in Stronghold all he wears is a plain white cotton hospital gown.

| GLACIER |      |      |      |  |
|---------|------|------|------|--|
| Val     | Char | Cost | Roll | Notes                                  |
| 80      | STR  | 70   | 25-  | Lift 1,600 tons; 16d6 [8]              |
| 20      | DEX  | 30   | 13-  | OCV: 7/DCV: 7                          |
| 60      | CON  | 100  | 21-  |  |
| 40      | BODY | 60   | 17-  |  |
| 5       | INT  | -5   | 10-  | PER Roll 10-                           |
| 10      | EGO  | 0    | 11-  | ECV: 3                                 |
| 50      | PRE  | 40   | 19-  | PRE Attack: 10d6                       |
| 6       | COM  | -2   | 10-  |  |
| 40      | PD   | 24   |      | Total: 40 PD (40 rPD)                  |
| 40      | ED   | 28   |      | Total: 40 ED (40 rED)                  |
| 6       | SPD  | 30   |      | Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12             |
| 30      | REC  | 4    |      |  |
| 120     | END  | 0    |      |  |
| 110     | STUN | 0    |      | <b>Total Characteristics Cost: 379</b> |

**Movement:** Running: 12"/24"

**Cost Powers** **END**

|     |  |    |  |
|-----|--|----|--|
| 140 | <i>Powers Of The Uttermost North:</i>  |    |  |
|     | Multipower, 140-point reserve  |    |  |
| 9u  | 1) <i>Ice Barrage:</i> Energy Blast 14d6, Area Of Effect (15" Cone; +1); No Range (-½)   | 14 |  |
| 7u  | 2) <i>Breath Of The Uttermost North:</i> Energy Blast 7d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: Intense Cold]; +1), Area Of Effect (15" Cone; +1); No Range (-½)  | 10 |  |
| 78  | <i>Chill Of The Uttermost North:</i> Change Environment 8" radius, -5 Temperature Levels and 3 points of damage (NND, defense is Life Support [Safe Environment: Intense Cold]), Multiple Combat Effects, Mobile (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Always On (-½), No Range (-½) | 0  |  |
| 20  | <i>Great Endurance:</i> Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼) on 80 STR  | 0  |  |
| 40  | <i>Body Of Ice:</i> Damage Resistance (40 PD/40 ED)  | 0  |  |
| 120 | <i>Body Of Ice:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, 75%, Resistant   | 0  |  |
| 18  | <i>Mindless Brute:</i> Mental Defense (20 points total)  | 0  |  |
| 13  | <i>Body Of Ice:</i> Life Support (Safe Environments: High Pressure, Intense Cold; Self-Contained Breathing)  | 0  |  |
| 12  | <i>Long Stride:</i> Running +6" (12" total)  | 1  |  |
| 4   | <i>Reach:</i> Stretching 1", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always Direct (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼)  | 0  |  |

**Skills**

25 +5 HTH

**Total Powers & Skills Cost: 486**

**Total Cost: 865**

**200+ Disadvantages**

- 20 Enraged: if hit with a Fire/Heat attack (Common), go 11-, recover 11-
- 20 Hunted: Stronghold 14- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 5 Physical Limitation: Large (-2 DCV, +2 to others' PER Rolls to perceive him) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Lives To Ravage And Destroy, Particularly Sources Of Warmth (Very Common, Total)
- 25 Social Limitation: Prisoner (Very Frequently, Severe)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Fire/Heat (Common)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Fire/Heat (Common)
- 530 Experience Points

**Total Disadvantage Points: 865**

**Background/History:** Glacier's origins are obscure. He first appeared during the Battle of Detroit as one of the monstrous beings and villains unleashed on the city by Dr. Destroyer. His nature and powers tend to suggest that he's a magical spirit or entity of some sort (perhaps, as some mystics have speculated, a god of the north somehow reduced in power and trapped in a mindless physical form). However, it would be highly unlikely that Dr. Destroyer would become involved with such an entity, much less capture or control it somehow. And yet, breeding or creating a creature of this sort seems beyond even the science of Destroyer or Teleios.

Glacier somehow escaped the carnage of the Battle of Detroit and fled north after being defeated by superheroes. Periodically he appeared again to attack civilization, or as a puppet being controlled by some supervillain. In 2002 the Champions, with the assistance of several other Millennium City heroes, fought him to a standstill and finally knocked him out when some as-yet unknown person let him loose in the City of the Future. Judged to be non-intelligent and thus lacking in civil rights altogether, he was sent without trial to Stronghold to be incarcerated in hot sleep. As of early 2008 he remains in the super-prison, one of the "residents" of its lowest, darkest level.

**Personality/Motivation:** None to speak of. Glacier is an unreasoning, rampaging brute who knows only that he wants to crush, destroy, rend, and kill. He's particularly prone to destroying sources of heat, including electrical lines and generators, furnaces, and living beings.

**Quote:** "Graaar!" (a sound less like a roar, and more like the crackling of ice on a river, or the sound made when part of an iceberg calves off)

**GLACIER PLOT SEEDS**

Glacier's powers begin to "overload" to the point where they affect even hot sleep technology. His coffin becomes icy cold... then rimed with frost... and then the frost starts to spread. If this can't be stopped, the odds are he'll break his coffin soon....

A cult forms around the belief that Glacier is some sort of ancient god. It petitions the government to release him, forms a church, solicits donations, and the like. Is it what it appears to be... or something more sinister?

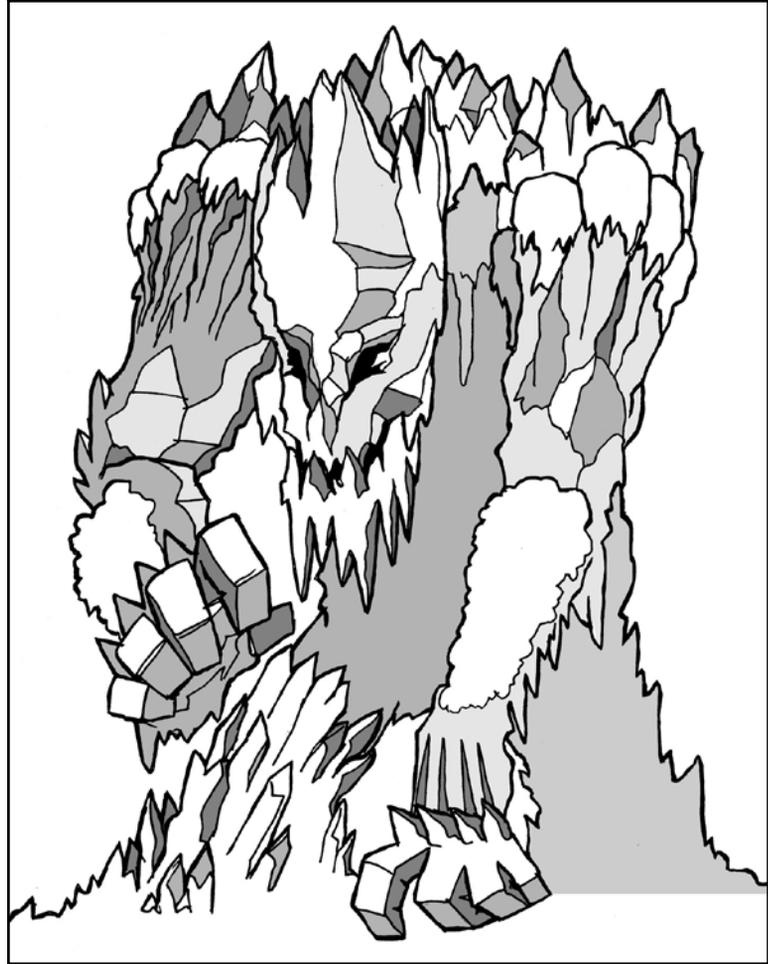
Glacier was created by Dr. Destroyer, and remains responsive to him. If Destroyer sends a signal, the sleeper shall awaken....

**Powers/Tactics:** Glacier has no tactics to speak of. He picks a target (usually the biggest or flashiest superhuman in the vicinity), fixates on it, and smashes it until it stops moving. If attacked by many people at once he uses one of his area-affecting attacks. If a hero (or any feature of the local environment) puts out a lot of heat, he attacks that target first; in part he seems to exist to destroy sources of warmth.

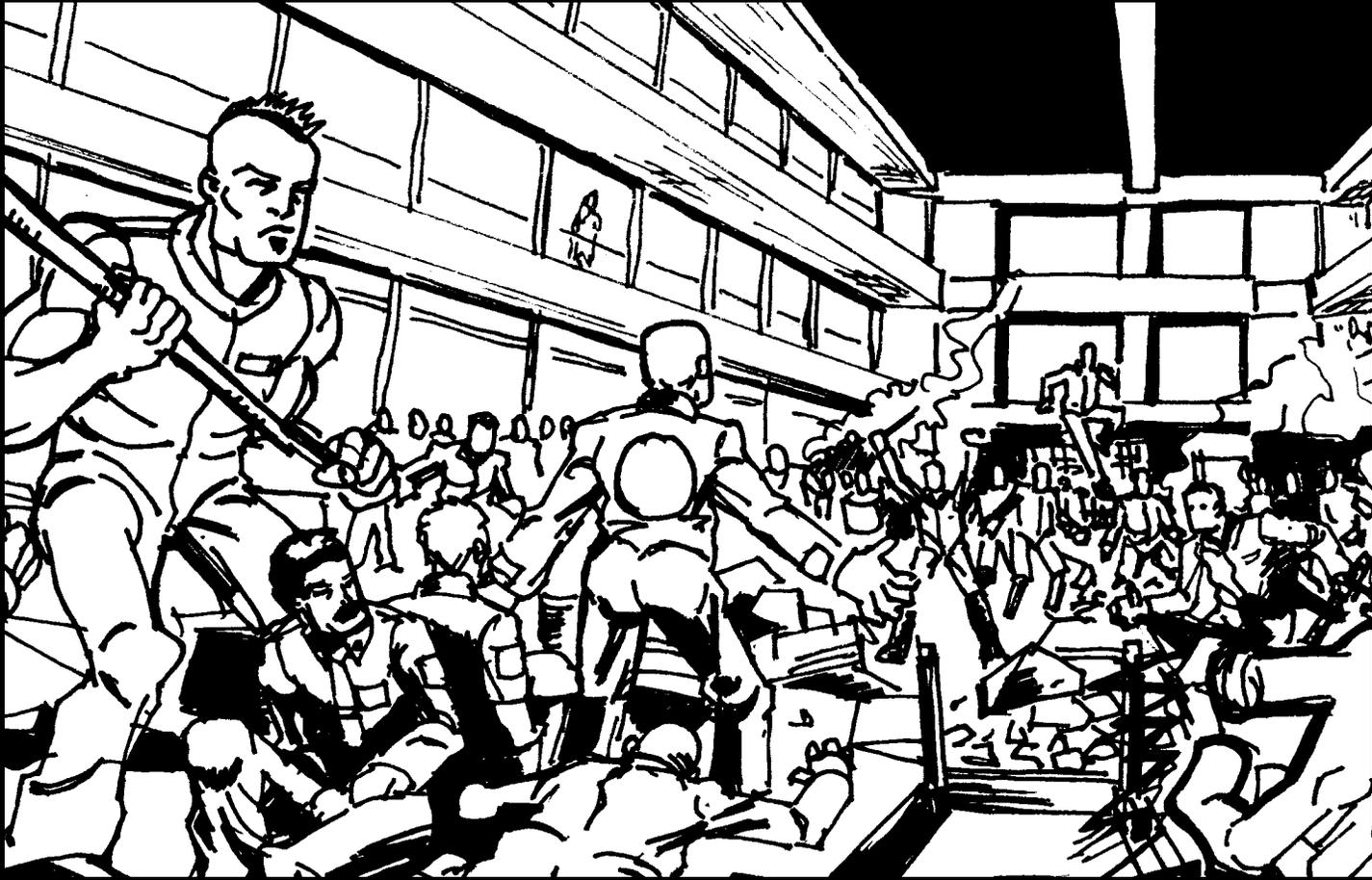
At the GM's option, Glacier's powers become stronger (by up to 25%) when the temperature is extremely cold (well below freezing). When this happens, he also becomes larger. Conversely, he may get smaller and a little weaker when it's extremely hot, or in very hot environments.

**Campaign Use:** Glacier is intended to be a tough enough foe to take on your entire superhero team. If he's not, beef up his STR and defenses until he is, and/or give him

some more attacks involving the control of ice and snow. Don't make them too sophisticated, though — he's supposed to be a sort of ravaging beast, a force of nature, not a supervillain who's explored all the permutations of his special effect. On the other hand, if Glacier's already too tough, just chip away at him until he's on the right level for your PCs.



**Appearance:** Glacier looks like a twelve foot tall humanoid chunk of ice. His mouth and eyes are cracks or holes in the ice; his fingers thick, sharp, squarish icicles; he has no feet, just legs that run straight to the ground. Wherever he goes things quickly frost up and ice over... but since he's confined in "hot sleep" in Stronghold, he hasn't gone anywhere in years.



# Running the Joint: Gamematerering Stronghold

# USING STRONGHOLD



**T**he primary uses of Stronghold — as a staging ground for escapes, riots, and other scenarios and campaigns — are covered in the scenarios described later on in this chapter. This section of Chapter Five discusses some alternate uses for Stronghold, how to adapt it to your campaign, and how to create your own superprison.

## STRONGHOLD IN OTHER CAMPAIGNS

Stronghold is of course intended for more or less standard *Champions* campaigns, but the concept of a super-secure prison for “special” prisoners works in many different types of games. For example:

### DARK CHAMPIONS

In a typical Dark Champions setting, super-powers are non-existent, or at best low-powered. Something like Stronghold, with its elaborate super-tech security, isn't possible. The superprison becomes the Hubbard Maximum Security Correctional Institution, *a.k.a.* “Stronghold” or “the Hub.” It's a prison designed to house the most dangerous, incorrigible, escape-prone inmates in the corrections system.

Built in a rural county a hundred miles or so from Hudson City, the Hub is one of the most harsh, depressing places in America. The warden, Arthur Wildman, is a political appointee whose philosophy of prisoners' rights is to wonder aloud, “Is there any such thing?” The guards are big, strong, brutal, and often corrupt; the few that try to do their job right are fighting a losing battle and giving ground every day.

Stronghold has a thriving underground economy built mostly on trade in illegal drugs, particularly cocaine and heroin. Guards and other prison employees on the take smuggle the stuff in to inmates who distribute it. Four main groups fight for territory in the prison drug trade, often violently: the Mexican Mafia, the leading gang of Hispanic prisoners; a group of Mafiosi from various families who've (mostly) put aside their differences and banded together for protection under the leadership of John “Jingles” D'arcoli, a captain in the Marcelli family; the Aryan Brotherhood, a gang of white prisoners who espouse a doctrine of racial superiority; and an unnamed gang of black gangstas led by a gigantic bear of a man known as “Tiny.” Other groups that take part but aren't considered as powerful include a gang of four Rus-

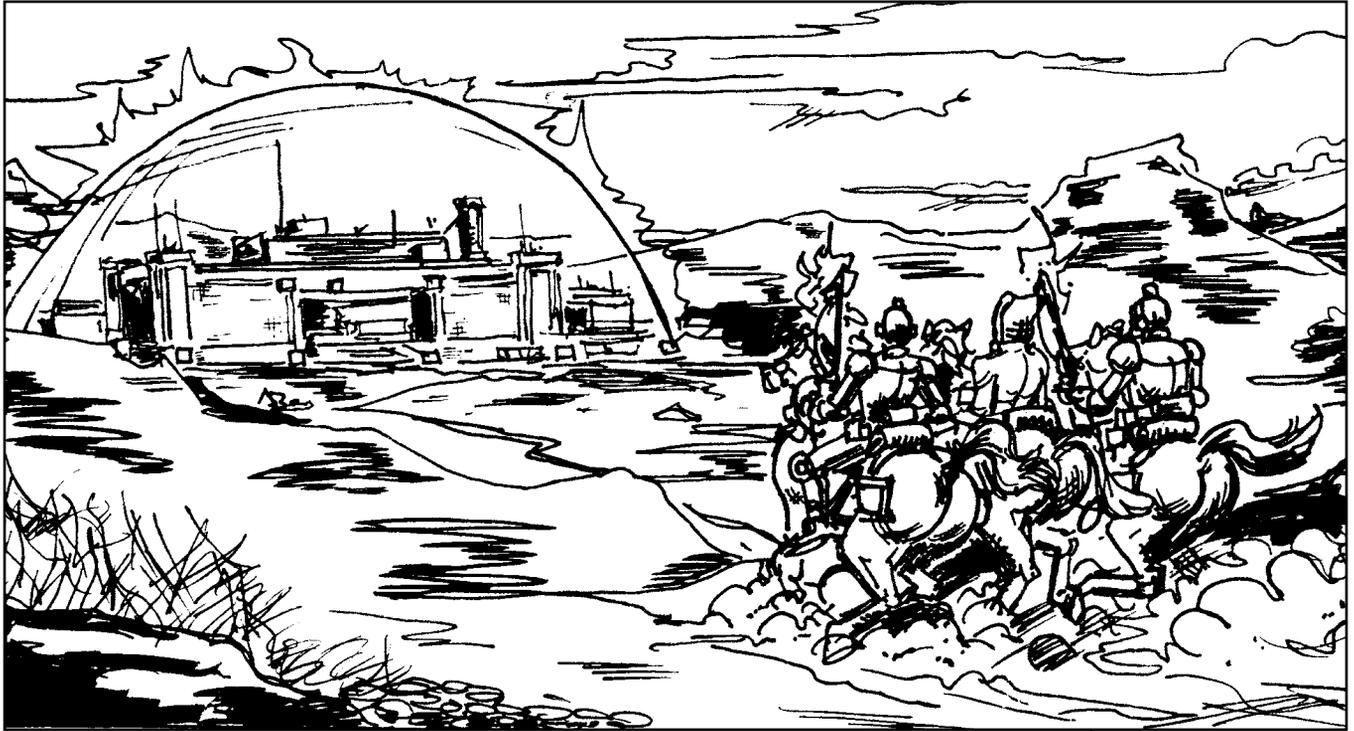
sians known for their viciousness and brutality, some Dominicans, a group of Hispanics opposed to the Mexican Mafia, several of Card Shark's men, and a few Chinese prisoners.

Any of the criminals described in *Dark Champions*, *Hudson City*, or *Predators* whom the PCs or police have captured should wind up in Stronghold, making the whole place even more dangerous. If they come from groups they probably band together for protection or all ally with one faction; if they're “independents” they probably use their skills and abilities to get in good with whichever prison gang appeals to them most. Most of the major Hudson City crimelords have at least a few “partisans” in Hubbard, which means putting them behind bars would instantly shift the balance of power within the prison.

### FANTASY HERO

In a Fantasy setting, the equivalent of supervillains tends to be (a) wizards, and (b) monsters. Monsters are usually just killed, but there may be reason to imprison some of them (intelligent ones might be able to ransom themselves, the king might be planning to create a zoo...). Wizards often have enough power and influence that imprisoning them may be difficult — especially in a campaign where the magic system lets them cast spells without the need for material components. A prison built to hold such people (and creatures) would have to use magical wards and guardians in place of Stronghold's super-science security devices.

For example, in the world of *The Turakian Age*, perhaps the magocratic kingdom of Arutha would build a special prison to house wizards who break its laws... or simply fall into extreme disfavor of the High Wizard. Built on a plateau in the Tabriz Mountains, not far from the source of the Aramthys River, the castle of Highguard stands ready to hold the enemies of the realm for as long as its rulers see fit. Built overnight by conjured demons, it has none of the flaws that human construction would, and its walls are so smooth and slippery that not even a master thief of Aarn could scale them. It's surrounded by magical warding-spells that prevent anyone from teleporting into, out of, or throughout the castle, approaching it while flying or invisible, or the like; the wards both cancel any such spells and sound an alarm. Within the castle itself, additional spells damp down the power of magic so that even the most puissant wizard is little more than a stripling apprentice. Only the spells of the guards, and the magical powers of the golems and other constructs who work for them, function at full effect.



The commander of Highguard is the dwarven mage Orgrend Khalkarios, who's known for his utter lack of a sense of humor. While not a brutal person (in fact, he's well aware of the noble status, influence, or sheer power of many of the wizards under his charge, and thus cautious when dealing with them), he tolerates no challenges to his authority or attempts to escape. He's swift to dole out harsh punishments when they're deserved. Few of his guards are honest men; at the very least most take bribes to smuggle in delicacies and other luxuries to certain prisoners.

### **GALACTIC CHAMPIONS**

The universe of Galactic Champions has just as much need for a super-prison as the world of regular Champions, and even more super-tech with which to build it. But a mesa in New Mexico just isn't isolated enough for a setting where characters can cross entire solar systems in the blink of an eye. Galactic Stronghold is built on an asteroid — one of millions in the Galgulard system. According to archaeologists, the Galgulard system once had at least two inhabitable planets, and perhaps as many as four... but millions of years ago something destroyed them, leaving only a gigantic asteroid belt. Only half a dozen distant gas giants remain of what used to be a habitable solar system. Now the only things that live there are the warden, a grim Mon'dabi ex-space marine named Tar'gash, his staff of guards (half of them living beings, half of them robots), and hundreds of the most dangerous beings in the Galaxy.

Galactic Stronghold is entirely “underground” — it's all built within one large asteroid. The level closest to the surface houses the administration, guards' quarters, recreation facilities for the staff, and the like. The super-

prison's builders were lavish in providing entertainment resources, since Galactic Stronghold is so isolated that staff members rarely get to leave. The remaining 20 levels house the prisoners. Every four levels is for a different category of prisoners and has its own dining hall, auditorium, and other communal facilities. The final four levels are the equivalent of Stronghold's Level 10; they house prisoners who are so dangerous they're kept in hot sleep.

### **PULP HERO**

In Pulp Hero campaigns stressing some degree of historical realism, the closest Pulp-era equivalent to Stronghold is probably Alcatraz Island, *a.k.a.* the Rock, which is discussed on page 160 of *Pulp Hero*. However, you could use just about any (in)famous maximum security penitentiary as a setting for prison-related scenarios. Examples include:

- Angola, the Louisiana State Penitentiary, known as “the Farm.” In the Pulp era this brutal place near the Mississippi River (and thus prone to flooding) was run mainly without guards. Prisoners served as trustees in a highly abusive and corrupt system.
- Sing-Sing Correctional Facility in Ossining, New York. Sing-Sing was taken over by Warden Lewis Lawes in 1920 after decades of neglect which were so bad that Lawes found some inmates missing, \$30,000 gone from the prison account, and one man being held for whom there were no records of admittance. During the Twenties Lawes added significantly to the prison, building administration centers, a hospital, a library, a mess hall, and a chapel. Sing-Sing's electric chair is known as Old Sparky.

## STAR HERO

Science Fiction expands the concept of the isolated ultra-security prison into the *prison planet* — an entire world, usually a desolate and unforgiving one, used to house prisoners. Perhaps the most famous example is Salusa Secundus from the novel *Dune*, a prison planet so harsh the Emperor uses it as a “breeding ground” for his elite troops, the Sardaukar.

The nature of prison planets varies from setting to setting. Some are literally run as world-sized prisons, with guards, various forms of confinement, punishment for misbehavior, and so on. In other cases whoever runs the prison doesn't worry with such measures. Since the prisoners have no way to build ships to get off-planet, they're simply left there to fend for themselves. The result is an incredibly brutal “society” in which he who is strongest, rules — but only until someone kills him and takes his place. Anyone who's not a ruler either works for the ruler, or is exploited and oppressed by the ruler. A third possibility would be an artificial “world,” a manmade prison that's the size of a planet and holds the most dangerous criminal scum in the Galaxy.

A more purely Stronghold-like prison might exist in a setting that features a lot of people with psionic powers. To prevent prisoners from using telepathy, mind control, and psychokinesis to escape, the government would have to build a psi-proof prison that negated mental powers the way Stronghold negates superpowers.

## CHANGING STRONGHOLD

Stronghold as it's presented in this book works well for typical Champions campaigns — but not every GM or campaign is “typical.” Here are some ideas and suggestions for ways you can change Stronghold to suit specific campaigns or preferences.

### CHANGE THE LOCATION

Stronghold is in a relatively “realistic” location that uses distance and isolation as one element of security. However, that may detract from its dramatic value since it makes it difficult for your PCs to get involved with plots involving the superprison — how often does a group of superheroes have reason to be in the middle of New Mexico? It may suit some campaigns better to move Stronghold closer to the campaign city, whether that's Millennium City, New York, Vibora Bay, or someplace else.

Unfortunately, few major cities are located near mesas, so you may have to alter the layout or functioning of Stronghold to suit a new location. In some places the easiest thing to do is just assume it's still underground, but not in a mesa. In other locations, such as the Gulf Coast or New York City, this may not be feasible for a variety of reasons. In that case the GM has to consider other physical layouts, such as:

- make Stronghold a freestanding building 11 stories tall, with the administrative sections on the first floor; the more dangerous the prisoner, the higher his cell is in the building.
- make Stronghold a complex of linked buildings on an island in a bay or wide river, using the separation from the mainland to enhance general security.
- make Stronghold a “floating prison” — a large building that's suspended hundreds of feet in the air using hover technology.
- put Stronghold underwater. This serves many of the same “isolation” goals as the New Mexico location without the need for so much distance. However, if one little thing goes wrong, hundreds of staff and inmates could drown.
- for the ultimate in isolation, relocate Stronghold to an alternate dimension, such as the Negative Zone Prison Alpha (Project 42) from Marvel Comics or the Phantom Zone from DC Comics. This makes the prison *extremely* secure, since except for one access portal there'd be no way for inmates who escape to make it back to Earth's dimension. On the other hand, it takes the problem of using the super-prison in stories featuring your heroes to an extreme; they have even less reason to visit a prison dimension than they do to go to New Mexico.

## **CHANGE THE SECURITY**

One significant way to change how Stronghold works in your campaign is to alter the security. There are several options.

### **Decrease The Security**

If you want to use Stronghold a lot in your campaign, you may want to make the security less comprehensive and effective. That way escapes are more frequent, the PCs can more easily infiltrate the prison if they need to, and the general story possibilities are enhanced. However, this may expose you to charges of being “unrealistic” or push your PCs toward vigilantism if they don’t think the villains they capture are going to stay behind bars very long.

### **Use Superhuman Security**

As presented, Stronghold doesn’t use superhumans as guards or to provide any other sort of security; it’s a prison run by ordinary (albeit well-trained and -equipped) people. Some GMs may want to change this, replacing some or all of the guards with superhumans or superhuman equivalents (such as guard in powered armor suits). After all, not everyone who has superpowers is necessarily going to want to put on a costume to fight (or commit) crime; many will be content to use their powers for high-paying mundane jobs.

Using super-guards has several implications. First, in many situations Stronghold will need fewer guards, since one superhuman can often do the work of several ordinary people. Second, you might be able to reduce or remove the power negation (see below) — instead of using those sorts of devices, Stronghold relies on its super-guards to maintain order.

### **Change The Power Negation**

Stronghold’s power negation systems, while in some senses realistic, are also sort of a hand-wave that neatly gets around the problem of keeping super-prisoners from using their powers to break out. Some GMs may want to alter the way the power negation works to enhance the dramatic possibilities Stronghold presents. Some ways to do this include:

First, change the power negators to power *suppressors*. In other words, instead of the systems having an absolute effect, they only decrease superpowers, either by an absolute

amount (which means some inmates are totally suppressed, others only mildly affected) or by a percentage (which means all inmates retain some small amount of superhuman power). This increases security problems at the prison, heightens tensions between prison gangs and inmates, and so on. This works well for, among others, SH campaigns where the players play inmates (see below).

Second, change the coverage of the power negators. Instead of assuming they cover nearly every area in the prison, create more “dead zones” where inmates’ powers work. The trick to escaping then becomes finding one of these areas and having the chance to use it.

Third, get rid of the power negators altogether outside of the cells. In his cell an inmate remains totally powerless... but outside it he’s got his full range of powers. That means the guards either have to have powers themselves (see above) or have to put special restraints on any inmate who’s taken out of his cell. This makes escape much easier.

## **CHANGE THE DAILY ROUTINE**

You can change the way Stronghold operates on a daily basis to increase prisoner interaction (and thus roleplaying possibilities in some campaigns) or provide more opportunities to escape. Some of the things you can do include:

- instead of having prisoners go to quads for recreation time, allow more movement within the prison so that prisoners from different levels can do things together (either all the time, or at specific times of day)
- allow the prisoners to have jobs in Stronghold. Instead of having a kitchen staff, janitorial staff, mail room staff, and the like, the prison relies on inmates to do most of that sort of work. This creates significant security issues, but also helps to defuse tension by giving the inmates something productive to do; in “SH” campaigns where the PCs are inmates, it gives them the chance to interact with virtually any inmate.
- change the cell arrangement so inmates are housed two to a cell, rather than each having his own cell. In that case, Stronghold needs one wing (probably on Level Omega) of solitary confinement cells.

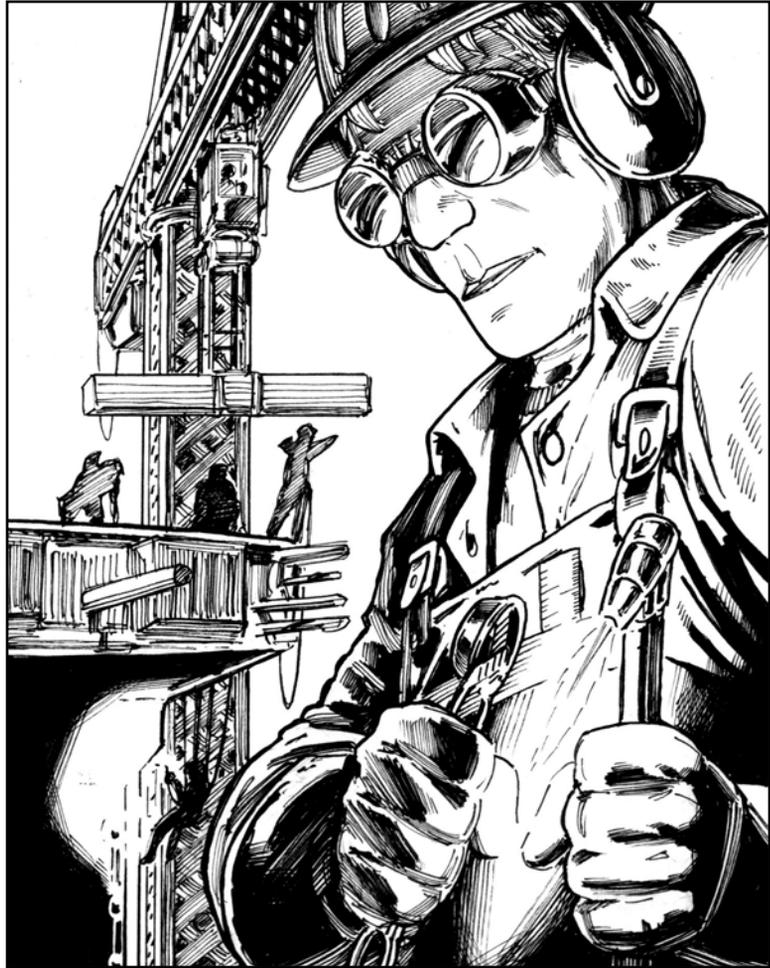
## CREATING YOUR OWN SUPERPRISON

Instead of using Stronghold, some GMs may prefer to create their own superprisons. Here's a checklist of some of the issues to consider as part of the design process:

**1. Location:** Where is your superprison located? Is it near the campaign city or far away? Is it in an exotic location (underwater, outer space, another dimension), and if so how do the officials responsible for the prison cope with the logistical challenges that presents?

**2. Layout:** One of the most important things for you to consider as you design your superprison is its layout. Is it all in one building, or multiple buildings? Is it a facility specifically built to contain a superprison, or was it adapted to that purpose from a previous use? How do inmates, personnel, and supplies get into and out of the prison? How does the prison provide basic needs (food, air, heat, recreation) to the inmates? What sort of recreation and work facilities are available?

**3. Inmates:** How many inmates can the prison hold — and how many does it currently have? What sorts of supervillains are eligible for incarceration there? Does the prison classify or catego-



rize the inmates, and if so how? Can the inmates hold jobs inside the prison?

**4. Security:** In general, is the prison's security tight or loose? How many guards does the prison need, and are they superpowered or ordinary people? What sort of security technology does it use? Are any parts of the prison covered by power negation or suppression fields, and if so which ones? How common are escape attempts, successful escapes, and other incidents?

# SCENARIOS



**T**his section describes five classic scenarios or campaign frameworks that you can run using Stronghold. You already have the crucial information you need — details on the superprison, its security systems and procedures, and its personnel, plus detailed maps of the important areas — so it's just a question of how you put them to use. These scenarios are more in the nature of outlines than fully fleshed-out adventures, since they all represent highly dynamic situations and depend to a large extent on the specifics of your campaign (what your PCs are like, which villains are inmates, and the like).

Obviously this section is *for the GM's eyes only*. If you're a player, don't read these scenarios! You'll only spoil the fun you might otherwise have seeing them unfold during play.

## GETTING THE HEROES TO STRONGHOLD

Since Stronghold is so isolated, a common element in many of the scenarios described below is how to get the PCs involved in the action. Unless you want to draw out the events so the heroes have time to get to New Mexico from the campaign city, which is likely to stretch the boundaries of believability, you have to arrange for them to be on the scene when the events of the adventure begin to unfold. Some of the ways you can do this include:

- the heroes have come to Stronghold to tour the facility and/or meet with Warden Wildman
- one or more of the heroes has been called in to serve as a consultant to Stronghold on an important matter (a security issue, the powers and personality of his archenemy who's now an inmate, advances in security technology based on a PC's invention, or the like)
- the heroes help the SSPTS transport a prisoner to Stronghold for added security
- the wrongly-accused PCs have been convicted and sent to Stronghold. Once the scenario begins, their willingness to fight the other inmates rather than take advantage of the opportunity to escape proves they were improperly convicted and convinces the authorities to let them go free. Alternately, if the wrongful conviction were engineered by an inmate, the evidence clearing their names comes to light during the adventure.
- the PCs are passing through New Mexico on their way to somewhere else when they get word of a crisis at the superprison
- the PCs are in a local city (such as Albuquerque) responding to some other crisis

- someone with foreknowledge of the incident — such as a “mystic guardian of reality” or Captain Chronos — arranges for the PCs to be near Stronghold, or “kidnaps” them and puts them there at the right moment. Alternately, an outside agency might accidentally move them to Stronghold against their will at just the right time by sheer superheroic coincidence.

Clever GMs can no doubt come up with even more ways to get the PCs to Stronghold based on the specifics of their heroes and campaigns.

## ESCAPE FROM STRONGHOLD

The classic story for nearly every prison is about escaping from it, particularly in a Comic Book Superheroes setting where villains traditionally escape from prison again, and again, and again to attack their heroic archnemeses. This scenario discusses how to run an escape involving Stronghold, whether it's just one or two villains or a repeat of the Great Stronghold Breakout.

### TYPES OF ESCAPE

Broadly speaking, all efforts to escape from Stronghold fall into one of two categories: internal breakouts; and being broken out.

An internal breakout is an escape engineered primarily from inside the prison by one or more inmates. The escapees use force or subterfuge to get outside the prison's walls and then flee the vicinity. They may have some outside help, like a corrupt guard who smuggles them an item they need or a friend waiting to pick them up when they get out, but for the most part they do all the work themselves.

Being broken out means an escape in which outside help — typically, supervillain colleagues or hirelings — plays a primary role. One example is a team of villains that smashes its way into Stronghold to “rescue” an incarcerated teammate, but historically deception has worked better than brute force. For instance, on at least two occasions the villainess Masquerade has used her shape-shifting powers to impersonate a prison worker and free a prisoner.

In a Champions campaign, breakouts are far more common than being broken out, because they tend to offer greater scope for PC involvement and a richer scenario. But don't overlook the possibilities of getting outside help involved, especially when that help shows up just as the PCs think they've got the whole situation under control...



### **STRONGHOLD'S VULNERABILITIES**

While Stronghold is extremely secure and is rarely escaped from, it's by no means escape-proof. Like any prisons it has its weak points, especially when one considers all the superpowers that could factor in. While no one can predict *every* weakness Stronghold might have or method a superhuman could use to break out of (or sometimes into) the super-prison, some tactics are more common or obvious than others. Some of Stronghold's vulnerabilities include:

#### **Brute Force**

Stronghold is very secure, but it's not a military fortress. Enough brute force brought to bear by a supervillain team, an army of VIPER agents, or the like could smash its way into the prison to rescue whoever it wanted... and would no doubt free plenty of other inmates to cover its tracks and slow down the authorities.

#### **Desolidification**

Individual cells can be configured to prevent an intangible villain from getting into or out of them; Stronghold as a whole cannot. A character with Desolidification who activates that power more than two kilometers away from the prison can approach without triggering the prison's motion/vibration sensors (though if he's not invisible he might still be seen by the guards). He could then walk through Devil's Head Mesa and right into Stronghold. Of course, once he enters Stronghold he's subject to the power negators and immediately becomes solid once again... assuming he hasn't somehow "shielded" himself from them in advance.

Stronghold is acutely aware of this approach; in 2003 four villains were broken out of the prison by an unknown superhuman who used Desolidification, Invisibility, and some sort of shielding technology to free them. Unfortunately, intangibility-proofing the entire prison isn't technologically or financially feasible, so the prison has settled for increased vigilance.

#### **Electrical Overload**

Stronghold and its security systems depend heavily on electricity, and that creates a vulnerability. No matter how well shielded an electrical system may be, there's always some amount of electricity that can short it out. Some of Stronghold's systems, particularly the hot sleep coffins on Level 10 and the customized power negators built into the cells, have short-term independent power supplies. But the rest of the system (even the backup generators on each level) could be overloaded in a single well-planned attack (or due to some natural disaster, see below), thus potentially freeing or re-powering dozens of supervillains.

#### **Hostages**

Some villains have concluded that they can break out of Stronghold with an indirect application of force: they take guards hostage and trade them for freedom. Despite the fact that this tactic has *never* worked — Stronghold simply won't agree to trade freedom for hostages, and even if it did there'd be plenty of cops and superheroes outside the prison waiting to recapture the escapee — every now and then a villain tries it again. Maybe one day someone will find a way to make it work.

#### **Magic**

Totally unpredictable, and often able to interfere with technology in ways no scientist can satisfactorily explain, magic is a wild card that more than one escapee has exploited. The warding-spells placed on Stronghold by super-heroic mystics are powerful, but there's always a way around that or an even stronger ritual if someone works and studies hard enough. Even if someone doesn't use magic in a deliberate attempt to escape (or break someone out), the number of powerful mystics incarcerated there might act as a "lightning rod" for free-floating arcane energies, thus creating the occult equivalent of a natural disaster.

### Malfunctions

Stronghold's technology is designed to be the best it can be, and often involves redundant or triple-redundant backups... but much of it is cutting-edge stuff, and malfunctions are always a possibility despite the dedicated efforts of the prison's corps of technicians. Most malfunctions are not themselves enough to allow an immediate escape (a malfunctioning hot sleep coffin being the main exception), but they create a window of opportunity that clever villains can exploit.

### Natural Disaster

The Great Stronghold Breakout resulted, in part, from a particularly strong thunderstorm that struck the region where the superprison is located. Many other natural disasters could cause similar problems for Stronghold. Earthquakes are a particular vulnerability; a strong enough one could crack open the mesa and potentially free every prisoner in the place.

### Personnel

The weakest link in Stronghold's security is its personnel, who can potentially be manipulated in many ways. First, some guards are corrupt, pure and simple. They're the exception to the rule, but they do exist. It might take a lot of money or other influence, but they could be persuaded to assist in an escape attempt. Second, a villain with shapeshifting powers could take a guard's place. Unless he somehow shields himself against the power negators he'll instantly revert to his true form when he enters the prison... but if he can shield himself, he's a serpent waiting to strike from the very heart of Stronghold. Third, an outside villain with mental powers could take control of a guard's mind. If the control is strong enough it will last until the guard gets inside Stronghold and can execute the orders the villain gave him — and the power negators won't detect or nullify the mental domination.

But a guard or technician doesn't have to be manipulated to facilitate an escape. A Stronghold worker who's disgruntled or mentally unbalanced might start an escape by switching off a key security system or killing some guards; one who's careless might forget or overlook something that an inmate could then exploit.

### Power Negator Overload

While it's not easy, past experience shows that it is sometimes possible for a villain (or, more likely, group of villains working together) to overload the power negators in one area of the prison. That gives them full and easy access to their powers, which then makes it easy to destroy more power negators, escape, or the like.

Overloading a power negator is primarily a dramatic device the GM uses to justify an escape, not something you need to simulate in game terms. However, if it becomes a crucial plot point in a game, such as a scenario where the PCs have infiltrated Stronghold and need to break out, the GM should handle it as follows. First, for purposes

of overloading it, assume any power negator has 500 Active Points. A character or characters must "activate" and "use" more than 500 Active Points' worth of superpowers for 1d6+3 Phases (using the lowest SPD of any character involved) to have a chance to overload a negator. Powers used for this purpose may be Pushed; Pushing adds 5 or 10 Active Points' worth of effect to a power, but of course at an increased END cost. (For purposes of determining how much END a character has to spend on an overload attempt, use his full END when his Characteristics aren't being negated down to low levels; otherwise no inmate would ever succeed.) After the powers have been in use for the specified time period, the GM should roll 3d6. In the first Phase he rolls, he has to roll 6- for a negator to overload. Each Phase thereafter the roll goes up by 1: 7-, then 8-, and so on. When the roll succeeds, the closest power negator overloads. If the GM makes the roll by half, the next nearest negator also overloads; if he rolls a three, the nearest negator and the four surrounding it all blow.

Of course, the guards aren't going to stand idly by while an inmate or group of inmates tries to overload the system. Unless the villains who are trying to escape find a way to distract, hide from, or neutralize the guards, the odds are they'll be restrained long before they can succeed.

Lastly, as noted on page 57, it's possible for an inmate to get used to the effects of the power negators, and some inmates inherently have more resistance to power negation than others. To represent that, the GM may reduce the power requirements for an overload from 500 Active Points to something less.

### POSSIBLE ESCAPE SCENARIOS

Here are brief descriptions of some possible escapes based on the current state of Stronghold:

#### The Juju B Concert

As mentioned on page 42, star rapper Juju B wants to hold a concert at Stronghold. Assuming the warden gives his permission, this is a chance for some inmates to mount an escape attempt. The most likely scenario is this: Requiem (see Chapter Four) or some other sonic-powered villain gains access to the rapper's sound equipment and uses it to amplify his own powers to the point where the power negators don't affect him. Since the concert's in the Solarium Hall on Level One, the villain uses his augmented abilities to blast the roof, destroying most of the power negators in the area and opening a big hole directly to the outside. Any villains who try to escape that way have to contend with the Zap Towers, but they can only handle so many (and in any event the initial blast might damage them or cut off their power supply).

#### Menton

The list of villains currently in Stronghold includes Menton, who's held on Level 10 in hot sleep. However, Menton's mind is so powerful that even hot sleep can't completely shut it down

for long. He's already regained just enough use of his abilities to communicate mentally with his psionic henchmen, primarily Mind Slayer and Kevin Poe (see *Champions Universe: News Of The World*, page 149). Soon he'll be able to communicate with Psimon, who's also in Stronghold. If he stays there long enough, in a few months he'll be able to mentally sense when the guards come to check the hot sleep area every shift... and in time he'll have the power to mentally influence them. He has no intention of remaining incarcerated that long, though, if Mind Slayer *et al.* can figure out a way to assault Stronghold that's reasonably likely to succeed.

#### **Pete Willis, Disgruntled Technician**

Page 92 introduces Pete Willis, a Stronghold technician who's on the verge of becoming dangerously disgruntled. If he does go over the edge, all he has to do is switch off a few power negators and it's off to the races.

#### **Rumblings**

An earthquake, either natural or supervillain-created, is Stronghold's ultimate nightmare. For a scenario that could make the Great Stronghold Breakout look minor in comparison, hit the super-prison with a magnitude 7 or higher earthquake. Some supervillains will die or be injured, but many more will find the way to freedom opened before them... unless your heroes react quickly enough to shut it in their faces.

#### **THE RESPONSE**

See page 74 regarding how Stronghold's personnel respond to escape attempts. But of course, ideally you want to let the PCs do the main work; they're the heroes of the story, after all. So give some thought to either (a) having Stronghold's personnel take a "backup" role when it comes to containing the escape, or (b) crippling Stronghold's ability to respond so the heroes have to step up to the plate.

Depending on how many villains succeed in escaping, your PCs might dedicate themselves to tracking down and recapturing all of the fleeing felons. This could form a story arc in an ongoing game, or even the basis for an entire campaign.

## **JUST LET US GO AND NO ONE GETS HURT**

When the power negators in one section of Stronghold malfunction, the inmates take advantage of the situation to grab some hostages and cut a deal. It's up to the PCs to resolve the situation without any guards dying.

#### **THE STORM BREAKS**

At 9:31 AM one morning, the power negators covering the B-C quad on Level Delta inexplicably malfunction. They "flicker" for a moment, and then "dim," falling to one-quarter effectiveness — nowhere near enough to totally negate the powers of many villains, though enough to weaken them. Never ones to overlook a golden opportunity, the inmates destroy the power negators, take every guard and janitor hostage (and possibly Mick Watkins, if the PCs know and like him), and barricade the entrances and exits with furniture and rubble.

Using Stronghold's computer system, they quickly ascertain that the malfunction didn't affect the entire prison, just their quad. If they're going to break free, they're going to need to trade the hostages for their release — if they blast and smash their way into other parts of the prison, the overlapping power negation fields will affect them and bring the escape to a rapid halt. It's a classic stand-off, since if Stronghold tries to rescue its personnel the inmates are likely to kill them. It's up to the heroes to save the day with no loss of life.

#### **WHO'S INVOLVED**

Level Delta houses Orange-level Danger inmates of no more than Level 3 Escape Risk. That could include inmates such as Arrowhead, Black Paladin, Brute, the Hand of Satan, Mechassassin, Slither, Thorn, and Wildeye.

Brute, the Hand of Satan, and Mechassassin all lead gangs in Stronghold, so the odds are against the authorities putting them all in the same quad... unless, of course, it suits your dramatic purposes for them to all be together. That would give the PCs a chance to exploit their rivalries and mutual animosity, perhaps leading to a roleplaying-heavy scenario. This might be even more fun if you alternate between the players playing their superheroes in scenes where they interact with the villains, and each of them taking on the role of a gang leader or member in scenes where the PCs aren't present. (Otherwise a lot of the action, including many of the potentially most dramatic scenes, takes place "off-camera.") Slither belongs to the Hand's gang; Arrowhead and Thorn belong to Mechassassin's; see page 72 for more information.

Regardless of who the villains are, they have about 20 hostages. Most are guards; a couple are other employees of Stronghold (janitors, counselors, technicians, and the like). The majority of the villains aren't bloodthirsty; they don't particularly want to hurt the hostages unless they have to, they just want to escape. A few definitely want to hurt

or kill hostages (especially guards); if the Hand of Satan is there, he may even try to convince the others he can gain the power to free them all by performing some human sacrifices (and he might even be telling the truth!).

### EVENTS UNFOLD

Once the villains take hostages they barricade the quad so Stronghold personnel can't easily retake it by force. They collapse the guard entrance (marked a on the map on page 51), destroy the door controls leading to C cellblock (14 on the map), create a furniture barrier at the door leading to B cellblock (5 on the map), and wedge open the doors to the staff elevators (k on the map) and cut the cables. All negotiations with Stronghold personnel or the PCs take place at the B cellblock entrance; the villains won't allow anyone to approach any further than the bend in the hallway (24 meters, or 3.5", from their barricade). One villain stands guard at each elevator (k), two or three at each hallway entrance, and the rest sort of mill around and do whatever they want.

The hostages are kept in the Gymnasium (11 on the map) and/or the Large Session Room (9 on the map), depending on what seems most tactically advantageous to the villains. They use the guards' own Mechalene Zipcuffs (page 86) to restrain them. In the event of a determined counterattack by the PCs or Stronghold personnel, the villains retreat to one of those rooms to make their stand.

The villains' ultimate goal is to escape by figuring out a way to leverage the situation to their advantage. They know Stronghold won't negotiate a hostages-for-freedom exchange. They also know that the longer they wait, the more likely it is that serious help, including superheroes (or more heroes, if they know the PCs are already there) will arrive. So they're playing a waiting game, but not an indefinite one because they're on the clock. Some of the things they'll try include:

- use the computer systems at Central Monitoring (d on the map) to try to shut off or weaken the power negators in other parts of the prison. Ideally they could shut off enough of them to escape, but just weakening them anywhere else in Stronghold will cause so much chaos their chances of getting away are significantly improved.
- use the computers at Central Monitoring (d on the map) to hack the communications system and try to get a message to the outside world. If they succeed, some will get messages to friends or henchmen seeking help with a break-out. Others will broadcast the group's demands to the press and try to create a media circus, since they know that will hamper the authorities.
- use Desolidification (if any of them have it) to get someone out by having him walk straight through the mesa to the outside. If enough of them can get out that way (perhaps because of an inmate with Desolidification Usable Simultaneously), they'll stage an assault on Stronghold's main power generators.

Ideally you should plan this stage of the scenario to draw the situation out and increase the tension. That means (a) taking the PCs' powers into account and making sure the villains have ways to counter them, and (b) making sure the villains have powers and resources that give them a serious chance to escape or cause a tragedy. Keep the heroes on edge, and frequently remind them of what's at stake. For example, maybe a hostage's spouse shows up to beg them to do anything they have to get him home safely... even if that means letting the villains escape.

### RESCUE... OR DISASTER

Once you feel the scenario's gone on long enough and the tension has reached its peak, let the wave break. Something major happens — the PCs begin their assault, or the villains launch whatever plan they've come up with to make a break for it. Depending on the tone of your campaign, either the odds strongly favor the PCs rescuing all the hostages (even if some villains escape), or it all depends on luck and skill as to whether a single hostage survives. Given the nature of the situation, the heroes can probably rescue at least some of the hostages unless they act stupidly; there aren't enough "ruthless killer" villains or villains who'll do *anything* to escape that it's likely every hostage will die. On the other hand, careless use of superpowers or letting the wrong villain get to the wrong place at the wrong time could spell disaster.

## RIOT IN CELLBLOCK BETA-2-D

A variant on classic hostage scenario described in *Just Let Us Go And No One Gets Hurt*, above, is the "prison riot" scenario. It differs from a hostage scenario in several key ways:

1. It takes place over a larger part of the prison — an entire cellblock, level, or multiple levels, or perhaps all the inmates on Level One during mealtime.
2. The power negators haven't failed, at least not at first. The prisoners have taken over part of the facility based on numbers and desperation. One of the first things they'll try to do is shut off or destroy the power negators, but for maximum drama it's usually best if they haven't succeeded yet — the PCs' goal is to stop the riot before things escalate to that point and a mass escape becomes not only possible, but likely. This may mean going onto Level Beta-2 when the negators still function... meaning the PCs will be without their superpowers in there.

In this case, the prisoners on Level Beta-2 (the fifth underground level) have overpowered their guards, used the computer in the Guard Tower to lock out all the elevators, and barricaded the stairs and doors. As the word implies, they're running riot — working out old grudges and feuds since the guards aren't around to stop



them, humiliating and even tormenting the guards they hate, openly using whatever liquor and drugs they can get their hands on, vandalizing the prison, and so on.

Level Beta-2 holds Yellow-level Danger inmates of no more than Level 4 Escape Risk. That could potentially include such villains as Alchemica, Arc, Boomslang, Cheshire Cat, Dragonfly, Esper, Flow, Frost, Gorgon, Krait, Megavolt, Menagerie, Overdrive, Pulsar, Requiem, Stiletto, Stormfront, and Whitefire. Several of those villains are female, so maybe two of the cellblocks (and thus one quad) are for female prisoners only. If so this raises other ugly possibilities for fraternization and assault that you have to decide if you want to deal with in your campaign. Note that both Frost and Requiem would not be on the same level; if you choose to put one here, the other is housed on a different level.

Once you've decided who's involved, pick three to five inmates to serve as the riot's "leaders." They're the ones who organize groups of inmates to man the barricades, try to keep a lid on any serious violence that could give prison officials an excuse to come in hard and heavy, and so on. The leaders should be inmates whom (a) the other inmates have particular respect for, (b) have skills or abilities that make them tough

and "powerful" in Stronghold, and/or (c) who are especially persuasive or influential within the Stronghold community.

Because of the size of the riot and the chaos involved, one roleplaying-heavy possibility is for the PCs to infiltrate Level Beta-2 disguised as prisoners to try to defuse the riot from within. If they play their cards right, they can make the whole thing collapse under its own weight by tricking the riot's leaders into quarreling with one another. On the other hand, that sort of situation could easily become violent — and if anyone recognizes the PCs, they'll be at the rioters' mercy.

#### MAINTAINING THE TENSION

If the heroes don't take that approach, you need to take steps to maintain, and slowly increase, the tension. Maybe the PCs find out one of the guards is diabetic and desperately needs his insulin shot. Perhaps reports of rape begin to filter out of Beta-2. Or the inmates could get into the computer system enough that there's a risk they could shut off the power negators and/or start riots on other levels. Similarly, keep events moving at a sufficient pace that the PCs have to spend some time *reacting* to what the inmates do rather than just planning a tactical assault — make them feel a little off-balance and out of control.

## HEROES BEHIND BARS

Instead of the inmates trying to break *out* of Stronghold, what if the PCs have to break *in*? While not as common as the escape story, the “break into the prison” story definitely has precedent. Typically a break-in story takes one of four forms:

1. The heroes have to smash their way into the prison violently to get someone or something, usually on a tight deadline, because the authorities won't let them in for some reason. (The classic example here is a teammate who's been framed for or wrongfully convicted of a crime; they have to get him out before the other inmates kill him.) The actual act of breaking in isn't necessarily difficult; the hard part is doing it to minimize the chance of inmates escaping... and then getting out past the force of guards, robots, and even other superheroes mobilized to stop them.
2. The heroes have to infiltrate the prison to get someone or something, usually on a tight deadline, because the authorities won't let them in for some reason. A smash-and-grab isn't possible here either because of the risk of other inmates escaping, or because the heroes don't want the authorities to be aware of what they're doing.
3. The heroes infiltrate the prison to get information by disguising themselves as villains. They do this with the assistance and knowledge of prison officials, but without any help from the media. They have to convince the other inmates that they're really villains even though no other inmate has ever worked with them. Alternately, if their powers match up with a villain group they might try to infiltrate disguised as that group, but that's even riskier since the odds are good some of the inmates know the real villains well enough to tell the difference.
4. With the knowledge and assistance of prison and justice system officials, the heroes infiltrate the prison to get information by framing themselves for a crime and arranging to be sent to Stronghold. While there they have to convince the inmates they really *are* criminals so they can mingle with them and learn what they need to know. The problem, of course, is that a lot of the inmates have serious grudges against them....

A related type of story is one where the heroes are wrongfully convicted and incarcerated of crimes despite their best efforts and end up in Stronghold for real. But that's really just a standard escape story with the added element of “find out who did this to us” (usually someone who's already in the prison and wants to hurt them for some reason). The above stories all share in common the idea that the heroes voluntarily enter Stronghold to get something they can't get anywhere else.

Planning this sort of scenario is mostly up to each GM, since it depends heavily on how the heroes plan to get into the prison, what sort of abilities they'll have while inside, and who cur-

rently happens to be in Stronghold in your campaign. For example, in a Champions Universe campaign, framing the Champions and throwing them into Stronghold would immediately attract Black Paladin's attention to Witchcraft. Noting his interest, the Hand of Satan and/or Redblade might try to concoct some sort of mystic plot to take advantage of the situation. And since the Champions are Hunted by VIPER, any of the VIPER villains in Stronghold would see their presence as an opportunity to score points with the VIPER leadership by “disposing” of them once and for all.

## THE SH

*The SH* is a campaign framework rather than a discrete scenario. Taking its inspiration from television shows like *Oz* and *Prison Break* and movies such as *The Shawshank Redemption*, it's a Stronghold-centered campaign in which the PCs are inmates. This is a pretty grim subject for a campaign, really more *Dark Champions* than *Champions*, but it may appeal to some gaming groups as an exercise in intense roleplaying or as a short-term break from a lighthearted campaign.

To prepare for an SH campaign, you need to consider several issues:

1. Are the PCs going to be actual criminals who were sentenced to Stronghold legitimately, or ordinary people or heroes? If the latter, did they get themselves sent to Stronghold for some ulterior purpose, or are they the victims of tragic circumstance desperate to prove their innocence?
2. What sort of relationship will the PCs have with the administration? If you want them to interact with Warden Wildman and his staff frequently, you need to have a reason for them to do so — such as a trial “jobs in prison” program that lets them work as, say, Assistant Warden Rothchild's secretary.
3. What sort of relationship will the PCs have with the other prisoners? Obviously this depends largely on how each player conceives, develops, and roleplays his character, but you have to provide a framework within which that roleplaying takes place. Who else is an inmate? What sort of gangs and other “power groups” exist? You can use the information in Chapter Three as a good starting point, but for such an intensely-focused campaign you should probably expand on it, increasing the list of inmates, the number of gangs, and the potential sources of tension and drama.

Once you've set the stage by addressing these issues and doing a little campaign planning, it's time to drop the PCs into the deep end. Depending on your preference, you can roleplay the intake procedure, or simply start the campaign the first morning they wake up in their cells. What happens after that is up to them... and your fiendish imagination.

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# HARD TIME

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