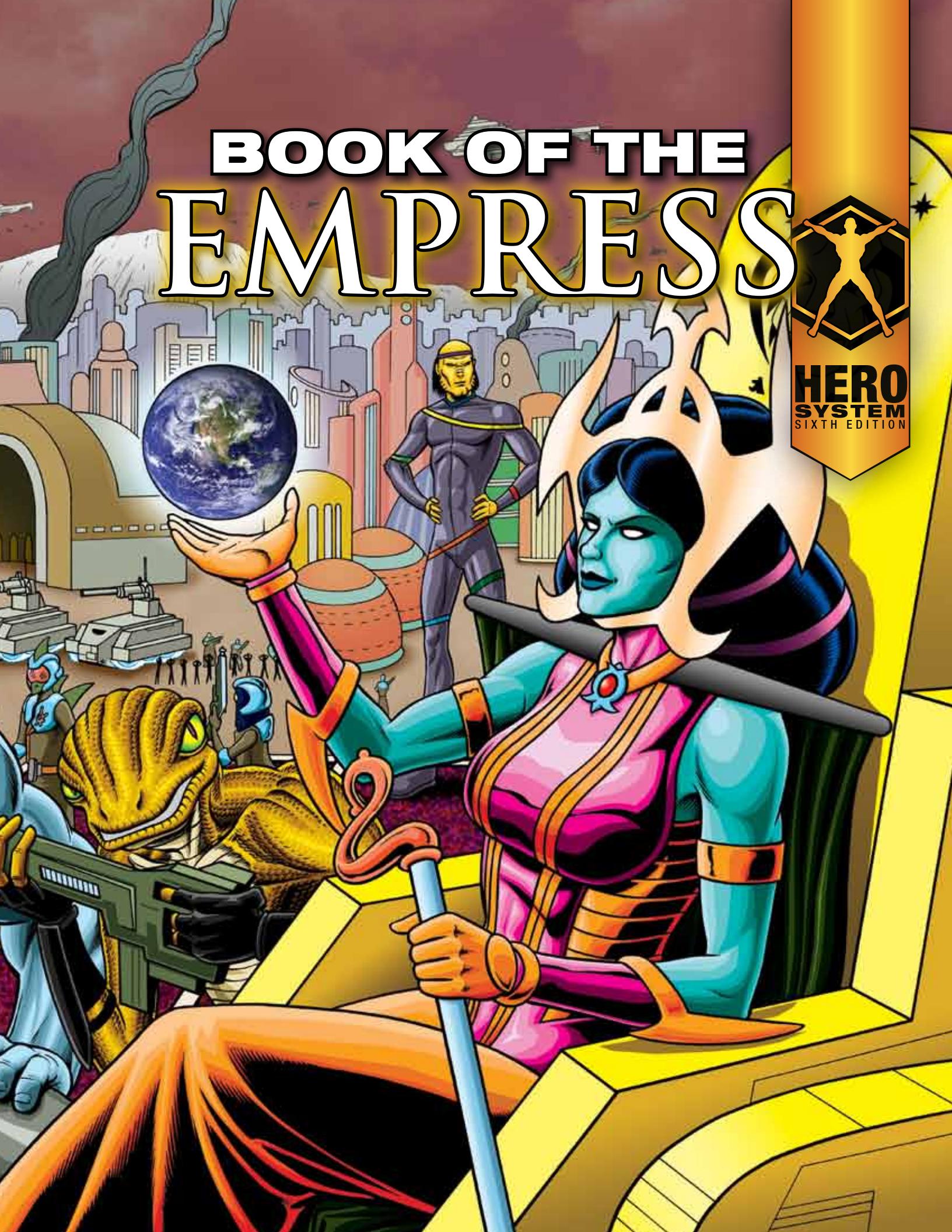


BOOK OF THE EMPRESS



BOOK OF THE EMPRESS



BOOK OF THE EMPRESS

A SETTING BOOK FOR CHAMPIONS

DEDICATION

Hero Games would like to dedicate *The Book Of The Empress* to Robert "Secret Power Behind the Throne" Towell for his generous support and encouragement.

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You're all Heroes!

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INTRODUCTION

Of all the fiendish and deadly master villains heroes have to face in the Champions Universe, the most dangerous isn't Dr. Destroyer, Mechanon, King Cobra, Menton, or even the Aztec god Tezcatlipoca — it's Istvatha V'han, the self-styled "Empress of a Billion Dimensions." After all, most master villains aspire to conquer and rule Earth, but with the exception of Dr. Destroyer for three months in 1984, none of them have ever succeeded. Istvatha V'han, on the other hand, rules not just a single planet but hundreds of millions of *entire dimensions*. Her resources dwarf those of any other master villain (except perhaps for rival dimension lords like Skarn the Shaper and Tyrannon), and her personal powers of dimension and time travel make it virtually impossible to truly defeat her.

The Book Of The Empress is your complete guide to Istvatha V'han. It covers everything you need to know about her, from her powers and skills, to the beings who serve her, the military forces she commands, and how her empire functions.

Chapter One, *A Crusade Across Realities*, offers a brief overview of V'han's history. It starts with her rise to power on her native planet, then proceeds down the centuries to her recent unsuccessful attempts to conquer Earth's dimension.

Chapter Two, *The Personage Imperial*, provides V'han's character sheet and more closely examines the Empress herself. It delves into her powers and how they work, what she knows (and doesn't know), and her motivations and psychology. It also provides alternate versions of the Empress for use in other genres, such as Fantasy and Science Fiction.

Chapter Three, *The Imperial Legions*, describes the V'hanian military in all its dimension-conquering glory. The chapter opens with a review of the Imperial Battalion, her thousands-strong corps of superhuman soldiers and bodyguards. It then reviews the military proper, covering such subjects as recruitment, ranks and force organization, D-Soldiers and their equipment, imperial warships and ground vehicles, and the Imperial Intelligence Command.

Chapter Four, *The Multiverse*, reviews the Multiverse of the Champions Universe — how it's organized and perceived by dimensional travelers, what types of dimensions exist in which "regions" of the Multiverse, and so on. Even if you don't want to use V'han herself in your games, this chapter

has everything you need for a Champions Universe dimension-hopping campaign.

Chapter Five, *The V'hanian Empire*, focuses in on that part of the Multiverse ruled by Istvatha V'han. It describes the extent of her empire, how it functions, what life is like for her subjects, and most importantly for many Champions campaigns how she conquers dimensions and adds them to her realm. This chapter also includes sections describing her current plans for Earth, and various enemies she has (who might become allies of the PCs — the enemy of your enemy is, after all, your friend... at least for a little while).

Chapter Six, *Gamemastering The Empress*, discusses ways to use Istvatha V'han in your Champions campaign. It includes plot seeds, information on how she interacts (or might interact) with various other members of the Champions Universe, and a section on dimensional campaigning in general. Istvatha V'han makes an ideal foe for a group of superheroes who frequently travel through the dimensions, and with the help of this chapter you can easily create just such a campaign if you want.

So tell your heroes to get ready — they're about to face the greatest threat Earth's ever encountered.

ISTVATHA V'HAN AND "REALISM"

For many gamers, the existence of a master villain like Istvatha V'han raises all sorts of uncomfortable questions. As powerful as she is, why hasn't she already conquered Earth's dimension? How can she really control an empire of millions of dimensions? Why is Earth so special and important that she keeps trying to conquer it? Why is everyone so frightened of her when all of her invasion attempts to date have been defeated by Earth's superhumans?

The answer to all these questions, and others like them, is: "Who cares?" This is a comic book master villain, in a comic book world, in a comic book roleplaying game. Evil masterminds do these sorts of things all the time in the comic books without it bothering anyone, so it shouldn't bother you that Istvatha V'han can do the same. After all, we're talking about a world where people can teleport, fly, fire blasts of energy from their eyes, and report news stories without injecting any political bias. Given all that, it's perfectly plausible that Istvatha V'han could rule her empire but not be able to conquer Earth... yet.



ABBREVIATIONS

This book uses the following abbreviations to refer to other *HERO System* books:

6E1: *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume I: Character Creation*

6E2: *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume II: Combat And Adventuring*

APG: *The HERO System Advanced Player's Guide*

APG2: *The HERO System Advanced Player's Guide II*

CU: *Champions Universe*

CV 1, 2, 3: The respective three volumes of *Champions Villains*

FH: *Fantasy Hero*

HSB: *The HERO System Bestiary*

HSEG: *The HERO System Equipment Guide*

HSG: *The HERO System Grimoire*

HSMA: *HERO System Martial Arts*

HSS: *HERO System Skills*

HSV: *HERO System Vehicles*

SH: *Star Hero*

If you feel you absolutely have to, you can devise some sort of “realistic” explanation for V’han and her activities that involves super-technology or superpowers (some parts of this book even do it for you). For example, perhaps Earth’s superheroes have found a way to interfere with V’han’s dimensional technology that makes it impossible for her to attack with the full force of her military. Whatever the justification you decide on, the important thing is this: use Istvatha V’han to have fun in your game. Don’t worry about the “realistic” details, unless everything in your game is about “realism.”

NAMES AND TERMINOLOGY

For ease of reference, this book uses Earth names and terms for people and things in the V’hanian Empire. For example, Chitthoram’s title isn’t really “Grand Chancellor” — it’s a V’hanian term that means more or less the same thing. If the GM prefers, he can create the V’hanian words for things and use them instead; this would be a good way of showing the players how different V’han’s empire is from Earth.

Similarly, names are usually given as if for a single individual, when in fact it’s not unheard of for Istvatha V’han to have multiple versions of the same person from different dimensions working for her. For example, the superpowered soldier Black (page 45) should rightly be called Black-17, since Blacks from various other dimensions than that Black’s also serve in her Imperial Battalion. But that can get cumbersome in the text, so instead he’s just referred to as “Black.” The GM should feel free to assume that the Empress has access to multiple versions of any important character unless the text says differently or he prefers otherwise for some reason.

Additionally, any dates given in the text are Earth years for the reader’s benefit, rather than the standard V’hanian Imperial Calendar, which uses the year of Istvatha V’han’s birth (1537 AD) as Year 1.

MMO INTO RPG, RPG INTO MMO

The Book Of The Empress includes material based on the massively multiplayer online (MMO) roleplaying game *Champions Online* created by Cryptic Studios. While a lot of effort has been devoted to making sure the MMO content is accurately represented in these books in *HERO System* terms, MMOs and RPGs aren’t the same type of game, so the same type of content isn’t appropriate for each one. For example, a villain’s lair in an MMO is deliberately simple, often with one room leading to another to guide game play. That doesn’t make much sense for an RPG, where it’s possible (and often very useful) to expand things beyond the scope of an MMO. Similarly, a villain or costume that works well on-screen in an MMO might not be as appropriate for a paper-and-pencil RPG (and vice-versa!).

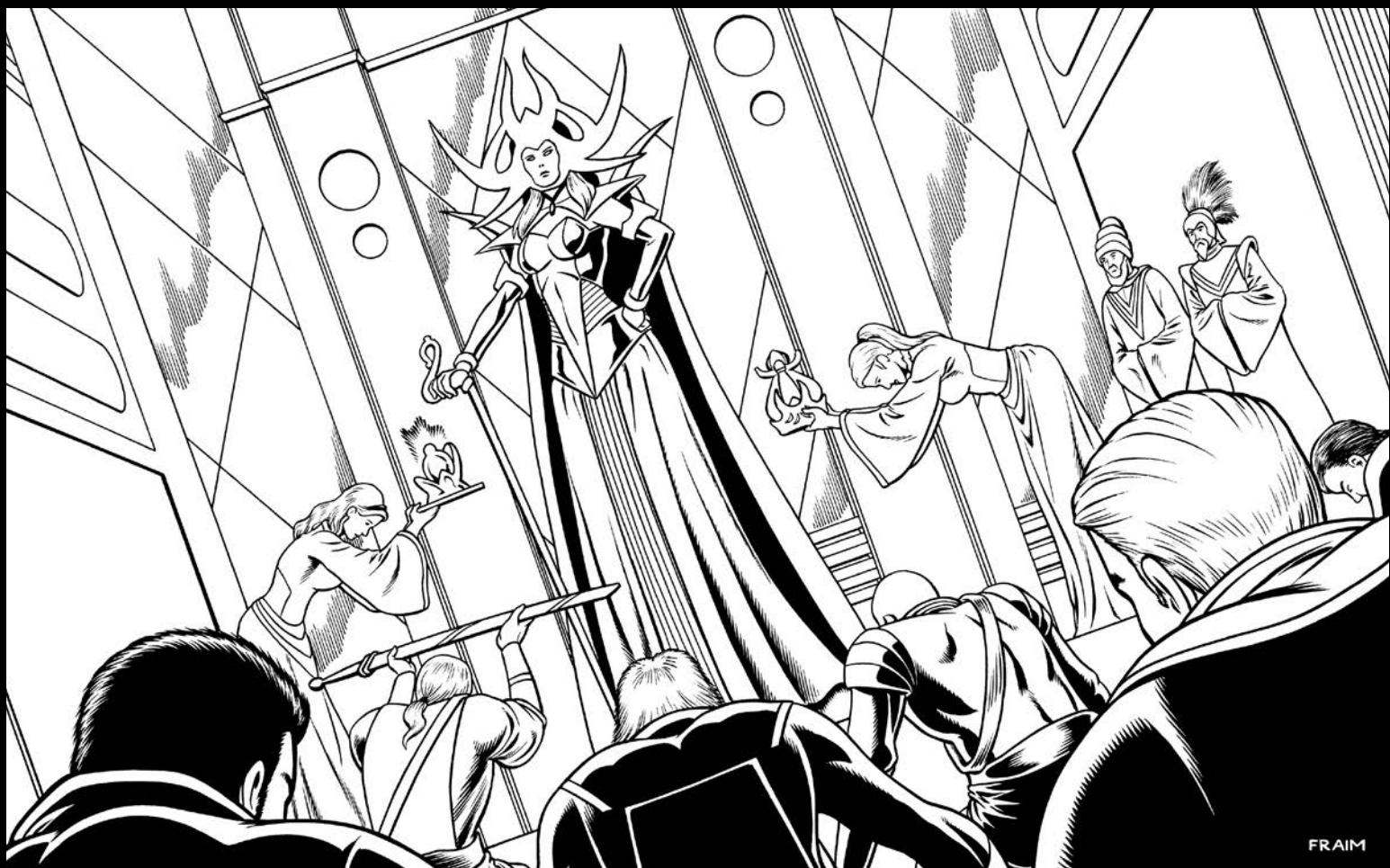
Thus, the MMO-based information in this book, while containing the essence of the *Champions Online* presentation, may add to it, or rework it in minor ways, to make things more “realistic” and appropriate for an RPG. Characters who have one or two simple abilities in *Champions Online* may get fleshed out into more detailed characters with a greater variety of powers in this book, since an RPG character sheet isn’t constrained by the same restrictions as an MMO. And of course, there may be some MMO secrets that you should only be able to learn by playing the MMO itself.

So don’t be surprised if you see some slight variation between the *Champions Universe* as portrayed in this book and the *Champions Universe* of *Champions Online*. The differences are just the result of the book taking the wonderful elements Cryptic Studios has created and doing even more with them.

SUPER “HUMAN”

For ease of reference, *The Book Of The Empress* sometimes uses the term “super-human” to refer to individuals with superpowers who aren’t actually Human. Technically it would be more accurate to refer to super members of whatever species is involved, but that would become awkward. So when you read “superhuman,” assume it means someone who has superpowers regardless of his species unless the context indicates otherwise.

CHAPTER ONE



**A CRUSADE
ACROSS REALITIES:
THE HISTORY OF ISTVATHA V'HAN**



THE HISTORY OF ISTVATHA V'HAN

Chronicling the history of any major political figure is often a monumental task. And when the figure in question is an immortal time traveler who rules millions of dimensions, the problem becomes one of almost Sisyphean magnitude! In fact, Istvatha V'han has an entire department of her government devoted to keeping track of what happens to her and throughout her Empire (see page 154) — though of course only the historical records she approves of are actually made public. (For example, only a few of her subjects are aware she's attacked Earth's dimension several times and failed to conquer it; it wouldn't help her image for her history ministry to make that known to all her subjects.)

What follows here is a *brief* history of V'han and her Empire up to the present day on Earth. This should give the GM (and his players, if they're allowed to read it) enough information to make it easier to use V'han in his campaign, without bogging him down in details. There's plenty of room for the GM to expand her history if he's so inclined. Equivalent dates in Earth's history, and V'han's age at the time, are provided for GMs running historical campaigns.

V'HAN'S EARLY LIFE (1537-1561 AD, AGES 1-24)

Excerpted from the *Chronica Imperialis V'han'a*, the gargantuan official history of Istvatha V'han and her Empire:

As the second child of four born to solidly middle class parents, the future Empress's young life was no different in any important respect from that of millions of other V'hanian children of her day. She was raised in a loving environment, learned the games and jokes common to young people in her part of V'ha, and went to school during most of the year. An examination of her school records show evidence of a budding genius, with consistently high marks but notes by many teachers that she seemed bored (or even became disruptive) because she wasn't challenged by the curriculum in any way.

Life changed for the better during early adolescence. First and most importantly, the future Empress discovered the first of her powers, the ability to travel between dimensions. Early experimentation with this power was a source of amazement to her, and also gave her a refuge from the inevitable pressures of her age. But not all her experiences with dimensional travel were so pleasant. Until she learned how to navigate the Multiverse she nearly became irretrievably lost on at least two occasions, and one time barely escaped with her life from a group of vicious autochthons she encountered on a planet she was exploring.

The future Empress realized there was more to her powers when she was fifteen years old. She was returning home from one of her trips to other dimensions when something went wrong and she wound up back at her home two hundred years before she was born! Confusion and fright soon gave way to wonder and excitement as she realized the possibilities. Her senses expanded — she realized exactly where she was in V'ha's timestream, and thus was able to return home easily.

THE CONQUEST OF V'HA (1560-1561 AD; AGE 23-24)

Over the next decade the future Empress spent more and more time exploring her powers and learning about the nature of the Multiverse. At first no one had any idea what she was doing, since she used her ability to travel in time to ensure she was never late for an appointment and got to spend plenty of time with family and friends. But eventually she chose to reveal her abilities to her parents and siblings after swearing them to secrecy. Concerned for her safety and stability, her mother and father begged her to forget about her powers and settle down into an ordinary life, but they could no more hold back the inevitable tide of the future Empress's destiny than a man can stop the ocean waves.

It was during this time that the future Empress's ambitions began to bloom. Her travels gave her a unique perspective on the way societies arose, grew, and decayed, and how sentient beings governed themselves. She became convinced she could manage peoples' lives better than they could manage them themselves — an attitude that in anyone else would seem to be the height of arrogance, but which in future Empress Istvatha was merely the first stirrings of her career.

By her early twenties the future Empress had used her powers to amass not only the greatest fortune anyone on V'ha had ever possessed, but enormous social and political influence throughout the planet. On her twenty-third birthday she made a worldwide announcement "requesting" that all governments turn absolute power over to her. At first this command was met with scorn and derision... but then the attacks started. Vast armies of mercenaries hired with her funds laid seige to the major cities of the world — and not every soldier in those armies was V'hanian. In what would set the stage for her imperial conquests to come, the future Empress recruited troops from another dimension. In this instance they were the Golugk, a squat, six-limbed species that worshipped her as a goddess because of the powers she'd demonstrated to them.

It took nearly two years of fighting, but in time the future Empress triumphed — V'ha was hers. Compared to many conquerors she was well-received, for she'd used her time travel powers to defeat most of her enemies with as little bloodshed as possible. Unlike most planets that experience worldwide civil war, V'ha remained relatively unharmed and prosperous... thus setting the stage for the future Empress's next great victory.

THE FIRST DIMENSIONAL CONQUEST (1562-1568 AD; AGES 25-31)

Excerpted from *The Bloody Hand*, an illegal history of V'han and her Empire maintained by various underground and rebel groups, clandestinely distributed among them and given to possible sympathizers:

Ruthlessly conquering her own world didn't even begin to slake Istvatha's thirst for power. She was a traveler of dimensions, and therefore it was entire dimensions she intended to rule... no matter how many trillions had to die for the sake of her ambition.

But one cannot field a reality-conquering army without the ability to travel through reality unhindered — and the V'hanians at the time only had low-powered FTL technology. This was an obstacle Istvatha could easily remove, however. Using her powers it was a simple matter to travel to other dimensions where species possessed advanced technology she could steal, or even to take it from V'ha's future if she felt she could do so without disrupting the timestream.

With a vast, well-supplied army and fleet of ships now at her command, Istvatha went to war. Using her time and dimensional travel powers, taking over her first dimension was an easy matter. But it took several years because she was learning the tactics of conquest, massacre, and oppression that would soon serve her so well on her path to the throne. One by one the worlds of her native dimension fell, until at last she had crushed all resistance beneath her booted heel.

She soon learned that all things have their price, and that she was right to be concerned about

affecting the flow of time. She returned to V'ha in triumph, the ruler of her entire dimension... but things were subtly wrong. Most of V'ha was just as she'd left it, but sometimes a building was at a slightly different location, or a river had a slightly different course. She found this disturbing, but tolerable. The full magnitude of her meddling with Time only became apparent when she went home to visit her family: the home wasn't there. No one so much as remembered her parents and siblings, or the things they'd done in life. Something she'd done on one of her trips into the past to manipulate events for her own benefit had somehow erased her family from the timestream forever. For many years she tried to find a way to restore them to existence, but neither she nor her scientists could devise a way to alter the course of history and bring them back without inflicting serious harm to the nascent Empire. And so, like any bloody conqueror in any dimension in any time, she sacrificed love for power, consigning her family to oblivion forever.

THE EARLY EMPIRE (1569-1702 AD; AGES 32-165)

Excerpted from the *Chronica Imperialis V'han'a*:

Having proved she could conquer one dimension, rule its inhabitants well, and improve the quality of life for all her subjects, the Empress began the next stage of her plans: the conquest of other dimensions. For her first targets she focused primarily on dimensions near to V'ha's own, including:

TETHRODA (1575-78 AD; AGES 38-41)

The second dimension the Empress conquered was Tethroda, a similar realm to her home plane. This gave her a chance to practice the strategies and tactics she'd developed during the conquest of V'ha's dimension, refining them to much greater levels of effectiveness without the need to travel back in time. During her rule the Empress has frequently employed this technique, often using newly-recruited soldiers so they can learn how dimensional conquest works with a well-established plan before being assigned to campaigns under less ideal conditions.

SARDAVA (1594-96 AD AND 1699 AD; AGES 57-59 AND 162)

After several nearly flawless conquests, the Empress encountered her first true difficulties with a dimension known as Sardava, home to a large number of sentient species. Many of these species belonged to advanced civilizations with interstellar (and even intergalactic) travel and communications capabilities. This allowed them to respond to her incursions with something approaching a unified front of opposition, which her armies had never encountered before. Nearly a year passed during the first stage of the invasion. Then the Empress withdrew, regrouped, and tried again, but enjoyed no greater success.

Enraged but unwilling to stall her progress with futile assaults on one realm, the Empress established dimensional bulwarks to keep the Sardavans from attempting a counter-invasion and turned her attention to other matters. But she never forgot Sardava, and vowed to one day to take it for her own. That day came over a century later. Now far more experienced at dimensional conquest and possessing much more extensive resources, she launched another assault on Sardava, easily shattering the opposing forces. She then led several well-equipped squads of soldiers back in time to kidnap the political and military officials who'd been most closely involved in the fight against her. She brought them forward in time to learn of the ultimate futility of their resistance, then had them publicly executed.

MAUK'TALANI (1657-62 AD; AGES 120-125)

As she neared the end of her first century as the ruler of V'ha and what would soon be millions of dimensions, the Empress had obtained enough experience and amassed enough resources to make her campaigns of conquest faster and more efficient. Of particular note is her increased use of dimensional flanking maneuvers — or in layman's terms, teleportation of large amounts of personnel and war materiel — during battles. Few of the planets and civilizations she encountered had the means to block her dimensional flanking systems, allowing her to move entire divisions behind enemy lines if necessary to subdue resistance as quickly and safely as possible.

A classic example of this, one still studied today in her military academies, is the conquest of Mauk'talani. A small yet vigorous dimension, Mauk'talani contained over a dozen starfaring societies and dozens of others that were less advanced. Designating the species with FTL capability as the primary targets, she moved several armies into Mauk'talani from V'ha, establishing a beachhead in an uninhabited system ten light-years from the most powerful civilization in the dimension, the Borthu. She moved a large fleet into Borth space, stopping just outside the orbit of the planet's largest moon. The Borthu defense fleets came out to meet her, and the two fleets began to battle. Suddenly a third of the V'hanian fleet vanished... and reappeared behind the Borthu! Trapped between hammer and anvil, the Borthu were soon crushed and their planet occupied by the Empress's troops. One by one the rest of the civilizations of Mauk'talani fell to similar tactics, and soon the entire dimension joined the Empire.

THE FIRST GREAT CONSOLIDATION (1703-1779 AD; AGES 166-242)

Excerpted from *Our Empress: History And Social Policy*, a textbook used by secondary school students throughout the Empire:

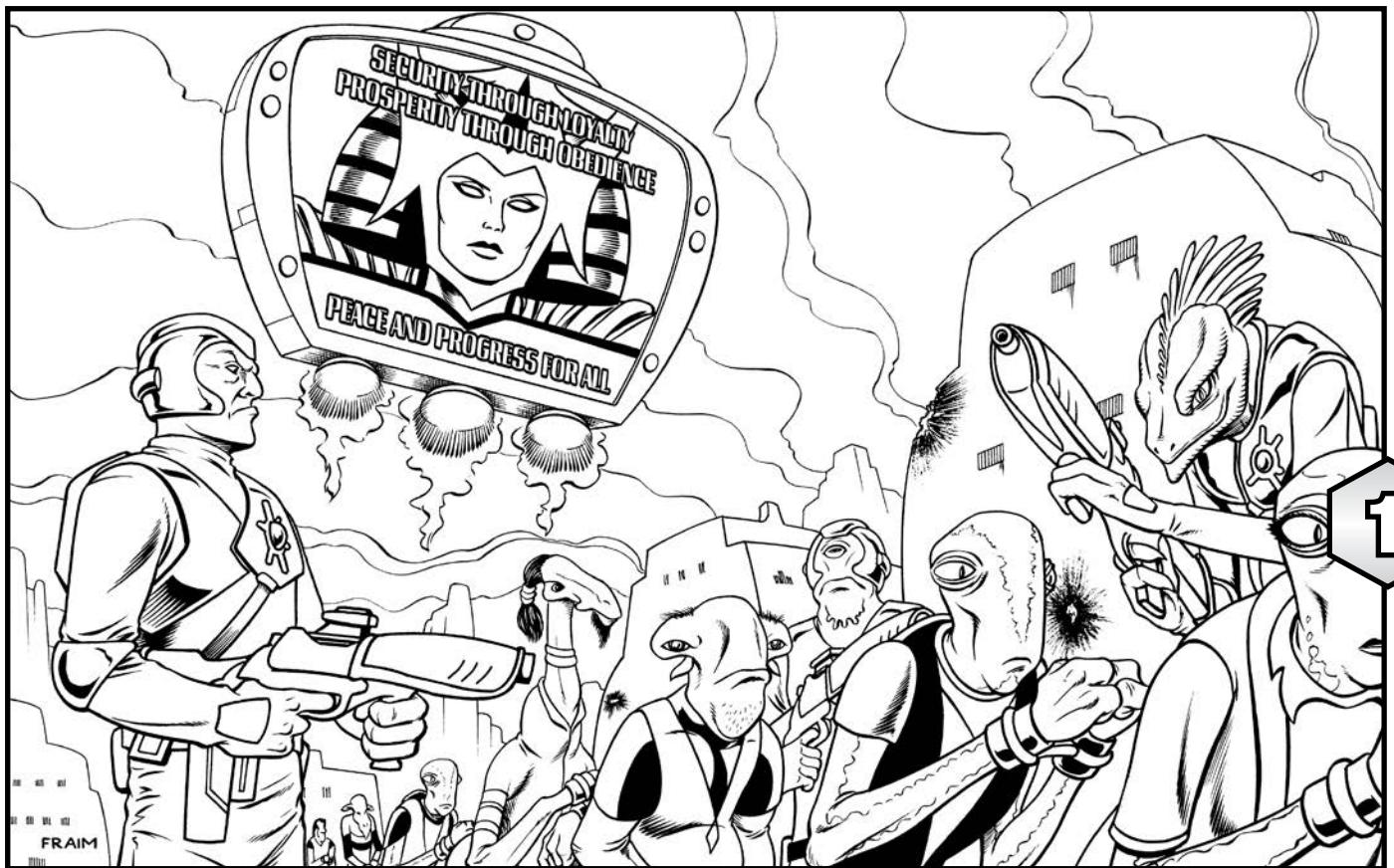
Following the conclusion of the campaigns against Troharn and Sorro, Empress Istvatha announced the beginning of what imperial historians have come to call the First Great Consolidation. While military campaigns that were already underway continued, and new expeditions were launched to destroy any groups that were foolish enough to rebel against the Empire, the Empress stated that no new campaigns of conquest would be initiated in the near future.

Instead, she declared she would devote this time to the peaceful pursuit of consolidating her gains, reorganizing her government, and improving living conditions for all subjects of the Empire. And over the course of the next seven decades, that is precisely what she did. Major bureaucratic, administrative, governmental, and economic reforms during this time include:

- a massive reorganization of the Imperial government into a form similar to what we know today, with ministries to oversee the day-to-day functioning of the Empire regarding matters which she could not devote personal attention to;
- the establishment of a uniform tax code for all Imperial subjects, and the establishment of the Subministry of Tax Enforcement to ensure that all Imperial subjects pay their designated tax;
- the creation of a uniform currency for the Empire — the *venar* — and abolishing all other forms of currency;
- declaring V'hanian the official language of the Empire;
- the establishment of the earliest interdimensional gateways for use by merchants, tourists, and other civilians (as opposed to military gateways, which had long existed); and
- the creation of the Imperial Security Force (prior to this time, police functions in most dimensions had been performed by a branch of the Imperial military).

Changes on this level, whether confined to a single planet or applying across multiple dimensions, cause a certain amount of societal disruption, but Empress Istvatha took pains to minimize the impact on her subjects, and to correct any problems that arose as quickly as possible. In her efforts during this time can be seen the roots of many of the Imperial social welfare programs that she initiated during the Second Great Consolidation.

Beyond the specific major changes listed above, the Empress worked tirelessly to integrate recently-conquered territories into the Empire as a whole. She established the Vice Ministry of Unification during this time, established millions of schools for teaching V'hanian, and did her best to provide relief from the short-term societal pains her consolidation project created. The success of her efforts can be seen in how flawlessly the Empire as a whole exists and functions today.



THE SECOND GREAT EXPANSION (1700-1947 AD; AGES 243-410)

Excerpted from the *Chronica Imperialis V'han'a*:

After focusing on the reorganization and administration of her Empire for over seventy years, the Empress felt the time was right to once again take to the road of conquest. She spent five years assembling supplies and materiel, re-organizing her military, planning strategies with her top admirals and generals, and making other preparations. When the time was right, she unleashed her awesome power upon the Multiverse.

The following period of over 150 years saw the Empire expand to a degree never equalled before or since. Many of what are now considered pillars of the Empire — Mrodarron, Osghuria, Thunderworld, the Emanations of Vyron, Yandass, Nocutaris, Altethrya — came into the Imperial fold during this time. The Empress's armies pushed forward from the core dimensions of the Empire (V'ha and the planes surrounding it, which were the focus of her earliest conquests) in nearly every direction, defeating any who dared to stand against them as they carried the Empress's crusade wherever she directed them to.

Of course, not all dimensions are of equal value to the Empire; some hold little of consequence, while others are rich with resources the Empress can use. So the expansion did not proceed in what one might call a "straight line" in every direction.

The Imperial Legions bypassed less desirable targets in favor of more valuable ones, saving the former for future military expeditions of lesser importance. During the second period of expansion discussed below, the Empress often used these "lesser" dimensions as targets for armies of soldiers who first saw action conquering an alternate V'ha (or other "common" target) and were now ready for something more unusual.

THE FIRST WAR WITH SKARN (1833-36 AD; AGES 296-299, 511)

Expanding the Empire had consequences beyond mere conquest. During her travels throughout the Multiverse, Empress Istvatha had learned of its structure in some detail. Through the early nineteenth century the Empire consisted solely of dimensions in the "lowest" level of the Multiverse, Assiah. The Empress felt it was time to bring the higher dimensions of the next level, Yetzirah, into her realm. This led to her first clashes with the entities who would become her greatest enemies: Skarn the Shaper and Tyrannon the Conqueror.

The Imperial Legions first encountered the soldiers of Skarn during their fifth Yetziratic campaign, the invasion of the dimension Karos. Compared to the homogenous, often primitive, militaries they were used to encountering, Skarn's armies were nearly as diverse, well-organized, and powerful as the Legion. Concerned and intrigued, the Empress ordered her commanders to cease all offensives in Karos and to maintain defensive positions while she learned more.

Months of intelligence-gathering and data analysis followed (presumably on her enemy's part as well, since his armies also became unusually passive at this time). What the Empress learned troubled her. These armies served a being named Skarn, also known as the Shaper, a mystic of great power and a dimensional conquerer much like herself. However, this Skarn was a butcher and a tyrant. Rather than simply taking over dimensions, he used strange, powerful magics to *meld* conquered dimensions with his own core realm, creating a dimensional agglomeration known as the Congeries. And what he did to his subjects was even worse: entire populations forced to relocate to other dimensions; whole civilizations deliberately warped by Skarn's magic into forms he considered "more fitting" (or which simply satisfied his whims); complete realities altered by arcane manipulations. The few pictures the Empress obtained of Skarn's people and realm horrified her.

Empress Istvatha could not tolerate a rival of such power, and even less could she tolerate one who so cruelly exploited and murdered the subjects he was supposed to protect and preserve. She gave new orders to her Legions: attack in force and destroy Skarn!

A war nearly four years long resulted. The Empire's forces were larger and better-equipped, but Skarn's forces wielded enchanted weapons and often used powerful spells, and magic is an unpredictable thing. The battles raged across Karos and into "neighboring" Yetziratic dimensions such as Sotha'Qa, Pallaraha, and the Parterres of several sentient species. In the "lower" Yetziratic planes, the ones nearest Assiah, the Imperial forces tended to prevail, but as they advanced into Yetzirah the dimensions became more and more dependent on magic, which made Skarn's armies stronger. The Empress even once used her powers of time travel to return from the future to bolster the Legion's efforts, but Skarn's treachery and spells gave him an advantage in magic-dominated dimensions.

This being the case, the war soon reached an impasse. Rather than risk further destruction and loss of life in a fruitless conflict, Empress Istvatha magnanimously suggested a truce. Through diplomats she negotiated a peace with Skarn that allowed her to keep Karos, Sotha'Qa, and several other lower Yetziratic dimensions where her Legions had prevailed, while granting him rights to others. A "boundary" between the Empire and Skarn's territory was also negotiated.

But peace with the Shaper was an uneasy thing at best. His desire to destroy dimensions and oppress the people of the Multiverse cannot be contained by the mere terms of a treaty. As shall be seen, clashes between himself and the Empress have occurred more than once since then.

THE FIRST WAR WITH TYRANNON (1850-52 AD; AGES 313-15)

The Empire had barely recovered from the war with Skarn and continued its march of conquest when Empress Istvatha encountered another enemy much like herself: the strange entity Tyrannon the Conqueror, a being who existed in hundreds of "selves" and used them to establish dimensional links to other planes so he could in time "merge" them with his home realm of Thulkos. (Tyrannon is much like Skarn in this regard, but where Skarn melds dimensions together into one bizarre, chaotic mass, Tyrannon "overwhelms" conquered dimensions, changing them to become part of Thulkos itself.) To the Empress, he was an even greater threat than Skarn, for he could change dimensions so that she could never conquer them, and might even "consume" her as he already has so many billions of other souls. His existence, and the threat he posed to her, were intolerable.

Again the might of the Imperial Legion was marshalled for war. Her armies went forth, sometimes led by the Empress herself to show the importance she placed upon the effort to destroy Tyrannon. Unfortunately, the result was much the same as with Skarn, for Tyrannon's potent magics were something the Legions could not easily come to grips with. The Battle of Nekoya, fought primarily in and around an uninhabited solar system in the dimension Relaemar, was the turning point in the war; there dozens of divisions of D-Soldiers, and a like amount of Tyrannon's personnel, were slaughtered; Tyrannon's Fire Viceroy and two of his Emissaries were nearly slain by members of the Imperial Battalion. In the end, both sides, exhausted, retreated from the conflict and claimed victory.

After Nekoya, both sides retired "behind their lines" and began keeping a wary eye on each other. No formal treaty ending the war was ever signed, nor has the Empress ever deigned to negotiate with the murderous despot Tyrannon. A "neutral zone" has come into effect in lower Yetzirah, with neither side willing to cross it openly. Although the Empire and Tyrannon have fought several lesser wars since then, for the most part Tyrannon deems it best to avoid Assiah and lower Yetzirah for fear of angering the Empress, and the Empress graciously returns the favor by not pressing far into Yetzirah.

THE RUKOSAN REBELLION

(1948-50 AD, AGES 411-413)

Excerpted from *The Bloody Hand*:

Despite the enormous power and resources of the Empire, brave sentients throughout V'han's realm have dared to rebel against her oppressive rule and attempt to regain their freedom. Sadly, almost none of them have succeeded; the odds against them are simply too great. Entire agencies of V'han's government monitor potential rebellions and attempt to crush them before they can flare to life; entire armies of her Legions are trained for anti-rebellion military actions and go into the field to slaughter rebels at her command.

While a few revolts have come close to succeeding (at least for a short period), only one has posed a significant threat to V'han's rule over a major portion of her empire: the Rukosan Freedom Movement (known to V'han's puppet historians as "the Rukosan Rebellion," "the Great Rebellion," or "Ka-Tro's Treachery"). Two factors combined to give this revolt against the tyrant V'han a chance at success.

First, it began with an unusual event on the planet Rukosa, in the dimension Earth-782. What exactly happened is unclear, since imperial forces have destroyed or suppressed many records, but it seems that the planet passed through a cloud of meteoroids or tiny asteroids composed primarily of a strange green mineral. When it came into contact with the flesh of a Rukosan (a blue-skinned humanoid species), this mineral often imbued that person with superhuman powers. Within a period of just a few weeks, nearly half the Rukosans — several million of them — were superhumanly strong or fast, could project energy bolts, wielded potent psionic abilities, or possessed other superpowers. The Rukosans had never accepted the V'hanian yoke meekly, and now they had the means to strike back. Within a few days from the first time a public official hinted at the possibility of revolt, every V'hanian garrison on the planet had been destroyed and the soldiers serving in them gotten what they deserved for being the tools of imperialist oppression.

The Empress assigned the sector admiral — Ka-Tro Tho'req Saan, one of her best military commanders — to take as many armies as he needed and crush the Rukosans so thoroughly that they would never revolt again. Unfortunately for her, she was unaware of Admiral Ka-Tro's own ambitions. He felt stifled in his military career and thought he, not V'han, should rule the empire. He had the military background, intelligence, and gift for command that marked a true emperor; she was just an adventurer whom fate had gifted with useful superpowers! And what was worse for the Empire, Ka-Tro was immensely popular among his troops; most of them felt they were fighting for him personally, not on behalf of the Empire.

Not being a fool, Admiral Ka-Tro recognized an opportunity when he saw one. After his forces entered Earth-782, he seized control of all working dimensional gates and also secured any likely nexus points where other gates would probably be built. Then he appealed to the Rukosans, offering his services and those of his army in furtherance of their revolt. He promised that if they chose him as leader, he would help them break from the V'hanian Empire and establish an enlightened government to rule over them. Swayed by his great personal charisma, they agreed.

Before the Empire could send forces loyal to the Empress to Earth-782, the Rukosan Rebellion spread. Ka-Tro's armies plus the superpowered might of the Rukosans was enough to free all of Earth-782 from the Empire within just a few months, and then Ka-Tro led his forces through the dimension gates into nearby planes. Everywhere the rebels went they were greeted with open arms by species resentful of V'han's oppression and tyranny, and the ranks of Ka-Tro's army swelled.

For a year the best the Empress could do was slow the tide with whatever military forces she had available to throw at the problem. But robbing it of its momentum was enough; that gave her time to plan and prepare. When Ka-Tro and the Rukosans gated into the dimension Daxillian they were confronted by three full V'hanian armies armed with the best ships and weapons the Empire could muster. For a year battles raged throughout Daxillian, both in space and on planetary bodies, but by then it was only a matter of time. Any soldier or vehicle V'han lost she could quickly replace from her vast resources in other dimensions, but any loss the rebels suffered diminished their forces. Eventually a disheartened Ka-Tro suggested suing for peace in an effort to negotiate some sort of gain, even a minor one like greater rights within the Empire.

But V'han would have none of it. Luring Ka-Tro and the Rukosan leaders to a peace conference on the planet Threl, she captured them and had them executed on a live videocast transmitted throughout the Empire. Over the next two months she obliterated the now-rudderless rebellion's forces, then proceeded to Earth-782. There she scoured Rukosa clean, wiping every city off the map, leveling mountains, and setting entire continents on fire. A few pitiful, non-superpowered survivors were left alive to show the Empress's "mercy," and thus the rebellion ended. To this day Rukosa stands as a monument to V'han's ruthlessness, cruelty, and tyranny.

THE SECOND GREAT CONSOLIDATION (1951-1993 AD, AGES 414-456)

Excerpted from *Our Empress: History And Social Policy*:

Following the second period of expansion and her first conflicts with Tyrannon and Skarn, Empress Istvatha once again felt the time was ripe for administrative and political consolidation. The Empire was now hundreds of times larger than it had been at the time of the First Great Consolidation, and the strain on Imperial functions and services was beginning to show.

Over the course of four decades, the Empress initiated a number of major reforms. These included:

- Reorganizing her government to the form we know today. Some old ministries were abolished (or combined with other ministries); new ministries and vice ministries were created to handle matters of importance; and many branches of government expanded. During this time the size of the Imperial bureaucracy increased almost a hundred-fold; as a result, today nearly half of Imperial subjects work directly or indirectly for the Empress.
- Reorganizing her military. A military designed for multiple campaigns of conquest is not necessarily suited to a mix of force projection, peacekeeping, anti-rebellion, and internal security duties, which was what the Empress now needed. Following ten years of planning and consultation with her leading military commanders, the Empress made sweeping

changes to the Legions' table of organization and equipment. Army functions and military mission parameters were often redefined or moved among various bodies of the Legions. Of particular note is the expansion of the Imperial Intelligence Command during this time.

- Expanding interdimensional travel, trade, and communications. To truly link her Empire together, the Empress embarked on an ambitious plan of building dimensional gates and encouraging inter-dimensional contact among her subjects. Control of the gates was, and remains, strictly under control of Imperial forces, but compared to earlier periods of Imperial history the rules by which subjects are allowed to use the gates, and for what purposes, are much looser.
- Instituting a program of infrastructural improvements. Together with encouraging inter-dimensional contact, the Empress started a comprehensive program to build (or improve) infrastructure throughout her domain: roads, spaceways, parks, public monuments, highways, and much more. Not only did this boost the economy by providing jobs for trillions of construction workers and related laborers, it allowed for general economic improvements.
- Increasing social welfare programs. The Empress also poured money into agencies and programs designed to ensure that no subject of hers would go hungry or be without a place to live. This involved such things as public works programs, free education, improved technology distribution, enhanced food production, cheap (but comfortable and secure) housing, and free medical care.



THE SECOND TYRANNON WAR (1979-82 AD; AGES 442-445, 713, 1,807)

Excerpted from the *Chronica Imperialis V'han'a*:

While most of the Empire's military campaigns slowed or ceased during Empress Istvatha's second major period of administrative reform and domestic policymaking, for one brief period the Imperial Legions returned to a complete war-time footing. In 1979 the murderous tyrant Tyrannon, in full defiance of the territorial sovereignty of the V'hanian Empire, violated the *de facto* neutral zone established after the war of 1850-52 and struck into three Assiatic dimensions: Thusal'pa'ta (which was imperial territory) and Xoreg and Kletch (which were both unclaimed, but near enough to imperial holdings to be regarded as within the Empire's planned zone of expansion).

Enraged by this affront, the Empress assembled as much of her full military might as she could on short notice and launched a counterattack on a three dimension front. Her forces arrived in time to prevent Tyrannon from absorbing any of the three into Thulkos, but not before he'd established significant beachheads and begun using wizardry to forcibly convert the natives to his "cause."

The result was three years of intense, bitter warfare. The Empress opened gate after gate to move more troops and ordnance into the theater of operations, primarily with the goal of flanking Tyrannon's forces or shutting down his mystic portals. Tyrannon responded in kind, creating as many gates as he could. While his typical soldier, a strange, dwarfish being known as a Signifer, is less powerful than a D-Soldier (and doesn't even carry weapons), its chief attack transformed D-Soldiers into more Signifers, swelling the invader's ranks while diminishing the Empress's own.

The picture became more desperate for the Empire in mid-1981 when Tyrannon devised a spell to prevent most of the Empress's gates from functioning. Deprived of supplies and reinforcements, the commanders of the Imperial Legions were hard-pressed to continue the fight. But they refused to surrender even in the face of the tyrant's most brutal attacks and kept battling on, inspired by love of Empire and Empress. At last help arrived in the form of the Empress herself, traveling back in time from hundreds of years in the future to provide her loyal troops with technology to overcome Tyrannon's spell.

Again the tide of battle shifted, as a fresh wave of D-Soldier armies entered the battlefield and pushed Tyrannon's soldiers back on several fronts. At the Battle of Belek-Tara in late 1981, D-Admiral Yonb Wsda lured several million Signifers into a trap and destroyed them with a Sigma Bomb. This opened a huge hole in the tyrant's lines; the forces of the Empire poured through it and began wreaking further havoc on Tyrannon's military machine.

Once more the great Empress Istvatha showed her love for her people by returning again from the distant future, this time with a warning. Analysis of long-lost historical records showed that Tyrannon had planned a last-ditch attack before withdrawing from the dimensions he'd invaded — an attack that

resulted in millions of D-Soldier deaths. Forewarned by the Empress, a specially-chosen squad of Red Lions elite soldiers penetrated the enemy defenses and destroyed the ritual space established by Tyrannon's sorcerers to cast the spell. All of them were slain, sacrificing their lives to save those of their fellow soldiers, but the murderous tyrant's scheme was foiled.

With that final defeat, Tyrannon ordered his forces back through the mystic portals and called off his invasion. Rather than pursue him further, the Empress ordered her forces to establish a defensive perimeter by conquering all three dimensions. Once that was accomplished, a series of defensive installations was put into place to guard against another invasion attempt, and loyal D-Soldiers have manned them vigilantly to this day.

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THE THIRD GREAT EXPANSION (1994-2020, AGES 457-483)

Excerpted from the *Chronica Imperialis V'han'a*:

Once Empress Istvatha felt she'd done what was necessary to remake and improve the machinery of the Empire, she set forth once again on the glorious path of imperial conquest. The next four years were a chronicle of victory after victory, bringing into the Empire such dimensions as Lorgn, Axrandes, Ekrosa, D'tho'ka, Zellim, Shorwin, and Yoth. Then she turned her attention to a newly-discovered dimension of vast resources and potential: Earth-1346.

V'HAN INVADES EARTH (1998; AGE 461)

Excerpted from *Istvatha V'han: Interdimensional Menace*, Humanity's primary reference source to the Empress, by Professor Ben E. Scott of Duke University:

In 1998 a new superhuman threat, possibly the greatest Humanity had ever encountered or ever would, appeared in Sol space near the planet Mars. Istvatha V'han, a superhuman who claimed to rule a billion other dimensions, opened a dimensional gate into Earth's reality and came through at the head of an army numbering in the millions. She announced her intentions in a broadcast sent not just to Earth, but throughout the Galaxy and beyond:

Beings of this reality — I am Istvatha V'han, Empress of a Billion Dimensions and your new ruler. This dimension is now part of the V'hanian Empire. As imperial subjects your lives will improve and you will have access to all services and benefits we provide to our subjects. Our soldiers will occupy this dimension and set up the mechanisms of government and interdimensional trade. Do not attempt to resist; any resistance will be met with the full force not only of our displeasure but our military, against whom any defense is futile.

*Security through loyalty!
Prosperity through obedience!
Peace and progress for all!*

WAR CASUALTIES

Unfortunately the First V'hanian War of 1998 was not without its casualties among Earth's defenders. In addition to thousands of UNTIL agents, VIPER agents, national soldiers, and other ordinary Humans who found ways to get involved in the fighting and made the ultimate sacrifice for their world, many superhumans were also killed in battle. Some of them include:

Azure Guardian, a member of the Tiger Squad

Captain Corona, a solar-powered hero whose powers were particularly strong in space

Cobalt Crusader, a hero with radioactivity powers

Devil Jack, a minor supervillain with low-level teleportation and fire powers

Gladiatrix, a robotic super"heroine"

Human Arsenal III, a weaponmaster hero

Roktar, a villainous "brick"

Sierra, a stone-controlling superheroine

Tremor, a hero with vibration powers

With that the Empress's forces moved toward Earth, rightly anticipating that its inhabitants would not meekly submit to her dictates. The first battle was fought in outer space between the Moon and Mars as several teams of superheroes — including the Justice Squadron, Sentinels, Tokyo Super Squad, the New Knights of the Round Table, and the Superhero Division — went forth to meet this new threat. Unfortunately all they could do was slow down the advance. Even that many experienced superheroes could only accomplish so much against an army of tens of thousands carried in powerful starships and armed with advanced energy weapons. The Drifter signalled a general retreat and the heroes withdrew to the Moon.

In the day it took for V'han's army to reach Earth orbit, the ranks of Earth's defenders increased to many times their original size. This proved to be something of a hindrance as well as an asset; while the expansion of strength and tactical options was welcome, there was no acknowledged chain of command, resulting in confusion, even chaos at times. As a result the first full clash between Earth and the V'hanian Empire went badly for Humanity. The individual fighting styles and impromptu strategies of Earth's heroes were sometimes highly effective, but overall could not win the day against such a large, disciplined enemy force. As a result V'han's forces moved ever closer to Earth, and were even able to launch attacks against several major cities (including New York, London, and Bombay).

Sensing the problem, Earth's defenders regrouped again and placed themselves at the discretion of UNTIL. The Tribunal had long planned and prepared for such invasion attempts and was ready to spearhead Earth's resistance. With UNTIL agents coordinating Humanity's defenders, the second battle went better. Earth's heroes struck with precision and power, inflicting sufficient damage on the Empire's fleet to bring it to a halt in cislunar space. Defensive perimeters were established and the war began in earnest.

For the next two months the planet Earth found itself under siege. Again and again V'han threw her forces at Earth, and again and again Human superheroes held them off, sometimes by the barest of margins. But soon more than just Human superheroes were a part of the war effort. V'han's announcement had gone out to the rest of Earth's reality, and many species who heard it had no more desire to join her Empire than Humanity did. The Star*Guard responded in force and was soon joined by superhero teams from many other species, and even a few Malvan adventurers. The Imperial Legions found themselves surrounded, fighting a war on all sides. Perhaps more importantly, many Human supervillains, who had no desire to become the subjects of some alien queen, joined forces with the heroes, sometimes in exchange for pardons, sometimes without asking for anything in return. Notable villainous participants in the war included Dr. Yin Wu (whose potent spells proved instrumental in several battles), the Ultimates, Eurostar, VIPER, Cateran, Anubis, Captain Chronos (who used his time travel powers to "block" the Empress from using hers), GRAB, and Zorran the Artificer.

For two months the struggle continued, and sometimes it seemed as if Earth's protectors would be overwhelmed. But after six weeks of fighting a "commando team" of some of Earth's most powerful superhumans smashed through the Empire's lines and damaged V'han's dimensional portal, rendering it temporarily inoperative and thus severing the Legions' supply line. Trapped without hope of reinforcements, the Empire's forces fought on for two weeks, but then accepted an offer to cease hostilities and leave Earth's dimension forever. After repairing the dimensional portal they returned to their home plane.

But that was not the last the Earth would see of Istvatha V'han.

DIMENSIONAL WAR IN FAERIE (2001; AGE 464)

Excerpted from the *Chronica Imperialis V'han'a*:

The Empress's continuing interest in the dimension Earth-1346 came to the forefront in 2001 when her long-time enemy, the cruel and corruptive sorcerer Skarn the Shaper, attempted to conquer Earth by attacking its Parterres — specifically, it's "Faerie" dimension. Imperial military strategists believe Skarn's attention was attracted to Earth by the Empire's recent activities there, and that he felt he could gain ground in his long-simmering conflict with the Empress by conquering the dimension himself. Rather than launch a frontal assault, he planned to attack Humanity's "psyche" by assaulting and defeating its gods and legends. Thanks to mystic "laws" imposed upon them through a means unknown to the Empire, the ancient gods of Humanity are unable to use their magic against extradimensional enemies such as Skarn.

Thus, Skarn's initial attacks went well. First he challenged the war-gods of half a dozen pantheons to simultaneous combat. Since they were unable to use magic against him and could only rely on physical strength, while his spells worked against them flawlessly, he defeated them easily. Having seen their greatest champions so quickly defeated, the Human gods despaired of victory; many of them changed their shapes and fled before Skarn and his forces.

The Empress considered this an intolerable assault on a territory she'd already claimed and determined to put a stop to it. She initiated a two-fold plan. First, she secretly passed word of what was occurring to Human mystics, whose spells would not be affected by the restriction on the gods' magic. Second, she sent a large force of D-Soldiers to oppose Skarn directly.

The Shaper soon found himself fighting a war on many fronts. The gods attacked him as best they could, and even without their magic they were not an enemy he could casually dismiss. Second, numerous Earth mystics, including Dweomer, Rashindar, and the Devil's Advocates, brought all their sorcerous might to bear against him. Last and worst of all, the Imperial Legions attacked him from behind with weapons against which his soldiers and spells were often less effective than they were against arcane adversaries. After a week



of being battered from all sides, Skarn retreated to the Congeries to lick his wounds and devise other plans.

Excerpted from *The Bloody Hand*:

After she defeated Skarn with Humanity's help, Istvatha considered adopting his strategy and continuing his attack on Earth through its Parterres. Ultimately she had to back down and retreat to her own territory, though. It was not clear to her whether Earth's gods' powers would work against her forces, since they were technological rather than mystical, and she didn't want to risk it when her plans for another invasion of Earth were almost complete.

**THE STILLBORN INVASION
(2002; AGE 465)**

Excerpted from *The Bloody Hand*:

Having failed at her first attempt to conquer the dimension designated Earth-1346, an enraged Empress immediately began making plans for another invasion. Four years of preparation followed. As the planned date of the invasion neared, certain members of the dissident underground within the Empire, including one of the authors of this history, learned of it. In an effort to stymie Istvatha's plans they used stolen dimension-breaching technology to send a message to the defenders of Earth.

A group of Human "superheroes" known as the Champions received the warning. After alerting the rest of their species to the threat, they decided to try to stop the invasion before it began... by invading the Empire itself! Using a device created by one of their colleagues they opened a gate into

V'han's territory and came through. Their plan was to conduct reconnaissance, and hopefully to disrupt the Empire's war effort. Fortunately for them, we of the underground sensed their arrival and made contact before the Imperial Security Force could apprehend them.

Learning from us of the existence of rebels within imperial territories, the Champions began an ambitious program of fomenting rebellions wherever they could in the hope of bringing the Empress down... or at least changing her plans to invade their dimension. They traveled from planet to planet and dimension to dimension, attacking prominent targets and appealing to local rebels to rise up and regain their freedom.

To the surprise of some of us, their strategy worked. Dozens of minor rebellions broke out, as well as ten major ones that eventually engulfed one or more entire dimensions. Istvatha put all military campaigns and invasion plans on hold and regrouped her forces to fight the revolutionaries. Most of the rebellions were put down within two years, but three of them linger on in some form, and we who hope to cast off the imperial shackles have the Champions to thank for it, and to provide an eternal example of what just a few dedicated sentients can do in the cause of freedom.

Excerpted from *Sapphire: The Playboy Interview* (August 2006):

Q: What was it like in Istvatha V'han's empire?

A: It was... different. Some places we went were so unusual it was like visiting an alien planet in this galaxy; others were a lot like Earth, but *not quite right* somehow in ways that always made me a little nervous. And everywhere you went,

pictures of V'han with that slogan of hers; it was like stepping into a strange Hollywood remake of 1984. I'm glad we were able to do some good there, and I hope it's lasted.

Q: Did you get to meet any alternate versions of yourself, or your teammates?

A: One time, in an alternate Earth dimension; I forgot the number. It was totally surreal. And my costume is *way* better than what that other Sapphire was wearing.

Q: Was there *Playboy* in this other Earth?

A: I don't know; we didn't have any time to visit any magazine stands.

THE SECOND V'HANIAN INVASION (2007; AGE 470)

Excerpted from *The V'hanian Invasion 2007: A Report to the United Nations*, by UNTIL:

As anticipated by UNTIL and Earth's major governments, Istvatha V'han, the self-proclaimed "Empress of a Billion Dimensions," attacked Earth's dimension for a second time. Almost ten years had passed since her first attempt (though information from the Champions indicates she planned an attack in 2002, which they deflected with asymmetrical warfare tactics).

During that interim, UNTIL had prepared for another possible V'hanian invasion (or like event) by coordinating with similar agencies and superheroes around the globe to establish a worldwide alert network and make plans for the initial response. Specific agencies and superhero teams were assigned specific tasks in the event of an invasion and told who to contact for further instructions. This program was eventually designated *Project Citadel* and placed under the primary command of Major Alexander Shumeykin of Russia.

Having learned a hard lesson in 1998, this time V'han's forces began their assault more warily. They created their dimensional gate in the vicinity of Saturn and brought an estimated one million soldiers (and supporting vehicles) through it before the Empress announced her intentions. GATEWAY's sensors detected what was going on before the announcement but not in time to forestall the invasion.

Project Citadel responded with near-perfection as Major Shumeykin, in consultation with Secretary-Marshall Eckhardt and the rest of the High Command, kept Humanity's response as organized and effective as possible. Squadrons of superheroes able to survive and move in outer space launched from every part of Earth in unison, rendezvoused near the Moon, and after destroying several scout vessels met up with the bulk of V'han's army in the asteroid belt region. Being met with planned resistance so soon gave the invaders pause, and after the superheroes inflicted significant casualties on the fleet the V'hanians ceased their advance and drew up defensive formations.

This hesitation gave more of Earth's superheroes time to reach the front lines as UNTIL and several technologically-oriented heroes assembled simple starbases and space vessels from component modules built in advance and stored at Moonbase Serenity. Furthermore, unlike the first invasion,

where Earth's superpowered criminals did not get involved until the situation seemed most dire, this time many of them volunteered their services from the beginning of the war. UNTIL would like to acknowledge the early participation of Merc-Force 1, the Crimelords, Red Winter, Dr. Yin Wu, Kinematik, Gravitar, the Warlord, and Holocaust in particular and recommends that their efforts be noted in their files.

Unfortunately even this much combined superhuman might wasn't enough to stop the invaders easily. Concentrating their attack on two specific areas of our defensive lines, V'han's forces smashed through with sheer strength of numbers (though Humanity's defenders inflicted more than their fair share of casualties in the process). Leaving behind the remnants of many starbases and spaceships, Humanity's forces retreated to the vicinity of Mars.

Thus the war went for nearly a month. V'han's forces relied on numerical superiority and a steady stream of reinforcements; Humanity on the valor of its superheroes, combined with aid from the Star*Guard and other defenders of this dimension (including, if some reports are to be believed, two Galaxars, the Lawbringer and the Warmonger). The turning point came when Dr. Wu, Rashindar, and several other Human mystics cast a ritual that temporarily stole the power of V'han's own mystics and then used that power to disrupt the functioning of V'han's ships, weapons, and other technology (including the dimensional gate). Unable to get their technology to work properly, the Imperial Legions fell into disarray and began to lose battle after battle. Humanity's hero army pushed them back further and further, eventually all the way to their gate... which they retreated through and then destroyed behind them.

CONCLUSION

Excerpted from *Omniscient Narrator Magazine*, favorite periodical of GMs everywhere:

Although Humanity has thwarted her plans to invade the dimension she calls Earth-1346 (albeit by the narrowest of margins), Istvatha V'han is not yet done with Earth. That any dimension, particularly one championed by so "primitive" a people as Humanity, should stymie her ambitions infuriates her. Invading Earth is not the only focus of her attentions, but it's never far from her mind. See Chapter Five for detailed information about V'han's current plans for, and activities on, Champions Universe Earth and its dimension.

Nor does V'han's history end in the early twenty-first century. As revealed in *Galactic Champions*, she's still in power as of the year 3000 AD (a fact known to Captain Chronos, among others, and which he may reveal to modern-day heroes if he thinks they should be aware of it). Circumstances prevent her from renewing her attacks on Earth during most of the third millennium, but that doesn't mean she's not active in other areas... just that a thousand or more years of her future history are beyond the scope of this book.

CHAPTER TWO



THE
PERSONAGE IMPERIAL



ISTVATHA V'HAN

Although she lacks the personal power of the likes of Dr. Destroyer or Mechanon, Istvatha V'han is nevertheless an immensely powerful, immensely dangerous individual. But more than that she's a *complex* individual, one not as easily reduced to a simple one-sentence description as either of those other two master villains. Player Character super-humans may become uncomfortable to find that they've got more in common with her than they might at first suspect.

THE MIND IMPERIAL

Analyzing a person as powerful, and in some respects as isolated, as the Empress is a difficult and potentially hazardous undertaking. Nevertheless certain aspects of her personality soon became apparent if one observes or interacts with her for a reasonable period of time.

IMPERIAL ARROGANCE

The first thing people tend to notice about Istvatha V'han is her overwhelming self-assuredness. As one spends more time around her, this quality — call it arrogance or imperial disdain, if you prefer — seems to predominate. It stems from several sources.

INTELLIGENCE AND COMPETENCE

Istvatha V'han is far more intelligent than virtually everyone around her... and she knows it. She's also got the gift of competence, so to speak: whatever she turns her hand to she usually does well with and ultimately succeeds at. Despite a few failures along the way, a long record of successes in her centuries of life naturally tends to make her intensely self-confident... and inclined to express that self-confidence in the way she carries herself and speaks to others.

PROOF OF POSITION

More specifically, there's the fact that she's so ably succeeded at the primary goal she set for herself: to become a dimensional ruler. She controls millions of dimensions and hundreds of octillions of subjects, many of whom adore her and would give their lives for her if she asked them to. What greater proof does one need of her innate superiority? And if one is superior, that tends to show in one's dealings with others.

UNIQUENESS

As discussed further below, Istvatha V'han is "multiversally unique" (there are no other versions of her in any known plane of existence). This in turn leads her to believe that her V'ha is the One True Dimension, the reality at the heart of all realities, because she couldn't have been created there if it weren't. That makes her a sort of "dimensional key" or "multiversal lynchpin"... again, proof of her innate superiority that justifies her looking down on lesser beings.

PRIDE AND VANITY

Lastly, the Empress has a strong streak of pride, and has ever since she was a young girl. She's been known to fly into a rage if anyone questions her, disobeys her, makes her look bad (especially in front of others), or doesn't treat her with the full respect she feels she deserves. Anyone who actually *insults* her, even indirectly, will merely find himself imprisoned if he's lucky, but more likely winds up very, very dead.

Accompanying this is her vanity: she's a good-looking woman, and she's well aware of that fact. While she doesn't play on her looks or sex appeal to get things done — she'd consider that demeaning — she spends time each day making sure she looks just right. The women of her court know better than to try to compete with her in the looks department; anyone who does so successfully is likely to find herself exiled to a dull job in some distant dimension, or married off to a repulsive husband.

THIRST FOR POWER

Istvatha V'han is intensely interested in acquiring power — she couldn't have conquered a hundred million dimensions if she didn't have that sort of drive and ambition. Many of her subjects have speculated (in private) as to why this is so. The higher-minded tend to think she wants power because she believes she can govern civilizations, worlds, and dimensions better than they can if left to themselves. (This is certainly the position taken by official publications, and given the state of her Empire, if she does believe this there's evidence to suggest she's correct.) It may also relate to her desire for a legacy (see below).

Somewhat less idealistic subjects think she wants power as a way of insulating herself from potential threats. As an immortal, her first goal (consciously or subconsciously) must be to preserve her own existence. While it's true that being Empress exposes her to some dangers she'd otherwise be safe from (such as assassination), for the most part her lofty position protects her from the everyday inconveniences, dangers, and threats most beings are subject to.

The most cynical view is that Istvatha V'han seeks power for its own sake. It's a good thing to have, generally speaking, so why shouldn't an immortal want to obtain as much of it as she can? Or perhaps she enjoys "lording it" over as many people as possible, or has obsessive-compulsive tendencies toward order and control (there's certainly some evidence in support of the latter point; see below).

Of course, it's entirely possible that Istvatha V'han's hunger for power stems from *all* of these reasons simultaneously. They're not mutually exclusive, and any individual as complex as V'han could easily have multiple motivations for something as fundamental as seeking power.

ALTRUISM

Despite what's written in the pages of *The Bloody Hand* and the other underground protest tracts that circulate clandestinely through the Empire, Istvatha V'han is in some ways a kindhearted person, plain and simple. As arrogant and condescending as she may sometimes be to individuals, and as prone to settling difficult problems with violent means, she genuinely and sincerely wants to make life better for her subjects, whether that's through managing the infrastructure and economy, maintaining the peace, providing them with jobs, ensuring equal treatment under the law, or offering free medical care. While her needs and the needs of the military must come first, the Empire is so wealthy she can afford to devote a lot of resources to improving the quality of life for the subjects of the Empire. (See Chapter Five for more information on how she treats conquered peoples.)

The source of V'han's altruism is unclear. Some observers attribute it to *noblesse oblige*, and there's definitely some element of that involved. Although she's never said so publicly, V'han does to some extent believe that as a person of rank, privilege, and wealth she has a duty to "give back." Others point to the fact that her family has (or more

accurately had, before she accidentally erased them from existence) a long record of charity work going back for generations — she may simply have been raised to "do good for others," and is following through with that belief using all the power at her command (and perhaps is trying to make up for "causing" their "deaths").

While Earth heroes and others who prefer not to sacrifice their freedom for V'hanian peace and security may label her a "villain," Istvatha V'han definitely doesn't think of herself as one, and neither do most of her subjects. Some tolerate her because they have no other real option; most truly like her to some degree; some practically worship her. She has no love for superpowered criminals, and does not associate with them. Any within her Empire are captured and given a simple choice: join the Imperial Battalion and scrupulously obey all military and civilian laws and regulations for the rest of your life; or suffer the appropriate legal punishment (typically a lengthy prison term or execution).

ANTI-CORRUPTION

One aspect of V'han's concern for her subjects that everyone in the Empire's well aware of is her intense hatred of corruption. Given the size of her government, it's inevitable that some less-than-honest people will obtain government jobs or other official responsibilities. But any imperial employee found to be involved in bribe-taking, influence-peddling, acting in their own interest instead of the public good, or the like is punished harshly. Severe cases of public corruption merit the death penalty — and those executions are carried out publicly as a warning.

ANTI-VIOLENCE

Unlike master villains such as Dr. Destroyer and Mechanon, Istvatha V'han has no particular bent for destruction, murder, or violence. There's no question that she'll employ whatever level of military force is necessary to complete a conquest with minimal loss of life among her soldiers, up to and including the use of Planetbuster Bombs or Nova Igniters (see Chapter Three). But she does so after carefully weighing the pros and cons and deciding that's ultimately the most merciful course of action (since when it comes down to it she cares more about the lives of loyal soldiers than the lives of potential subjects [particularly potential subjects so stubborn or stupid they're determined to fight her]). She prefers not to use any more violence than she has to; she finds that she can often persuade planets to surrender and join her Empire simply by sending an army so large the inhabitants of that planet know there's no hope of resisting her.

DESIRE FOR A LEGACY

For whatever reason — perhaps as a side effect of her immortality and dimension/time-traveling powers — Istvatha V'han is biologically incapable of having children. She could clone one from her own cells, or adopt one, but neither solution appeals to her. Since she'll have no heirs of flesh and blood to come after her, she wants her legacy to be a Multiverse of peaceful, prosperous subjects whose lives are better because of what she's done.

Even though she's immortal, she recognizes that sooner or later something's going to kill her (be it a determined assassin, a cosmic catastrophe, or a tragic accident), and she wants her Empire and the benefits it provides to live on after her. The longer she sits on the V'hanian Throne the more this concerns her; she desperately wants to keep her Empire from being torn apart by ambitious underlings after she's gone, but has no clear idea about how to prevent that from happening (aside from trying to appoint the most honorable qualified people she can find to important positions).

SUBTLE AND MANIPULATIVE

While the Empress has a well-deserved reputation for using overwhelming force to get the job done — after all, why not win a battle quickly and easily if you can? — there's more to her than brute force. She can be extremely subtle and manipulative if she has to be; she'd have difficulty navigating the social waters of her own court if she weren't. She's been known to do things like walk among her courtiers in disguise to hear what they're really saying, spread competing rumors to set two courtiers at one another's social throats (thus deflecting them from something she wants them paying less attention to), and use the appearance of favoritism toward one courtier to get others to do what she wants them to. Similarly, while she knows how to employ raw military force as needed, she also understands the value of intelligence gathering and special operations.

A STUDENT OF DIVERSITY

Istvatha V'han is endlessly fascinated by the myriad species, cultures, and civilizations of her Empire and often spends time studying them in a casual way (she's no anthropologist, and has no ambitions to become one). There's no prejudice or bigotry in her; she finds such emotions repugnant. (After all, she's seen so many different species and cultures in her dimensional travels that exalting one above the others seems idiotic.) In her Empire, everyone is equal before Imperial law and custom... and equally below herself.

If there's any exception to this rule, it's for her native people, the V'hanians. While she doesn't grant them privileges or resources beyond those of her other subjects, any V'hanian who wants one can get just about any sort of government job he wants... at significantly higher pay than other species doing the same job. As a result, over 90% of V'hanians are imperial employees... and are *intensely* loyal to their Empress.

ORDERLINESS

The Empress has a passion for order. She likes everything to be *just so*, and is a devotee of schedules, lists, and other forms of organization. Woe betide the courtier or official who's late to a meeting with her! Her security personnel often try to get her not to be such a creature of habit — routines create patterns, and patterns are weaknesses enemies can exploit — but for the most part she doesn't listen to them. It's their place to inform her of these things... and her place, as Empress, to do as she sees fit regardless of their advice.

2

V'HAN'S POWERS

The key to Istvatha V'han's conquests is, ultimately, her personal superpowers. They made her first conquests possible, which in turn allowed her to build her Empire into what it is today. And as noted in Chapter One, sometimes she uses them to help her armies during particularly difficult battles.

DIMENSIONAL TRAVEL

First and foremost, Istvatha V'han is a dimensional traveler. She possesses one of the rarest of superpowers, the ability to effortlessly travel to nearly any dimension. Of course, certain dimensions are inimical to sentient life, or are otherwise barred to some or all travelers based on their nature (see Chapter Four), but the vast majority of the planes of the Multiverse are open to the Empress, should she care to visit.

V'han's dimension-traveling power involves temporarily opening up a sort of "portal" between the dimension she's currently in and where she wants to go. This looks like a shimmering, light burgundy-colored, roughly oval-shaped field slightly larger than V'han herself that appears right in front of her. Although it seems to be a generic "gate," in fact it's specifically attuned to her genetic and neurological patterns. Other beings cannot use it unless she's touching them and wills them to come with her. She can do this for up to seven beings of roughly her own size and weight (or a like amount of unliving mass, such as a small vehicle). The apparent size of the portal is irrelevant; what matters is the mass (the portal seems to "expand" to cover any object that satisfies its mass threshold).

The nature of V'han's dimensional travel abilities (and the technology her scientists have derived from them) is such that it tends to be "easier" for her to open "portals" at certain locations. These locations are usually on or near planets that are inhabited by sentient beings (or once were, or will be in the future). That's why her most common invasion strategy is to open a D-Portal in an inhabited system (usually the one that's her primary target for that dimension). It would often be a better military tactic to open a D-Portal far away from where anyone could detect or destroy it, bring her forces through, and then go on the warpath... but that's "harder" (among other things, it takes significantly more power). She'll do it if she has to, but uses the easier method when she can. (In game terms, consider ignoring the *Reduced Endurance* (½ END; +¼) Advantage on her Extra-Dimensional Movement when she uses it in a location that's more than .25 light-years from a planet that has, had, or will have a significant amount of sentient life.)

One danger V'han must remain aware of during her journeys is entering a plane where her dimensional travel power doesn't function properly... or at all. If that happened she could be trapped. This would be most likely to occur in the "lowest" of Assiatic dimensions, where the level of ambient magical energy is so minimal that no superhuman abilities can possibly exist or function. But there are certainly some other unusual Assiatic dimensions,

not to mention Yetziratic or Brialic ones, where the natural laws and/or laws of magic might not work to her advantage. If possible she “scouts” a dimension with a Transdimensional Probe (page 80) first to make sure it’s safe for her to enter. If that’s not feasible she sends some members of the Imperial Scout Service through a D-Portal to examine the place and determine whether they can build another D-Portal there. If they can, she can safely enter. If not... they’ve just become colonists in a new reality unless and until the ISS can find a way to rescue them.

DIMENSIONAL DESTABILIZATION

One “dimensional powers trick” V’han can perform is something she calls *Dimensional Destabilization*. She causes a millisecond-long destabilization in the dimensional “fabric” in the space occupied by the target. This creates “ripples” or “forces” in the dimensional superstrata and substrata in that location that can inflict significant harm to the target (much like properly-focused gravitic or magnetic waves could in normal space). She avoids using this attack repeatedly on the same precise physical location, though, since she fears (correctly) that it could cause a permanent weakening of the dimensional barriers.

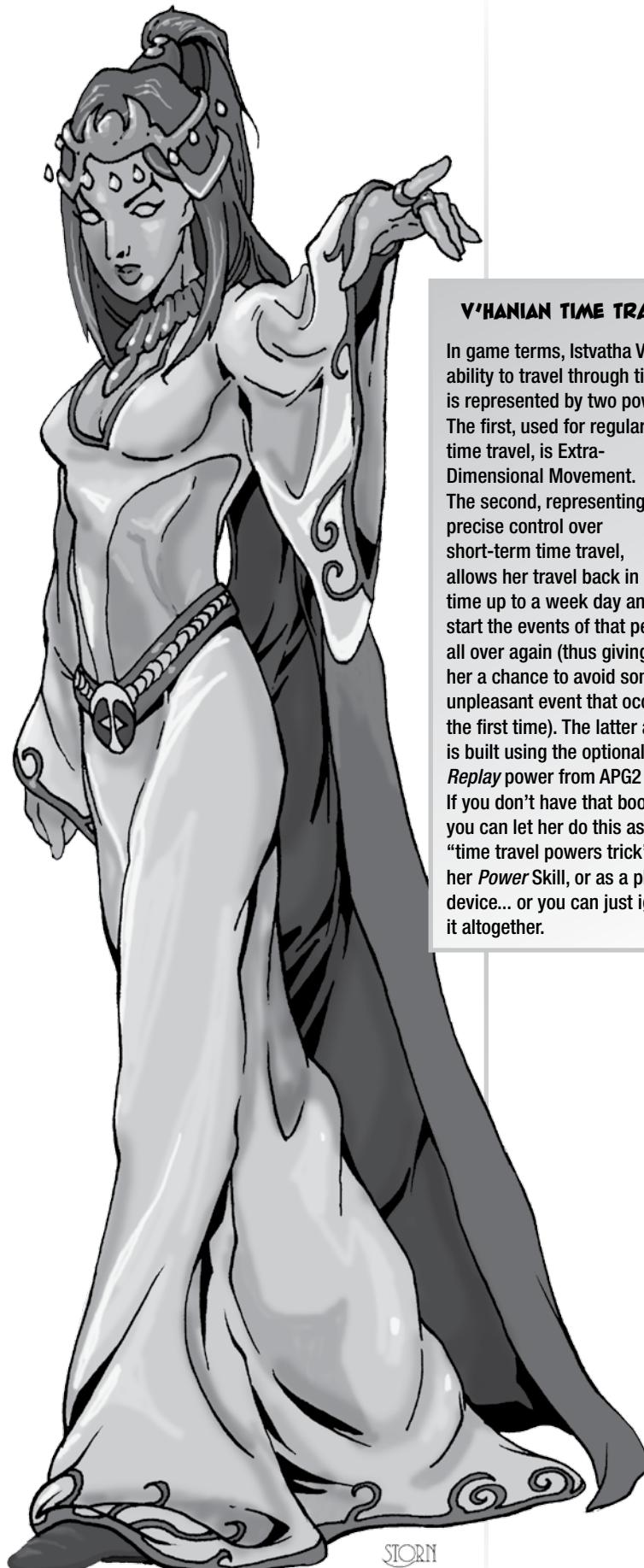
DIMENSIONAL POWER TRICKS

At the GM’s option, the Empress could perform other “dimensional power tricks” as well. She can use her *Power: Dimensional/Time Travel Powers* Skill to perform minor “power stunts” such as opening a tiny portal she can look through (the *Dimensional Sense* Modifier for her Normal Sight) or perhaps fire an attack through (a naked *Transdimensional* Advantage). She shouldn’t be allowed to do this frequently, however, since she hasn’t paid Character Points for these abilities (though the GM’s also free to rewrite her character sheet to include such powers, if desired).

TIME TRAVEL

A close second to Istvatha V’han’s ability to travel among the dimensions is her power to travel through time. The entire spectrum of Time, insofar as she and her scientists know it to exist, is open to her; she can visit any point in the past or the future.

The Empress’s time travel powers work in any dimension she visits. According to her perceptions, as influenced by the research conducted by her scientists, there’s a single overall Stream Of Time that applies throughout the Multiverse... but each dimension’s “branch” of the overall Stream “runs” at its own speed. In some dimensions (such as two or more alternate Earths), time flows along at nearly the same rate, with the same events happening at more or less the same time. But in other planes time moves faster, or slower, or “curves” in unusual ways. V’han has the power to “perceive” which branch of the Time-Stream she’s in, where she is in it (e.g., near the end, in the middle, 40% from the beginning), and any unusual features it may have. (She can only perceive these things once she’s actually in a branch, though, so if time in a particular dimension flows in odd ways she may be affected by them even as she perceives them... which isn’t always a desireable outcome for her.)



V'HANIAN TIME TRAVEL

In game terms, Istvatha V’han’s ability to travel through time is represented by two powers. The first, used for regular time travel, is Extra-Dimensional Movement. The second, representing precise control over short-term time travel, allows her travel back in time up to a week day and start the events of that period all over again (thus giving her a chance to avoid some unpleasant event that occurred the first time). The latter ability is built using the optional *Replay* power from APG2 40. If you don’t have that book, you can let her do this as a “time travel powers trick” with her *Power* Skill, or as a plot device... or you can just ignore it altogether.

2

CHRONAL NODES

However, again according to her perceptions, every branch of the Stream Of Time has *chronal nodes* — dates/events/incidents of such importance that their outcome can affect the future flow of time by splitting off a new “branch” of the Stream (and thus creating a new dimension in the process). The typical events in the life of a typical person don’t create or involve chronal nodes; they can be changed by time travelers without affecting the overall flow of time in any meaningful way. But events of great significance, or the actions of extremely important persons, are/create chronal nodes. Interfering with a chronal node thus can “change history” going forward from that point.

Some chronal nodes are very specific and discrete — such as whether a certain person does or does not cross a certain street at a certain time. But others are very “broad,” such as whether a particular war is fought and who wins it. (Some scientists consider the latter merely a large collection of specific chronal nodes, rather than a single large node; research is ongoing.) In either case, it can be difficult, and potentially dangerous, for Istvatha V’han to time travel across a chronal node. She’s experienced enough at time travel that these difficulties rarely cause her any problems more significant than minor stomach upset or headache for a few minutes, but the potential dangers are real. When possible she minimizes them by intensely studying the historical events surrounding and at the node; just knowing about them tends to “smooth out the bumps” as she travels (and of course makes it far more likely she can choose wisely if she has to interfere with a node).

In the modern-day Champions Universe Earth (Earth-1346 as V’han knows it), the primary chronal nodes are the emergence of superpowers (1938) and the arrival of Mechanon (1985). The American Revolution, American Civil War, and some aspects of World Wars I and II are also nodes. Istvatha V’han has the ability to perceive chronal nodes, and has an extensive knowledge of the ones in her Empire.

MEETING HERSELF

Nothing in the nature of Istvatha V’han’s time travel powers makes it impossible for her to meet herself in the past (or future). In theory dozens of V’hans could meet up at a specific place and time to apply their group intellect to some problem. However, in practice the Empress tries very hard to avoid meeting herself through time travel. Because she’s multiversally unique (see below), she and her scientists are concerned that two or more of them in the same point of space-time could have negative effects on the Stream Of Time or otherwise harm Reality in some fashion. She’ll risk it if she has to... but she prefers not to. She keeps careful track of where she’s been when in an effort to avoid any accidental “encounters” with herself. If possible, she in fact limits herself to no more than one V’han in any one dimension at any given point in time (though as shown in Chapter One, she’s willing to visit the past to bring information or technology

that will help her former self’s soldiers/followers overcome an enemy they otherwise probably could not defeat).

MULTIVERSALLY UNIQUE

As far as she and her subjects can ascertain, Istvatha V’han is “multiversally unique.” Since there are an enormous (perhaps infinite) number of alternate versions of many dimensions (including V’ha and Earth), there are likewise an enormous (perhaps infinite) number of alternate versions of most important people (if not everyone). For example, most alternate Earths feature some form of the Champions and most other renowned superheroes. These alternate versions may be significantly different (such as “evil” versions of good characters, people being of different races or coming from wildly different backgrounds, and the like), but they’re still recognizable versions of the same person.

Not so Istvatha V’han. There is only one of her in all the Multiverse... or at least all evidence points to that being the case. In her extensive dimensional travels, including visits to thousands of alternate V’has, she’s never once met an alternate version of herself, or even heard stories about one. Whenever she visits a new dimension she’s regarded as being unlike anyone there; she’s never drawn comparisons with the “local” Istvatha. Nor has she ever encountered, or learned about, anyone else who is multiversally unique (aside perhaps from some cosmic beings like the Galaxars, but they’re an entirely different order or “scale” of existence). Not even her arch-enemies Skarn and Tyrannon are unique (though none of their alternates have developed into dimension-conquering master villains; they’re relatively mundane beings compared to the “true” Skarn and Tyrannon).

Given this state of affairs, V’han also believes that her native dimension, V’ha (or V’ha-1, to be more precise), is the “One True Dimension” from which all others spring. Her theory is that only in the One True Dimension could the Only Multiversally Unique Being be born. None of her scientists have been able to determine if this is true, and if true what the implications are for the nature and structure of the Multiverse. But theories abound and are the subject of extensive scientific-philosophical debates among a small coterie of her top researchers and theoreticians.

IMPLANTED DEVICES

To protect her from assassins and other enemies (and when necessary to allow her to engage in superpowered combat), Istvatha V’han has had a number of powerful micro-devices implanted in her body. One of these, her Cerebellic Translator, is simply for convenience (since even she doesn’t have the time to learn even a fraction of the languages spoken by her subjects), but the others are defensive. One establishes a “resistance field,” a form of force-field that protects her against a wide variety of attacks. The other is a Cerebellic Shield that prevents psionic powers from affecting her very strongly (if at all).

SURVIVABILITY

Perhaps as some sort of adjunct to, or “side effect” of, her time travel powers, Istvatha V’han is immortal. She can still be killed through physical trauma, but she never experiences the effects of aging. Similarly, she doesn’t need to eat, sleep, or breathe (though she often eats for the pleasure of it) and is immune to harm from radiation, vacuum, pressure, heat, and cold.

KNOWLEDGE

Istvatha V’han is immensely knowledgeable about a wide variety of subjects. Ordinarily even an immortal wouldn’t have time to become as well-informed as she is about so many subjects, but the Empress has an ace up her sleeve: she’s a time traveller. She can cram literally years’ worth of learning into a single hour through the use of her Replay power (or, if you prefer, time travel simply becomes a “special effect” for high KS rolls). For example, every day millions of reports are sent to her on a vast array of subjects. Special devices can feed thousands of those reports directly into her brain in the space of an hour... then she simply goes back to the beginning of the hour (having forgotten nothing she’s learned in the past hour) and starts over again with new reports. Similarly, if she feels like becoming informed about topics such as Cantralvian Literature or the diplomatic customs of the Skreee, she can spend as much time as she wants studying, then time travel back to the moment she began studying... so that to other people it seems as if she picked up expertise in the subject in a split second. (In game terms, this is the special effect for her high KS: Everything roll, other KSs to some extent, and her Cramming.)

Furthermore, since V’han doesn’t have to sleep, she has three shifts of highly-trained servants (and robots) who bring her reports and information and manage her schedule around the clock. Much to the chagrin of some of her staff, it’s not at all uncommon for her to set briefings for, say, 3:00 AM — to her one time is as good as another, after all.

Subjects the Empress is particularly well-versed in include:

- what’s going on in her Empire. A significant portion of the imperial bureaucracy consists of people whose job it is to keep a watchful eye open, investigate matters of concern, study useful subjects, and just generally learn things, and then send reports about them to the Empress. Every day she spends hundreds of subjective hours reading the most intriguing or crucial reports and having others psionically fed into her brain by special devices. To others it seems as if she’s almost magically informed about events in even the most backwater areas of the V’hanian Empire. To her it seems like hour after hour after hour of often boring work... but work that’s absolutely crucial to the proper functioning of her Empire, and to her image.

■ the nature and structure of the Multiverse. If Istvatha V’han isn’t the single most knowledgeable person in the Multiverse about the Multiverse and the dimensions comprising it, she’s certainly in the top five.

■ phsycis. The Empress is a world-class expert on physics, particularly dimensional physics (the science of the nature of the Multiverse, how dimensional barriers function and can be crossed, and so on). Although she has no interest in performing experiments or building devices, she can discuss theoretical physics at the same level as most of the leading scientific minds of her Empire. Her chief scientists usually find this a blessing, since it makes briefing her on scientific matters much easier... though they’re less happy about it when she’s able to discern their mistakes.

■ magic. V’han isn’t a spellcaster herself — she’s tried to learn but, to her chagrin, simply doesn’t have the innate “knack” for it. But she’s aware that much of the nature and structure of the Multiverse is, or depends upon, what people tend to call “magic.” Therefore she’s become quite the lay expert on the subject, and often enjoys discussing such matters with practicing mystics or watching them at work. (If a means were discovered for her to learn to become an actual spellcaster, she’d be highly tempted to do so.)

■ politics. The Empress has seen a practically infinite number of political and social systems at work and has a strong grasp of why they work (or don’t), and their implications. On those rare occasions when someone has the daring (or insanity) to debate political matters with her, she can usually crush them intellectually by citing a dozen examples of whatever it is she wants to do that her “opponent” has never heard of.

WEAKNESSES

Istvatha V’han’s primary physical weakness — one she does her best to keep secret, and in fact has killed to keep secret — is that dimensional attacks used against tend to be highly effective. She theorizes this is because being multiversally unique somehow renders her more “fragile” to such assaults, but she has no way to be certain and isn’t eager to experiment so she can find out. (At the GM’s option, in addition to having a Vulnerability, she might also be Susceptible to being Teleported or Extra-Dimensionally Moved against her will.)

Beyond that, the Empress has few real weaknesses (not that she’d be likely to engage Player Characters in direct combat anyway). However, her imperial pride and arrogance could easily become a chink in her armor. An appeal to that side of her could drive her to make promises or commit to courses of conduct she’d otherwise be smart enough to avoid. Her desire for power and conquest could also be exploited, perhaps luring her (or more accurately, a lot of her D-Soldiers) into a trap.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN EMPRESS

Istvatha V'han's daily routine is hard to describe. Since she uses her time travel powers to compress thousands of subjective hours' worth of work into a single day, to others she often seems to flit from one task to another with the speed and energy of a Zugarian hummingbird. In an "instant" she learns what she needs to know, figures out what she needs to figure out, does what she needs to do, or issues the necessary orders, and then it's off to the next item on the agenda.

Additionally, since she doesn't have to eat or sleep, and she rules over tens of millions of dimensions whose inhabitants use millions of different ways of telling time and organizing their days, there's no need for V'han to adhere to any specific way of organizing her day. She can schedule activities around the clock. For example, most of her subject species are diurnal, so she prefers to meet with them during the day, but enough are nocturnal that she could fill an entire day and night with meetings if need be.

The Empress "begins" most days at 6:00 AM Imperial Standard Time (a multiversal time standard adhered to for all imperial business regardless of local conditions). Most days she fills the early hours with briefing meetings and review of reports, constantly Replaying spans of time so that she has thousands of meetings and learns millions of facts within what objectively seem to be just a few minutes or hours. Her advisors love the fact that she never has to cut them off for lack of time; a meeting can go on just as long as it needs to, then she steps back in time to the beginning and starts all over again with another meeting. She gets more work done, and so do her servants.

Various other tasks pertaining to the administration of her Empire occupy her until approximately mid-day. At that point she usually takes several objective hours off for leisure time, including lunch with friends or lovers (see below). She reads, plays games, walks in her gardens, goes on a brief trip to another dimension, plays games, or whatever other light amusements catch her fancy. Of course, emergency situations may upset these plans... but once again she can usually use her time travel powers to let her do whatever she wants for as long as she wants without any negative consequences.

When her leisure time is over, V'han returns to work. That leads to the early evening and formal social occasions — state dinners, court balls, attending artistic performances, and the like. This is when she's most likely to become involved with activities that she doesn't Replay, thus signalling how serious they are to her.

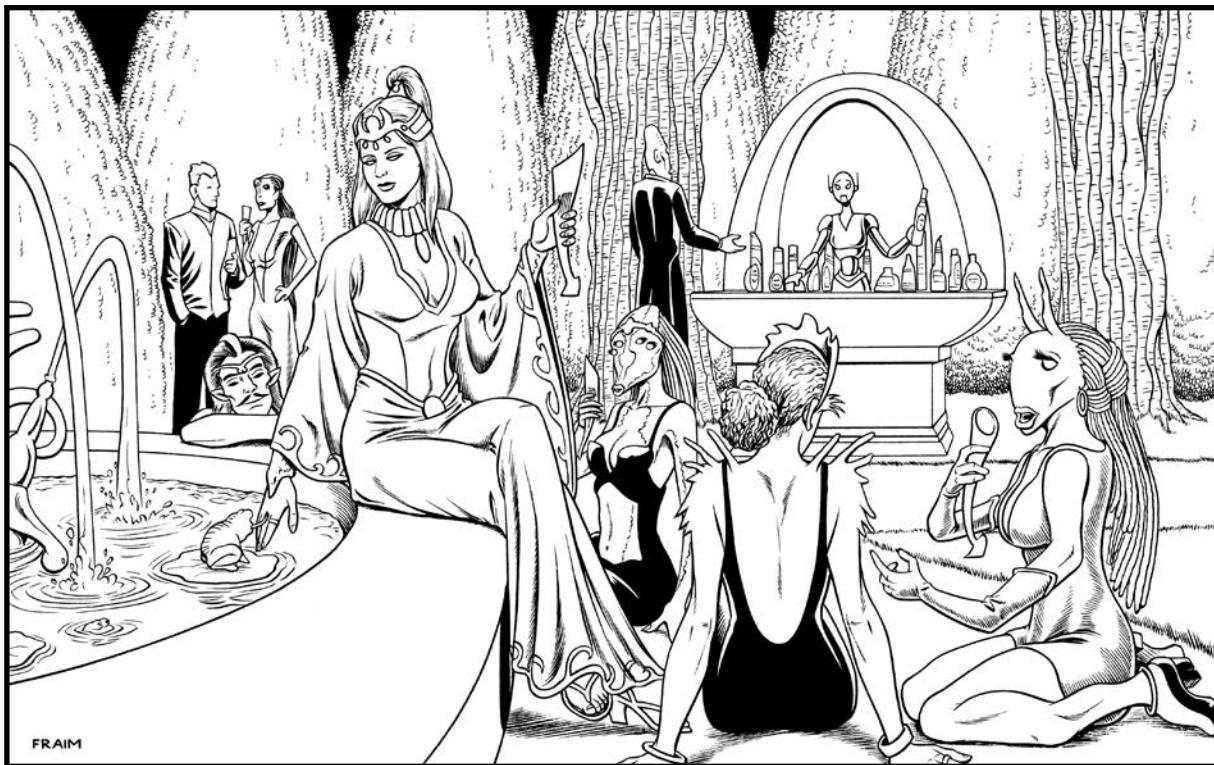
Late at night the Empress resumes her less formal leisure schedule. Now her activities are more serious than in the early afternoon: disguising herself and going out to some nightclub with friends; romantic rendezvous; and other sorts of "night life" activities (though she avoids the use of alcohol or drugs and tends to prefer that her companions do so as well). Whenever she gets tired of that, it's back to her palace and back to work.

2

LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Like most immortals, Istvatha V'han has developed a wide range of interests as a way of staving off boredom and routine. While she sometimes goes through "fads" where she develops an obsession with some particular activity and spends most of her leisure time on it, usually she tries to balance her leisure pursuits so that she's always stimulating her mind and senses in different ways. Some of her typical leisure activities include:

- collecting. If it's rare, interesting, or valuable, Istvatha V'han probably collects it. But there has to be some challenge to assembling the collection or it won't hold her interest for long — since she can buy anything she wants, collecting anything that's easily purchased usually doesn't attract her attention. But things that are rare or difficult to obtain are a different matter... especially since she has millions of dimensions' worth of collectibles to choose from! To keep things challenging and fair, she never orders a merchant or another collector to simply give her something — if someone else has an item she wants for her collection, she either pays fair price for it through an intermediary or finds some way to convince the owner to let her have it without applying imperial pressure. (And of course, many subjects like to give her gifts as a way of attracting her notice or currying favor.) Some of her main collections include art, rare books, animals, plants, and gemstones. She houses these collections on entire continents or planets devoted to them. (In some cases these "museums" are open to her subjects; in others they're kept private.) For example, the Jovian-sized terrestrial planet Ugong in the dimension Traxus is where she keeps part of her collection of animals from around the Multiverse. The main job of the thousands of "game wardens" who "curate" her animal collection is to keep the ecology balanced. The Empress often enjoys "going on safari" with her corps of huntsmen (and usually a lot of bodyguards) to acquire new creatures for her animal collection; similarly she enjoys browsing rare book stores and attending art auctions (in disguise, of course!).
- reading. There's little the Empress enjoys more than a good book, and she can choose from the best literature of a hundred million dimensions. She often spends subjective days at a time reading (she reads very quickly, though not at Speed Reading level), particularly when she discovers a genre or literary movement that's new to her and wants to really delve into it. She's probably the most well-read person in the history of Reality.
- music. The Empress enjoys many types of music, from relatively sedate classical music to hard-core rock 'n' roll (to put it in Human terms). Becoming one of the Empress's favorites is a ticket to lifelong success and wealth for a musician, since she loves command performances and showers money and gifts on her preferred musicians in a patron-like fashion. She often combines listening to music with reading.



- travel. After all, what's the fun of being able to visit any dimension if you don't use that ability? She usually goes in disguise (since otherwise she can't travel anywhere without causing all sorts of havoc) but almost always has quite a few Imperial Battalioneers or robotic bodyguards (also disguised) with her, just in case.
- games. Nothing can quite capture the attention and excitement of a good game, and Istvatha V'han plays all sorts of games from throughout her realm (ranging from board and card games, to computer games, to games that require holochambers). A subject who introduces her to a new one she particularly likes will find himself richly rewarded.

SOCIAL CIRCLE

One aspect of her life where the Empress has to be careful about using her time travel powers to “compress time” and get things done quickly is her social life. For everyday social engagements she can sometimes use her Replay without giving offense. Since everyone involved remembers everything that happened the first time a given span of time passed, people who attend a party the Empress Replays actually get to go to the party twice! But there are situations where it would be rude (not to mention counterproductive) to Replay a meeting or activity — it could make it seem as if the Empress were taking the matter lightly, for example. That rarely occurs (after all, *she's* the one in charge and doesn't usually have to care about what other people think), but there are circumstances where she prefers to go through a social situation and then not Replay it as a way of indicating how meaningful it is to her.

Since friends make life sweeter, the Empress cultivates a wide social circle. Most of her friends are other women from high-ranking or wealthy

imperial families, but she knows and associates with people from every walk of life. More than once she's struck up an interesting conversation with a palace servant and accompanied that person home to continue it and meet his family. (Such fortunate souls usually find their wealth and station in imperial society rising swiftly thereafter.) On the other hand she has no use for toadies, bootlickers, and yes-men, and is quick to send them packing when they try to ingratiate themselves with her.

The only downside to being part of the V'hanian social circle is that it's basically a full-time job — you have to be ready at any time to meet up with the Empress and do whatever she feels like doing. Maintaining a job is pretty much impossible; maintaining close ties to one's family is sometimes almost as difficult. Fortunately the Empress is aware of this and usually arranges for her favorites to receive a comfortable salary from the imperial treasury for being her “companions.”

While Istvatha V'han has never married, and never shown any real inclination to, she usually maintains a group of three to four lovers at any given time. Rarely has just one captured her devoted attention for any length of time; she finds it more fun to play them off against one another or tease them with the fact of their rivals' existence. Although she's had romantic companions of every description, she seems to favor handsome humanoids who are intelligent, active, caring, but cognizant of the fact that she's in charge. Sooner or later she tires of every lover, but unless he's done something to anger her she usually shuffles them off to some important imperial job that they're well-suited for and pays them a lavish salary for life. Rumors constantly swirl around the Empire that the Empress enjoys some... strange... romantic activities, but all of her lovers have quite wisely kept their mouths shut about this.

ISTVATHA VIHAN

EMPERESS OF A BILLION DIMENSIONS

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 HTH damage [3]
20	DEX	20	13-	
20	CON	10	13-	
25	INT	15	14-	PER Roll 14-
25	EGO	15	14-	
30	PRE	20	15-	PRE Attack: 6d6
7	OCV	20		
7	DCV	20		
3	OMCV	0		
8	DMCV	15		
6	SPD	40		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
25	PD	23		Total: 25 PD (20 rPD)
25	ED	23		Total: 25 ED (20 rED)
20	REC	16		
60	END	6		
16	BODY	6		
60	STUN	20		Total Characteristics Cost: 289

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost	Powers	END
171	Dimensional Travel: Extra-Dimensional Movement (any location in any dimension, can travel through time), x8 Increased Weight 6 Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	
412	Precise Time Travel: Replay (1 Week; see APG2 40) Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	16
80	Dimensional Destabilization: Blast 20d6 No Knockback (-¼)	10
20	Resistance Field: Resistant (+½) for 20 PD/20 ED	0
20	Resistance Field: Power Defense (20 points)	0
25	Cerebral Shield: Mental Defense (25 points)	0
40	Vitality: Life Support: Total (including Longevity: Immortality)	0
15	Perceive Chronal Nodes: Detect Chronal Nodes 14- (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Range	
13	Temporal Perception: Detect Position In Stream Of Time 14- (no sense Group), Discriminatory, Range	
18	Implanted Imperial D-Link: Mind Link, specific group of up to any 16 minds (her Regent/Viceroy/Herald robots), Dimensional, No LOS Needed Only Can Be Maintained With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1), Flashed As Radio And Hearing Groups, Not Mental Group (-½)	0
15	Favor of Fortune: Luck 3d6	0

Talents

5	Eidetic Memory
20	Cerebellic Translator: Universal Translator 14-

Perks

25	Fringe Benefit: Empress of a Billion Dimensions
3	Fringe Benefit: Access To Briah
15	Money: Filthy Rich All the Followers, Vehicles, and Bases she could possibly need

Skills

3	Acting 15-
3	Bureaucratics 15-
3	Charm 15-
3	Combat Driving 13-
3	Combat Piloting 13-
3	Computer Programming 14-
20	Cramming x4
3	Deduction 14-
3	Electronics 14-
3	High Society 15-
19	AK: Chronal Nodes In Her Realm 30-
3	Navigation (Dimensional, Space) 14-
3	Oratory 15-
3	Persuasion 15-

11	Power: Dimensional/Time Travel Powers 18-
3	Riding 13-
3	SS: Dimensional Engineering 14-
3	SS: Physics 14-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Systems Operation 14-
3	Tactics 14-
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms
3	Scholar
18	1) KS: Her Realm And What Goes On In It 30-
2	2) KS: Dimensional History 14-
18	3) KS: Dimensions Of The Multiverse 30-
18	4) KS: Everything 30-
2	5) KS: Political Science 14-
2	6) KS: Layman's Arcane And Occult Lore 14-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 1,068

Total Cost: 1,357

400 Matching Complications (75)

15	Distinctive Features: regal bearing and regalia (Concealable With Difficulty; Causes Major Reaction [fear and/or loathing])
5	Enraged: if questioned or disobeyed (Uncommon), go 8-, recover 14-
25	Hunted: Tyrannon (Frequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
25	Psychological Complication: Overconfidence; Regal Bearing And Attitude (Very Common, Total)
20	Psychological Complication: Wants To Conquer And Rule The Multiverse (Common, Total)
10	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from dimensional-based attacks (Uncommon)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 957

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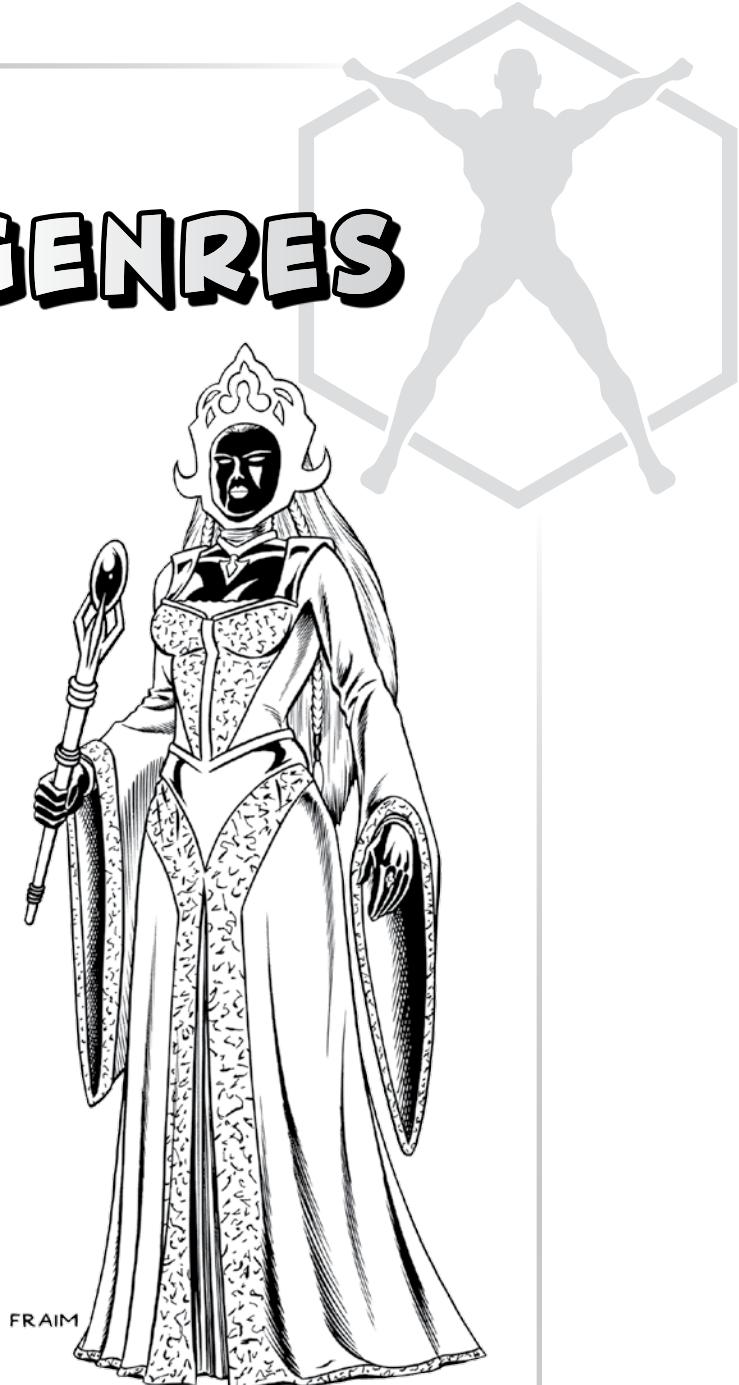
OTHER GENRES

Although Istvatha V'han is most appropriate for Superhero campaigns, GMs running other sorts of campaigns can easily adapt her — or various aspects of her — to other genres. A few examples are presented below, but there are many other ways you can do this to suit specific campaigns or PCs.

Since V'han is a dimensional traveler *and* a time traveler, you don't necessarily have to "adapt" her at all — she could show up, as-is, in pretty much any sort of campaign. Of course, with the Imperial Legions and other resources at her beck and call she could easily overwhelm most campaigns; even extremely powerful superheroes have trouble fending off her invasions. So you may have to arrange matters to keep her from simply taking over and relegating your PCs to the status of slaves. For example, perhaps due to some sort of "dimensional storm" or accident she gets sent "off course" while crossing dimensional barriers and ends up in the campaign setting, temporarily trapped and without any resources but her powers and whatever she happened to be carrying with her.

DARK CHAMPIONS

In Dark Champions, the Empress of a Billion Dimensions becomes *Vatha Vahana*, an exotically beautiful crimelord from India who's come to the United States both to escape enemies on the subcontinent and to take advantage of the vast opportunities offered by America. She's brought with her an enormous gang of minions. Most of them are regular modern criminals, but a few are skilled stranglers who worship her as an incarnation of the death-goddess Kali (thus adding a little "color" to her organization). On the surface she's just another criminal threat for your PCs to deal with, albeit a rather exotic one. In a larger, symbolic, sense, she represents the potential perils posed by immigration.



FANTASY HERO

In Fantasy settings Istvatha V'han becomes *Empress Istvatha*, the sorcerer-queen of a vast, powerful kingdom that threatens to conquer the entire world. The Empress herself is a powerful spellcaster specializing in conjuration, elemental magics, and travel magics; among other things her spells allow her to travel anywhere in the world in the blink of an eye, and to visit other planes (such as the astral plane, elemental planes, and various hells) at will. Through summoning rituals she's conjured a seemingly endless host of half-demonic warriors from some quasi-hell; their reddish skin, claws, and eerie-looking armor make them distinctive amongst the various races of the world.

VATHA VAHANA

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
12	STR	2	11-	Lift 133 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
14	DEX	8	12-	
15	CON	5	12-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
16	EGO	6	12-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
6	OCV	15		
7	DCV	20		
3	OMCV	0		
6	DMCV	9		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	PD	4		Total: 9 PD (3 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 8 ED (3 rED)
7	REC	3		
35	END	3		
15	BODY	5		
40	STUN	10		Total Characteristics Cost: 133

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost	Powers	END
3	Perceptive: +1 to PER Rolls with all Sense Groups	0

Perks

30	Contacts: various in the underworld in India and among the Indian immigrant community in Hudson City
90	Followers: 2,000 Indian criminals and Thugs built on up to 175 Total Points each
10	Money: Wealthy

Talents

6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
6	Striking Appearance +2/+2d6

Skills

12	+1 Overall
3	Bribery 13-
3	Charm 13-
2	Combat Driving 10-
3	Conversation 13-
3	Deduction 13-
1	High Society 8-
2	Interrogation 10-
1	Lockpicking 8-
3	Persuasion 13-
3	Stealth 12-
3	Streetwise 13-
2	TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles
3	WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 189

Total Cost: 322

CYBER HERO

You can also use Vatha Vahana in Cyber Hero campaigns. Just “upgrade” her with a few pieces of cyberware so she fits the genre better:

Cost Power

7	Handrazors: HKA ½d6; No STR Bonus (-½)
5	Left Cybereye: Infrared Perception (Sight Group)
3	Cerebral Recorder: Eidetic Memory; Only For Things Seen Through Cybereye And Heard Through Earbuds (-½)
3	Linguachip Reader: Variable Power Pool, 2 Pool + 2 Control Cost; OAF (implanted reader but OAF software chips; -1), Only For Languages (-1)

175 Matching Complications (50)

15	Hunted: rival gang from India (Frequently, As Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Kill)
25	Hunted: FBI (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
15	Psychological Complication: Greedy And Powerhungry (Common, Strong)

Total Complications Points: 50

Experience Points: 152

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Steyr SPP	+1	+1	1d6+1	+0	11		30

Armor: Light Body Armor (3 PD/3 ED) in appropriate situations

Gear: Lockpicks concealed in her clothing

Clothing: On most occasions she wears Western-style women's casual wear, hand-tailored and designed to show off her figure to best advantage. On formal occasions she wears a sari and other traditional Indian garb made from the finest silks.

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EMPERESS ISTVATHA

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
13	DEX	6	12-	
13	CON	3	12-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
23	EGO	13	14-	
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
7	OCV	20		
7	DCV	20		
7	OMCV	12		
7	DMCV	12		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
10	PD	8		Total: 10 PD (10 rPD)
10	ED	8		Total: 10 ED (10 rED)
10	REC	6		
60	END	8		
13	BODY	3		
36	STUN	8		Total Characteristics Cost: 175

Movement: Running: 12m
Teleportation: Anywhere in the world via spells

Cost	Powers	END
200	Spells: 200 Character Points' worth of spells and magical abilities, including the spells described in the main text (see HSG for hundreds of example spells you can use)	
10	Spells Of Protection: Resistant (+½) for 10 PD/10 ED	0
10	Spells Of Protection: Mental Defense (10 points)	0
10	Spells Of Protection: Power Defense (10 points)	0
15	Magesense: Detect Magic 14- (Sight Group), Discriminatory, Analyze	0

Perks	
100	Followers: 16,000 half-demon soldiers built on 150 Total Points each
20	Fringe Benefit: Empress of the V'hanian Empire
15	Money: Filthy Rich

Talents	
5	Eidetic Memory

Skills

30	30 points' worth of Magic Skills, as appropriate for campaign
3	Conversation 14-
2	Cryptography 14- Translation Only (-½)
3	Deduction 14-
3	Interrogation 14-
15	AKs/CKs: 15 Character Points' worth, as appropriate for campaign
12	Languages: 12 Character Points' worth, as appropriate for campaign
2	Navigation (Dimensional) 14-
3	Persuasion 14-
3	Stealth 12-
3	Tactics 14-
1	WF: Daggers
3	Scholar
2	1) KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 14-
2	2) KS: The Arcane World 14-
2	3) KS: Conjuration 14-
2	4) KS: Demonology 14-
2	5) KS: Elemental Magics 14-
2	6) KS: Necromancy 14-
2	7) KS: Witchcraft 14-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 482

Total Cost: 657

175 Matching Complications (50)

15	Hunted: various rival kingdoms (Less Pow or As Pow, Frequently, NCI, most to Kill, some Watching)
5	Hunted: a band of powerful, noble-minded adventurers (Less Pow, Infrequently, Kill)
15	Psychological Complication: Must Rule The World And Crush Her Enemies Beneath Her Heel (Common, Strong)

Total Complications Points: 35

Experience Points: 497

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Enchanted Dagger	+2	—	2d6	+1	10	—	
Lightning Wand	+0	+0	3d6	+0	—	37	which Never Recover

Armor: None

Gear: Various material components and spellcasting appurtenances; lavish jewelry (including several gems secretly sewn into her clothing as an "emergency fund" when she goes plane-traveling); Expandable Cottage (a Base she can "summon"; OAF)

Clothing: Empress Istvatha dresses similarly to Istvatha V'han, but her clothes are regal Fantasy-era robes and she carries her imperial scepter in her right hand. Her skin is a glossy black instead of teal.

HORROR HERO

In appropriate Horror campaigns, Istvatha V'han becomes *the Istvatha*, a strange mystical or alien force that takes over the minds and bodies of innocent people and forces them to commit horrible deeds. While she remains in a victim's body, that victim is slowly corrupted until he's the Istvatha's willing servant. The Istvatha can then move on to her next victim. Her goal is to take over all of humanity, one person at a time. One possible stumbling block: the eyes of a victim suffering from Istvathan Possession (but not Temporary Possession or Corrupted Soul) change to a distinctive violet color, making it possible for Our Heroes to figure out what's happening and stop it... if they act in time....

PULP HERO

In the pulse-pounding world of Pulp adventure the Empress becomes Istvatha of V'han, ruler of an entire system of planets (the chief of which is called V'han). Her system's sun will soon go nova, so she's used the awesome powers of Weird Science to move the planets away from it and across the Galaxy in search of a more suitable source of heat and light. And now she's found it: the star known to its natives as Sol. All she has to do is get rid of its existing planets — including that pesky third one, inhabited by a few million slightly evolved apes — and move her own right into their place!

STAR HERO

Istvatha V'han already has a very "Science Fiction" feel to her, with her fleets of starships and an empire that spans not just galaxies, but dimensions. By scaling down the level of her power you could use her as-is in many Star Hero campaigns — perhaps her goal is to conquer the Galaxy, not all of Reality. But if you prefer to change her into a purely Science Fiction villain, try this: Queen Ist, ruler of an insectoid species that wants to take over all life!

Background/History: Ist is the unquestioned ruler of the Krch'ree, a species of humanoid insects whose females stand about five feet tall (males are a foot shorter on average). The queenship of the Krch'ree is hereditary; each queen can only give birth to other queens, and no other female of the species can. If the queen has multiple daughters — as Ist's mother did — they eventually have to fight among themselves for rulership of the species. A particularly brutal and clever fighter, Ist handily defeated her rivals to emerge as the unquestioned ruler of the species.

Among the Krch'ree, the females are highly intelligent and lead society; the males are somewhat slow-witted but quite strong (they make fine laborers and excellent soldiers). But what really makes the species dangerous is how it breeds. The females must lay fertilized eggs in the bodies of other sentient life-forms. When the tiny young hatch, they begin altering the host body at the genetic level, transforming it over a period of days or weeks into a Krch'ree! (How long the process takes depends on how similar the host is to the Krch'ree to begin with.) Having eventually exterminated the other sentient species on their enormous homeworld, the Krch'ree have moved out into space with a vengeance, driven by the needs of their biology to invade and conquer. And leading their grand crusade across the stars is the ruthless and clever Queen Ist.

Personality/Motivation: As the queen of the Krch'ree, Ist is genetically predisposed to be supportive and protective of all of her people. It's instinctual; fighting it is like fighting the urge to breathe. She'll do whatever she has to — no matter how ruthless, "evil," cruel, cunning, underhanded, or deceptive — to ensure that the Krch'ree survive and thrive.

That aside, Queen Ist is sometimes regarded as being a bit frivolous. She loves the pomp and dalliance of office — the grand receptions, the state meals, the official ceremonies — as well as the more intimate pleasures her office allows her. She's practically addicted to court gossip and has an enormous retinue of ladies-in-waiting and other hangers-on trying to curry favor by bringing her the latest news.

Quote: "We are Queen Ist, and you will soon be our subjects."

Powers/Tactics: Queen Ist is the largest, strongest female Krch'ree in existence. Her mandibles and arm-spines are particularly large and sharp, giving her plenty of natural weaponry to fight with if need be. But she's also well-versed in Krch'ree weaponry, so if an enemy finds a way to break through her Royal Guard she's quite capable of defending herself.

Appearance: To Human eyes a Krch'ree sort of resembles a humanoid mantis-roach sort of being, though that's a loose comparison at best. By Krch'ree standards she's extraordinarily beautiful, though to Humans she's hideous and terrifying. Her exoskeleton is shades of purple, and she wears special red royal robes.

THE ISTVATHA

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
0	STR	-10	9-	Lift 0 kg; 0d6 HTH damage [0]
18	DEX	16	13-	
20	CON	10	13-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
20	EGO	10	13-	
20	PRE	10	1x-	PRE Attack: xd6
3	OCV	0		
3	DCV	0		
8	OMCV	15		
8	DMCV	15		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
2	PD	0		Total: 2 PD (0 rPD)
2	ED	0		Total: 2 ED (0 rED)
8	REC	4		
40	END	4		
5	BODY	-5		
30	STUN	5		Total Characteristics Cost: 104

Movement: Running: 0m
Flight: 20m

Cost	Powers	END
68	Istvathan Possession: Possession (Mind Control EGO +60, Telepathy EGO +40) Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Range (-½), Unified Power (with Temporary Possession; -¼)	0
60	Temporary Possession: Mind Control 12d6 Telepathic (+¼), Unified Power (with Istvathan Possession; -¼))	7
40	Mental Communication: Telepathy 8d6	4
17	Corrupted Soul: Severe Transform 1 point (ordinary human into human who's the Istvathan's willing slave; heals back through certain magical rituals) ACV (uses OMCV versus DMCV; +½), AVAD (Mental Defense; +0), Works Against EGO, Not BODY (+¼), Damage Over Time (60 increments, one per hour for 60 hours, defense only applies once, cannot be used again on same victim until all increments accrue; +1½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
53	Cannot Be Touched: Desolidification (affected by certain magical rituals; can "merge" with victims per APG 930) Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+¼), Inherent (+¼); Always On (-½)	0
40	Cannot Be Seen: Invisibility to Sight Group, No Fringe Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+¼), Inherent (+¼); Always On (-½)	0
20	Psychic Protections: Mental Defense (20 points)	0
10	Doesn't Scare Easily: +20 PRE Only To Protect Against Presence Attacks (-1)	0
35	Hovering: Flight 20m No Turn Mode (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
-12	Only Hovers: Running -12m (0m total)	
-2	Only Hovers: Leaping -4m (0m total)	
-2	Only Hovers: Swimming -2m (0m total)	

Skills

3 Stealth 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 330

Total Cost: 434

175 Matching Complications (50)

20	Physical Complication: No Manipulation (can only manipulate physical objects through possessed/controlled victims) (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
15	Physical Complication: Mute (can only communicate telepathically) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)

Total Complications Points: 35

Experience Points: 274

ISTVATHA OF V'HAN

Val Char Cost Roll Notes

10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
15	DEX	10	12-	
13	CON	3	12-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
20	EGO	10	13-	
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6

6	OCV	15		
6	DCV	15		
6	OMCV	9		
6	DMCV	9		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
6	PD	4		Total: 9 PD (3 rPD)
6	ED	4		Total: 9 ED (3 rED)
6	REC	2		
30	END	2		
15	BODY	5		
30	STUN	5		

Total Characteristics Cost: 148

Movement:	Running: 12m	
	Teleportation: 1m-30,000 km	

Cost Powers

25	Transteric Scepter: Multipower, 50-point reserve All OAF (-1)	END
2f	1) Transteric Blaster: Blast 10d6 OAF (-1), 12 Charges (-½)	[12]
2f	2) Transteric Domination: Mind Control 10d6 OAF (-1)	5
10	Imperial Will: Mental Defense (10 points)	0
90	Instantaneous Travel: Teleportation 30m MegaScale (1m = 1,000 km; +1%), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	4

END

Perks

100	Followers: 16,000 space troopers built on 150 Total Points each
20	Fringe Benefit: Empress of the V'han System
15	Money: Filthy Rich

Talents

6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
3	Striking Appearance +1/+1d6

Skills

3	Acting 14-
3	Bureaucratics 14-
3	Charm 14-
3	Computer Programming 13-
5	Cramming
3	Deduction 13-
2	Electronics 10-
3	High Society 14-
3	AK: V'han 13-
2	Navigation (Space) 13-
3	Oratory 14-
3	Persuasion 14-
2	SS: Physics 11-
3	Stealth 12-
3	Systems Operation 13-
3	Tactics 13-
4	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 324

Total Cost: 472

175 Matching Complications (50)

5	Hunted: by various rivals and enemies at court (Frequently, Less Pow, NCI, Watching)
20	Psychological Complication: Must Find A New Sun For Her People (Common, Total)
10	Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Electricity attacks (Uncommon)

Total Complications Points: 35

Experience Points: 312

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Concealed Raygun	+1	+0	2d6	+1	8		6

Armor: Transteric Field Belt (Resistant Protection (5 PD/5 ED))

Gear: None

Clothing: Imperial robes, jewelry, and crown appropriate to the situation

QUEEN IST

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH damage [2]
18	DEX	16	13-	
18	CON	8	13-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
18	EGO	8	13-	
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
6	OCV	15		
7	DCV	20		
3	OMCV	0		
6	DMCV	9		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
12	PD	10		Total: 12 PD (3 rPD)
8	ED	6		Total: 8 ED (3 rED)
8	REC	4		
40	END	4		
15	BODY	5		
40	STUN	10		Total Characteristics Cost: 173

Movement: Running: 12m
Leaping: 8m

Cost Powers

10	Arm-Spurs: HKA $\frac{1}{2}$ d6 (2d6 with STR)
4	Mandibles: HKA 1 point Armor Piercing (+ $\frac{1}{4}$); No STR Bonus (- $\frac{1}{2}$)
3	Chitinous Exoskeleton: Resistant (+ $\frac{1}{2}$) for 3 PD/3 ED
2	Krch'ree Legs: Leaping +4m (8m total)
5	Krch'ree Eyes: Increased Arc Of Perception (240 Degrees) for Sight Group
6	Four Arms, Two Legs: Extra Limbs (2) Inherent (+ $\frac{1}{4}$)

Perks

15	Fringe Benefit: Ruler of the Krch'ree
15	Money: Filthy Rich

Talents

6	Environmental Movement: Zero-G Training
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Skills

10	+1 with All Combat
3	Bureaucratics 14-
1	Computer Programming 8-
3	Deduction 14-
3	KS: Krch'ree History And Culture 14-
3	Oratory 14-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Tactics 14-
3	Teamwork 13- Only With Krch'ree (-0)
4	WF: Common Krch'ree Melee Weapons, Krch'ree Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 102

Total Cost: 275

175 Matching Complications (50)

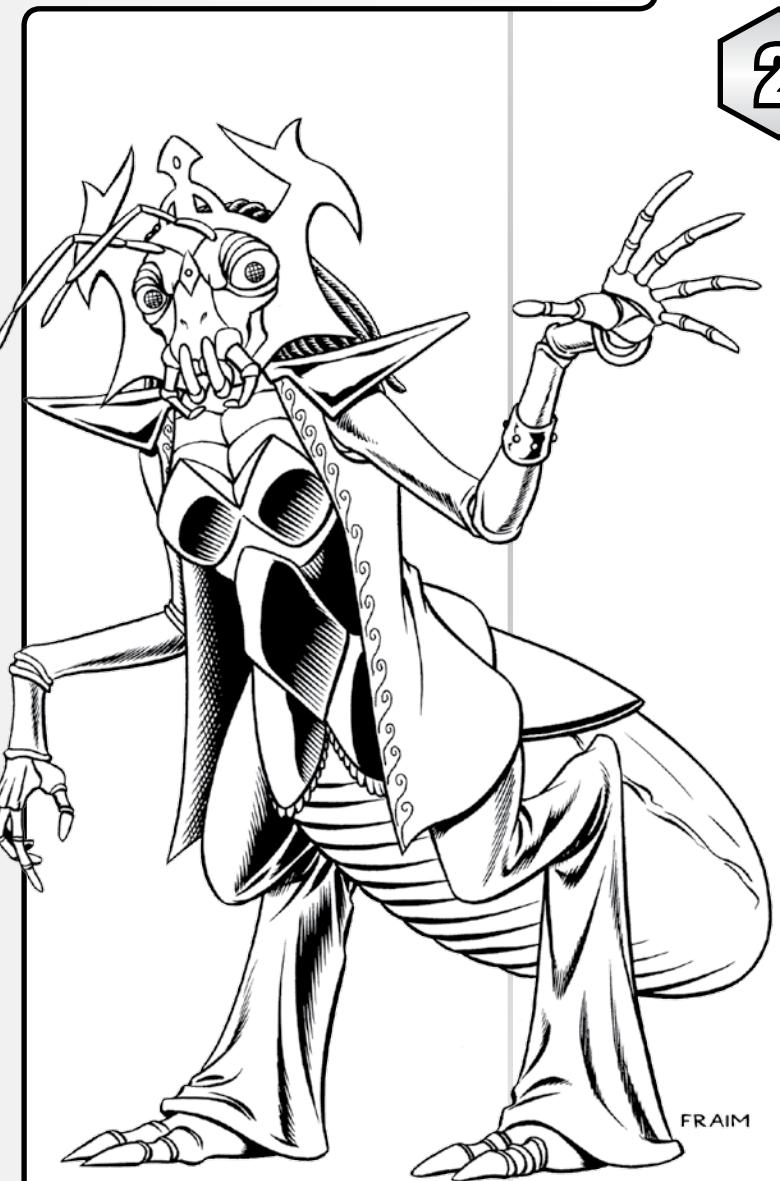
20	Hunted: enemies of the Krch'ree (Frequently, As Pow, NCI, Kill)
25	Psychological Complication: Protective Of The Krch'ree; Will Do Anything To See Them Triumph/Succeed (Very Common, Total)

Total Complications Points: 45

Experience Points: 105

EQUIPMENT

Weapon	OCV	RMod	Damage	STUN	STR	Min	Shots
Royal Sceptre	+0	—	3d6 N	—	10	—	—
Armor:	Force-field belt	(Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED))					
Gear:	None						
Clothing:	Royal robes						

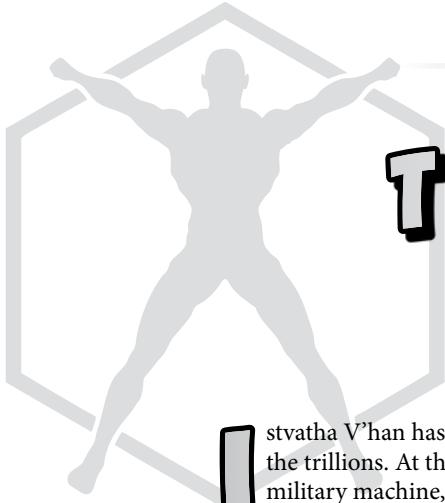




CHAPTER THREE



THE IMPERIAL LEGIONS



THE IMPERIAL BATTALION

Istvatha V'han has a military numbering in the trillions. At the forefront of that vast military machine, not only in the minds of most of her subjects but in terms of which soldiers Human superheroes are most likely to encounter and remember, are the members of the *Imperial Battalion* — or more formally, the 1st Imperial Battalion. Nicknamed “the Invincibles,” the members of the Battalion are superpowered warriors who serve Istvatha V'han with unswerving loyalty.

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION OF THE BATTALION

The Imperial Battalion functions differently than other battalions within the V'hanian military, and occupies an unusual “position” within the overall table of organization. On paper, the Imperial Battalion is a single battalion like any other. Most members hold the rank of Captain, though they generally aren't expected (or permitted) to give orders to lower-ranking ordinary D-Soldiers in combat. Battalion officers of course have higher ranks.

In practice, the Imperial Battalion doesn't function like a battalion at all. Instead, Battalioneers are assigned to units of D-Soldiers in much the same way that the unit might be assigned a hover-tank, an artillery piece, or a heavy machine gun. Battalioneers' assignments depend on the needs of the unit and the Battalioneer's powers; administrative officers go to some trouble to ensure that Battalioneers are put to best use. As a result, many find themselves re-assigned on a frequent basis. Some enjoy this because they get to see lots of different places and make friends throughout the military; others dislike the uncertainty of it and the inability to form long-term bonds with fellow V'hanian soldiers. On the other hand, it's not unknown for commanders to assign a Battalioneer to the same unit for years at a time. This usually happens when the unit's been given some sort of long-term duty — typically pacification, peacekeeping, and/or anti-rebellion activities on a particular planet or in a particular sector of space.

Additionally, some Battalioneers receive non-military assignments. This is most common with Battalioneers whose powers are more suited to “civilian” uses than combat, but it depends on the nature of the assignment. Examples of this include disaster relief, infrastructure construction, and “traditional superheroing” (crimefighting) as an “auxiliary officer” of the Imperial Security Force (see page 165).

SUPER-SQUADS

In ordinary circumstances Battalioneers don't work together; they're either assigned to their units solo, or at most come together in twos and threes because they're each working with units who are part of the same military operation. But sometimes the Empress or her commanders need a large amount of “superhuman force” to handle some problem (such as a team of superheroes invading V'han's realm from another dimension). In that case they'll form “superteams” of four or more Battalioneers; these are known as *super-squads* and assigned a temporary code number.

When forming a super-squad, commanders give some thought to team composition. They typically prefer squads with a variety of superpowers (and thus tactical flexibility). They also look for Battalioneers whose powers synergize well, and/or who are used to working together. Military doctrine dictates that a super-squad should have, if possible, the following members:

- at least one who's superhumanly strong and tough (a “brick”)
- at least two who can fly (and more is better)
- at least one with movement powers who can transport the entire squad quickly
- at least three who can attack at range
- at least two who are skilled at hand-to-hand combat
- at least one with scientific and/or technological skills
- at least one who's “sneaky” and/or skilled at espionage fieldcraft
- at least three who have different special effects for their attacks

Of course, it isn't always possible to meet these criteria, but given the vast number of Battalioneers the commanders can usually come pretty close even if they can't satisfy them all.

Since Istvatha V'han controls alternate versions of many dimensions, the Imperial Battalion often includes multiple "versions" of the same superhuman. Commanders try to avoid assigning "duplicates" to work together, since this has been known to cause psychological or social problems (and can even pose difficulties in the field, if squadmates can't tell the two apart easily). But sometimes the military has a mission that's best suited to a squad whose members all have the same or similar powers. For example, it's not unheard of for a mission to destroy an enemy installation to be assigned to an all-brick team, or for a squad composed entirely of gadgeteers to sneak into and plant bugs in enemy facilities. If "duplicates" of a specific Battalioneer are the most qualified candidates for this sort of mission, it's possible that the commanding officer might assemble a squad of "all alternate Defenders" or "all alternate Dr. Silverbacks" (so to speak).

BATTALION RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

By Imperial law, all superhumans in the Empire automatically become members of the Imperial Battalion. If a superhuman's powers manifest in childhood, he's taken from his home and raised to become a superhuman soldier; otherwise he's inducted whenever it's discovered he has powers. The Empress makes allowance for superhumans whose powers aren't effective in combat or who have religious/moral objections to fighting. She assigns them to non-combat duties, but they're still Battalioneers and draw military pay and benefits... and are subject to military regulations, which are harsher than civilian law.

Of course, not all superhumans want to join the Battalion. Some come from recently-conquered species, others are villains or simply prefer to be left alone. In that case severe methods of control are used (see below). However, the Empress prefers for the Battalioneers to be eager volunteers (since one of their duties is protecting her, after all), and if possible will try to arrange things to "sweeten the deal" and get a recruit's enthusiastic cooperation. For example, it's quite common for her to "bribe" a Battalioneer by giving all of his family members cushy, high-paying jobs.

Once recruited, a Battalioneer undergoes extensive military training. Despite their powers and often "unorthodox" approach to problem-solving, superhuman soldiers are still soldiers, and are expected to possess professional competence and discipline. The accompanying Template describes the basic skills taught to all Battalioneers, though it's certainly possible for one of them to request and receive more extensive military training.

CONTROLLING THE BATTALION

Superhumans are notoriously individualistic and even iconoclastic — keeping them under control and performing as an effective military unit is a challenge in any place and time. Istvatha V'han keeps the Imperial Battalion under control with a combination of the carrot, the stick, and the *really big stick*.

"The carrot" is the extensive benefits received by Battalioneers. They're highly paid and have excellent quarters. Their families receive good jobs with the imperial government if they want them. They get full pay if injured, and a lavish pension after retirement (or death benefits if they die in the line of duty). If they need to leave the field for some reason, they transition into some other sort of military or imperial job with no loss of pay or benefits. They're regarded as heroes by most imperial subjects, and many of them are famous (with all the corresponding "perks" fame entails).

Of course, for many Battalioneers, the benefits are just icing on the cake — they're loyal subjects of the Empire who are proud to serve it. Many dimensions have been part of the Empire so long that they know no other way of life. Superhumans from these places usually join the Imperial Battalion willingly; it's regarded as an excellent career and a way to fulfill a duty to the Empire to which they owe so much. The ranks of the Battalion contain many die-hard V'hanian patriots who joined with pride and serve proudly all their lives.

"The stick" is the significant punishment imperial law mandates for superhumans who don't willingly join the Battalion, which range from imprisonment up to death. (If necessary, the Empire will also threaten the superhuman's family and loved ones, but that's a last-ditch tactic.) Thus, any supervillain in the Empire has, in effect, committed a potentially capital offense regardless of what crimes he committed, since by definition he hasn't joined the military. In many cases the punishment for non-service also extends to the superhuman's family, any friends or colleagues who knew about him and didn't inform the authorities, and the like. Trying to hide from V'han's recruiters, or not serving her loyally after joining the Battalion, is a Very, Very Bad Idea.

The "really big stick," used only on those superhumans who are so valuable that the Empress prefers not to kill them, but so intractable that no other alternative will work, is mind control. "Brain-washing" and related techniques are well within the Empire's technological capabilities, and V'han doesn't hesitate to use them on potential Battalioneers if appropriate. Kharrl Korathon, described below, is an example of this. Ordinarily he'd never serve the woman who removed his entire species from existence... but thanks to V'hanian mind control he's now a highly loyal Battalioneer.

IMPERIAL BATTALIONEER TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 2 KS: V'hanian Military Science And Doctrine 11-
- 2 Language: V'hanian (fluent conversation)
- 3 Tactics
- 3 Teamwork
- 2 WF: V'hanian Small Arms

Cost Equipment

- 7 Imperial Battalion
 - Communicator: HRRP (Radio Group); IIF (-1/4), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-1/2)

Total Cost Of Template

Abilities And Equipment: 19

Value Complications

- 10 Hunted: enemies of the V'hanian Empire (Infrequently, As Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 20 Social Complication: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Value Of Template

Complications: 30

3

EXAMPLE BATTALIONEERS

Here are a few members of the Imperial Battalion that the PCs might encounter. See page 54 for a list of some of the other members.

ABRAXAS

Background/History: Toren Allep began his career in the air force of his people, the Rilarans. He was soon promoted into the aeronautics program based on his health, skills, and attitude. After several years of training, Allep achieved his great ambition: he flew into space as a member of a mission to explore one of Rilara's moons.

But then something went wrong and the spaceship found itself almost powerless, drifting off-course with no hope of rescue. To Allep's astonishment, the combination of the stress and exposure to the cosmic rays of space activated his previously-dormant mutant ability to "tap into" the motion of planets, comets, and other space bodies. Using his newfound power he saved the spaceship and everyone aboard. He became one of Rilara's greatest heroes, using his powers both to fight crime and to advance the space program. He called himself, in Human terms, *Abraxas*.

That was twenty years ago. A mere two years after his first flight, Istvatha V'han invaded and quickly conquered Rilara's dimension. Abraxas and Rilara's other heroes fought valiantly against her, but her overwhelming numbers and technology made it a futile effort. Since then Rilara and the rest of its dimension have become a loyal territory of the Empire (though some anger still lingers among those old enough to remember the days before the invasion). Abraxas survived the invasion and was drafted into the Imperial Battalion and has served in it ever since.

Personality/Motivation: At first, Abraxas resented being forced into the Battalion and having to serve the woman who conquered his people. But he soon realized just how beneficial the Empire could be, and as the years passed his resentment turned into acceptance, and then devotion. He now serves V'han as a loyal soldier, one who's quick to champion her cause against those who think to resist her.

Beyond that aspect of his personality (which may make him seem villainous, or at least like some kind of apologist, to Human PCs), Abraxas is a valiant and heroic individual. He enjoys being challenged and confronts the obstacles put in his way with forthright vigor and optimism. Before being a soldier he was one of Rilara's superheroes, and it shows in his deeds and words. He won't use excessive force or put innocents in danger if he can possibly avoid doing so, and he'll try to appeal to the PCs' better natures and sense of logic rather than use force if he can.

3

Appearance: Abraxas is a member of the Rilarans, a humanoid species with distinctive horizontal furrows or ridges along the bridge of the nose, the sides of the jaw, and the elbow (and parts of the arm just below it). He wears a full bodysuit that's a sort of purple-grey, but with finger-thick bands of random colors circling the legs, waist, torso, and arms (and one around the top of his head, like a fillet).

Quote: "Look, I've been where you are. It's an invasion, it's not pleasant at first. But think of it like medical treatment — it hurts a little now, but your world will be much, much better for it in the long run. Don't fight us; join us to help make a better tomorrow a reality!"

Powers/Tactics: Abraxas is a Rilaran mutant (he doesn't register as a mutant on Human mutant detection devices) with the power to draw upon the orbit of planets, comets, and other astronomical bodies, and even large-scale planetary phenomena like Coriolis force. He can then "project" a tiny fragment of that power to attack his enemies, propel himself through the air, or protect himself from attacks. If he's willing to unleash the full force he can channel, he can "fire" a "blast" powerful enough to affect even the strongest targets.

However, for any of his powers to work, Abraxas either has to be on a planet or within a solar system. If he's in interstellar space there's not enough motion for him to "tap." (The motion of stars, galaxies, and the like is too "broad" and powerful for him to work with... at least for now. If he ever becomes powerful enough to channel galactic motion he'd be able to devastate entire worlds with a wave of his hand.) Usually this isn't a drawback, but Istvatha V'han's forces often have to fly through space to reach their next target... and if he's attacked at that time he's largely powerless (though his Characteristics remain at superhuman levels).

In combat Abraxas usually prefers to start by taking a support role. He augments his teammates' movement abilities and Entangles enemies to get them out of the way. If he's attacked directly or his team needs help he'll unleash his Orbital Bombardment or Coriolis Hurl, though. Unless an opponent is obviously tough enough to take a full blast, he starts Bombardment at 12-16d6 and ratchets up from there until he determines what level of force is most effective against a target without posing a risk of causing significant harm or death.

Campaign Use: Besides being a foe the PCs can face in combat, Abraxas can fulfill several other potential roles. First, he could serve as a "superpowered diplomat" to Earth, stating V'han's case from the perspective of someone who's been conquered by the Empire but learned to appreciate all the benefits it offers. Second, if the PCs have enough success against V'han that they weaken her hold over Rilara's dimension, they could perhaps persuade him to turn his back on the Empress and lead his people to freedom.

If you want to make Abraxas more powerful, expand his powers to kinetic energy and momentum control in general. *Champions Powers* has plenty of sample powers suitable for him in that case. To weaken him, reduce his SPD to 4 and his Orbital Bombardment to 20d6.

ABRAXAS

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
18	DEX	16	13-	
18	CON	8	13-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
15	EGO	5	12-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
8	OCV	25		
9	DCV	30		
3	OMCV	0		
5	DMCV	6		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
6	PD	4		Total: 26 PD (20 rPD)
6	ED	4		Total: 26 ED (20 rED)
10	REC	6		
80	END	12		
12	BODY	2		
46	STUN	13		Total Characteristics Cost: 181

Movement: Running: 12m
Flight: 20m

Cost Powers

Cost	Powers	END
120	Keplerian Tapping: Multipower, 120-point reserve All slots Only When Abraxas Is On A Planet Or In A Solar System (-0)	
12f	1) Orbital Bombardment: Blast 24d6	12
4f	2) Coriolis Hurl: Telekinesis (60 STR) Only To Push Targets Away From Abraxas (-1)	9
5f	3) Planetary Rotation: Entangle 8d6, 8 PD/8 ED Costs Endurance (to maintain; -½)	8
2f	4) Movement Enhancement: Boost Movement Powers 4d6 Variable Effect (any one kinetic energy-based Move- ment Power at a time; +½), Ranged (+½); Costs Endurance (to maintain; -½), Only Aid Other (-½), Only Works On People/Objects Currently In Motion (-¼), Points Fade Immediately When Person/Object Stops Moving (-½)	5
34	Planetary Force Shield: Resistant Protection (20 PD/20 ED) Costs Endurance (to maintain; -½), Only When Abraxas Is On A Planet Or In A Solar System (-0), Unified Power (-¼)	6
5	Force-Field Belt: Power Defense (8 points) OIF (-½)	0
13	Force-Field Belt: Life Support (Self Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: all) OIF (-½)	0
24	Planetary Flight: Flight 20m, x8 Noncombat Only When Abraxas Is On A Planet Or In A Solar System (-0), Unified Power (-¼)	3
15	Imperial Battalion Communicator: HRRP (Radio Group), Dimensional IIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0

Perks

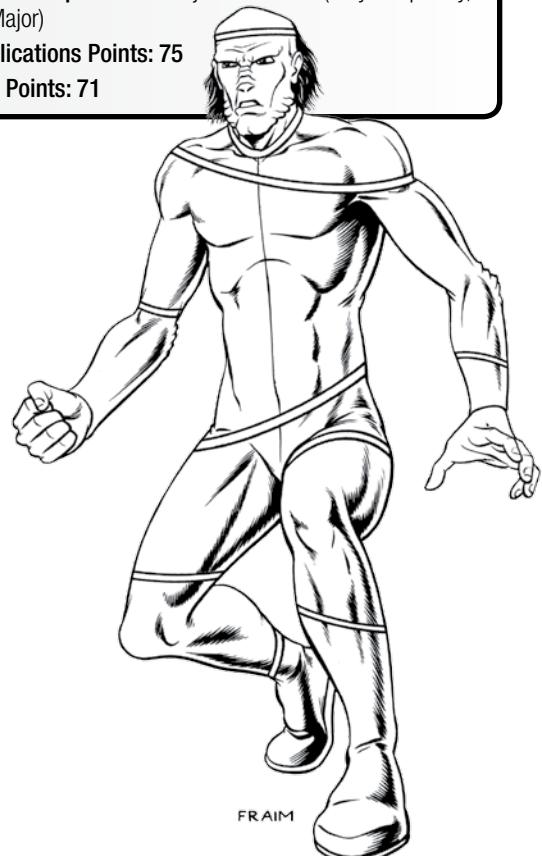
8	Fringe Benefit: Military Rank: Member of the Imperial Battalion
10	Money: Wealthy
Skills	
15	+3 with Keplerian Tapping Multipower
2	Computer Programming 10-
2	Electronics 10-
2	KS: V'hanian Military Science And Doctrine 11-
2	PS: Astronaut 11-
2	Language: V'hanian (fluent conversation; Rilaran is Native)
2	SS: Astronomy 11-
3	Systems Operation 13-
3	Tactics 13-
3	Teamwork 13-
2	WF: V'hanian Small Arms
Total Powers & Skills Cost: 290	
Total Cost: 471	

400 Matching Complications (75)

10	Distinctive Features: Rilaran Mutant (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
10	Hunted: enemies of the V'hanian Empire (Infrequently, As Pow, Capture/Kill)
20	Psychological Complication: Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)
15	Psychological Complication: Heroic; Willing To Place Himself In Danger To Aid Others (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Complication: Imperial Patriot (Common, Strong)
20	Social Complication: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 71



ARS DIAVOLA

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
16	DEX	12	12-	
15	CON	5	12-	
25	INT	15	14-	PER Roll 14-
25	EGO	15	14-	
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
6	OCV	15		
7	DCV	20		
9	OMCV	18		
9	DMCV	18		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
6	PD	4		Total: 24 PD (18 rPD)
8	ED	6		Total: 26 ED (18 rED)
8	REC	4		
60	END	8		
10	BODY	0		
40	STUN	10		
Total Characteristics Cost: 195				

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Powers END

303	Mastery Of The Infernal: Multipower, 455-point reserve	
	All Gestures (-½), Incantations (-½)	
11f	1) Combat Conjunction: Summon up to two demons built on up to 600 Total Points	22
	Expanded Class (demons and other infernal beings; +½), Friendly (+½); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Gestures (-½), Incantations (-½)	
8f	2) Ritual Conjunction: Summon up to 16 demons built on up to 1,200 Total Points	45
	Expanded Class (demons and other infernal beings; +½), Friendly (+½); Concentration (0 DCV throughout casting; -1), Extra Time (20 Minutes; -2½), Gestures (throughout casting; -½), Incantations (throughout casting; -½)	
6f	3) Greater Conjunction: Summon one demon prince built on up to 1,500 Total Points	30
	Expanded Class (demon princes and similarly powerful infernal beings; +½); Concentration (0 DCV throughout casting; -1), Extra Time (1 Hour; -3), Gestures (throughout casting; -½), Incantations (throughout casting; -½)	
62	Hellfire Spells: Multipower, 62-point reserve	
6f	1) Hellfire Lance: Blast 12d6	6
6f	2) Hellfireball: Blast 8d6	6
	Area Of Effect (18m Radius Explosion; +½)	
	6	
6f	3) Cutting Hellfire: Blast 9d6	6
	Armor Piercing (+½)	
6f	4) Eternal Hellfire: Blast 5d6	6
	Constant (+½), Penetrating (+½), Uncontrolled (+½)	
64	Other Magics: Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 50 Pool + 50 Control Cost	var
	Only Magic (-½), Can Only Be Changed With Access To Spellbooks (-½)	

40 **The Hellring:** Mind Control 16d6 4

Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½); OIF (-½), Only Versus Demons And Infernal Beings (-1)

12 **The Hellring:** PRE +35 0

OIF (-½), Only For Presence Attacks And Interaction Skills Against Demons And Infernal Beings (-1½)

27 **Mantle Of Mastery:** Resistant Protection (18 PD/18 ED) 5

Costs Endurance (-½), Side Effects (coloration of Mantle reveals caster's generally Good or Evil nature, always occurs; -½)

13 **The Hellring:** Mental Defense (20 points) 0

OIF (-½)

13 **The Hellring:** Power Defense (20 points) 0

OIF (-½)

5 **Demon's Eyes:** Infrared Perception (Sight Group) 0

15 **Mage's Eye:** Detect Magic 14- (Sight Group), Discriminatory, Analyze 0

32 **Demon Sense:** Detect Infernal Beings 14- (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Range, Sense, Targeting 0

15 **Imperial Battalion Communicator:** HRRP (Radio Group), Dimensional 0

IIF (-¼), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)

Perks

30 Contacts among, and Favors owed to her by, various powerful demons

8 Fringe Benefit: Military Rank: Member of the Imperial Battalion

10 Money: Wealthy

Talents

27 Danger Sense (out of combat, immediate vicinity, sense) 14-

Skills

16 +2 with Ranged Attacks

3 Charm 14-

5 Cramming

3 Deduction 14-

7 AK: The Netherworld 18-

3 KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 14-

14 KS: Demons And Infernal Beings Of All Species 25-

3 KS: The Mystic World 14-

2 KS: V'hanian Military Science And Doctrine 11-

2 Language: Hebrew (fluent conversation; English is Native)

2 Language: Greek (fluent conversation)

2 Language: Latin (fluent conversation)

2 Language: V'hanian (fluent conversation)

2 Navigation (Dimensional) 14-

3 Persuasion 14-

3 Stealth 12-

3 Tactics 14-

3 Teamwork 12-

2 WF: V'hanian Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 805

Total Cost: 1,000

ARS DIAVOLA

Background/History: For as long as she can remember, Ruth Dellingham has been fascinated by the scary, the creepy, the horrific. A love of horror movies as a child metamorphosed into a full-blown interest in the occult by the time she was a teenager. Her first dabblings in layman's occultism led her to search for deeper, darker lore... and one day while poring through the stock of an old used bookstore she found it. That grimoire, a book of true magic, was her portal to a larger, more dangerous world of mysticism... and she loved it! She had talent for it, too — not just a knack for spellcasting, but a "sixth sense" that warned her what was too dangerous to attempt and what she could safely try. As a result she never made that one last fatal mistake so many self-trained sorcerers eventually do.

Dellingham's most intense occult interest was demonology. Demons and other denizens of the infernal realms fascinated her, and she was particularly skilled at evoking them. As her magic became stronger and stronger, she formed pacts with many demons of power, though she never fully sold her soul to any of them. Learning more about demons — what they were like, how to summon them, how to control them — became a full-blown obsession. Driven by her desires, she at long last tracked down the fabled Hellstone in the Netherworld. Journeying there, she dared to chip off a small piece and fashion it into a ring that gave her even greater powers over diabolic beings.

Her power now greater than ever before, Dellingham realized it wasn't enough simply to possess power; she had to *use* it. Soon she was using demons to commit crimes for her, and in time she became a part of the supervillainous world, christening herself *Ars Diavola* ("the arts of the Devil").

As the years passed, Ars Diavola became history's greatest expert on the demons of Humanity. Whether the culture was Western, Eastern, or other, she knew all that could be learned about their demons. But still it wasn't enough to satisfy her obsession. She knew there were alien species and extradimensional races out there — surely *they* had demons too, didn't they? She had to find out!

And then she got the chance. In 1998 Istvatha V'han made her first attempt to conquer Earth and Earth's dimension. Although she ultimately failed, a handful of Human supervillains joined the Empress's cause — some for altruistic reasons, some out of greed or a belief V'han would eventually triumph, some for reasons of their own. Ars Diavola was one of the latter. She realized a dimension-traveling master villainess could give her access to more species — and more demonologies — than she could ever learn about on her own. Pledging fealty to V'han was an easy thing to do after that.

Since then, Ars Diavola has revelled in the study of demons while becoming one of the Imperial Battalion's most powerful mystics. When not on a mission she spends her time studying other species' demons, visiting versions of the Netherworld, and so on. As far as she's concerned, it's the ideal life — and she'll fight as hard as she can to prevent anyone from taking it away from her.

3

400 Matching Complications (75)

- 10 **Distinctive Features:** Infernal-Tinged Mystic Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
- 5 **Hunted:** various mystics (Infrequently, As Pow, to take Hellring)
- 10 **Hunted:** enemies of the V'hanian Empire (Infrequently, As Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 5 **Negative Reputation:** consorts with demons (Infrequently)
- 20 **Psychological Complication:** Fascinated By All Things Infernal (Common, Total)
- 5 **Rivalry:** Professional, with other mystics who summon demons
- 20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 600



ARS DIAVOLA FACTS

Here are some facts characters and NPCs might know about Ars Diavola if they succeed with an appropriate Skill Roll:

N/R: Ars Diavola is a mystic villainess who specializes in summoning and controlling demons.

K/R: Ars Diavola betrayed Humanity to join forces with Istvatha V'han during V'han's 1998 invasion of Earth's dimension, and upon V'han's defeat left Earth's plane to go to V'han's home dimension and become one of her superpowered soldiers.

-1: Ars Diavola is probably the greatest living expert on Human demonology... and by now, perhaps the demonology of other species as well.

-2: Her real name is Ruth Dellingham.

-4: Ars Diavola once worked with (or for) the *Sylvestris*, but they had a falling out and now hate one another.

-6: Ars Diavola possesses the *Hellring*, a powerful infernal artifact that gives her even greater power over demons and devils. Many mystics would love to take it from her for their own.

3

OTHER HUMAN RENEGADES

Ars Diavola wasn't the only supervillain — or hero — to join forces with Istvatha V'han during one of her invasions. Some who did so, and are now part of her Imperial Battalion, include:

Bird of Hope: A low-powered Brazilian superhero who often crusaded against social injustice and worked to improve conditions in the *favela* slums of Rio de Janeiro, Bird of Hope decided Istvatha V'han offers more hope for Humanity's poor and downtrodden than any Human leader. He constantly petitions the Empress to renew her assault on Earth's dimension, arguing that the oppressed masses of Humanity desperately need her wisdom, power, and generosity.

Monstrosity: A villain with the power to change into various monstrous forms. Paranoid about being used as a "guinea pig for super-science experiments" if he were ever captured, he defected to V'han's side during her 2007 invasion attempt when she gave him her solemn oath never to do such a thing.

Mother Nature: A self-described "hippy eco-terrorist" with powers of plant and animal control, Mother Nature spent years fighting for the environment and social justice. She was about to give up in despair, but learning about Istvatha V'han and her "enlightened" government convinced Mother Nature to join the Empire. She spends most of her time working the the imperial departments in charge of planetary development and resources, and essentially has half a dozen planets under her "benign oversight" to ensure their environments aren't improperly exploited.

Steelhand: A powered armor-wearing British supervillain who signed up with the Empress for access to better technology and the chance to "see the Multiverse." Since his villainy was mostly motivated by greed and V'han pays her Battalioneers very well, he's become an efficient, disciplined superhuman soldier and a hero to many of V'han's subjects.

Twister: A ruthless Chicago supervillain with speedster/whirling powers who "jumped ship" to avoid being captured by PRIMUS and sentenced to Stronghold for life. V'han's commanders have to watch him carefully and keep him on a tight leash. Sooner or later he's probably going to step over her line for acceptable behavior and end up in front of a firing squad (so to speak).

Warchild: A Greek mutant villain who regards himself as an incarnation of the god Ares, Warchild joined Istvatha V'han because of the unlimited opportunities she provided for combat. He's been involved in some sort of battle nearly every day since and couldn't be happier... though he does miss Human food.

Personality/Motivation: Ars Diavola is monomaniacally obsessed with anything related to the demonic or infernal. If she hears about demon lore she doesn't yet know, a demonic enchanted item she doesn't possess, or a notable demon she's never conjured, she won't stop until she's acquired it or done it. Her loyalty to Istvatha V'han is born of this; only the Empress can give her access to the demonology of literally millions of dimensions. There's always something new to learn!

Unfortunately, while she hasn't yet sold her soul (primarily because she doesn't want to be beholden to any one demon), Ars Diavola's long association with the infernal has tainted her. She's often deliberately cruel and evil, rejoicing in the suffering of others almost as much as a demon would itself. She particularly enjoys toying with her adversaries/victims, torturing them both physically and emotionally.

Quote: "Behold! — your fate is sealed! I have conjured a Tyelgravian demon of the black-skinned subspecies to slay you!"

Powers/Tactics: Ars Diavola is perhaps the Multiverse's leading expert on demonology. She's studied the demon lore of over three thousand separate species and civilizations (including Humanity's, of course). She's also an expert on the Netherworld itself. Unlike most mystics she's aware of the Netherworlds of other species (see page 99) and often visits them instead of Humanity's Netherworld for a "change of pace."

Although she's mastered Hellfire and can cast a wide variety of Superheroic Thaumaturgy spells (see HSG 266-80 or CU 66-68), Ars Diavola prefers not to be a frontline combatant. She can conjure demons from any culture she's studied, and if possible does so to have them do her fighting for her. If she has time she can summon up to 16 powerful demons (though she usually tries to keep at least 20% of the ones she's conjured as a personal bodyguard). She can summon weaker demons in the middle of combat (though only two of them), or given time could even invoke a powerful demon prince. (The latter, however, aren't kindly disposed toward her the way other demons tend to be.) Her Hellstone helps her impress (and even control) demons she encounters, whether she's summoned them or not.

For Ars Diavola's demons, use the ones on HSB 71-100. Just change the appearance (and perhaps some powers) to represent demons from non-Human species and civilizations.

Campaign Use: Ars Diavola provides a possible Human connection for the PCs to use against V'han — though a wicked and unreliable one at best. It would require some truly special bit of demonic lore or infernal enchanted item to tempt her to reveal information about the Empress (much less betray her).

To make Ars Diavola stronger, assume that either her magics or her frequent trips to the Netherworld have corrupted her body, making her more demonic: give her tougher skin, the ability to grow claws, demonic senses, and so forth. To weaken her, reduce her VPP's Pool to around 30 points (and maybe the Control Cost in proportion).

Associates, Allies, And Adversaries: Although she hasn't really been a part of the Champions Universe for over a decade, Ars Diavola hasn't entirely been forgotten — the Demonologist (a former lover) and Talisman (a former bitter rival) still remember her, for example. So do the Sylvestrists; at one point she worked with them on several "projects," but eventually they had a falling out (which each blames on the other). Patriarch has a deep hatred for her (and vice-versa) and has forbidden anyone in the family to ally with or help her in any way.

Luther Black would be *particularly* interested to learn of the Hellring and how Ars Diavola obtained it. He's been tracking the Hellstone for decades without success, and Ars Diavola might hold the key to finding it (or at the very least her Ring would be a great prize for him). If he learns about her/it, he'll stop at nothing to discover what she knows.

Appearance: Ars Diavola is a white Human female about six feet tall and well-proportioned. Her costume consists of a long black evening gown slit up the right side to the thigh and cut on the top to display her figure to best advantage, plus black evening gloves and a black cape with red lining. The backs of the hands of the gloves have embroidered red pentacles. Her hair is brown and worn shoulder-length. On the ring finger of her right hand she wears the Hellring, a ring made of red rock that glows like an ember.

BLACK

Background/History: The Lith'sa, a reptilian species whose homeworld and dimension were conquered by Istvatha V'han over a hundred years ago, have a thriving, vibrant culture that's flourished under the Empire's rule. Known for their skills as diplomats, talkers, traders, financiers, investigators, and general busybodies, the Lith'sa were quick to take advantage of the interdimensional trade opportunities being imperial subjects had to offer.

Seven years ago a young Lith'sa trader named Tithshada F'hlaa was making his first trip through one of V'han's dimensional portals to trade with the inhabitants of a planet in another of her dimensions. But something went wrong, or somehow the dimensional transfer process activated latent abilities he possessed (though he doesn't register as a mutant). When he emerged on the other side of the portal, he was a featureless jet-black color from tail to toe! Testing soon revealed that F'hlaa now had the ability to emit a semi-solid "shadow substance" from his body. At first he could just "cover" himself in it, rendering himself intangible (and invisible in deep darkness), but he soon learned how to do other things with it, including attack. So much for his planned career as a trader — he became a member of the Imperial Battalion, codenamed *Black*.



Personality/Motivation: Black is a pretty ordinary guy, all things considered. While he's loyal to the Empire and V'han (after all, he's become powerful, popular, and wealthy because of them), it's not the overwhelming patriotic loyalty of Targe, the implanted loyalty of Kharrl, the self-interested loyalty of Ars Diavola, or the zealous convert loyalty of Abraxas. It's just the everyday devotion of a man to his native country, based on the fact that he's prospered and never known anything else.

Aside from that, Black's a regular fellow in other ways. He fights because that's his job, but he doesn't enjoy violence and typically won't use any more than he thinks is necessary to get the job done (and protect himself). His hobbies are those of the common people (reading, watching video, various sports) rather than the exotic pastimes superhumans so often seem to prefer. Of all the members of the Imperial Battalion described here, Black's the "everyman" that many PCs are most likely to get along with.

Quote: "Surrender now and you won't be hurt. The full force of imperial justice will protect you. Fight us, or hurt anyone... and things won't turn out so well."

BLACK

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
20	DEX	20	13-	
20	CON	10	13-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
15	EGO	5	12-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
8	OCV	25		
7	DCV	20		
3	OMCV	0		
5	DMCV	6		
6	SPD	40		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
8	PD	6		Total: 28 PD (20 rPD)
10	ED	8		Total: 30 ED (20 rED)
12	REC	8		
80	END	12		
13	BODY	3		
50	STUN	15		
Total Characteristics Cost: 198				

Movement: Running: 24m

Cost Powers

END

90	Shadow Substance Field: Darkness to Sight Group 15m radius Personal Immunity (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (1/2 END; +1/4); Unified Power (-1/4)	4
75	Shadow Substance Projection: Multipower, 94-point reserve All Unified Power (-1/4)	
7f	1) Shadow Substance Lash: Blast 15d6 Personal Immunity (+1/4); Unified Power (-1/4)	9
7f	2) Shadow Substance Envelopment: Drain STUN 5d6 Constant (+1/2), Personal Immunity (+1/4); Unified Power (-1/4)	8
7f	3) Shadow Substance Tendrils: Entangle 7d6, 7 PD/7 ED Personal Immunity (+1/4); Unified Power (-1/4)	9
7f	4) Shadow Substance In Your Eyes: Sight Group Flash 15d6 Personal Immunity (+1/4); Unified Power (-1/4)	9
3f	5) Shadow Substance Barrier: Barrier 4 PD/4 ED, 4 BODY (up to 20m long, 4m tall, and 2m thick), Dismissable, Non-Anchored Costs Endurance (to maintain; -1/2), Unified Power (-1/4)	6
40	Shadow Substance Shielding: Resistant Protection (20 PD/20 ED) Costs Half Endurance (to maintain; -1/4), Unified Power (-1/4)	3
32	Shadow Substance Sheathing: Desolidification (affected by Light powers and magic) Unified Power (-1/4)	4
100	Shadow Substance Sheathing: Affects Physical World (+2) for any Shadow Substance Projection Multipower slot using up to 50 Active Points Reduced Endurance (1/2 END; +1/4); Unified Power (-1/4)	5

11 Shadow Substance Sheathing Concealment:

Invisibility to Sight Group 0

Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); Linked (to Desolidification; -1/2), Only In Deep Darkness/ Shadows (-1), Unified Power (-1/4)

10 Shadow Substance Skating:

Running +12m (24m total) 1
Unified Power (-1/4)

2 Lith'sa Swimming:

Swimming +4m (8m total) 1

15 Imperial Battalion Communicator:

HRRP (Radio Group), Dimensional
IIF (-1/4), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-1/2)

5 Lith'sa Tail:

Extra Limb (1)
Inherent (+1/4); Limited Manipulation (-1/4) 0

Perks

8 Fringe Benefit: Military Rank: Member of the Imperial Battalion

10 Money: Wealthy

Skills

15 +3 with Shadow Substance Projection Multipower

3 Bureaucratics 13-

2 Deduction 10-

2 KS: Lith'sa Trade And Finance 11-

2 KS: V'hanian Military Science And Doctrine 11-

2 Language: V'hanian (fluent conversation; Lith'sa is Native)

3 Stealth 13-

3 Tactics 12-

3 Teamwork 13-

3 Trading 13-

2 WF: V'hanian Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 469

Total Cost: 667

400 Matching Complications (75)

10 **Hunted:** enemies of the V'hanian Empire (Infrequently, As Pow, Capture/Kill)

20 **Psychological Complication:** Code Versus Killing (Common, Total)

10 **Psychological Complication:** V'hanian Patriot (Common, Moderate)

20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 60

Experience Points: 282

3

Powers/Tactics: Black's powers involve the emission and control of *shadow substance*. This is a pitch-black, utterly opaque semi-solid stuff that has some properties of matter and some of energy — imperial scientists don't fully understand it and it defies conventional analysis. Black can control how much of it he emits, how it's shaped, and how "solid" it is. He can make it "dense" enough to hurt when he hits someone with it, for example. On the other hand, if he emits just enough to coat his body, he becomes intangible (and cannot be seen in deep enough shadows).

In combat Black prefers to rely on his Entangle and Flash as much as possible, stepping up to Drain as necessary and his Blast solely as a last resort (or when he has to damage unliving matter). He's not aggressive and prefers to let his teammates take the lead while he plays more of a supporting role.

Campaign Use: As mentioned above, Black is an easygoing guy that Human PCs could easily get along with — the Lith'sa in general tend to be gregarious, not at all xenophobic, open to new ideas, curious, and talkative. But that doesn't mean he'll adopt their cause as his own or defect to their side. The Empire treats him and his family well, he thinks it's an excellent form of government, and he has no desire at all to "rock the boat."

To make Black more powerful, give him a wider range of darkness powers (keeping his special effect in mind, of course — he can't, for example, Teleport through shadows). *Champions Powers* has a section of Darkness Powers you can consult for inspiration. To weaken him, reduce his Multipower reserve to 75 points (and slots accordingly) and/or decrease his SPD to 4-5.

Appearance: Black is a member of the Lith'sa, a serpent-man species. He's 5'11" tall with ochre-colored scales and a tail; a line of triangular crests runs down the center of his back and tail, becoming progressively smaller as they proceed. He has three fingers and a thumb on each hand; the fingers are oddly long (by Human standards) but lack claws; his toes are similarly proportioned. His costume, such as it is, consists of black trunks, bracer-fingerless gloves, and toeless boots. Some uses of his powers cause him to become a jet-black "silhouette" of himself.

KHARRL KORATHON

Background/History: The planet Koratho exists — or used to exist — in a dimension that Istvatha V'han attempted to conquer relatively early in her imperial career. What astonished her was that the Korathons were *all* superpowered. Every single member of the species was immensely strong and tough... and what's more, they loved to fight. Although the Korathons were only in an early starfaring stage of civilization, they'd already begun building what would one day no doubt have been a vast interstellar empire — but they ran into Istvatha V'han.

V'han's early attempt to conquer Koratho's dimension went well, but when she actually came up against the Korathons in battle her forces were smashed and routed. Defeat followed defeat, since her soldiers' most powerful weapons were largely useless against the superhumanly strong, blue-skinned species. What was worse, now they were aware of the existence of other dimensions, which meant they'd want to conquer them, too.

It was too great a threat for V'han to tolerate, so she took a simple but drastic step. After entering Koratho's dimension, she traveled back in time and prevented Koratho from coalescing into a planet, thus eradicating the entire Korathon species from reality in one fell swoop...

...or rather, the entire species but one. Unwilling to waste a potential resource, V'han first captured one Korathon, a former naval officer who'd been drafted into the space navy, and put him in time-shield field in another dimension. This preserved him from eradication. When the proper mind-altering technology was available, she freed him from the field, erased his memories, and replaced them with loyalty to her. Kharrl Korathon, now widely known as "the strongest man in the Empire," has served her devotedly ever since.

Personality/Motivation: Early in life Kharrl Korathon was a complex, intelligent individual who served in the Korathon wet and space navies; he was a Korathon patriot, a loving family man, and a well-respected military figure. All that changed when Istvatha V'han wiped out his species and reprogrammed his mind. He's still smart and has a wide variety of interests, but two aspects dominate his personality. The first and foremost is an overwhelming loyalty to the Empress. This is so fundamental to him now that it's almost genetic; overcoming it would require intense Mind Control or similar treatments.

Second, Kharrl still retains much of the "macho warrior's code" that so affected Korathon history and eventually drove his people onto the path of interstellar conquest. He's a big, bluff, larger-than-life sort of person... but woe be it to anyone who questions his bravery, claims he can't do something, "disrespects" him, or insults his honor. Long-ingrained military discipline and professionalism prevent him from simply killing such fools (as so often happened to them throughout Koratho's history), but that doesn't mean he can't put them in some serious pain. His teammates have learned just how far they can joke with him, and are careful never to cross that line.

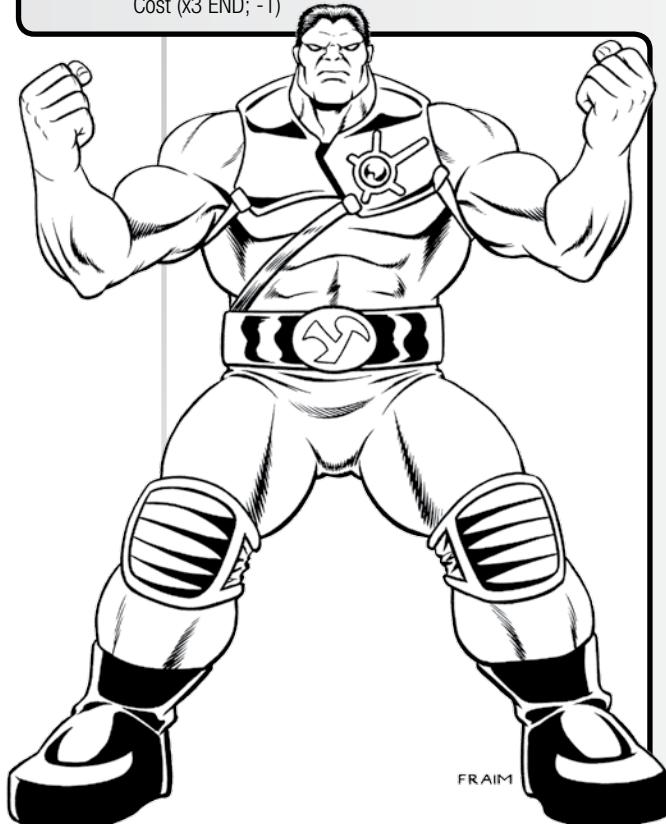
KHARRL KORATHON

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
100	STR	90	29-	Lift 25 ktons; 20d6 HTH damage [10]
14	DEX	8	12-	
40	CON	30	17-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
15	EGO	5	12-	
35	PRE	25	16-	PRE Attack: 7d6
9	OCV	30		
9	DCV	30		
3	OMCV	0		
8	DMCV	15		
6	SPD	40		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
40	PD	38		Total: 40 PD (40 rPD)
40	ED	38		Total: 40 ED (40 rED)
40	REC	36		
150	END	26		
25	BODY	15		
100	STUN	40		Total Characteristics Cost: 471

Movement: Running: 18m
Leaping: 50m

Cost Powers

Cost	Powers	END
40	It Hurts Just To Hit Him: Blast 8d6 Area Of Effect (personal Surface — Damage Shield; +1/4), Constant (+1/2), Persistent (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); Always On (-1/2), No Range (-1/2), Only Versus Beings/Things That Hit Him (-1/2)	0
20	Send 'Em Flying: Double Knockback (+1/2) for up to 100 STR Extra Time (Full Phase; -1/2), Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1)	15



FRAIM

40	Impervious Skin: Hardened (x2; +1/2) for 40 PD/40 ED	0
40	Impervious Skin: Impenetrable (x2; +1/2) for 40 PD/40 ED	0
80	Impervious Skin: Resistant (+1/2) for 40 PD/40 ED Hardened (x2; +1/2), Impenetrable (x2; +1/2)	0
30	Impervious Skin: Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, 25%, Resistant	0
16	Psychic Shield: Mental Defense (20 points) IIF (armor chest/shoulder piece; -1/4)	0
16	Power Shield: Power Defense (20 points) IIF (armor chest/shoulder piece; -1/4)	0
4	Strong Lungs: Life Support (Extended Breathing: 1 END per 20 Minutes)	0
6	Long Legs: Running +6m (18m total)	1
23	Strong Legs: Leaping +46m (50m forward, 25m upward)	5
6	Strong Eyes: +12 versus Range Modifier for Normal Sight	0
15	Imperial Battalion Communicator: HRRP (Radio Group), Dimensional IIF (-1/4), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-1/2)	0
3	Long-Lived: Life Support (Longevity: 800-year lifespan)	0

Perks

8	Fringe Benefit: Military Rank: Member of the Imperial Battalion
10	Money: Wealthy

Skills

32	+4 HTH
3	Breakfall 12-
1	Computer Programming 8-
2	KS: V'hanian Military Science And Doctrine 11-
2	Navigation (Marine) 12-
2	PS: Sailor 11-
1	Systems Operation 8-
3	Tactics 12-
3	Teamwork 12-
2	WF: V'hanian Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 408

Total Cost: 879

400 Matching Complications (75)

10	Hunted: enemies of the V'hanian Empire (Infrequently, As Pow, Capture/Kill)
20	Psychological Complication: Loyal To Istvatha V'han (Common, Total)
15	Psychological Complication: Macho Warrior Code (see text; Common, Strong)
20	Social Complication: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)
20	Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Drugs/Chemicals/Poisons (Common)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 479

Quote: “Strength for the glory of the Empress!”

Powers/Tactics: Kharrl Korathon is the last existing member of the Korathon people, a species of superhumanly strong humanoids who once lived on a planet called Koratho. At a pinch he can lift up to 25 kilotons, and his punches are powerful enough to knock down buildings or affect nearly any foe. If he winds up, he can smash a target back through the air for many meters.

Kharrl's body is so tough and injury-resistant that just hitting it hurts most people. But that's not to say he doesn't have his weak points. First, he has no innate Mental Defense or Power Defense (he gets those from a force-field generated by a piece of the armor he wears, and can obtain more if he knows he'll need it) and no Flash Defense or extra senses (though again, he can get some goggles if he knows he's going to fight someone who uses a lot of Flashes). What may be worse, his high-paced Korathon metabolism makes him particularly vulnerable to drugs, poisons, and similar chemical attacks, a fact he and the Battalion work hard to keep secret.

In combat, Kharrl follows his warrior's code: he steps boldly forward and challenges the biggest, toughest-looking opponent (or possibly *multiple* opponents) to battle. He won't attack from surprise or take unfair advantage, a fact his commanders have to remember when assigning him to missions. The first time he Stuns a foe, he often steps back for a moment and lets him recover so the fight can proceed on a fair footing (second and later times just indicate that his opponent is weak and deserves to lose; he'll go on attacking in that case).

Campaign Use: Given his “macho warrior's code,” Kharrl makes a good adversary or rival for a similarly powerful Player Character — they might even come to respect one another even though circumstances force them to fight. That would upset V'han, but not enough for her to punish him. What's of more concern to her is the tiny possibility that a powerful mentalist could break his “brain-washing” and thus turn him into one of her greatest enemies. She tries not to send him on missions where he's likely to encounter people with strong psionic powers, but sometimes it's unavoidable.

If you need to make Kharrl more powerful, increase his Damage Reduction. To weaken him, remove his existing Damage Reduction and scale his STR back to the 80-90 range.

Appearance: Kharrl is a Korathon from Koratho, which means he's eight feet tall, superhumanly muscled, and has light blue-ish skin and dark blue hair cut short. His costume is a sort of modified version of the field uniform worn by D-Soldiers: grey pants with a wide dark blue belt with a large oval buckle with an alien letter on it (the V'hanian equivalent of K), dark blue kneepads, dark blue boots, and a dark blue shoulder/upper chest piece of armor (the rest of his chest, arms, hands, and head are bare).

TARGE

Background/History: Orgad is an Earth-like planet in a dimension that Istvatha V'han's ruled for centuries — so long that the Orgaddi have never known any other way of life and are eternally grateful for all the benefits the Empress bestows upon them. Among other things the Empire provides employment, directly or indirectly, for approximately 80% of the Orgaddi population — and even then, as longstanding imperial subjects of great loyalty, they don't have to work too hard most of the time. As a result, the Orgaddi have been able to channel a lot of their natural competitiveness and ambition into sports, games, and related leisure activities. In the past this drive resulted in almost constant warfare between the dozens of Orgaddi nations, but the Empire put a stop to that. Now the Orgaddi compete on the sporting field, not the battlefield.

The most prestigious and popular sport on Orgad is the use of the *telava*, or traditional fighting-shield, in personal combat and other competitions (such as throwing for accuracy and distance). The most prestigious Orgaddi tournament for this and other sports is the Pan-Orgad Games, their equivalent of the Olympics (but with even more cultural importance, fame, and money involved). And during the period Humanity refers to as “the 1990s,” one man dominated telava sports at this and every other competition: Jorren Werar.

Possessed of a competitive spirit the likes of which had rarely been seen even on Orgad, Werar trained constantly, pushing himself to heights of fitness and skill never before achieved by any Orgaddi. As a result he won the telava tournament at the Pan-Orgad Games an unprecedented eight years in a row, more than doubling the previous record. This made him one of the most famous and wealthy individuals on the planet...

...and he gave it all up to enter military service. A devoted, some would say fanatical, V'hanian patriot, Werar felt he'd achieved all he wanted to in the arena and that it was now his civic duty to give something back to the Empire that had nurtured and supported him. Recognizing the value of his skills, V'han's drill sergeants took him out of basic military training and put him into the Imperial Battalion. Military scientists designed some special telavaa for him that served as super-powerful weapons and provided him with a battlesuit for protection. After training with his new equipment to ensure he wouldn't suffer any loss of ability, Werar began field duty with the Battalion as *Targe*.

TARGE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH damage [2]
20	DEX	20	13-	
20	CON	10	13-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
20	EGO	10	13-	
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
10	OCV	35		
10	DCV	35		
3	OMCV	0		
7	DMCV	12		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	PD	6		Total: 23 PD (15 rPD)
8	ED	6		Total: 23 ED (15 rED)
10	REC	6		
70	END	10		
15	BODY	5		
60	STUN	20		
Total Characteristics Cost: 240				

Movement:	Running:	20m
	Swimming:	6m
	Leaping:	10m/30m

Cost Powers
END

50	Orgaddi Throwing Shield: Multipower, 100-point reserve All OAF (-1), Lockout (cannot combine some effects when using both shields, see text; -0)	
13f	1) Protection: Resistant Protection (20 PD/20 ED) Hardened (+1/4), Impenetrable (+1/4); OAF (-1), Nonpersistent (-1/4), Requires A Use Orgaddi Throwing Shield Roll (no Active Point penalty; -0)	0
1f	2) Thrown Shield Blocks Attacks: Deflection OAF (-1), Lockout (cannot use other Multipower slots while using this one, and not until thrown shield is retrieved; -1/2), Requires A Use Orgaddi Throwing Shield Roll (no Active Point penalty; -0)	2
1f	3) Shield-Bash: HA +6d6 OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-1/4)	3
1f	4) Shield Edge-Blades: HKA 1d6 (2d6+1 with STR) OAF (-1)	1
1f	5) Thrown Shield I: Blast 10d6 OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1/4), Lockout (cannot use Multipower until shield is retrieved; -1/2), Range Based On STR (-1/4), Requires A Use Orgaddi Throwing Shield Roll (no Active Point penalty; -0)	5

Quote: "You may be able to lift buildings — but with skill and determination a fighter like me can overcome even the most powerful opponent."

2f	6) Thrown Shield II: Blast 10d6	9
	Area Of Effect (40m Line; +3/4); OAF (-1), Lockout (cannot use Multipower until shield is retrieved; -1/2), No Range (-1/2), Requires A Use Orgaddi Throwing Shield Roll (no Active Point penalty; -0), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1/4)	
2f	7) Thrown Shield III: Blast 10d6	10
	Area Of Effect (16m Radius Selective; +1); OAF (-1), Lockout (cannot use Multipower until shield is retrieved; -1/2), Range Based On STR (-1/4), Requires A Use Orgaddi Throwing Shield Roll (-1 per 20 Active Points; -1/4), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1/4)	
1f	8) Thrown Shield With Extended Blades: HKA 1d6 (plus STR)	2
	Range Based On STR (+1/4); OAF (-1), Lockout (cannot use Multipower until shield is retrieved; -1/2), Requires A Use Orgaddi Throwing Shield Roll (no Active Point penalty; -0), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1/4)	
1f	9) Cover Your Eyes! : Sight Group Flash Defense (20 points)	0
	Hardened (+1/4); OAF (-1), Activation Roll 14- (-1/4), Nonpersistent (-1/4), Lockout (cannot use other Multipower slots while using this one; -1/2)	
5	Orgaddi Throwing Shield: another Throwing Shield (total of 2)	var
30	Battlesuit Gauntlets: Multipower, 45-point reserve All OIF (-1/2)	
1f	1) Metal Gauntlets: HA +3d6 Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); OIF (-1/2), Lockout (cannot be combined with Shields' HA; -1/2)	0
2f	2) Magnetic Attractors: Telekinesis (20 STR) Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); OIF (-1/2), Affects Whole Object (-1/4), Only Works On Ferrous Metal Objects (-1/2), Only To Pull Objects Toward User (-1/2)	0
30	Battlesuit: Resistant Protection (15 PD/15 ED) OIF (-1/2)	0
7	Helmet: Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points) OIF (-1/2)	0
3	Helmet: Hearing Group Flash Defense (5 points) OIF (-1/2)	0
8	Helmet: Mental Defense (12 points) OIF (-1/2)	0
7	Battlesuit: Power Defense (10 points) OIF (-1/2)	0
8	Fast Runner: Running +8m (20m total)	1
1	Fast Swimmer: Swimming +2m (6m total)	1
3	Strong Leaper: Leaping +6m (10m forward, 5m upward)	1
10	Jump-Jet Boots: Leaping +20m (30m forward, 15m upward) Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); OIF (-1/2)	0
13	Imperial Battalion Communicator: HRRP (Radio Group), Dimensional OIF (-1/2), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-1/2)	0

Personality/Motivation: Targe is one of the most driven, motivated people the PCs are ever likely to meet. Earlier in life, when he was just an athlete, what drove him was the desire to win — to be acknowledged the best by everyone. Now that's still a strong part of his motivation (he *hates* to be

outdone at anything by anyone), but coupled with it is a strong strain of what amounts to an inferiority complex. Targe looks around himself at some of his fellow Battalioneers, men like Kharrl Korathon and Abraxas whose power and ability he can never hope to match, and he subconsciously thinks to

himself, "Why am I here? What do I have to offer?". Rather than dare to ask himself that directly and deal with it through therapy, he pushes himself to train *more*, to become *better*, to do whatever he must to measure up — and that includes taking foolish risks in combat to prove that he's worthy to be a Battalioneer. One of these days his unspoken desire to be the best, or at least to think of himself as an equal, may push him that one final step too far.

Perks

- 8 Fringe Benefit: Military Rank: Member of the Imperial Battalion
- 10 Money: Wealthy

Talents

- 15 Combat Sense 13-

Skills

- 80 +8 with All Combat
- 12 +2 with Agility Skills
- 3 Acrobatics 13-
- 3 Analyze Combat Technique 13-
- 3 Analyze Superpowers 13-
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 Climbing 13-
- 1 Computer Programming 8-
- 3 Criminology 13-
- 1 Cryptography 13-
- 3 Deduction 13-
- 3 Demolitions 13-
- 2 Electronics 10-
- 3 Forensic Medicine 13-
- 3 KS: Humanity 13-
- 3 KS: Superhumans Of Earth 13-
- 3 KS: Superpowers 13-
- 3 KS: Supervillains And Notorious Criminals Of The V'harian Empire 13-
- 3 KS: V'harian Military Science And Doctrine 13-
- 3 Lockpicking 13-
- 2 Mechanics 10-
- 17 Power: Use Orgaddi Throwing Shield 20-
- 3 Security Systems 13-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 1 Systems Operation 8-
- 3 Tactics 13-
- 3 Teamwork 13-
- 5 WF: Orgaddi Common Melee Weapons, Orgaddi Throwing Shield, V'harian Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 412

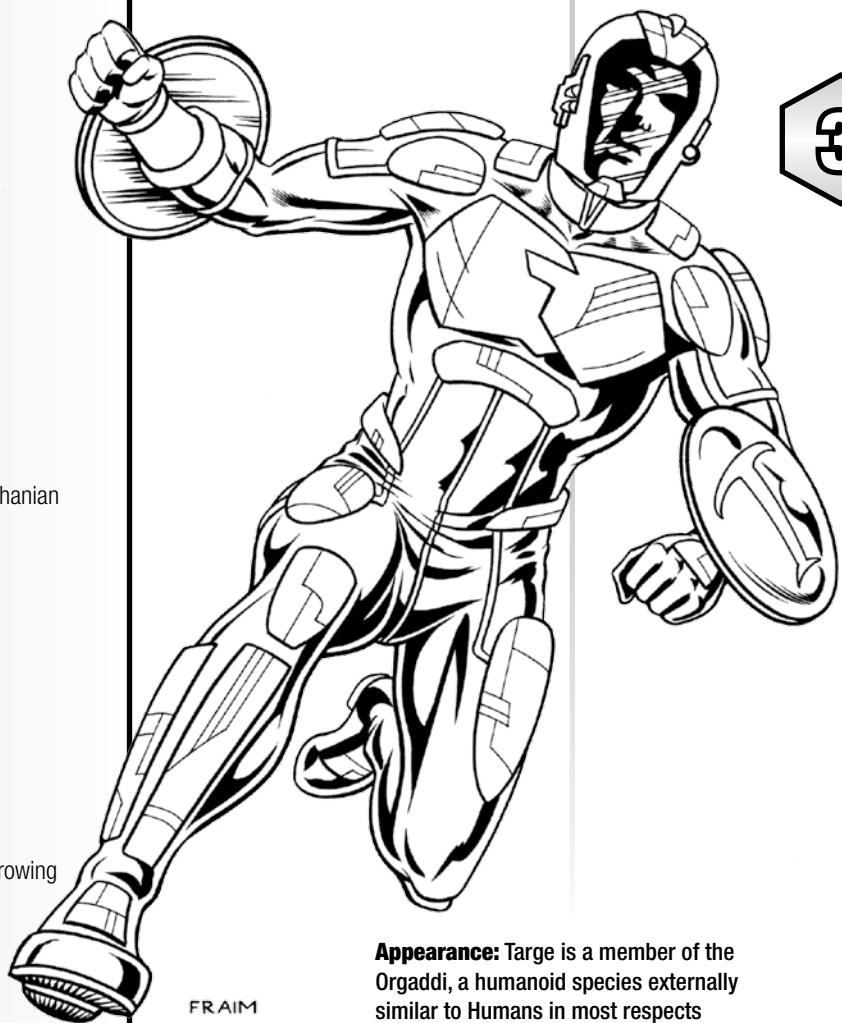
Total Cost: 652

400 Matching Complications (75)

- 10 **Hunted:** enemies of the V'harian Empire (Infrequently, As Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 20 **Psychological Complication:** V'harian Patriot (Common, Total)
- 15 **Psychological Complication:** Has To Be The Best; Keeps Striving Until He Proves Himself (Common, Strong)
- 20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 65

Experience Points: 262



Appearance: Targe is a member of the Orgaddi, a humanoid species externally similar to Humans in most respects (though the prevalent eye and hair colors are different). His costume is a form-fitting battlesuit that's mostly silver-colored with some green panels and highlights, plus a high-tech silver helmet that conceals his face. On each forearm he wears a small, round metal shield (each one is a little over a foot in diameter); he uses these as both throwing and melee weapons. Painted on each shield is a stylized T.

Powers/Tactics: Targe is an expert at the use of the *telava*, the traditional Orgaddi fighting-shield, which functions as a weapon as well as a form of protection. In addition to being used to bash and smash, in the hands of a trained warrior it can be thrown. Targe's shields are special high-tech versions of the traditional shield; they're tougher and have blades that pop out of the edges. When he throws one, he either uses a Combat Skill Level to Bounce it back to him, or he retrieves it later by hand or with the Magnetic Attractors built into his gauntlets.

With his 8 Combat Skill Levels with All Combat, Targe in effect has a "CSL Martial Art" as discussed on HSMA 109 (though of course he can't apply those Levels to, say, Grab, given the nature of the weapons in question). However, note that even though he has two shields he can't always "combine" their effects. For example, he can't use Slot #1 in both Multipowers to gain a total of Resistant Protection (40 PD/40 ED); all he can get from using them is 20 defense. Similarly, he can't add the HAs +6d6 together to get +12d6; he can only get +6d6 from using the shields.

Since he often finds himself fighting people with far more raw power than he, Targe has trained himself to analyze the combat techniques and powers of his foes. He often spends the first few Phases of a combat fighting defensively, studying them and looking for the opportunity to make an Analyze Skill Roll to detect a weakness, a pattern in his opponent's fighting, or the like. Then he can counterattack more effectively than normal.

Istvatha V'han has given Targe a special assignment: he's to become one of her experts on Humanity and Earth, in preparation for her next attempt at invading Earth's dimension. He hasn't achieved a true depth of knowledge yet, but he's become well-versed on the subject of Humanity in general (and super-Humans in particular). He's more likely than most other Battalioneers to recognize the PCs, know what powers they have, and have formulated a plan for dealing with them.

Campaign Use: As one of V'han's experts on Earth, Targe may know of the PCs, making him a natural candidate to fight them or engage in "first contact." The Empress might even send him to Earth to infiltrate the Superhuman World, study it, and devise ways to weaken or attack it.

To make Targe tougher, assume he's been subjected to super-science treatments that raise his STR, DEX, and other main Characteristics to 25, 30, or more. To weaken him, remove his second shield and reduce his CSLs with All Combat to 4.

VECTRON

Background/History: The world Ka'lek and its dimension have belonged to the V'hanian Empire for a little under two centuries. The Ka'lek'ta are a quasi-humanoid species among whom superpowers are rare, but possible. Ka'lek'ta soldiers are valued for their discipline and efficiency (the Ka'lek'ta being notably "humorless" and logical compared to most sentient species).

The Ka'lek'ta Blood'an-7 manifested mutant powers of teleportation and energy projection shortly after he underwent the Rite of Passage to Adulthood. He basically grew up in the military, with drill sergeants for parents and commanding officers telling him what to do every day. But he didn't mind, since Ka'lek'ta culture is itself group-oriented, and has gone on to become a valued member of the Imperial Battalion under the code-name *Vectron*.

Personality/Motivation: Vectron spent his semi-mindless early childhood in a regular Ka'lek'ta home, but his formative adolescent years in the imperial military, and that's shaped his outlook on everything. Not only is he a staunch patriot of the "my country, right or wrong" variety, but he views every situation from a military perspective. Something's causing trouble? Pacify it or blow it up? Riots slowing down trade in the capital city? Send in the troops. He thinks (and acts) in an aggressive, straightforward manner, which tends to make him predictable in combat.

Quote: "Overwhelming force in this situation is ours. Two options are yours: surrender to the lawful authority of the V'hanian Empire; or destruction."

Powers/Tactics: Vectron has two interrelated mutant powers. The first is teleportation; he can teleport over distances of as much as 20 kilometers, and even carry others with him on short "jumps." The second is the power to "charge up" his body's bio-electric field so that it becomes powerful enough to project electrical blasts. Through biological and neurological mechanisms not clearly understood by V'hanian scientists, Vectron's teleportation somehow charges up his body until it can do this.

Here's how the GM should handle this in game terms. Every time Vectron uses Teleportation, he gets to "roll" Aid Endurance 1d6 for every full 4m of Teleportation he uses. The Standard Effect Rule applies, so each die comes up 3. Since the effect is halved (and rounded in his favor), that means 2 Character Points of Aid to the END of his Endurance Reserve per d6 rolled — 10 END. That END fades at the rate of 5 END per minute, but of course is likely to be used up before then. In the interest of smooth game play, it may be easier to ignore the fade rate and just keep adding END at the rate of 10 per 4m Teleported until he reaches his maximum (20 points of effect, or 100 END). If he reaches maximum, he's "topped out" until he uses some, at which point he can add more END.

Since his Endurance Reserve only starts out with 12 END, Vectron often spends a Phase or two at the

VECTRON

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
23	DEX	26	14-	
22	CON	12	13-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
15	EGO	5	12-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
8	OCV	25		
9	DCV	30		
3	OMCV	0		
5	DMCV	6		
6	SPD	40		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
8	PD	6		Total: 28 PD (20 rPD)
12	ED	10		Total: 32 ED (20 rED)
10	REC	6		
60	END	8		
10	BODY	0		
48	STUN	14		Total Characteristics Cost: 211

Movement: Running: 12m
Teleportation: 40m

Cost	Powers	END
75	Bio-Electric Blasts: Multipower, 75-point reserve (all slots draw END from Endurance Reserve)	
7f	1) Bio-Blast: Blast 15d6	7
7f	2) Lightning Cone: Blast 10d6 Area Of Effect (16m Cone; +1/2)	7
3f	3) Intense Bioelectric Charge: RKA 3d6 Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -1/2)	8
5	Internal Power: Endurance Reserve (12 END, 3 REC)	0
93	Teleportation Fueling: Aid Endurance 10d6 (see text) Delayed Return Rate (points fade at the rate of 5 per Minute; +1), Trigger (when Vectron uses Teleportation, activating Trigger takes no time, Trigger immediately automatically resets; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); Only Aids Endurance Reserve END (-1), Proportional Gain (amount of Aid gained depends on amount of Teleportation used, see text; -1/4)	0
40	Teleportation Powers: Multipower, 40-point reserve (all slots draw END from personal END)	
4f	1) Basic Teleportation: Teleportation 40m	4
4f	2) Courier Teleportation: Teleportation 20m Position Shift, x8 mass	4
4f	3) Long-Range Teleportation: Teleportation 20m MegaScale (1m = 1 km; +1)	4
3f	4) Focused Teleportation: Teleportation 20m Armor Piercing (x2; +1/2)	3
3f	5) Blink Teleport: +8 DCV Costs Endurance (-1/2)	4

40 **Force-Field Belt:** Resistant Protection (20 PD/20 ED) 0

OIF (-1/2)

5 **Ka'lek'ta Eye:** Infrared Perception (Sight Group) 0

15 **Imperial Battalion Communicator:** HRRP (Radio Group), Dimensional 0

IIF (-1/4), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-1/2)

5 **Ka'lek'ta Legs:** Extra Limbs (2) 0
Inherent (+1/4); Limited Manipulation (-1/4)

Perks

8 Fringe Benefit: Military Rank: Member of the Imperial Battalion

10 Money: Wealthy

Talents

Absolute Range Sense

Skills

+3 with Bio-Electric Blasts Multipower

3 Breakfall 14-

3 Climbing 14-

3 KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 13-

3 KS: V'harian Military Science And Doctrine 13-

3 Stealth 14-

3 Tactics 13-

3 Teamwork 14-

2 WF: V'harian Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 366

Total Cost: 577

400 Matching Complications (75)

10 **Distinctive Features:** Ka'lek'ta Mutant (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)

10 **Hunted:** enemies of the V'harian Empire (Infrequently, As Pow, Capture/Kill)

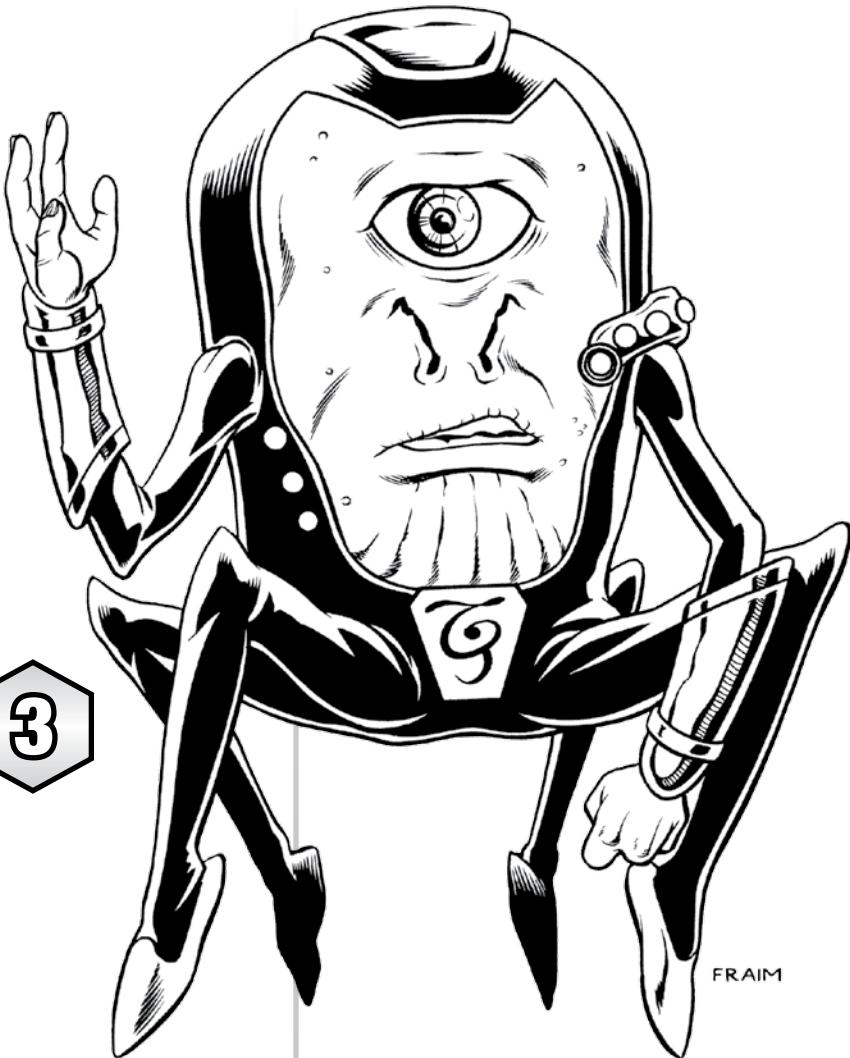
15 **Psychological Complication:** V'harian Patriot (Common, Strong)

10 **Psychological Complication:** Always Looks For The Military Solution (Common, Moderate)

20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 65

Experience Points: 187



start of a combat making Full Moves with Teleportation to build up his energy reserves. Then he's ready to let his bio-electric blasts rip!

Campaign Use: Vectron is a classic example of someone the PCs will meet frequently if they fight Istvatha V'han for long: the gung-ho military patriot. Her legions are filled with them; in some times and places, holding back the enthusiastic soldiers is one of the hardest parts of the commander's job.

To make Vectron more powerful, increase the base END of his Endurance Reserve, and/or increase his SPD to 7-8 (and perhaps give him some "teleportation tricks" to emphasize his speedster nature). To weaken him, decrease his Aid to 5d6.

Appearance: Vectron is a member of the Ka'lek'ta, a squat, four-legged, neckless species with one large eye. He wears a royal blue full-body suit that leaves his face exposed, plus large gold bracers on his wrists.

OTHER BATTALIONEERS

Since Istvatha V'han has thousands of super-powered soldiers at her command (not to mention the potential of multiple versions of the same character, as discussed on page 6), the six Battalioneers described above are far from the only ones the PCs might encounter in their struggle against the Empress. The easiest way to create new Battalioneers is to take a character from *Champions Villains* or some other sourcebook and change his name and appearance (and perhaps the special effects of his powers). Here's a list of Battalioneers based on the villains in CV2 and CV3:

The Overbrain: Brainburn, the living brain of a psionic Battalioneer whose body was destroyed by an enemy weapon.

Ape-Plus: Borgus, a member of an ape-like species granted high intelligence by an experiment gone awry.

Black Mist: Sorrag Lah, master of his peoples' fighting arts and stealth skills.

Lynx: Verreka (named after a lynx-like cat native to the planet Orlith VII).

Mr. Zombie: Unstoppable, a golem-like being created in an irreproducible laboratory project.

Archdruid Airetach: The Weaver, mystic master of knot-based magics and related spells.

Martika Duquesne: Creona Blight, a minor mystic.

Roger Duquesne: Creona's long-suffering husband Dokar, who wields an enchanted axe and knows a few spells.

Amnesia: Mnemosyne, a mentalist who can control and alter memories.

Cauldron: Red Dragon, who can breathe fire and smoke.

Flow: FlexiBull, a malleable mutant from a bovinoid species.

Minimax: Psizer, a telekinetic who can mentally alter the size of objects.

Bobby Holmes: Thucho Saa'ren, who can create a "telekinetic duplicate" of himself.

Dreadnaught: SteelMan, a being of living metal.

Morgaine the Mystic: Shirana the Sorceress, a mystic specializing in elemental magics.

Starflare: Brightstar, an energy projector.

Tiger Lily: Jritha Jahar, a martial artist from a feline species.

Warhammer: Battlemaster, a powered armor wearer.

Dark Seraph: Demonic, an infernal-looking superhuman whose heroic nature belies his evil appearance.

Bloodstone: Incarnadine, a biokinetic with control over blood.

Eclipse: Blackout, a darkness controller.

Force: Auron, a force controller whose powers manifest as a form of golden energy/matter.

Phoenix: Corona, a supervillainess who has fire and light powers.

Tremblor: Faultline, an earth controller.

Requiem: Dirge, a criminally-inclined superhuman with sonic powers, who'd rather not be in the Battalion but is forced into service by threat of death.

Frost: Blizzard, Dirge's frost-manipulating and like-minded brother.

The Demonologist: Infernus Princeps, a mystic specializing in conjuration.

Golem: The Living Statue, a disembodied being who can take control of statues.

Gyre: Spiralle, a wizardess whose spells involve magic circles and spheres.

Kapilasa: Parandu Vaa, a mystic from a grey-skinned humanoid species.

Tartarus: Diabolus, a humanoid who can assume demonic form for short periods.

Vilsimbra: Simbara, a humanoid who's mistress of her species's magics.

Fiacho: Torgon, a cybernetically-enhanced martial artist who also uses special weapons.

Durak: Tomboy, a superstrong villainess with a chip on her shoulder.

Feuermacher: Firefiend, a fire controller.

Mentalla: Psionica, a mentalist.

Pantera: Cougrrrl, a beast-woman.

Scorpia: Stinger, a martial artist who also wields poisoned weapons.

Ultrasonique: Sergeant Sound, a villain who uses sonic-based weapons and gadgets.

Der Westgote: Hrokt Dethen, a superstrong humanoid with burnt orange-colored skin.

The Fiend: The Torturer, a sadistic pain manipulator.

Morticus: Lord Lightning, who wears a suit of powered armor with electricity weapons.

Black Diamond: Ebon Avenger, a superstrong heroine.

Bluejay: Lady Peregrine, who wears a battlesuit that allows her to fly and is equipped with several weapons.

Cheshire Cat: Sidestep, a teleporting martial artist.

Hummingbird: Tina Tiny, a superheroine with shrinking powers.

Stareye: Stargazer, an energy projector.

Piledriver: Sunstroke, a solar-powered "brick."

The Cahokian: Black Sagittarius, a skilled archer with a super-tech crossbow and gimmicked bolts.

Psimon: Psykon, a powerful mentalist and psychokinetic.

Medusa: Gorgon, a psychokinetic who specializes in paralyzing her opponents.

Mind Slayer: Psykara, a psychokinetic and Psykon's sister.

Deuce: DT (for "Double Trouble"), who has the ability to separate her shadow from herself; both selves have mental powers.

Hypnos: Mesmeros, a mentalist specializing in mental control.

Soulfire: Pyrok, a powerful pyrokinetic.

The Soviet Guard: Crimson Guardian, a "brick" with combat training and a few gadgets.

Drago: Silence, a mute weaponmaster specializing in firearms; has also been enhanced with low-level superstrength.

Hammer: Smasher, a superheroine with a "hammer-gauntlet."

Red Dawn: Megatron VII, a powered armor wearer.

Sickle: Scythe, a weaponmaster who wields twin super-tech sickles.

White Wolf: Snow Wolf, a seductive female lycanthrope.

Smoke: Fuma, an Italian darkness manipulator.

Mirrors: Rifletta, an Italian illusionist and Fuma's sister.

Patriarch: Doctor Sylvestri, a powerful mystic who's made pacts with several powerful spirits.

Astralle: Astromancer, a mystic who focuses on celestial and planetary magics.

Cornelius Liefeld: The Green Lion, a mystic hero with alchemy powers.

Bocal Mcfarlane: Draconic, a man-dragon hybrid created by magic.

Graniteman: Stoneface, a superstrong hero made of stone.

Red Bullet: The Bronze Blur, a speedster.

Summer Cloud: TornadoMan, who has power over air/wind (and also some whirling powers).

Technocrat: The Technician, a gadgeteer.

Winter Dragon: Frost Dragon, an ice/cold manipulator.

Binder: Tangler, a weaponmaster whose weapons use super-tech glue to trap his foes.

Blackstar: Whitestar, a density-controlling "brick."

Cyclone: Sky Sentinel, a powered armor hero specializing in high-speed flight and maneuvering.

Orion: Arcturus, an energy projector.

Slick: SlipSlide, a devil-may-care friction controller.

Thunderbolt: Thunderstorm, an electricity manipulator.

Adrian Vandaleur: Doctor Vandaleur, a powerful mystic and patriarch of a family of mystics.

Eduard Vandaleur: The Thaumaturge, a mystic with a limited selection of very powerful spells.

Anais Vandaleur: The Sorceress, wife of the Thaumaturge and similarly powered.

Chatoyant: Jaguar, a mystic with astral projection powers.

Tobias "The Toad" Vandaleur: The Toad, an ugly mage with a wide variety of non-combat spells.

Alchemica: Transforma, whose mutant powers of transformation are enhanced by a unique super-tech device.

Ambush: The Messenger, a low-powered teleporter who's usually assigned to courier or scouting duties.

Ankylosaur: Vlorgak, who wears a suit of powered armor based on a powerful extinct creature native to the planet Menkara IV in the dimension Yoron.

Anubis: Chesaro, the incarnation of the death-god of the Unagi people of the planet Ethamon in the dimension Perrax.

Arachne: The Silver Spider, a highly-trained athlete and martial artist with spider-themed weapons and gadgets.

Armadillo: Loronk, a powered armor wearer whose suit (and its powers) are partly inspired by the *loronk*, a burrowing mammal from the planet Belbara Secundus in the dimension Olekka.

Arrowhead: Goldbow, a skilled archer with super-tech arrows.

Automaton: Virus, sentient software who infiltrates the computers of V'han's enemies.

The Basilisk: Theskaro, a reptilian villain with petrification powers, named after a mythic creature referred to in stories told on the planet Reladu in the dimension Earth-845.

Baykok: Karnarond, a death-spirit created by the legends of the Pewacha people of the planet Gerada III in the dimension Tollek.

Black Fang: White Fang, a lycanthrope and sometimes lover of Snow Wolf (see above).

Blackguard: Brawler, a low-level "brick" and martial artist.

Black Harlequin: Clever Johnny, a highly-skilled but somewhat mentally unbalanced espionage agent whose weapons and gadgets often resemble toys.

Black Paladin: Silver Paladin, a man from Earth-84 who's possessed by the spirit of a valorous medieval knight and wields that knight's mystical weapons.

Bloodrage: Berzerk, a rage-controlling mutant.

Blowtorch: Incendiary, a hero equipped with various flame-based weapons.

Brainchild: Brainpower, a mentalist and gadgeteer.

Josiah Brimstone: Josephus Gaunt, a mystic who specializes in acquiring and safekeeping dangerous enchanted items and summoned beings and finding ways to put them to heroic use.

Bromion: As a cosmic being Bromion doesn't really have "duplicates" or alternate versions from other dimensions, but beings from different realities may perceive him different ways and/or have other names for him.

Bulldozer: Earthmover, a "brick" who's full of bragadocio but has the skills and "brick tricks" to back up his trash talk.

Buzzsaw: Sawbones, a mutant doctor with some unusual weapons.

Cadaver: Scavenger, a semi-living being who can graft others' body parts onto his own body.

Cairngorm: Steinzauberer, a mystic specializing in Earth-related spells.

Captain Chronos: The Timekeeper, who helps the Empress keep track of the effects of her time travel.

Cateran: Red Meg, a fiery-haired, fiery-tempered immortal Scottish warrior-woman from Earth-922.

The Curse: Kephren-Taa, an undead pharaoh who must in unlifce perform good deeds to compensate for the many cruelties he inflicted on the world when he was alive.

Cybermind: Cybandit, a notorious hacker forced to join the Battalion on pain of having himself and his entire family thrown into jail to pay for his crimes.

Deadman Walkin': Mortuus, an undead D-Soldier who continues to serve his Empress.

Devastator: Ironside, a powered armor wearer.

Doctor Teneber: Doctor Lux, a mystic specializing in Life Magic and Light Magic spells.

Double Dealer: The Two-Blade Kid, a skilled knife-fighter.

Dragonfly: Kshrax, greatest living hero of an insectoid species from the dimension Jutaa.

Dreamwitch: Morphea, mistress of sleep and dream magics.

Eclipsar: Nightwave, a powerful darkness controller.

Eclipse: Copycat, who has the ability to steal superpowers from other superhumans; commanders often deploy her against "heroes" who invade the Empire, sometimes by having her pose as a captive who wants to "join" them.

The Engineer: Psiborg, a human/robot hybrid with cyberkinetic powers, superstrength, and various other abilities.

Entropy: The Barrister, a manifestation of the power of Order and Law.

Esper: Cerebra, a mentalist superheroine.

Evil Eye: Eyebeam, a telekinetic whose beams of power emerge from his eyes.

Exo: X.O., a V'hanian military officer now irreversibly welded into a super-tech exo-skeleton; due to his tactical skills and experience he's often put in command of super-squads.

Fenris: Wolfen, a human with wolf powers and artificial claws.

Firewing: Firehawk, the only surviving Malvan of Earth-374, possessed of vast fire powers that embody the spirit of his species.

Fleshtone: The Sculptor, a biokinetic able to shape and mold flesh.

Foxbat: Change Foxbat? Sh'ya, right. Why would anyone want to change the greatest supervill... err, hero ever?

Frag: Shatter, a mutant with the ability to break things and injure people just by touching them.

Freakshow: Captain Fear, only survivor of a superhuman soldier program designed not only to augment him physically, but to give him the power to inspire fear in the enemy.

Galaxia: Solarion, a powerful mutant energy projector.

Galeforce: Windy, a young mutant with power over air and wind.

Gargantua: The Crimson Colossus, one of the few surviving members of the Vorban (a species of red-skinned humanoids), who has the mutant power to grow to tremendous heights.

Gauntlet: Powerfist, whose super-tech gauntlets have all sorts of built-in weapons.

Geos: Steron Todorgan, a mutant with power over stone and earth.

Geothermal: LavaMan, master of magma!

Glacier: Icestorm, a monstrously large mutant with ice/cold powers.

Green Dragon: Crobar af Pelim, the greatest martial artist of the Xeshtar species.

Grenadier: Bombardier, a gadgeteer with a wide variety of explosive missile weapons.

Grond: Gronk, a highly-intelligent, four-armed “brick” from a distant planet in the dimension Qorvad.

Grotesk: Masque, a superstrong hero who wears a mask to hide his incredibly ugly face.

Harpy: Griffin Girl, who has the ability to change into a woman-griffin hybrid.

Hazard: Hard Luck, a skilled D-Soldier with astoundingly good luck.

Hell Rider: Heavensent, a woman gifted with angelic powers she’s driven to use to combat evil and injustice.

Herculan: Gameshtar, a Fassai from the dimension Earth-73, with metabolism-draining powers and superstrength.

Hornet: EntoMaster, the Insect-Powered Man!

Howler: Primal Scream, a woman with powerful sonic abilities.

Hurricane: Typhoon, who has both wind and water powers.

Incubus: Doctor Raven, who has powers of shapechanging, illusion, and trickery.

Jade Phoenix: Tala Huban, master of dozens of martial arts styles.

Kanrok the Acquisitioner: Shackle, a superhuman expert at capturing/subduing other superhumans; the Empress often assigns him to bring in renegade or villainous supers.

Lady Blue: Lady Sapphire, a loyal supporter of V’han’s regime, who wears a force-manipulating battlesuit.

Lamplighter: Ch’wauchu, a mystic who specializes in magics related to the soul, spirit, and life energy; he’s a strange, sadistic man who has to be watched carefully by his commanding officers.

Lash: The Scarlet Lash, who wields a super-tech whip.

Lazer: Broathen Genshawkirio, sometimes described as “the D-Soldier’s D-Soldier,” who’s equipped with some of the most advanced personal military technology available in the Empire.

Leech: D’gwushaaj’ch’taa, a mutant member of a dwarfish, semi-sentient, parasitic species that drains the life essence from living beings for sustenance.

Leviathan: Orell Rhan Tengarri, a sophisticated, highly-educated member of a water-dwelling sentient species who gained superstrength and other abilities due to a strange laboratory accident.

Li Chun the Destroyer: Kor Ronn, a mystic martial artist who claims to possess the power of “a thousand angels” who live within him.

The Living Sphinx: “Sammy,” a semi-sentient, monstrous life-form from the planet Stordan in the dimension Alaqrion; specially-trained D-Soldiers serve as his handlers, and he has a dog-like loyalty to a few Battalioneers.

Lodestone: Magnon, who controls and manipulates magnetism.

Mantara: Sheerala Nu’to, one of the most skilled members of the Hostile Environment Legion, who’s been given special equipment that allows her to be an expert underwater operative and combatant.

Mantisman: Iron Mantis, who wears a suit of insect-themed powered armor.

Masquerade: The Living Legion, a spy who can assume any humanoid form (making him/her/it one of the Imperial Legion’s most valued spies and infiltrators).

Mechassassin: Loku Geren, a former mercenary who was “persuaded” to join the Battalions. He uses several advanced energy weapons and other devices of his own design.

Megavolt: Gigawatt, an electricity projector/controller.

Menagerie: Zoon, who has the power to change shape into various animals.

Mindgame: Master Mind, a powerful psionic.

Mirage: Sleight, a master of misdirection and illusion who’s often assigned to create large-scale deceptions to fool enemy armies.

The Monster: Claw, a barely controllable, murderous lab experiment who’s widely (and rightly) feared by the Empire’s enemies.

Morningstar: Smasher, an enormous, superstrong brute who wields a ball and chain as a weapon.

Morph: Myriad, a master shapechanger and one of the Empire’s most valuable superhuman assets.

Mother Gothel: The Gingerbread Lady, a strange but sometimes powerful witch.

Nebula: The Warden, who has the power to teleport people to any of V'han's prison-planets.

Ogre: Orfath Clar, a superstrong but somewhat dimwitted soldier.

Onslaught: Bruiser, a low-level "brick."

Photon: Photonic, a being of light accidentally trapped in a solid body.

Plague: Eppie Demic, a strange girl with disease control powers.

Pulsar: Captain Quasar, an energy projector.

Python: Mister Constrictor, a member of a serpentoïd species who has superhuman strength and low-level stretching powers.

Reaper: The Cold Hand, a scythe-wielding mystic being who claims to embody the "essence of Death."

Ricochet: Rebound, a kinetic energy controller.

Riptide: Undertow, a water controller who can convert his entire body into water if necessary.

El Salto: Señor Rana, the high-leaping acrobatic adventurer with the good looks and panache to drive the women crazy with desire!

Samhain: The Antler-Crowned King, supreme nature spirit of Earth-718 and a protector of nature on all worlds.

Sargon: TREGOS, a powered armor wearer.

Scimitar: Tulwar, an Indian weaponmaster with a razor-sharp questionite sword.

Shadowdragon: Dragondark, a martial artist with shadow control powers.

Shrinker: Miss Molecule, the Multiverse's tiniest woman!

Signal Ghost: Software Specter, a gadgeteer whose devices allow him to fly and become intangible (among other things).

Snowblind: Frostbite, a young female ice/cold controller with a wicked sense of humor.

Spektr: Spectro, a hero with vast energy powers.

Spirit Fist: Ghost Fist, a mystic martial artist.

Stalker: The Night Watcher, a self-willed, heroic vampire.

Steel Commando: Steel Centurion, a super-soldier who wears light powered armor and uses advanced energy weapons.

Stiletto: Poniard, a dagger-wielding weaponmaster.

Stingray: Tethys, a swimming speedster who can also manifest the powers of nearly any oceanic creature (including shapechanging into them), and who claims to be the living incarnation of the sea-goddess of the Helarian people of the planet Sudatho V in the dimension Transhormi.

Stormfront: Stormsurge, a weather controller.

Sunspot: Sunflare, whose energy projection powers depend in part on his exposure to stellar energies.

Syzygy: O.R.B.I.T., the Omniversal Robot for Battle, Intelligence-gathering, and Technology, a sophisticated sentient robot with several sphere-shaped "helpers."

Tachyon: Gorthoz ki Othemm, a superstrong teleporter.

Taipan: Venomous, a super-fast, highly-skilled assassin specializing in killing superpowered enemies of the Empire.

Talisman: Lady Arcane, a super-mystic known for her flirtatious manner.

Wayland Talos: Ukmaro re'Tashi, a skilled gadgeteer who spends most of his time building (or repairing) gadgets for other Battalioneers.

Terrayne: Rockslide, a being made of stone who claims to be an earth elemental trapped in the material world.

Thorn: Briar Scarlet, mistress of plant powers!

Thunderbird: Captain Falcon, a highly-skilled D-Soldier from a species of heavyworlders who wields advanced energy weapons and has other gadgets. He specializes in killing superhumans and is often teamed with Venomous and/or Trickshot.

Thunderbolt: Diesel, a superstrong speedster

Timelapse: Timeframe, a time manipulator who has the power to age people or things.

Turs Al-sh'ab: Larem'do Q'Ratha, a crude, super-strong brawler.

Utility: Trickshot, a highly-trained, gadget-equipped humanoid who specializes in defeating superhuman opponents.

Valak the World-Ravager: K'aval the Mighty, a nigh-cosmic being kept under tight control through V'hanian mind control technology reinforced by periodic mind control sessions with various psionic Battalioneers.

Vector: Warp, a powerful speedster.

Vesper: Tairon g'Lethar, a humanoid-bat being.

Vibron: Shiver, a vibration-controlling character with some minor fear creation powers as well.

Vixen: Apparition, a super-skilled thief with the ability to become intangible for short periods of time.

White Rhino: Black Rhino, a superstrong rhinoceros-man hybrid.

Wildeye: Beastling, a short but vicious animal-man.

Witchfinder: The Grey Hunter, a detective and assassin who specialized in finding and killing mystics.

Zephyr: Sirocco Siren, a wind controller.

Zigzag: Turnabout, a malleable/stretching hero.

Zorran the Artificer: Ronzan the Renegade, a powerful mystic who specializes in the creation of enchanted items.

THE IMPERIAL LEGIONS

Istvatha V'han maintains a military, known collectively as the *Imperial Legions*, numbering in the trillions (with many times that number in the supporting bureaucracy). Since her desire to conquer more and more dimensions is never quenched, the V'hanian Empire is always to some extent on a “war footing,” with the military commanding a large share of imperial resources and attention. When a major war’s brewing with Tyrannon, Skarn, or some other foe, the war footing becomes more intense; during periods of consolidation it ebbs to its lowest points. But at no time does it ever vanish; even if V'han decided to halt all conquest programs, she still has to keep troops in place in much of her territory to fight rebels, maintain the peace, or protect her subjects from various threats.

STRUCTURE AND RANKS

In the interest of efficiency, the Empress has deliberately created a relatively simple structure for her vast military machine. The rank system does not differentiate between space-based and ground-based forces, so that in practice a captain of an infantry unit stationed on Coromwal III can give orders to a lieutenant serving on a starship orbiting that planet. In practice, the troops tend to maintain a *de facto* split between infantry (including wet navy personnel) and space forces; it would be considered odd (and even a little rude) for a starship officer to give orders to infantry personnel, or vice-versa, even if that’s technically possible.

On the other hand, military regulations do maintain a strong division between “Combat personnel” and “Administrative and Logistical personnel.” Officers designated “A&L” generally don’t have to risk their necks by entering war zones, but except for certain very limited situations are not entitled to give orders to Combat troops. The Legions assume that only personnel trained for, and experienced in, actual fighting should typically command the soldiers who do that fighting.

On the other hand, Command personnel can’t pull rank to force A&L personnel to supply them with equipment, re-assign them, or the like. This results in a certain amount of friction between the two “branches,” but the Empress prefers that to the possibility of some desk jockey giving orders in life-or-death situations he doesn’t really know anything about.

A D-Soldier’s military specialization (if any) is indicated by a subtitle after his rank, such as Ensign-Engineer m’thalGa or Captain-Infantry Shawnet.

THE IMPERIAL HIGH COMMAND

The overall commander-in-chief of the Imperial Legions is, of course, the Empress herself. She’s keenly interested in matters military and maintains careful oversight of what her Legions are doing (and planning to do) by reviewing hundreds of daily reports. Skilled military advisors are available to her at all times; these are considered plum positions among the upper echelons of the Legions, since the Empress has been known to lavishly reward advisors whose insights she finds helpful.

However, even a time-traveling immortal can’t oversee every strategic, logistical, and administrative detail pertaining to trillions and trillions of soldiers serving across millions of dimensions. Thus, the day-to-day running of the V'hanian military falls to a body known as the *Imperial High Command*. The IHC’s members include the Supreme Admiral, the Sector Admirals, and various civilian personnel, consultants, and advisors. After receiving input from V'han herself, the IHC determines the overall strategic course of the Legions, such as which dimensions to target for the next campaigns of conquest, how to allocate personnel and resources to address the current threats to the Empire, and the like. Of course, V'han can override any such decisions if she wants to, but in practice she usually follows the IHC’s recommendations.



IMPERIAL MILITARY RANKS

The rank structure of the Imperial Legions is as follows, from highest to lowest. Generally the Legions policy is not to assign an officer to a position in his native dimension (much less his native galaxy or homeworld), but an officer with the proper skills and/or enough rank may be able to pull strings to get a “close to home” posting.

SUPREME ADMIRAL

The highest rank in the Imperial Legions is *Supreme Admiral*, the overall commander of the entire military (aside from Istvatha V’han herself, of course). The Supreme Admiral has the final say on many military issues, and even when the IHC as a whole disagrees with him his views are typically noted and explained in the relevant reports. He’s one of the Empress’s most trusted advisors, and she puts a lot of thought into picking a new Supreme Admiral when the current one retires.

SUPREME ADMIRAL PIETTIK TA’RU

As of mid-2011 in Champions Universe Earth time, the Empire’s Supreme Admiral is Piettik Ta’ru, a member of the blue-skinned humanoid Crothara species from the planet Crotha XII in the dimension Tirellan. A career military officer from a long line of career military officers, Ta’ru first attended the prestigious Karuda University and studied Crotharan literature and imperial security before enrolling in the Legions. Intelligent, decisive, and charismatic, he rose through the ranks quickly when he led the troops to victory in the Battle of IV Piresta Shan as a mere lieutenant after all higher-ranking officers were killed.

Having now served as Supreme Admiral for nearly an imperial decade, Ta’ru has established a reputation as one of the most skilled officers ever to fill the position and as a commander who’s genuinely concerned about the personnel serving under him, all the way down to the lowest private. The Empress trusts him implicitly and consults with him on a regular basis.

SECTOR ADMIRAL

With a hundred million dimensions to oversee, the Empire and its military have to divide them into administrative districts known as *sectors*. Each sector encompasses an average of eight to twelve million dimensions. A *Sector Admiral* commands all Imperial Legion personnel and resources within a sector. Each of them answers directly to the Supreme Admiral.

DIMENSIONAL ADMIRAL

A *Dimensional Admiral*, or D-Admiral, commands all Legion forces in a single dimension. Ideally he maintains his headquarters on a heavily-secured starbase or planet near the center of the dimension. But the military realities of the situation may dictate otherwise; another location may be more secure (or offer other benefits, like proximity to galactic or intergalactic trade routes), or the entire dimension may not yet be under imperial control.

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IMPERIAL LEGIONS FRINGE BENEFIT

Here are the *Military Rank* Fringe Benefit costs for the Imperial Legions:

Cost	Rank
18	Supreme Admiral
16	Sector Admiral
15	Dimensional Admiral (D-Admiral)
14	Galactic Admiral (G-Admiral)
13	System Admiral
12	Admiral (General)
11	Army Commander
10	First Commander
9	Second Commander
8	Captain
6	Lieutenant
4	Ensign
2	Sergeant
1	Corporal
0	Private

DIMENSIONAL ADMIRAL SKNAAG 7

Sknaag 7, a member of a species that relies heavily upon cloning, is a classic example of a D-Admiral. He and his clone-brothers all joined the service together, and each was able to learn more (and faster) than ordinary soldiers due to his psychic link to the other Sknaags. Several of them have been killed in action or retired to non-military careers over the years, but Sknaag 7 remained in the military and rose through the ranks. A nearly unblemished record of successes in major campaigns, battles, and military maneuvers resulted in promotion after promotion, until he now commands all Imperial Legionnaires in the dimension Srogana.

Intelligent and insightful, D-Admiral Sknaag 7 considers himself to some extent “responsible” for the inhabitants of Srogana and does what he can to “lobby” on their behalf with the Empress and the imperial bureaucracy. A student of languages, he’s learned five major Sroganian languages (in addition to speaking seven languages from his native planet and dimension).

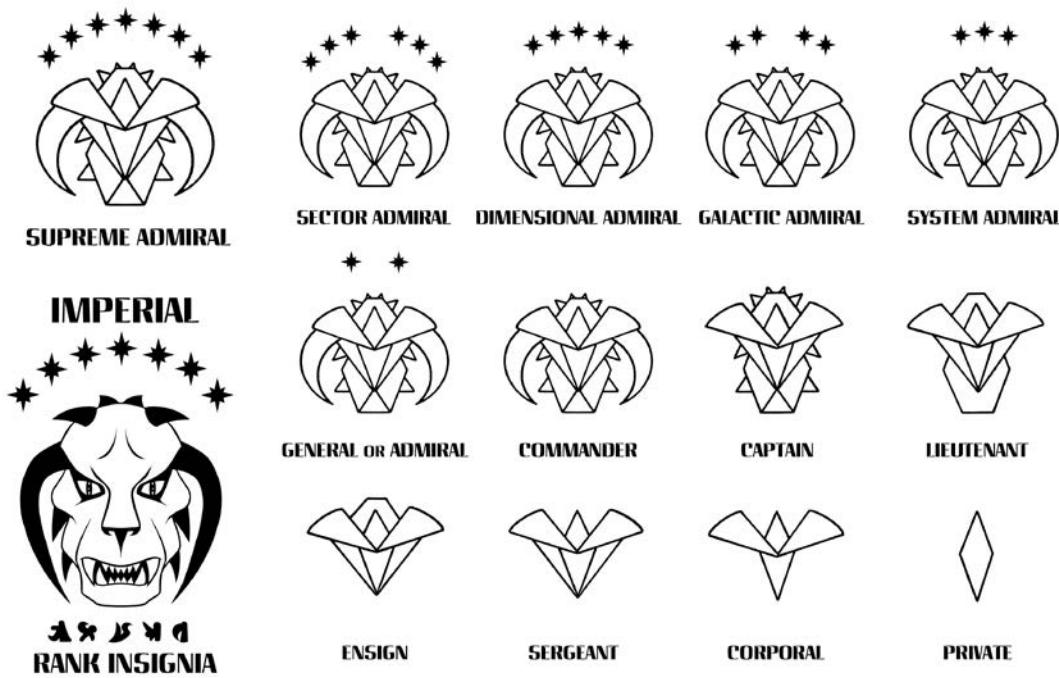
GALACTIC ADMIRAL

Since most dimensions consist of multiple galaxies, the Imperial Legion has the rank of *Galactic Admiral* to command all the forces in a specific galaxy. “G-Admirals” answer to the D-Admiral. (In large dimensions some G-Admirals may be informally promoted to “Dimensional Sector Admiral,” the officer responsible for coordinating all the G-Admirals in a particular region of the dimension.) Since galaxies differ in size, number of sentient species, resources, and other important aspects, so to does the importance of a Galactic Admiral to his D-Admiral.

GALACTIC ADMIRAL DGAK

The V’hanian forces in the Silvery Eye galaxy in the dimension V’ha-2216 fall under the command of Dgak, one of the most-decorated officers serving in the Imperial Legions today. A member of the brutish-looking reptilian Ro’taggh species native to the planet Yartha in the dimension V’ha-993, he joined the military as a way to escape from a relatively bland life on his homeworld. For over twenty years he served in combat zones, seeing battle an average of twice a week during that period. He earned a reputation for toughness and his instinctual tactical savvy. Despite his expressed preference for the lower ranks, his experience and skills eventually got him promoted up the chain of command. Today, nearly thirty years later, he commands at the galactic level, and could easily rise further — by his species’s standards he’s only in early middle age.

G-Admiral Dgak is very much a front-line commander who looks for any opportunity to get out from behind his desk and go out into the field. If there are no major military actions he often conducts surprise inspections of forward outposts (though compared to most high-ranking officers he’s pretty forgiving of the more-or-less inconsequential violations of military standards and protocol common in such facilities). When fighting breaks out, it’s not unknown for him to show up



and take command of a major push — sometimes he even brings along his beloved energy rifle Sn'greesha and heads right onto the battlefield (a practice his superiors have repeatedly discouraged, to no avail).

SYSTEM ADMIRAL

Below G-Admiral is the rank of *System Admiral*, the officer in charge of all forces in a single solar system (or multiple systems, in regions of space where there are relatively few inhabited planets). There are millions of System Admirals throughout the Legions; this is the highest rank that most soldiers can aspire to (and reaching even this far requires a high degree of talent, intelligence, and experience).

ADMIRAL (GENERAL)

An *Admiral* commands all Legionnaires assigned to a specific planet. If he prefers to command from a planetside facility, he's often referred to as "General" instead, a practice the IHC doesn't object to but also doesn't acknowledge in any official records. On many worlds he's a far better-known figure than the Planetary Governor and is considered "the face of the Empire." Despite this, the military discourages even indirect involvement in local politics by Generals (or other officers, for that matter), and is quick to punish personnel who step out of line in this regard.

GENERAL TRE'L NA-HUJIN

Tre'l na-Hujin, a member of the six-limbed Throyde species which controlled a large intergalactic empire in the dimension Oraxia before it was conquered by Istvatha V'han over an imperial century ago, is the General commanding the imperial forces occupying the planet Lentana IV in the dimension Balnakar. The Imperial Legions only finished conquering Balnakar three decades ago, and Lentana IV remains home to many subjects who remember pre-imperial times. As a result minor rebellions and outbreaks of sedition are not unknown, forcing General na-Hujin to keep a close eye and a tight rein on the populace. However, since he expects to spend the remainder of his career here, he does his best to establish contacts with Lentanan leaders and use the minimal force necessary to uphold imperial law. He'd rather lead the Lentanans into willing imperial subjectship by showing them the benefits than using the imperial fist on them.

THE COMMANDER RANKS

Immediately below Admiral are three ranks designated "commander." The highest, *Army Commander*, commands an entire army of the Legions (approximately one million D-Soldiers, plus supporting vehicles and equipment). Next is *First Commander*, who's in charge of an entire corps (100,000 to 500,000 D-Soldiers) and *Second Commander*, who commands a division (20,000 D-Soldiers). His Army Commander is the highest-ranking officer most D-Soldiers ever meet.

THE LOWER RANKS

The lower ranks, also known in Legions parlance as the "field ranks" (because they're the ranks held by D-Soldiers who actually fight and go on missions) are:

- Captain (commands a brigade of 5,000 D-Soldiers, or one large starship)
- Lieutenant (commands a battalion of 1,000 D-Soldiers, or one small starship [in which case he's referred to as "Captain" when on board])
- Ensign (commands a company of 200 D-Soldiers)
- Sergeant (commands a platoon of approximately 50 D-Soldiers, or some equivalent group such as a hovertank platoon or hyper-fighter squadron)
- Corporal (commands a squad of 8-12 D-Soldiers)
- Private

YOU'RE IN THE D-ARMY NOW

Since it's constantly fighting a wide variety of wars on potentially millions of fronts, the Imperial Legions is constantly recruiting. The Empress prefers to maintain a volunteer force, resorting to a draft only during times of major conflict (such as a war against Tyrannon). The Legions pays well and usually has no difficulty attracting qualified recruits. Serving in the military is widely regarded as a way to climb the social ladder, to see parts of the Empire a subject might otherwise never get to see, and to escape the doldrums of living on a backwater planet (or one that hasn't yet received the full benefits and services the Empire's capable of extending).

The Legions maintains recruiting offices in most major cities on most inhabited planets in most imperial dimensions. It also stages "recruitment fleet" drives where several smart-looking starships travel together through the less populated regions of the Empire to meet potential recruits who don't have access to an office. Once the ships' quarters are filled with new recruits, the "fleet" takes them to a training facility and a new "fleet" moves into position to continue the drive.

BASIC TRAINING

A "class" of recruits usually numbering in the thousands is taken to one of the tens of thousands of training facilities maintained by the Imperial Legions. Now referred to as "D-Recruits," the new troopers are taught what they need to know to serve their Empress. They spend the first two days learning basic V'hanian through hypno-pedagogy; the Legions doesn't want its personnel to depend on translator devices, since those can get damaged in combat.

The next period of basic training involves instilling military discipline in the recruits, who come from dozens of different planets and species — just learning how to get along as a cohesive group is sometimes a major obstacle! They learn how to march (and to fly in formation, in the case of winged recruits), how the rank structure and military law function, and how to communicate with their officers and fellow soldiers in a militarily-approved manner.

3

After a recruit has mastered those relatively simple subjects, field training with weapons and gear begins. Learning to use the standard-issue energy rifle and other weapons is relatively simple; what most D-Recruits find hardest to master is the use of the Dimensional Shift Harness (and the tactics that go with it; see below). The idea of dimensional travel, even in a form so rapid it's tantamount to teleportation, is something most sentients aren't accustomed to; they have to physically and psychologically acclimate themselves to it through repeated exposure and practice. D-Recruits who show an innate aptitude for this sort of thing often get tapped to take advanced training classes and become D-Navigators.

The entire basic training program takes approximately six months. At the end of that time D-Recruits become D-Soldiers and are assigned to an army (or to advanced training to join an elite force, if appropriate).

BASIC V'HANIAN MILITARY TACTICS

The standard tactics used by the Imperial Legions aren't that different from those employed by other advanced military forces in countless other places and times: enfilade and defilade; arranging the squad for covering fire and support; the proper use of artillery, tanks, and other heavy weapons; coordinated advancements of small units across a front; and so forth. What sets the Legions apart is the use of dimensional travel as a flanking tactic. Each D-Soldier wears a Dimensional Shift Harness that allows him to instantly shift to a hyperspace-like dimension, travel a short distance, and then emerge back into the dimension he's occupying in a different position — in short, to teleport up to 20m. In a close combat situations (such as city or jungle warfare), this allows D-Soldiers to get behind or beside an enemy and attack without being subject to counter-fire. In larger-scale situations it lets D-Soldiers move rapidly across the battlefield, often from covered position to covered position, and then overwhelm the enemy. If necessary, units can use D-Shift Enhancers (see page 77) to increase the distance they can "teleport," thus allowing them to "d-flank" enemies even across large battlefields.

D-SOLDIERS

The accompanying character sheet represents a typical D-Soldier of the Imperial Legions. Although not as skilled, powerful, or well-equipped as more specialized troops (who are represented by the various training Templates discussed below), the D-Soldier is the backbone of Istvatha V'han's armies. With his powerful energy rifle and ability to teleport, he's a dangerous combatant even against superhuman opponents.

D-Soldiers come from the millions of dimensions Istvatha V'han rules, and thus come in a nigh-infinite variety of shapes and sizes. Most are humanoid, but the resemblance ends there: their skin colors, number and orientation of limbs, size and shape of head, size and shape of sensory organs, and other features vary wildly. You can use the accompanying table to generate a D-Soldier's basic appearance and features randomly, or simply choose whichever ones you want. Having special abilities (like wings or enhanced senses) often improves a D-Soldier's chances for a better posting... though they may also make it more likely he gets assigned to a platoon that's seeing combat on a regular basis.



RANDOM D-SOLDIER GENERATOR TABLE

Want to vary the type of D-Soldier your heroes face and show the multi-dimensional diversity of Istvatha V'han's troops? Use these handy tables! See the "Options" for the D-Soldier for the game effects of these selections, where relevant.

Roll	Size
1-2	Notably smaller than Humans
3-5	Same average size as Humans
6	Notably larger than Humans

Roll	Mass
1-5	Mass is proportional for size
6	Unusually heavy

Roll	Skin Color
1	Red
2	Blue
3	Yellow
4	Green
5	Purple
6	White

Roll	Basic Racial Stock
1-3, 1-3	Mammalian
1-3, 4-5	Reptilian
1-3, 6	Icthyoid
4-6, 1-3	Avian
4-6, 4-5	Insectoid
4-6, 6	Plant

Roll	Extra Manipulatory Limbs
1-3	0 (just two arms/hands)
4	1 (possibly a prehensile tail)
5	2
6	4 or more

Roll	Extra Senses
1-2	None (has standard human senses)
3	Extra/better eyes
4	Acute hearing
5	Acute sense of smell
6	Unusual sense (such as radar or sonar)

Roll	Natural Weaponry
1-3	None
4	Claws
5	Fangs
6	Horn(s)

Roll	Unusual Features
1	Aquatic
2	Exotically attractive
3	Malleable form
4	Psionics
5	Wall-climbing
6	Wings

D-SOLDIER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	Lift 150 kg; 2½d6 HTH damage [1]
16	DEX	12	12-	
15	CON	5	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
12	PRE	2	11-	PRE Attack: 2d6
5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	PD	3		Total: 13 PD (8 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 13 ED (8 rED)
6	REC	2		
30	END	2		
12	BODY	2		
36	STUN	8		Total Characteristics Cost: 72

Movement: Running: 12m
Teleportation: 20m

Cost	Powers	END
31	V'hanian Energy Rifle: Multipower, 50-point reserve [32] 32 Charges for entire reserve (+1); all OAF (-1)	
2f	1) Basic Setting: Blast 10d6 OAF (-1)	
2f	2) Autofire Setting: Blast 6d6 Autofire (5 shots; +½); OAF (-1)	
4	Gun-butt Club: HA +2d6 OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	1
14	Body Armor: Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED) OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (-½)	0
13	Dimensional Shift Harness: Teleportation 20m OIF (-½)	2
3	Imperial Legions Helmet: Infrared Perception (Sight Group) OIF (-½)	0
6	Imperial Legions Helmet: Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group) OIF (-½), Affected As Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0

Perks
0 Fringe Benefit: V'hanian Military Rank: Private
Skills
9 +3 with <i>V'hanian Energy Rifle</i> Multipower
2 KS: V'hanian Military 11-
1 Language: V'hanian (basic conversation)
1 Navigation (Dimensional) 8-
2 PS: V'hanian Soldier 11-
3 Stealth 12-
3 Tactics 12-
2 WF: Small Arms

9 **Choose 9 Character Points' worth of the following:**
Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Combat Skill Levels, Computer Programming, Demolitions, Electronics, Fast Draw, Gambling (3 points' worth), Interrogation, Lockpicking, Paramedics, Persuasion, Security Systems, Streetwise, Systems Operation, Teamwork, any Background Skill

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 106

Total Cost: 178

100 Matching Complications (30)

5 **Distinctive Features:** V'hanian uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)

10 **Hunted:** V'hanian Imperial Military Police (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)

15 **Psychological Complication:** Loyal To Istvatha V'han (Common, Strong)

20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 30

Experience Points: 78

OPTIONS

Cost Power

var **Notably Smaller Than Human:** buy appropriate Size Template from 6E1 444

var **Notably Larger Than Human:** buy appropriate Size Template from 6E1 443 or APG 100

var **Unusually Heavy:** buy appropriate Mass Template from 6E1 446 (typically Hefty or Weighty)

2 **Scaly Skin/Exoskeleton:** Resistant (+½) for 2 PD/2 ED

5 **More Manipulatory Limbs:** Extra Limbs (1 or more)

5/10 **Extra/Better Eyes:** Increased Arc Of Perception (240 or 360 Degrees) for Sight Group

var **Better Eyes:** Nightvision (5 points); Infrared Perception for Sight Group (5 points); Ultraviolet Perception for Sight Group (5 points); Telescopic (+6 versus Range Modifier) for Sight Group (9 points)

var **Acute Hearing:** +2 to PER Rolls with Hearing Group (6 points); Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group) (3 points)

var **Acute Smell:** +2 to PER Rolls with Smell/Taste Group (6 points); Tracking for Smell/Taste Group (10 points)

var **Unusual Sense:** Active Sonar (15 points); Radar (15 points); Radio Perception (8 points)

10 **Claws:** HKA ½d6 (possibly plus STR)

5 **Fangs:** HKA 1 point (possibly plus STR)

8 **Horn(s):** HKA ½d6 (possibly plus STR); Inaccurate (½ OCV; -½)

9 **Aquatic:** Life Support (Expanded Breathing: breathe underwater); Environmental Movement (Aquatic Movement)

3+ **Exotically Attractive:** Striking Appearance +1/+1d6 (or more)

2 **Malleable Form:** Stretching 2m

var **Psionics:** the D-Soldier has one or more minor mental powers, chosen by the GM

10 **Wall-Climbing:** Clinging (normal STR)

8 **Wings:** Flight 12m; Restraining (-½)



SPECIALIZED D-SOLDIERS

The following Templates represent D-Soldiers who've received special or advanced training in some military discipline. They add to the standard D-Soldier character sheet. These represent only a few of specialized types of D-Soldiers; the GM can easily create more if needed for a campaign that focuses on the V'hanian military.

COMBAT ENGINEER

In a military so dependent on advanced technology, a Combat Engineer is sometimes the most important member of the unit. Most platoons have at least one, and in some "high activity zones" (i.e., places where D-Soldiers see combat every day), that number may rise to as high as one per squad.

COMBAT ENGINEER D-SOLDIER TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 3 Demolitions
- 3 Electronics
- 3 Mechanics
- 2 SS: Civil Engineering 11-
- 2 SS: Electronic Engineering 11-
- 3 Systems Operation

Cost Equipment

- 3 V'hanian Engineer's Field Kit: +2 with Demolitions, Electronics, and Mechanics; OAF (-1)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities And Equipment: 19

COSMON

"Cosmon" is the V'hanian military term for D-Soldiers assigned to the starships of the Imperial Legions (equivalent to Human terms such as "astronaut" or "starship personnel"). A cosmon receives training that covers standard situations aboard ship; this is represented by the Basic Cosmon Template. For more advanced training in fields such as ship's doctor or engineer, you can use the following Professional Templates from *Star Hero*: Doctor (SH 57); Engineer (SH 58); Law Enforcement Agent ("Security Officer"; SH 58-59); Pilot ("Helmsman"; SH 59); Scientist ("Science Officer"; SH 61); Tactician (SH 63); Tech (SH 63).

BASIC COSMON TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 1 Systems Operation 8-
- 2 One PS at 11- covering the character's primary job aboard ship
- 2 PS: Zero-G Operations 11-
- 6 Environmental Movement: Zero-G Training

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 11

D-NAVIGATOR

While all D-Soldiers wear a basic Dimensional Shift Harness that allows them to "teleport," imperial military tactics often call for even greater use of dimensional travel. To make that possible, some D-Soldiers are specially trained as *Dimensional Navigators*, or D-Navigators. With their advanced Dimensional Shift Harnesses and special skills, they can carry a squad of D-Soldiers across dimensional barriers, then back to their starting reality in the perfect position to attack the enemy.

The Enhanced Dimensional Shift Harness can be programmed to take the wearer to any dimension. However, when commanding officers issue one to a D-Navigator it's pre-programmed with 10 dimensions (typically the ten "closest" to the dimension where the fighting's taking place). Most D-Navigators aren't able to reprogram their Harnesses; they have to take them to a military technician to have that done.

D-NAVIGATOR TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- +4 Increase Navigation (Dimensional) to INT Roll +1
- 2 KS: Dimensions Of The Multiverse 11-

Cost Equipment

- +27 Enhanced Dimensional Shift Harness: Change Harness to the following:
- 33 Enhanced Dimensional Shift Harness: Multipower, 50-point reserve; all OIF (-½)
- 1f 1) **Personal Shift:** Teleportation 10m, MegaScale (1m = 1 km; +1); OIF (-½)
- 3f 2) **Group Shift:** Teleportation 10m, x8 Increased Mass, MegaScale (1m = 1 km; +1); OIF (-½)
- 3f 3) **Dimensional Flanking:** Extradimensional Movement (physical location in any dimension corresponding to D-Navigator's position in the dimension he's leaving), x8 Increased Mass; OIF (-½), Has To Be "Programmed" For No More Than 10 Dimensions (see text; -0)

Total Cost Of Template

Abilities And Equipment: 33

3

PILOT

Like any other modern military, the Imperial Legions relies on air power when fighting planet-side. With their high-speed Hoverjets (pages 93-94) and other aircraft, the Legions can easily dominate most planetary air forces. Flying these aircraft are V'han's brave aviators, who combine daring, tactical skills, and a love of speed and adventure into a winning package. Additionally, they receive basic electronics and avionics training so they can assist with the repair and maintenance of their vehicles.

V'hanian PILOT TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 5 Combat Piloting (DEX Roll +1)
- 1 Computer Programming 8-
- 1 Electronics 8-
- 1 Mechanics 8-
- 1 Systems Operation 8-
- 2 Navigation (Air) (INT Roll)
- 2 TF: V'hanian Military Aircraft
- 2 WF: weapons for two different V'hanian aircraft

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 15



3

FRAIM

RED LIONS TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- +2 Increase STR to 15
- +4 Increase DEX to 18
- +2 Increase CON to 17
- +3 Increase INT to 13
- +3 Increase EGO to 13
- +3 Increase PRE to 15
- +5 Increase OCV to 6
- +5 Increase DCV to 6
- +2 Increase PD to 7
- +1 Increase REC to 7
- +2 Increase END to 40
- +3 Increase BODY to 15
- +4 Increase STUN to 44
- 2 Running +2m
- 1 Swimming +2m
- 12 Martial Arts (Commando Training)
- 2 Navigation (Land) (INT Roll)
- +2 Add +1 to Stealth
- 4 Survival (choose two environments) (INT Roll)
- 3 Teamwork
- +3 Additional WFs of soldier's choice

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 68

IMPERIAL ELITE FORCES

The D-Soldiers of the Imperial Legions are usually all the Empire needs to take a target or accomplish some other military objective... but some missions call for special training and experience. When that's necessary, the Legions calls on one of its elite forces to get the job done. Some of the most prominent of these special soldiers are:

THE RED LIONS

The "standard" elite force of the Empire, the one that's numerically largest and that's most often referred to in the news, is the *Red Lions*, so named because their insignia is the imperial "lion's head" in red. Strong, tough, and able to take the worst the enemy can dish out, the Red Lions are suited for a wide variety of missions where a small, highly-trained force can succeed at missions an entire army would fail at.

29,555TH PLANETARY ASSAULT DIVISION

The Legions can invade most planets using regular troops. But some planets are unusually tough nuts to crack for some reason — their weather and geography, a significantly higher percentage of trained soldiers in the population, weird magical effects, or any of a thousand other things. When faced with such a world, the Legions brings in the 29,555th Planetary Assault Division.

The “PAs” (as they’re known) specialize in studying a planet in detail, strategizing the best invasion plans, and then leading V’hanian forces onto the planet and onward to victory. Initially their work is almost academic, so the PAs recruit D-Soldiers who aren’t just tough and good fighters, but smart and insightful as well. Once they’ve finished thoroughly studying a planet, they use what they’ve learned to plan the best strategies for the invasion; this involves working closely with a wide array of Legions personnel. When the attack begins, the PAs are in the vanguard, putting their theories into action by leading the attack. Once a beachhead’s been established, though, their job is done. Military transports take most of them away from the planet (a few remain as advisors to the assault’s commanders) and on to their next assignment.

PLANETARY ASSAULT DIVISION TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- +5 Increase INT to 15
- 5 Cramming
- 3 PS: Planetary Assault Analysis (INT Roll)
- 3 SS: Geography (INT Roll)
- 3 SS: Meteorology (INT Roll)
- 2 Survival (one environment) (INT Roll)
- 3 Scholar
- 20 KSs pertaining to previous and current targets
- 2 KS: Patterns Of Planetary Cultural Development (INT Roll)
- 2 KS: Patterns Of Planetary Military Development (INT Roll)
- 2 KS: V’hanian Planetary Invasion Strategies (INT Roll)
- 3 Traveler
- 20 AKs, CKs, and CuKs pertaining to previous and current targets

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 73

71,137TH SPACE COMBAT DIVISION

Typically a V’hanian “space combat division” is a formal military term for the Legions’s marines. But in one case it refers to something slightly different: an elite force of soldiers specially trained to engage in extravehicular combat in outer space. The soldiers of the 71,137th Space Combat Division, sometimes referred to as the “Vacuum Dogs” or “Vacuum Eaters,” come equipped with armored space suits, impellers that allow them to “fly” from ship to ship, and thousands of hours’ worth of practice at approaching, attacking, and entering enemy starships.

Space Combat Division personnel usually approach a target ship by stealth — their suits hide them from the typical Radio Group senses starships would use to detect them, such as Radar. (Of course, if they use their own radios they reveal their position, but their “Vacuum Code” Language allows them to communicate through a combination of (a) sounds that mimic static and interference, and (b) hand-signals.) The suits also have anti-reflective coating, so it’s hard to see them in space with the naked eye.

71,137TH SPACE COMBAT DIVISION TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- +3 Increase INT to 13
- 2 Electronics 10-
- 3 KS: Starships (INT Roll)
- 1 Language: Vacuum Code (basic conversation)
- 1 Lockpicking 10; Starship Locks Only (-1)
- 2 Mechanics 10-
- 2 Navigation (Space) (INT Roll)
- 2 SS: Astronomy 11-
- 3 Systems Operation (INT Roll)
- 3 Teamwork

Cost Equipment

- 20 **Armored Spacesuit:** Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED); OIF (-½)
- 13 **Armored Spacesuit:** Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Pressure, High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum); OIF (-½)
- 7 **Armored Spacesuit Stealth Field:** Invisibility to Radio Group; OIF (-½)
- 3 **Armored Spacesuit Anti-Reflective Coating:** Change Environment (-2 to Sight PER Rolls to see wearer), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (-½), No Range (-½), Only Works In Outer Space (-1)
- 18 **Armored Space Suit Impeller:** Flight 30m, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (-½), Only Works In Outer Space (-1)
- +0 **Armored Spacesuit Helmet:** Increase to HRRP

Total Cost Of Template Abilities And Equipment: 83

D-WALKERS

When even a D-Navigator (see above) isn't quite enough, the Legions can send the *Dimension Walkers* (D-Walkers) to complete a mission. The Empress herself pays close attention to this unit and makes sure that only the most loyal D-Soldiers get chosen for it — she's *very* cautious about whom she allows to have dimensional travel technology that approaches being as useful as her own powers.

The accompanying Template is in addition to the Red Lions Template.

D-WALKER TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- +8 Increase Navigation (Dimensional) to INT Roll +3
- 3 KS: Dimensions Of The Multiver (INT Roll)
- +2 Survival (add one environment)
- 3 Systems Operation (INT Roll)

Cost Equipment

- +18 **D-Walker Dimensional Shift Harness:** Change Harness to the following:
- 28 **D-Walker Dimensional Shift Harness:** Multipower, 42-point reserve; all OIF (-½)
- 1f **1) Personal Shift:** Teleportation 10m, Megascale (1m = 1 km; +1); OIF (-½)
- 2f **2) Dimensional Flanking:** Extradimensional Movement (physical location in any dimension corresponding to D-Walker's position in the dimension he's leaving); OIF (-½)
- 13 **Dimensional Communications System:** HRRP (Radio Group), Dimensional (any dimension); OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities And Equipment: 34

HELLIONS

The HELLions — short for the Hostile Environment Legion — are elite soldiers trained to function in even the most inhospitable environments. Red Lions who show an aptitude for outdoor survival and maneuvering are often re-assigned to the HELLions, where they receive advanced survivalism training and special equipment.

To create a HELLion, use the Red Lion Template, but increase the Survival to any four environments with +2 to the roll (costs 12 points total). The environments chosen are typically Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical, Desert, and either Mountains or Arctic, but it all depends on which "branch" of the force a D-Soldier's assigned to. The Imperial Legions have to fight in every environment in the known Multiverse, and that sometimes means mounting a military operation in "terrain" unlike anything ever seen on terrestrial planets. If necessary troops from the Infinite Star (see below) may be assigned to work with HELLion units to deal with any magical problems that arise.

THE ORDER OF THE INFINITE STAR

Much of the structure of the Multiverse depends on magic, and in fact "higher" dimensions are often entirely mystical in nature. Even in Assiah, where most of Istvatha V'han's activity occurs, dimensions exist which "feature" much more magic than planes such as Earth's and V'ha's. Conducting military operations in magic-heavy realms is often difficult for ordinary troops. When troubles arise, the Imperial Legions calls on the Order of the Infinite Star — its elite force of soldier-sorcerers.

The Infinite Star is one of the smallest of the Empress's elite units. To qualify for membership, a D-Soldier first has to complete Red Lion training successfully. Then he has to show an aptitude for magic, either because he's already capable of casting spells or because he has the ability to learn to do so. If he's not already a spellcaster, he has to spend two years in a crash course on matters mystic. If he emerges with passing marks and sanity intact, he has to pass several field test; upon successful completion of those, he joins the Infinite Star.

The Infinite Star Template is in addition to the Red Lion Template.

ORDER OF THE INFINITE STAR TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- +5 Increase INT to 18
- +5 Increase EGO to 18
- +9 Increase OMVC to 6
- +9 Increase DMVC to 6
- 3 KS: Arcane And Occult Lore (INT Roll)
- 10 Other KSSs and Languages pertaining to the practice of magic
- 13 Power: Magic 18-
- 40 40 points' worth of spells and other mystic abilities

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 94

Cost Option

- +11 **Powerful Mystic:** Change the basic 40 points' worth of spells to: Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 40 Pool + 40 Control Cost; Magic Only (-¼), Can Only Change Spells With Access To Spellbook (-½)
- +16 **Really Powerful Mystic:** As Powerful Mystic, but remove Can Only Change Spells With Access To Spellbook (-½)

RAPID RECON ASSAULT FORCE

D-Soldiers can move fast thanks to their Dimensional Shift Harnesses, but sometimes the Legions can obtain a tactical advantage with troops who move *really* fast. The Rapid Recon Assault Force (RRAF) is equipped with high-speed, one-man hovercraft and has gone through pilot training. Mounted on their “hoverbikes,” RRAF soldiers can swiftly penetrate enemy lines to flank an opposing force, carry messages, or conduct sabotage operations. If necessary, a RRAF soldier can a special “kamikaze” tactic he trains in: flying his hoverbike directly into a target, but using his Dimensional Shift Harness to teleport safely away right before impact.

RAPID RECON ASSAULT FORCE TEMPLATE**Cost Ability**

- +4 Increase DEX to 18
- +5 Increase to DCV 6
- 3 Combat Piloting
- 3 Teamwork
- 1 TF: RRAF Hoverbike
- 1 WF: RRAF Hoverbike Weapons

Cost Equipment

- +7 **RRAF Dimensional Shift Harness:** Add No Relative Velocity
- +0 **Imperial Legions Helmet:** Increase to HRRP

Total Cost Of Template Abilities And Equipment: 24

ZORON AZKARI

D-Soldiers are well-trained and well-armed... but that's not always enough. Sometimes troops need to be stronger, tougher, and faster than normal to get the job done. When the Empress needs her best soldiers for a mission, and even one of her elite forces isn't up to the task, she calls on the *Zoron Azkari*. Created through genetic technology and raised to be nothing but warriors, the Zoron Azkari are bred to be utterly loyal to Istvatha V'han and to do anything she asks — if she told one to commit suicide, he'd kill himself right then and there. They'll do whatever's required to fulfill her commands.

The Zoron Azkari have the same basic training as D-Soldiers, but they're better at what they do because they're bred to be incredibly strong, smart, and durable (*i.e.*, they have higher Skill rolls). They also carry better weapons and equipment.

ZORON AZKARI TEMPLATE**Cost Ability**

- +7 Increase STR to 20
- +8 Increase DEX to 20
- +5 Increase CON to 20
- +10 Increase INT to 20
- +8 Increase EGO to 18
- +8 Increase PRE to 20
- +10 Increase OCV to 7
- +10 Increase DCV to 7
- +9 Increase DMCV to 6
- +10 Increase SPD to 4
- +5 Increase PD to 10
- +5 Increase ED to 10
- +4 Increase REC to 10
- +4 Increase END to 50
- +8 Increase BODY to 20
- +7 Increase STUN to 50
- +3 Increase CSLs with Energy Rifle to +4
- 6 Running +6m
- 2 Swimming +4m
- +2 Make Infrared Perception a natural ability
- 2 Language: Zoron Azkari Battle-Code (fluent conversation)
- 16 Martial Arts (Commando Training)
- 2 Navigation (Land) (INT Roll)
- +2 Add +1 to Stealth
- 4 Survival (choose two environments) (INT Roll)
- 3 Teamwork
- +5 Additional WFs of soldier's choice

Cost Equipment

- +8 **V'hanian Energy Rifle-ZA:** Increase reserve to 60 points, Slot 1 to Blast 12d6, and Slot 2 to Blast 8d6
- +3 **Body Armor:** Increase to Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED)
- +0 **Imperial Legions Helmet:** Increase to HRRP

Total Cost Of Template Abilities And Equipment: 176

Value Complications

- +10 Increase Psychological Complication to Very Common, Total

Total Value Of Template Complications: +10

THE IMPERIAL SCOUT SERVICE

Most “branches” of the Imperial Legions are purely military. But there are some “departments” of the Legions that serve other functions as well yet are grouped under the Legions’s umbrella because of their importance to Istvatha V’han’s campaigns of conquest. The best-known of these is the *Imperial Scout Service*, the Empress’s corps of explorers.

As a division of the Legions, the ISS is first and foremost responsible for military scouting and reconnaissance. In their maneuverable starships (see page 90), scouts spread out in the space around a V’hanian fleet to look for astronomical phenomena that might cause problems (or present tactical opportunities to take advantage of), try to locate the enemy and determine how he’s arranged his forces, locate possible points of ambush, determine optimum arrival points for fleet teleportation maneuvers, and so forth. It’s often a risky job, but subjects who join the ISS are rarely the type of people who prefer the comfort and quiet of staying at home.

The other major aspect of the ISS’s work, the one it’s best known for in the public mind, is exploring Istvatha V’han’s vast domain and the Multiverse beyond. The Empress controls so much space that even with Dimensional Scanners she can’t know everything about every part of her realm (much less planes she doesn’t control yet). Scouts travel through the less well-known parts of her territory in search of usable planets, exploitable resources, sentient species that haven’t yet made contact with (inter)galactic society in their native dimensions, scientific phenomena meriting study (and/or warning beacons!), and the like. The Empress has been known to reward scouts who make particularly important finds with wealth and power; more than one person has joined the ISS hoping to “strike it rich” this way.

Similarly, scouts often venture into dimensions Istvatha V’han doesn’t control yet. In this case they’re assessing what sort of target for conquest the dimension is: its size; how many sentient species it has; how powerful those species are; and so forth. Once the decision’s been made to conquer a dimension, though, the responsibility for further scouting falls on the Dimensional Surveillers of the Imperial Intelligence Command (see below).

Generally speaking, imperial scouts try to maintain a low profile when exploring (particularly in dimensions not under imperial control). They don’t want to alert existing or potential enemies to their activities, scare species that might not yet be aware of galactic or dimensional civilization, or attract other forms of unwanted attention. The hulls of their ships are designed to make them hard to sense or see, and in some rare cases they’re even equipped with full-blown cloaking fields.

The ISS as a whole functions pretty efficiently for an organization containing so many intensely individualistic people, but a certain amount of internal tension exists because of the dual nature

of the Service’s mission. Most of the Scouts prefer to focus on exploration and discovery... but they’re constantly finding themselves re-assigned to military scouting duties. Some of them chafe so much at this that they eventually quit the Service — or in rare cases go rogue, stealing their ship and striking out into the Multiverse on their own. (If captured, a “rogue Scout” faces the death penalty.)

The accompanying Template describes a typical ISS Scout. As you can see, Scouts have to be well-rounded individuals; they’re skilled pilots with both military and scientific training. Since they often spend weeks, months, even years at a time by themselves, they also tend to be self-reliant loners — renegade types who don’t really fit well into any other segment of imperial society but are perfectly suited for this sort of challenging work. Many of them also come from “spacer” or “belter” cultures that are used to spending most or all of their time in space aboard starships.

IMPERIAL SCOUT TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

6	+3 DEX
2	+2 CON
3	+3 INT
3	+3 PRE
5	+1 OCV
5	+1 DCV
3	Combat Piloting
1	Electronics 8-
2	KS: V’hanian Military 11-
1	Mechanics 8-
4	Navigation (Air, Dimensional, Space)
3	Stealth
2	SS: Astronomy 11-
2	SS: Physics 11-
2	Survival (2 points’ worth)
3	Systems Operation
3	Tactics
2	TF: V’hanian Military Starships
2	WF: V’hanian Small Arms

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 54

Value Complications

5	Distinctive Features: ISS uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
10	Hunted: V’hanian Imperial Military Police (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Psychological Complication: Loyal To Istvatha V’han (Common, Strong)
20	Social Complication: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Value Of Template Complications: 50

Cost Option

var	Experienced Scout: add 5 or more points’ worth of AKs, representing galaxies, dimensions, and the like that the Scout’s explored
(-15)	Renegade: Remove Psychological Complication

THE IMPERIAL INTELLIGENCE COMMAND

Another major “department” of the military, one that’s not quite so well-known or well-regarded as the ISS, is the Imperial Intelligence Command — Istvatha V’han’s espionage agency.

Headquartered primarily on the giant terrestrial planet Ugarti III in the Sarennix system (a mere three light-years from V’ha itself), the IIC is a vast, powerful agency with many crucial responsibilities. These include:

- gathering and analyzing general intelligence about the Empire’s rivals, competitors, and enemies — everything from their demographic patterns, to their economic and technological data, to the skeletons their major figures have in their respective closets... and much, much more.
- gathering and analyzing military intelligence. The Empress wants to know everything there is to know about her enemies’ (and potential enemies’) military capabilities, and the IIC supplies that information to the best of its ability. This is why the IIC falls under the “jurisdiction” of the Imperial Legions rather than being a distinct branch of government.
- study and analysis of potential targets for conquest (which could technically be considered an aspect of military intelligence). Before the Empress approves the conquest of a dimension, she receives a detailed report on it, the potential problems a campaign might encounter (and solutions for them), and how the dimension might best fit into the Empire after being defeated.
- counterintelligence. The Empress’s enemies want to spy on her as much as she does on them, and the IIC is responsible for stopping enemy spies... or better yet, tricking them.
- certain aspects of internal security. The Imperial Security Force (page 165) is the Empire’s police agency, but the IIC is its “secret police.” Among other things, the IIC holds primary responsibility for infiltrating and stopping some types of rebellions and seditious movements. All this leads to some rivalry and friction with the ISF, but for the most part the two agencies work together pretty well.

IIC AGENT TEMPLATES

Here are some Templates for typical IIC agents that Human superheroes might encounter. (All the “specialized” ones are in addition to the basic IIC Field Agent Template.) You can use the Random D-Soldier Generator Table (page 63) to determine the sort of species an agent comes from, if desired.

IIC FIELD AGENT

This Template represents the typical agent the IIC sends into the field to gather intelligence, “eliminate” troublesome enemies, and perform other dangerous missions.

IIC FIELD AGENT TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

6	+3 DEX
3	+3 CON
5	+5 INT
3	+3 EGO
5	+5 PRE
5	+1 OCV
5	+1 DCV
3	+1 DMCV
10	+1 SPD
3	KS: The Espionage World (INT Roll)
2	KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 11-
3	PS: Tradecraft (INT Roll)
1	SS: Astronomy 8-
1	SS: Physics 8-
3	Stealth
2	TF: V’hanian Military Starships
2	WF: V’hanian Small Arms
3	Fringe Benefit: Espionage Rank
3	Fringe Benefit: Security Clearance

18 points’ worth of Skills from the following

list: Acting, Bribery, Bureaucratics, Charm, Climbing, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Combat Skill Levels, Computer Programming, Concealment, Conversation, Cramming, Cryptography, Deduction, Demolitions, Disguise, Forgery, Gambling, High Society, Lipreading, Lockpicking, Martial Arts, Mimicry, Navigation, Persuasion, Security Systems, Shadowing, Skill Levels, Sleight Of Hand, Streetwise, Survival, Systems Operation, Tracking, Weapon Familiarity, any Background Skill, Contacts, Deep Cover

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 86

Value Complication

20	Hunted: enemy espionage agency (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
10	Hunted: the IIC (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Psychological Complication: Loyal To Istvatha V’han (Common, Strong)

Total Value Of Template Complications: 45

Value Option

10	Trusted Agent: Add Fringe Benefit: License To Kill
0	Undercover Spy: Choose as optional abilities Acting, Disguise, Deep Cover(s), and a selection of appropriate Background Skills for his Deep Cover(s)
(15)	Psychological Complication: Womanizer; Can’t Resist A Pretty Face (Common, Strong)
(15)	Psychological Complication: Thrillseeker (Common, Strong)
(5)	Rivalry (Professional, with another IIC spy)

INTELLIGENCE ADMIRAL BESHARO T’RAI

As of the Earth year 2011, the commander of the IIC is Besharo T’rai, who holds the rank of “Intelligence Admiral” (equivalent to a Sector Admiral). He’s a V’hanian (the Empress always chooses a V’hanian for this position, to ensure maximum loyalty) and has been a part of the IIC for almost his entire career. After a brief stint as a D-Soldier he transferred into the IIC and slowly worked his way up the ladder from Field Agent to administrator. Twelve years ago

V’han promoted him to his current position, and she’s never regretted that decision.

Ruthless, logical, and pragmatic to an extent that even some of his chief underlings sometimes find disturbing, I-Admiral T’rai is ideally suited for his job. He has a steel-trap mind (INT 23, Deduction 15-, Eidetic Memory) and seems to be able to multitask as well as a computer. He constantly astounds his personnel with insights on the relationship between various bits of data that had never occurred to them.

On top of that he’s a skilled shot with pistol or rifle, goes rock-climbing and paragliding for relaxation, and enjoys reading classic V’hanian literature. Even the Empress sometimes wonders if there’s any subject he’s not in some way interested in.

D-ASSASSIN TEMPLATE**Cost Ability**

5 +5 STR
 10 +5 DEX
 3 +3 INT
 5 +5 PRE
 10 +2 OCV
 5 +1 DCV
 10 +1 SPD
 10 +1 with All Combat
 3 Demolitions
 10 Martial Arts (10 points' worth)
 3 SS: Pharmacology/Toxicology (INT Roll)
 3 Streetwise
 3 WF: three more points' worth of WFs
 3 Fringe Benefit: Espionage Rank
 3 Fringe Benefit: Security Clearance
 6 +6 points' worth of Skills from the IIC Field Agent list

Cost Equipment

33 Enhanced Dimensional Shift Harness: Multipower, 50-point reserve; all OIF (-½)
 1f 1) Personal Shift: Teleportation 10m, MegaScale (1m = 1 km; +1); OIF (-½)
 3f 2) Dimensional Flanking: Extrdimensional Movement (physical location in any dimension corresponding to D-Navigator's position in the dimension he's leaving); OIF (-½), Has To Be "Programmed" For No More Than 10 Dimensions (-0)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities And Equipment: 129

CIVILIZATION ANALYST

Also known as a Species Analyst or Planetary Analyst, a Civilization Analyst is a Field Agent who's been specially trained to study and evaluate entire civilizations that Istvatha V'han intends to conquer or interact with in some way. Their primary tool for doing this is data gathered remotely by secret probes and the like, but if necessary they have the skills to mingle with the population unnoticed. (Naturally, in choosing which Analyst to assign to a civilization, the IIC chooses agents from species that have similar body structure, so that a humanoid agent doesn't have to try to disguise himself as a seven-limbed crustaceoid.)

CIVILIZATION ANALYST TEMPLATE**Cost Ability**

3 Acting
 3 Analyze Civilization/Species
 10 Cramming x2
 3 Disguise
 3 Mimicry
 3 Persuasion
 3 SS: Anthropology/Xenology (INT Roll)
 3 SS: Sociology/Xenosociology (INT Roll)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 31

D-ASSASSIN

Sometimes the best solution to a problem is to eliminate the person causing it... personally. When that's the case, the Empress sends in one of her feared D-Assassins, who combine combat skills with dimensional shift technology into one lethal package.

D-SURVEILLER

A Dimensional Surveiller, or D-Surveiller, is a scout-spy who specializes in studying and observing dimensions that are targeted for conquest. Once the decision is made to conquer a dimension, the ISS's responsibility for studying it ends and the IIC's responsibility begins. Compared to a Scout, a D-Surveiller has more training in evaluating military capabilities and threats, and in discerning weaknesses the Imperial Legions can exploit.

To create a D-Surveiller, take both the IIC Field Agent and Imperial Scout Templates (eliminate the lower of any duplicated Skills or abilities), and add Analyze Military Science/Capabilities (+3 Character Points).

INTERNAL SECURITY SPECIALIST

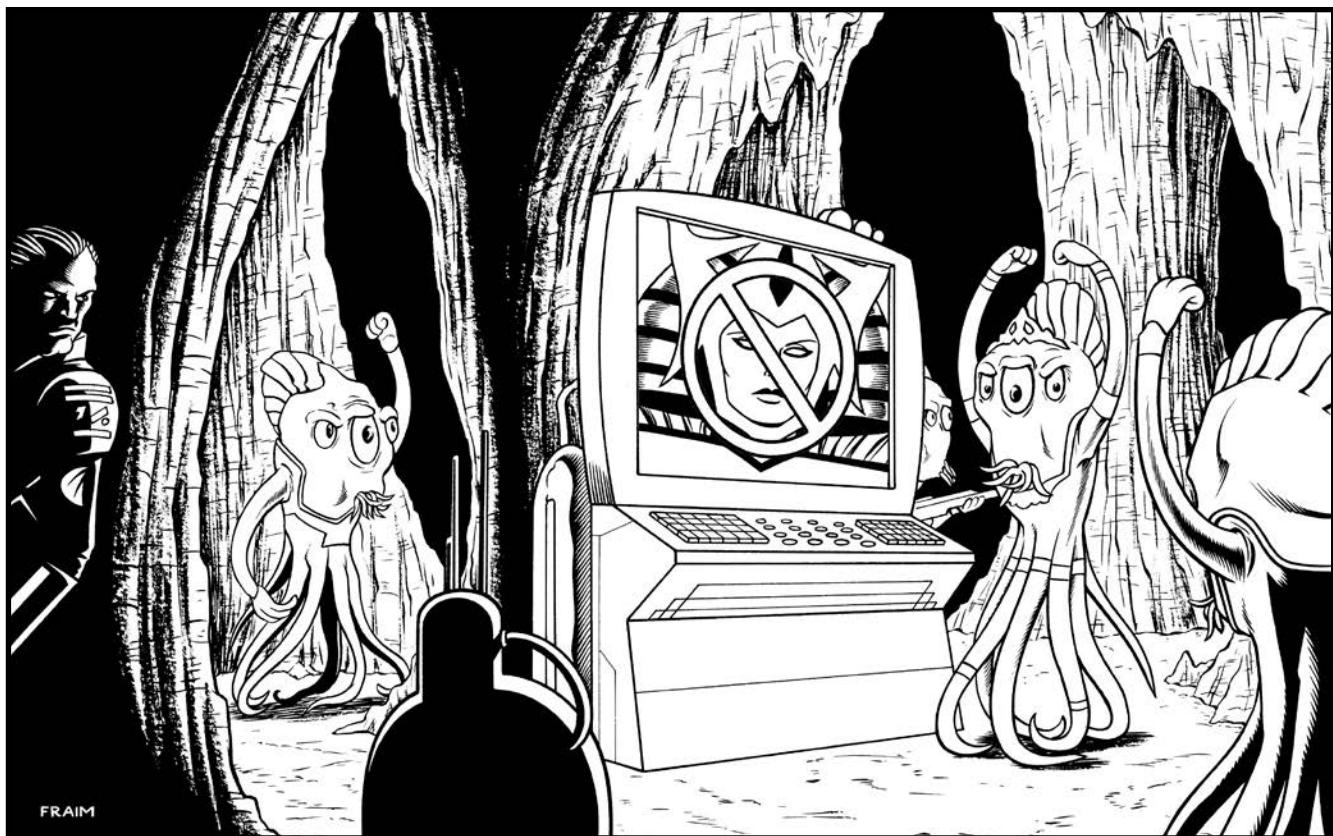
The Empire calls them "Internal Security Specialists." Most imperial subjects refer to them in private as "secret policemen." Basically they're spies who spy on the Empress's subjects rather than her enemies. However, their authority to conduct undercover operations is limited; in most situations they have to turn such matters over to a Rebellion Infiltrator (see below).

INTERNAL SECURITY SPECIALIST TEMPLATE**Cost Ability**

3 Bribery
 3 Bugging
 3 Concealment
 3 Interrogation
 3 KS: Current Events (INT Roll)
 5 Shadowing (INT Roll +1)
 5 Streetwise (PRE Roll +1)
 5 **Forceful Intimidation:** +10 PRE; Only To Make Fear-/Intimidation-Based Presence Attacks (-1)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 30





REBELLION INFILTRATOR

Revolts against Istvatha V'han's rule aren't unknown (see page 187). While most of them are quickly crushed by the Imperial Legions and/or the Imperial Security Force, some develop enough momentum to last for months or years. In that case the IIC may be called upon to send in a Rebellion Infiltrator to spy on the rebellion from within, and hopefully corrupt it or otherwise bring it down.

REBELLION INFILTRATOR TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 3 Acting
- 5 Cramming
- 3 Disguise
- 3 Mimicry
- 3 Persuasion
- 3 Streetwise
- 6 +6 points' worth of Skills from the IIC Field Agent list

Total Cost Of Template Abilities: 26

SUPERPOWERED SPIES

Some Imperial Battalioneers are assigned to espionage duties. Some superpowers are ideally suited for espionage activities, and subjects who possess those powers are often assigned directly to the IIC instead of the Battalion. Some typical examples of this include:

MYSTIC SPIES

Spellcasters and other mystics whose powers focus on divination, scrying, and similar areas often

find themselves working for the IIC. Being able to mystically ascertain the location of an enemy fleet, or an opposing general's battle plan, is a huge advantage for the Imperial Legions. Such magics have also doomed many a rebel movement.

PSIONIC SPIES

Mental powers often focus on gathering information or controlling the minds of others — both abilities that the IIC can put to good use! The Command is particularly interested in psionics whose Telepathy and other powers can be used on a target without the target being aware of it. Such mentalists are often trained as Internal Security Specialists or Rebellion Infiltrators. A few D-Assassins are telekinetics who use their powers, not weapons, to kill their targets.

SHAPECHANGING SPIES

The ability to change shape, particularly into other sentients' forms, is of obvious value to an intelligence agency. Superhuman subjects with those abilities are sometimes trained as Civilization Analysts, but are even better at being Internal Security Specialists or Rebellion Infiltrators.

CREATING A SUPERPOWERED SPY

There's no Template *per se* for superpowered spies, since their abilities can vary tremendously. The easiest way to create one is to give 30-50 points' worth of appropriate superhuman abilities (possibly more) to a character. Superpowered spies may or may not receive Field Agent training based on the nature of the missions they're likely to perform.



V'HANIAN MILITARY TECHNOLOGY

This section provides a brief overview of the technology used by Istvatha V'han's military (and some related devices that are also used by civilians, depending on the circumstances). It concentrates on devices D-Soldiers frequently carry (and thus would use against PC superheroes), or which are particularly important to V'han and her methods of dimensional conquest. Naturally, given the size and scope of the Empress's resources, what's described here barely begins to scratch the surface of the technology available to her and her military. If necessary, you can easily supply her minions with more gadgetry from *The HERO System Equipment Guide*.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Here are some examples of equipment carried by the D-Soldiers of the Empire.

WEAPONS



DIMENSIONAL BYPASS SYSTEM

Effect:	Transdimensional (all nearby dimensions) for a V'hanian weapon built on up to 120 Active Points
Target:	One character
Duration:	Instant
Range:	No Range
Charges:	10 Charges
Breakability:	18 PD/18 ED

Description: This expensive, sophisticated device is rarely issued to D-Soldiers... but when it is, it can vastly increase their combat effectiveness. It allows them to fire "through" dimensional barriers at targets in nearby dimensions. A squad that's accompanied by a D-Navigator and can thus easily shift into another dimension can make deadly use of this device. However, the shooter needs some way to "see" into the other dimension so he can aim properly (such as Dimensional Viewer [see below]).

Game Information: Transdimensional (all nearby dimensions; + $\frac{1}{4}$) for any V'hanian weapon built on up to 120 Active Points (90 Active Points); OAF (-1), Extra Time (makes the weapon take a Full Phase to use, or an Extra Segment if it already takes a Full Phase or longer; - $\frac{1}{2}$), 10 Charges (- $\frac{1}{4}$). Total cost: 33 points.

V'HANIAN ANTI-MATERIEL RIFLE

Effect: RKA 5d6, Extra Time (Full Phase)

Target/Area Affected: One character

Duration: Instant

Range: 750m

Charges: 15 Charges

Breakability: 15 PD/15 ED

Description: This large rifle is intended primarily for use against buildings and vehicles... though there's no reason D-Soldiers couldn't use it against, say, superhumanly tough Human heroes. It's slow to fire, though, which limits its use in active combat.

Game Information: RKA 5d6 (75 Active Points); OAF (-1), Extra Time (Full Phase; - $\frac{1}{2}$), Two-Handed (- $\frac{1}{2}$), 15 Charges (-0). Total cost: 25 points.

Options:

1) *Cross-D Anti-Materiel Rifle*: For a true surprise, attack, this form of the Anti-Materiel Rifle can be used across dimensional barriers! The shooter needs some way to "see" into the other dimension so he can aim properly (such as Dimensional Viewer [see below]). Add Transdimensional (any dimension; +1). 150 Active Points; total cost 50 points.



V'HANIAN AUTORIFLE

Effect:	Blast 12d6, Autofire
Target/Area Affected:	One character
Duration:	Instant
Range:	600m
Charges:	60 Charges
Breakability:	24 PD/24 ED

Description: This is the heavy weapon most commonly issued to squads of D-Soldiers. It packs a powerful punch but is lightweight enough for a single soldier to carry and use. It has folding bipod legs so the firer can steady it when shooting from the ground or a platform.

Game Information: Blast 12d6, Autofire (5 shots; +½), 60 Charges (+½) (120 Active Points); OAF (-1), Two-Handed (-½). Total cost: 48 points.



V'HANIAN PARALYSIS RIFLE

Effect:	Drain SPD 10d6
Target:	One character
Duration:	Instant
Range:	300m
Charges:	10 Charges
Breakability:	20 PD/20 ED

Description: This weapon fires a beam of energy that interferes with the nervous systems of most living organisms. Once hit, they begin to move and function more slowly. A strong hit, or repeated hits, may leave the victim virtually paralyzed.

Game Information: Drain SPD 10d6 (100 Active Points); OAF (-1), Limited Range (300m; -¼), Two-Handed (-½), 10 Charges (-¼). Total cost: 33 points.



V'HANIAN ENERGY RIFLE

Effect:	Blast 10d6; Blast 6d6, Autofire
Target:	One character
Duration:	Instant
Range:	500m/450m
Charges:	32 Charges
Breakability:	10 PD/10 ED

Description: This is the standard energy rifle issued to D-Soldiers. It can fire a powerful single blast, or the user can switch to automatic fire for a burst of weaker bolts.

Game Information:

Cost Power

31 **V'hanian Energy Rifle:** Multipower, 50-point reserve, 32 Charges for entire reserve (+¼); all OAF (-1)

2f **1) Basic Setting:** Blast 10d6; OAF (-1)

2f **2) Autofire Setting:** Blast 6d6; Autofire (5 shots; +½); OAF (-1)

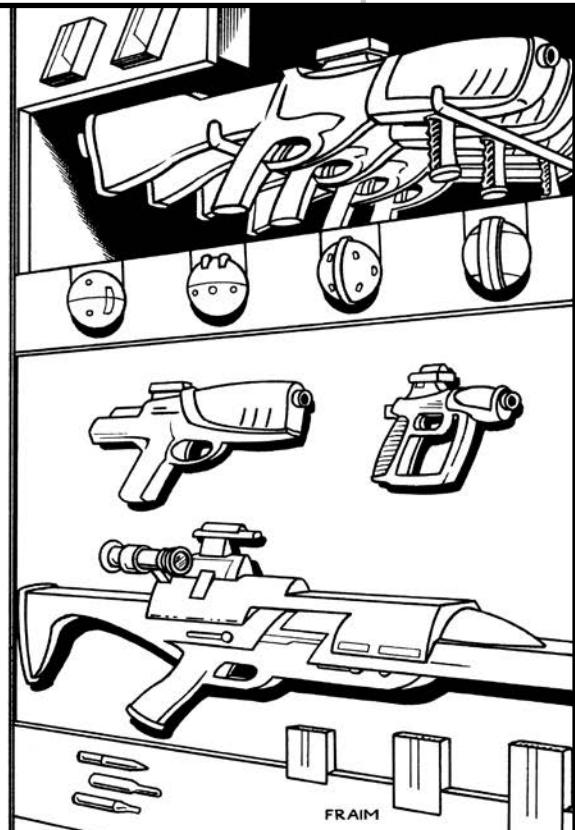
4 **Gun-butt Club:** HA +2d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-¼)

Total cost: 39 points.

Options:

1) **ZA Rifle:** This is the version of the rifle carried by the Zoron Azkari. Increase reserve to 60 points, Slot 1 to Blast 12d6, and Slot 2 to Blast 8d6. Total cost: 51 points.

3



DEFENSIVE EQUIPMENT



D-SOLDIER BODY ARMOR

Effect:	Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED), Activation Roll 14-
Target:	Self
Duration:	Persistent
Range:	Self
END Cost:	0
Breakability:	8 PD/8 ED

Description: This is the standard protective wear issued to D-Soldiers. It's primarily made of super-tech fabrics and plastics, but the shoulder pieces are a light, super-tech metal. The Imperial Legions Helmet (see below) is a part of this suit as well.

Game Information: Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED) (24 Active Points); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (-¼). Total cost: 14 points.

Options:

1) *Heavy Body Armor*: The Zoron Azkari and some other troops wear heavier body armor. Increase to Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED). 30 Active Points; total cost 17 points.

2) *Light Powered Armor*: One step up from Heavy Body Armor are suits of light powered armor. These often incorporate a Dimensional Shift Harness, jump-jets, a jetpack, strength augmentors, sensory systems, and other devices as well (see HSEG 247-67 for plenty of possibilities). Increase to Resistant Protection (15 PD/15 ED). 45 Active Points; total cost 26 points.



FORCE-FIELD HARNESS

Effect:	Resistant Protection (18 PD/18 ED)
Target:	Self
Duration:	Constant
Range:	Self
Charges:	1 Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 1 Hour
Breakability:	18 PD/18 ED

Description: This device, typically in the form of a harness that also incorporates Dimensional Shift technology (see below), generates a protective field of force. The Imperial Legions generally prefers for D-Soldiers to rely on body armor rather than force-fields (which run out of power, can suffer from interference, and the like). But in some situations a force-field is a better option, or provides some extra protection to troops that really need it.

Game Information: Resistant Protection (18 PD/18 ED) (54 Active Points); OIF (-½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 1 Hour (Easy to recharge; -0). Total cost: 36 points.

Options:

1) *Strong Field*: Increase to Resistant Protection (21 PD/21 ED). 63 Active Points; total cost 42 points.

2) *Weak Field*: Decrease to Resistant Protection (15 PD/15 ED). 45 Active Points; total cost 30 points.

3) *Broad-Spectrum Force-Field*: This device generates an enhanced force-field that protects against more types of attacks. Change to Resistant Protection (12 PD/12 ED/8 Sight Group Flash Defense/8 Mental Defense/10 Power Defense) (75 Active Points); OIF (-½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 1 Hour (Easy to recharge; -0). Total cost: 50 points.

4) *Concealed Harness*: This form of the Device can be woven into clothing so that onlookers don't know the character's wearing it. This form of the device is sometimes used by the Empress's spies, or other operatives who may get into trouble but can't be seen wearing body armor. Change OIF (-½) to IIF (-¼). Total cost: 43 points.

MOVEMENT DEVICES



DIMENSIONAL SHIFT HARNESS

Effect:	Teleportation 20m
Target:	Self
Duration:	Instant
Range:	Self
END Cost:	2
Breakability:	4 PD/4 ED

Description: D-Soldiers are infamous among the Empire's enemies mainly because of their ability to teleport by temporarily shifting themselves into another dimension. This harness is how they do it. (See the D-Navigator and D-Walker, above, for advanced, specialized versions of this device.)

Game Information: Teleportation 20m (20 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 13 points.

Options:

1) *Type II Harness*: Some squads of D-Soldiers have upgraded Harnesses. (Similarly, sometimes the officer leading a unit has a Type II Harness, while the rest of the troops have standard issue.) Increase to Teleportation 40m. 40 Active Points; total cost 27 points.

D-SHIFT ENHANCER

Effect:	MegaScale (1m = 50m) for Dimensional Shift Harness
Target:	Up to 8 D-Soldiers at once
Duration:	Instant
Range:	No Range
Charges:	1 Charge which Never Recovers
Breakability:	8 PD/8 ED

Description: This one-use device, which is about the size of a modern Earth toaster, enhances the power of a squad's Dimensional Shift Harnesses — when it's in use a D-Soldier can Teleport up to 1 kilometer instead of just 20m. Up to eight D-Soldiers can take advantage of it at once. To use it, they stand around it. One of them activates it, then each of them has 3 seconds to use his Dimensional Shift Harness (typically they all Teleport to a pre-arranged target location).

Game Information: MegaScale (1m = 50m; +1) for Dimensional Shift Harness, Usable Simultaneously (up to 8 D-Soldiers at once; +1) (40 Active Points); OAF (-1), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4). Total cost: 7 points.

V'HANIAN JETPACK

Effect:	Flight 20m
Target:	Self
Duration:	Constant
Range:	Self
Charges:	1 Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 2 Hours
Breakability:	4 PD/4 ED

Description: The Imperial Legions rarely issues jetpacks to its soldiers; it believes that the Dimensional Shift Harness provides each D-Soldier with plenty of enhanced movement capability. However, there are some tactical situations where being able to fly is particularly advantageous; in those cases D-Soldiers are equipped to take to the skies!

Game Information: Flight 20m (20 Active Points); OIF (-½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 2 Hours (requires specially-refined fuel, Difficult to obtain; -0). Total cost: 13 points.

COMMUNICATIONS AND SENSORY GEAR

DIMENSIONAL VIEWER

Effect:	Clairsentience (Sight Group), Dimensional, Mobile Perception Point
Target:	One character
Duration:	Constant
Range:	14,400m
Charges:	1 Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 1 Hour
Breakability:	14 PD/14 ED

Description: A squad-portable version of the Dimensional Scanner (see page 78), this computer monitor-sized device allows a squad to view nearby dimensions. Typically it's used to make sure that the dimension "next door" is safe to travel in before a D-Navigator takes a squad through so they can flank an enemy by moving through the other dimension then returning to the plane they're fighting in in a better position to attack. It can view the other dimension for a range of over 14 kilometers (almost nine miles) from the point corresponding to the viewer's physical location in his current dimension.

Game Information: Clairsentience (Sight Group), Dimensional (only dimensions "near" the dimension the viewer currently occupies), Mobile Perception Point (48m per Phase movement), 32x Range (14,400m) (70 Active Points); OAF (-1), Concentration (½ DCV throughout use; -½), Dimensional Viewing Only (-½), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge lasting 1 Hour (Easy to recharge; -0). Total cost: 20 points.

IMPERIAL LEGIONS HELMET

Effect:	Infrared Perception (Sight Group); Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group)
Target:	Self
Duration:	Persistent
Range:	Self
END Cost:	0
Breakability:	2 PD/2 ED

Description: The regulation helmet issued to D-Soldiers not only protects the head (it's part of the overall Body Armor), it allows him to see heat signatures and communicate with his comrades using dransanian-wave technology.

Game Information:

Cost Power

3	Imperial Legions Helmet: Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OIF (-½)
6	Imperial Legions Helmet: Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group); OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-¼)

Options:

- 1) **Improved Communications Helmet:** Some versions of the Helmet also can receive and transmit video and on other frequencies. Change to HRRP (Radio Group) and Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½). Total cost: 6 points.



UNIVERSAL TRANSLATOR DEVICE

Effect:	Universal Translator (INT Roll)
Target:	Self
Duration:	Persistent
Range:	Self
END Cost:	0
Breakability:	4 PD/4 ED

Description: Many of Istvatha V'han's minions, from D-Soldiers on down to bureaucrats and ordinary subjects of the Empire, use imperial translation technology to communicate with beings from other planets and dimensions. Typically these devices are inobtrusively built into a soldier's helmet or a person's clothing or jewelry.

Game Information: Universal Translator (INT Roll) (20 Active Points); IIF (-1/4). Total cost: 16 points.

Options:

1) *Cheap Translator*: Imperial subjects who can't afford the better sorts of translators have to settle for cheaper ones worn around the neck or head; others can easily see them. Change IIF (-1/4) to OIF (-1/2). Total cost: 13 points.

2) *Cerebellic Translator*: The wealthy and important often have their translators implanted, just like the Empress. Remove IIF (-1/4). Total cost: 20 points.

OTHER EQUIPMENT

The devices described above are ones a D-Soldier could carry into the field if necessary. Here are some others of importance to the Empire that are stationary or can only be carried by vehicles.



DIMENSIONAL SCANNER

Effect:	Clairsentience (Sight Group) to scan/view entire dimensions
Target:	Area
Duration:	Constant
Range:	Throughout a dimension (see text)
END Cost:	224
Breakability:	448 PD/448 ED

Description: This device, which requires an entire dedicated facility and staff of thousands of technicians and operators for maximum effectiveness, is a sensor system that can scan an entire dimension at once from any point in the Multiverse. The Empress has several such facilities; they're used primarily by her Legions (to plan invasions and wars), the Imperial Scout Service, and various ministries such as Interdimensional Relations and Trade and Economics. Since her minions can't travel chronologically the way she does, booking time on a Dimensional Scanner is often difficult and involves a lot of bureaucratic wrangling.

Game Information: Clairsentience (Sight Group), Dimensional (any dimension), Multiple Perception Points (16,000), Mobile Perception Point (1,536m per Phase movement), MegaRange (1m = one-tenth the size of Earth's dimension, see page 97 regarding dimensional sizes; +10), MegaScale (1m of Mobile Perception Point movement = 1,000 light-years; +5) (2,240 Active Points); OAF Immobile (-2), Concentration (1/2 DCV throughout use; -1/2), Dimensional Viewing Only (-1/2), Extra Time (Full Phase; -1/2). Total cost: 498 points.



D-PORTAL

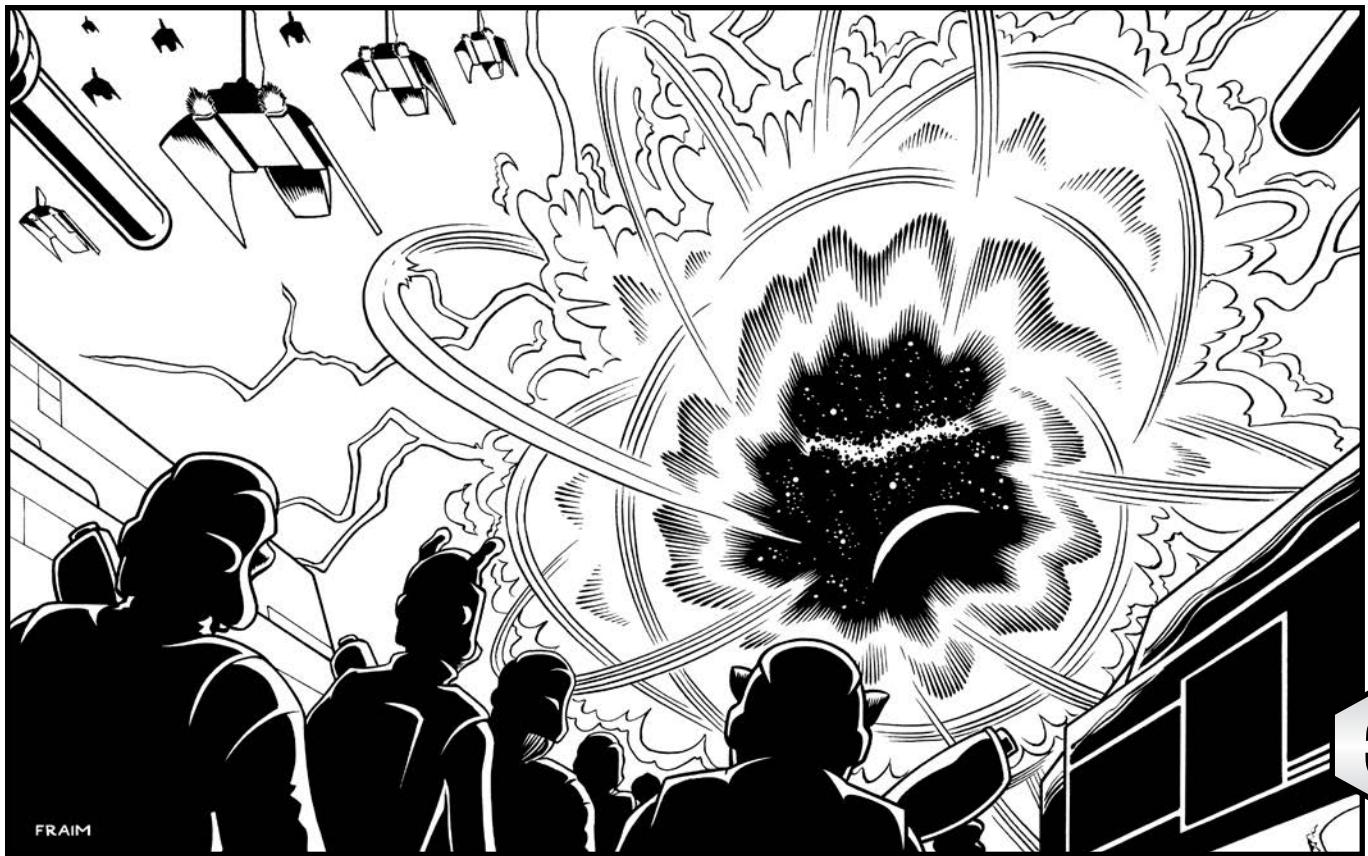
Effect:	Extra-Dimensional Movement (any location in any dimension), Gate
Target:	500m Radius
Duration:	Constant
Range:	Self
END Cost:	126
Breakability:	126 PD/126 ED

Description: A D-Portal (short for Dimensional Portal), also known as a Reality Gate, is a large device that creates an opening from one dimension to another, thus allowing personnel and materiel to travel to another plane. The opening is 500m radius wide so that large vehicles can go through (provided they meet the weight restriction of 50 million tons, more than enough to allow the passage of a large starship and all of its contents). In some instances the operator of a Portal can increase its size or weight allowance by pumping extra power into it (though this is risky; it could cause a short circuit or other malfunction).

To Human eyes a D-Portal looks something like a gigantic gyroscope with twelve gimbals rotating inside one another: the six outer gimbals designate the dimension the gate opens into by the rate, vibration, and harmonics of their spin, while the inner six designate the specific location of the gate within that dimension. When the gimbals reach the proper velocity, they fade into intangibility and the gate opens.

D-Portals are a major imperial asset and are heavily guarded by both the Imperial Legions and the Imperial Security Force. Most major planets in the empire have at least one. When the Empress orders the construction of a D-Portal on a world, it's a sign that that planet has "arrived" in imperial society — that it's loyal and active enough to merit such a resource — or that it's important, heavily populated, or well-placed enough to need one regardless of its loyalty.

Game Information: Extra-Dimensional Movement (any location in any dimension), x500,000 mass (50 million tons), Area Of Effect (500m Radius; +2), Constant (+1/2), Usable Simultaneously (up to eight vehicles at once, provided they and their contents meet the weight restriction; +1) (630 Active Points); OAF Immobile (-2), Extra Time (takes a minimum of 1 Turn and a maximum of about 1 Hour to activate; -3/4), Gate (-1/2), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -1/2). Total cost: 133 points.

**Options:**

1) *T-Portal*: Istvatha V'han has a few D-Portals that also allow her to send personnel and materiel through time as well as space. These are even more well-protected than ordinary D-Portals. Add any physical location at any moment in time. 976 Active Points; total cost 205 points.

2) *Legions D-Portal*: The Imperial Legions has a smaller, less effective version of the D-Portal that it can quickly build on worlds where it's established a beachhead and needs to bring reinforcements and supplies through. Unlike a standard D-Portal, which can open a portal to any dimension, a Legions D-Portal can only access "nearby" dimensions that Istvatha V'han already controls — it has to "home in on" "beacons" her minions construct in dimensions she rules. Change to: Extra-Dimensional Movement (any location in "nearby" dimensions controlled by the Empire), x1,000 mass (100,000 kg), Area Of Effect (64m Radius; +1½), Constant (+½), Usable Simultaneously (up to four vehicles at once, provided they and their contents meet the weight restriction; +¾) (297 Active Points); OAF Immobile (-2), Extra Time (takes a minimum of 1 Turn and a maximum of about 1 Hour to activate; -¾), Gate (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½). Total cost: 62 points.

NOVA IGNITER

Effect:

RKA 1,000d6, MegaScaled to cover an entire solar system

Target:

One solar system, more or less

Duration:

Instant

Range:

15,000,000 km

Charges:

1 Charge which Never Recovers

Breakability:

18,000 PD/18,000 ED

Description: The single most feared weapon in the arsenal of the Imperial Legions, used only when absolutely necessary, is the Nova Igniter. This bomb plunges into the heart of a star where it initiates a reaction that causes the star to go supernova in mere minutes. (Once started the process cannot be stopped.) The exploding star does enough damage to destroy everything within its solar system, and possibly beyond (the GM may also want to address the effects of the wavefront of radiation and pressure on nearby systems and starships). Given the weapon's relatively limited range (7.5 million km), it has to be launched by a robotic ship, a suicide vessel, or a ship with enough FTL capacity to escape from the system in time.

Game Information: RKA 1,000d6, Area Of Effect (1m Radius; +½), MegaScale (covers an entire solar system the size of Earth's; +3½), MegaRange (each 1m of range = 100 km; +1½) (93,750 Active Points); OAF (-1), Extra Time (takes 20 Minutes after weapon enters the star's corrective zone for the supernova to occur; -2½), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4). Total cost: 11,029 points.



PLANETBUSTER BOMB

Effect:	RKA 10d6, MegaScaled to destroy an Earth-size planet
Target:	MegaScaled to cover an Earth-size planet
Duration:	Instant
Range:	750,000 km
Charges:	1 Charge which Never Recovers
Breakability:	150 PD/150 ED

Description: A step down from the Nova Igniter in destructive potential, the ILX-36 Planetary Detonation Device, better known as the Planet-buster Bomb, is designed to destroy entire worlds at a single blow. It's designed primarily for planets of approximately the same size and composition as Earth; blowing up a gas giant would require some modifications and enhancements to the weapon.

The Planetbuster is a favorite of some segments of the Imperial Legions because (as one admiral put it) "a lot of planets aren't worth the trouble it would take to conquer them, and their raw materials can easily be mined from the rubble." The Empress isn't quite so sanguine; as with Nova Igniters, she must personally approve all uses of this weapon.

See SH 230 for more information on destroying planets in the *HERO System*.

Game Information: RKA 10d6 (standard effect: 30 BODY), Area Of Effect (1m Radius; +1/4), MegaScale (affects entire Earth-sized planet; +2), Mega-Range (each 1m of range = 1,000 km; +1 1/4) (750 Active Points); OAF (-1), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4). Total cost: 125 points.



TIME-SHIELDED CAPSULE

Effect:	Change Environment (preserve temporal existence of things/beings in capsule)
Target:	2m Radius
Duration:	Constant
Range:	No Range
END Cost:	2
Breakability:	5 PD/5 ED

Description: On rare occasions Istvatha V'han finds it necessary to use her time travel powers to deliberately change history to remove some existing or potential threat. This usually means preventing some species or civilization from arising. When she does this, she often likes to preserve notable relics or individuals so that whatever she's destroying isn't entirely forgotten. To make that possible she and her best scientists invented the Time-Shielded Capsule. The objects or persons to be preserved are placed in the capsule, which is then specifically programmed to "link" to specific chronal nodes and other "markers." Once the Empress makes whatever changes she has to make, the contents of the Capsule can be removed and will continue to exist despite the fact that the civilization or species that created them no longer ever existed.

Game Information: Change Environment (preserve temporal existence of things/beings in capsule), Area Of Effect (2m Radius; +1/4) (25 Active Points); OAF Immobile (-2), No Range (-1/2). Total cost: 7 points.



TRANSDIMENSIONAL PROBE

Effect:	Detect Nature/Contents Of Dimension 18-
Target:	Self
Duration:	Constant
Range:	Self
END Cost:	5
Breakability:	10 PD/10 ED

Description: One of the things that terrifies Istvatha V'han is the possibility of entering a dimension where her powers don't work (whether because of an extremely low level of ambient magic, natural mystic phenomena that interfere with her powers, or some other reason). If that happened she'd wind up trapped, possibly beyond hope of rescue. To prevent that, whenever possible she sends a Trans-dimensional Probe into another dimension before entering it herself. The Probe can analyze the basic nature of the dimension and let her know with reasonable certainty whether it's safe for her to go there or not.

Game Information: Detect Nature/Contents Of Dimension 18- (Radio Sense Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Dimensional (any dimension) (44 Active Points); OAF Immobile (probe itself, plus console to read/analyze its transmissions; -2), Costs Endurance (-1/2). Total cost: 12 points.

V'HANIAN MILITARY VEHICLES

While Istvatha V'han is best known for her power to travel across dimensions, conquering and traveling within most dimensions typically requires the use of starships. The Imperial Legions has hundreds of millions of starships in its overall fleet, ranging from the gargantuan flagship *Invictor Imperius* to small, one-man fighter craft. Since Human superheroes are likely to find themselves fighting against her ships at some point (as they have in her previous invasion attempts), this section provides character sheets for a few of them. You can easily adapt starships from other *HERO System* books (such as *Star Hero* and *HERO System Vehicles*), since the breadth and diversity of her fleet is as mind-boggling as that of all her other resource bases.

Similarly, the Imperial Legions needs a vast and varied fleet of ground-based vehicles and atmospheric aircraft for many of its missions. A few examples are presented below; again, you can easily find more to adapt in books like *HSV*.

V'hanian ships are designated "IVV," meaning Imperial V'hanian Vessel. Ground vehicles are designated "IVA" for "Imperial V'hanian Army," a centuries-old, obsolete term that's remained in place due to the inertia of the military bureaucracy.

V'HANIAN STARSHIPS

Imperial starships are like most other species's starships in many respects; they have artificial gravity, life support, tractor beams, navigation systems, and so on. However, certain technologies are characteristic of V'han's ships, or are particularly important to the way they function and fight.

POWER

The standard power source for V'hanian starships is an antimatter engine that generates power by annihilating raw matter with antimatter and channeling the energy given off by the explosive reaction. However, some larger or more advanced ships may instead (or in addition) use a more sophisticated (and in some ways still experimental) system called a *transdimensional generator*. V'han's scientists have discovered that in much the same way that the thermoelectric effect can generate electricity, some dimensional barriers can generate vast amounts of energy if a relatively tiny amount of electrical current is sent across them in the

proper way. Initially there was some concern that this might weaken the dimensional barriers in question or create other "environmental" problems, but so far testing and field use of transdimensional generators has not uncovered any serious side effects. Research continues, but the Empress is sufficiently satisfied with the safety and usefulness of the technology to allow engineers to install it on some starships.

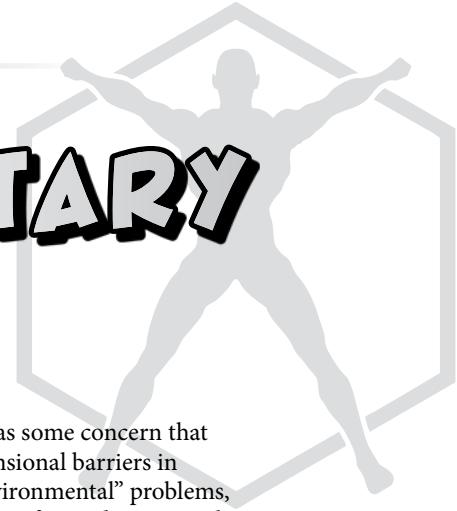
PROPELLION

V'hanian starships' propulsion systems involve extensive use of hyperspace dimensions where the laws of physics don't function quite the same as they do in most Assiatic dimensions (such as Earth's and V'ha's). Due to the altered nature of space in these planes, travel there can be accomplished much more quickly than in normal dimensions, thus providing the ability to travel significantly faster than the speed of light. Through the use of a *hyperspace shunt engine*, a V'hanian ship can shift into hyperspace, fly to a point corresponding to where it wants to be in the dimension it left, and then return to the dimension it left.

In *HERO System* terms, for long journeys this is built as MegaScaled Teleportation with Extra Time, since during a trip a starship doesn't exist in the dimension it left and thus can't be targeted with attacks. For short journeys it's built as Teleportation. The latter is known as a "hyperburst," and allows a starship to flank enemy vessels by teleporting in much the same way D-Soldiers use their Dimensional Shift Harnesses as a tactic against ground-based foes.

Travel at high subluminal speeds is accomplished through a related device called a *hyperspace bridge*. This technology, one of the most advanced and closely guarded in the Empire, allows a ship to *partially* shift into hyperspace. While in this state, a ship can use ordinary energy rockets to fly at velocities approaching the speed of light. "Bridging" also has defensive advantages for a ship, but reduces its offensive power (see below). Smaller ships, such as fighters, that need to remain in normal space when flying at high speeds have powerful energy engines instead.

Some V'hanian starships also incorporate a form of D-Portal technology, allowing them to travel across any dimension they want to.



WEAPONS

The primary weapon mounted on most V'hanian starships is the *ultra-laser*, a high-energy beam powerful enough to penetrate most defensive shields and hulls. Large ships have multiple laser cannons so they can attack targets anywhere around them; smaller ships may only have one or two that point in specific directions.

For longer-range attacks, some ships also carry antimatter torpedoes. These missiles are controlled by the firing ship and can arc around a target to attack from vulnerable angles.

When using the hyperspace bridge for flight and/or defense, a V'hanian ship only partly exists in normal space. Therefore its weapons and attacks aren't as effective. In game terms, they're reduced in power by 25/50/75% depending on the amount of Damage Reduction the ship has (see below).

DEFENSES

Most V'hanian starships feature three primary defensive systems. The first is their sturdy hulls, which are constructed of super-tech metals and plastics to be resistant to most forms of attack.

Second, they mount powerful force-field generators that protect the entire ship. At full effect the field is quite strong, but attacks gradually wear away at it until it collapses. In some cases crucial parts or subsystems of a ship will have their own individual force-field generators to provide extra protection, but this is rare.

Third, the use of the hyperspace bridge (see above) places a ship partly in hyperspace, where weapons fired in normal space can't affect it as easily. In *HERO System* terms this is represented by Damage Reduction that costs END. When a ship uses its hyperspace bridge to travel, it *must* engage this defensive feature (though in the interest of "realism" the GM may ignore the Damage Reduction's END cost in this case). The amount of Damage Reduction in this case depends on how fast the ship's going: if it flies at up to 49% of its maximum speed it gets 25% Damage Reduction; 50-74% of maximum speed gives it 50% Damage Reduction, and 75% or more of maximum speed gives it 75% Damage Reduction.

Alternately, a ship can turn on its hyperspace bridge solely for defensive purposes without moving (in which case the ship must pay the END cost for Damage Reduction). The more the ship shifts into hyperspace, the more protected it is (*i.e.*, the greater its percentage of Damage Reduction, and the more END it pays). However, sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander: weapons that only partly exist in normal space aren't as effective against targets in normal space. In game terms, apply the Damage Reduction percentage (25%/50%/75%) to the damage done by the ship's weapons.

INVICTOR IMPERIUS

Description: The *Invictor Imperius* is the flagship of the V'hanian Empire and Istvatha V'han's personal starship for many state visits, inspection tours, and military campaigns. At four kilometers long and two wide it's virtually a city in space — a city that

INVICTOR IMPERIUS

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
33	Size	165	4 km x 2 km x 2 km; mass 800 mtons; -33 KB; OCV+ 22
175	STR	0	Lift 800 mtons; 3d6 HTH [0]
12	DEX	4	
12	OCV	45	
4	DCV	5	
4	SPD	20	<i>Phases:</i> 3, 6, 9, 12
30	PD	42	
30	ED	42	
400	BODY	357	Total Characteristics Cost: 680

Movement: Ground: 0m
Flight: 120m
FTL Teleportation: up to 2,880 LY/day
Short-Range Teleportation: up to 100 million km

Cost Abilities & Equipment END

Power Systems

154	Transdimensional Generator: Endurance Reserve (900 END, 300 REC)	0
44	Auxiliary Antimatter Power: Endurance Reserve (240 END, 90 REC)	0

OIF Immobile (-1½),
Only Powers Electrical Devices (-¼)

OIF Immobile (-1½),
Only Powers Electrical Devices (-¼)

Propulsion Systems

24	Hyperspace Shunt Engine: Multipower, 60-point reserve	
1f	1) Long-Range FTL Travel: Teleportation 10m	24
1f	MegaScale (1m = 288 light-years; +5); OIF Immobile (-1½), Extra Time (journey takes 1 Minute per light-year traveled; -1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½)	
1f	2) Short-Range FTL Travel: Teleportation 10m	16
32	MegaScale (1m = 10 million km; +2¾); OIF Immobile (-1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½)	
32	Hyperspace Bridge: Flight 120m, x8 Noncombat	13
-12	OIF Immobile (-1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of weapons and requires use of Damage Reduction as described in the rules, always occurs; -1)	
-2	Spaceflight Only: Ground Movement -12m (0m total)	
-2	Spaceflight Only: Swimming -4m (0m total)	



can move at a speed of nearly three thousand light-years per day and mounts ultra-laser weaponry capable of easily cutting most capital ships into floating fragments.

The interior of the ship ranges from utilitarian to ultra-luxurious. The Empress's quarters and associated areas are so comfortable and capable

of accomodating her wishes that it's almost as if she never left one of her palaces. The ship's main areas are also lavishly decorated and appointed, not only for the cosmons' comfort but to impress visiting dignitaries. Other parts of the ship, such as the engine room, aren't much different than on standard V'hian military vessels.

Tactical Systems

164	Main Ultra-Laser Cannon: RKA 12d6	45
	Increased Maximum Range (x64 range, or 115,200m; +1½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 degrees forward, only on same horizontal level; -¾)	
135	Secondary Ultra-Laser Cannons: RKA 10d6	34
	Increased Maximum Range (x32 range, or 48,000m; +1½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 degrees starboard; -½)	
10	Secondary Ultra-Laser Cannons: 3 more Secondary cannons (port, aft, and dorsal) (total of 4)	27
400	Antimatter Missiles: RKA 10d6	[100]
	Area Of Effect (20m Radius Explosion; +½), Mega-Scale (each 1m of Radius is 10km wide, broad, and deep; +1½), Indirect (Source Point is always the starship's torpedo launcher, but Path can vary from use to use; +½), Increased Maximum Range (x250 range, or 375,000m; +2), 100 Charges (+¾); OIF Bulky (-1), Can Be Deflected (-¼)	
34	Force-Field Generator: Resistant Protection (40 PD/40 ED)	24
	OIF Bulky (generator; -1), Ablative (-½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	
24	Hyperspace Bridge Defensive Effect: Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, 75%, Resistant OIF Immobile (-2), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½), Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of weapons in equal proportion, see text, always occurs; -1)	24
9	Ultra-Laser Point Defense System: Deflection OIF Bulky (-1), Only Works Against Physical Projectiles (-¼)	2
	Operations Systems	
114	Sensor Arrays: Variable Power Pool, 100 Pool + 100 Control Cost	var
	OIF Bulky (-1), Only For Senses And Communications (-1), Costs Endurance (-½)	
212	Long-Range Sensors: MegaScale (1 light-year per Active Point; +4½) for any Sensor Pool Sense	var
	OIF Bulky (-1)	
15	Long-Range Sensors: +20 versus Range for Radio Group	var
	OIF Bulky (-1)	
140	Electronic Warfare Systems: Variable Power Pool, 120 Pool + 120 Control Cost	
	OIF Bulky (-1), Only For Electronic Warfare (-1)	
20	Electronic Warfare Defense: Radio Group Flash Defense (20 points)	0
6	Sensor Enhancements: +6 to Systems Operation OIF Bulky (-1)	0
20	Internal Monitors: Clairsentience (Sight And Hearing Groups), 4x Range (up to 1,000m), Mobile Perception Point, Multiple Perception Points (up to eight at once) OAF Immobile (-2), Perception Point Cannot Move Through Solid Objects (-0)	6
4	Navigation Computer: +4 to Navigation roll OIF Bulky (-1)	0
	Personnel Systems	
12	Life Support: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) Costs Endurance (-½)	2
6	Backup Life Support: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) [1cc] Only Within Affected Area (5 x 5 x 2.5 m chamber; -2), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Month; -0)	
45	Backup Life Support: 499 more Backup Life Support chambers (total of 500) [1cc]	
3	Food Supplies: Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat) [1cc] 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Year; -0)	
15	Thibault Gravity Plating: Telekinesis (20 STR) Selective (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1)	3
	Skills/Laboratories	
43	Tactical Systems: +8 with Ranged Combat Costs Endurance (-½)	6
13	Computer Programming 14-	
13	Cryptography 14-	
13	Demolitions 14-	
13	Electronics 14-	
13	Mechanics 14-	
15	Weaponsmith (Firearms, Missiles & Rockets, Incendiary Weapons, Energy Weapons) 14-	
100	Other laboratories (defined by GM or player)	
	Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 1,853	
	Total Vehicle Cost: 2,533	
	Value Complications	
25	Distinctive Features: V'hanian military vessel (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [abject fear])	
15	Physical Complication: Cannot Enter Atmospheres (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)	

Total Complications Points: 40

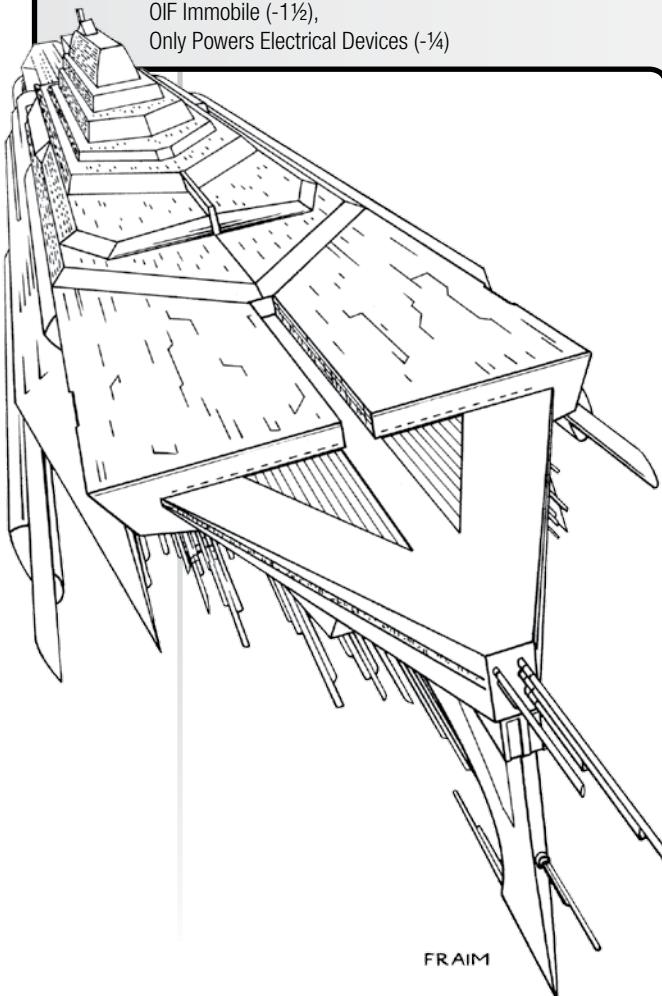
Total Cost: $2,543/5 = 507$

IV HEAVY WARPSHIP

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
30	Size	150	2 km x 1 km x 1 km; mass 100 mtons; -30 KB; OCV+ 20
160	STR	0	Lift 100 mtons; 32d6 HTH [0]
12	DEX	4	
9	OCV	30	
4	DCV	5	
3	SPD	10	Phases: 4, 8, 12
24	PD	33	
24	ED	33	
240	BODY	200	Total Characteristics Cost: 465

Movement: Ground: 0m
Flight: 80m
FTL Teleportation: up to 1,440 LY/day
Short-Range Teleportation:
up to 10 million km

Cost	Abilities & Equipment	END
Power Systems		
98	Transdimensional Generator: Endurance Reserve (600 END, 180 REC) OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Powers Electrical Devices (-¼)	0
29	Auxiliary Antimatter Power: Endurance Reserve (160 END, 60 REC) OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Powers Electrical Devices (-¼)	0



Propulsion Systems

24 **Hyperspace Shunt Engine:** Multipower, 60-point reserve
All OIF Immobile (-1½)

1f **1) Long-Range FTL Travel:** Teleportation 10m 24
MegaScale (1m = 144 light-years; +5); OIF Immobile (-1½), Extra Time (journey takes 1 Minute per light-year traveled; -1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½)

1f **2) Short-Range FTL Travel:** Teleportation 10m 12
MegaScale (1m = 1 million km; +2½); OIF Immobile (-1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½)

22 **Hyperspace Bridge:** Flight 80m, x8 Noncombat 9
OIF Immobile (-1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of weapons and requires use of Damage Reduction as described in the rules, always occurs; -1)

-12 **Spaceflight Only:** Ground Movement -12m (0m total)
-2 **Spaceflight Only:** Swimming -4m (0m total)

Tactical Systems

136 **Main Ultra-Laser Cannon:** RKA 10d6 37
Increased Maximum Range (x64 range, or 96,000m; +1½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 degrees forward, only on same horizontal level; -¾)

108 **Secondary Ultra-Laser Cannons:** RKA 8d6 27
Increased Maximum Range (x32 range, or 38,400m; +1¼); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 degrees starboard; -½)

10 **Secondary Ultra-Laser Cannons:** 3 more Secondary cannons (port, aft, and dorsal) (total of 4) 27

383 **Antimatter Missiles:** RKA 10d6 [64]
Area Of Effect (20m Radius Explosion; +½), Mega-Scale (each 1m of Radius is 10km wide, broad, and deep; +1¼), Indirect (Source Point is always the starship's torpedo launcher, but Path can vary from use to use; +½), Increased Maximum Range (x250 range, or 375,000m; +2), 64 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Can Be Deflected (-¼)

22 **Force-Field Generator:** Resistant Protection (30 PD/30 ED) 27
OIF Bulky (generator; -1), Ablative (-½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1)

24 **Hyperspace Bridge Defensive Effect:** Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, 75%, Resistant 24
OIF Immobile (-2), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½), Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of weapons in equal proportion, see text, always occurs; -1)

9 **Ultra-Laser Point Defense System:** Deflection 2
OIF Bulky (-1), Only Against Physical Projectiles (-¼)

Operations Systems

114	Sensor Arrays: Variable Power Pool, 100 Pool + 100 Control Cost OIF Bulky (-1), Only For Senses And Communications (-1), Costs Endurance (-½)	var
212	Long-Range Sensors: MegaScale (1 light-year per Active Point; +4) for any Sensor Pool Sense OIF Bulky (-1)	var
15	Long-Range Sensors: +20 versus Range for Radio Group OIF Bulky (-1)	var
140	Electronic Warfare Systems: Variable Power Pool, 120 Pool + 120 Control Cost OIF Bulky (-1), Only For Electronic Warfare (-1)	
20	Electronic Warfare Defense: Radio Group Flash Defense (20 points)	0
6	Sensor Enhancements: +6 to Systems Operation OIF Bulky (-1)	0
18	Internal Monitors: Clairsentience (Sight And Hearing Groups), 2x Range (up to 500m), Mobile Perception Point, Multiple Perception Points (up to eight at once) OAF Immobile (-2), Perception Point Cannot Move Through Solid Objects (-0)	
4	Navigation Computer: +4 to Navigation roll OIF Bulky (-1)	0

Personnel Systems

12	Life Support: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) Costs Endurance (-½)	2
6	Backup Life Support: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) Only Within Affected Area (5 x 5 x 2.5 m chamber; -2), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Month; -0)	[1cc]
45	Backup Life Support: 499 more Backup Life Support chambers (total of 500)	[1cc]
3	Food Supplies: Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat) 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Year; -0)	[1cc]
15	Thibault Gravity Plating: Telekinesis (20 STR) Selective (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1)	3

IVV HEAVY WARSHIP

Description: A Heavy Warship is the largest V'hanian ship Human superheroes are ever likely to encounter. Over a mile long on its largest axis, it carries some of the most powerful weaponry in the imperial fleet (and unlike smaller vessels, it powers the weapons directly from the ship's transdimensional generator rather than an individual battery system). It has a crew of just over 1,000 (plus robots) and can travel at the same speed as a war cruiser (1,440 light-years per 24-hour day).

3

Skills/Laboratories

43	Tactical Systems: +8 with Ranged Combat Costs Endurance (-½)	6
15	Computer Programming 15-	
15	Cryptography 15-	
15	Demolitions 15-	
15	Electronics 15-	
15	Mechanics 15-	
17	Weaponsmith (Firearms, Missiles & Rockets, Incendiary Weapons, Energy Weapons) 15-	
150	Other laboratories (defined by GM or player)	

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 1,748**Total Vehicle Cost: 2,213****Value Complications**

25	Distinctive Features: V'hanian military vessel (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [abject fear])
15	Physical Complication: Cannot Enter Atmospheres (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)

Total Complications Points: 40**Total Cost: 2,213/5 = 443**

IVV WAR CRUISER

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
24	Size	120	500 x 500 x 250 m; mass 1.6 mtons; -24 KB; OCV+ 16
130	STR	0	Lift 1.6 mtons; 26d6 HTH [0]
15	DEX	10	
8	OCV	25	
5	DCV	10	
3	SPD	10	Phases: 4, 8, 12
20	PD	27	
20	ED	27	
200	BODY	166	Total Characteristics Cost: 395

Movement: Ground: 0m
 Flight: 80m
 FTL Teleportation: up to 1,440 LY/day
 Short-Range Teleportation: up to 10 million km

Cost	Abilities & Equipment	END
Power Systems		
65	Antimatter Power Plant: Endurance Reserve (320 END, 150 REC) OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Powers Electrical Devices (-¼)	0
20	Auxiliary Power: Endurance Reserve (100 END, 45 REC) OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Powers Electrical Devices (-¼)	0
Propulsion Systems		
24	Hyperspace Shunt Engine: Multipower, 60-point reserve All OIF Immobile (-1½)	
1f	1) Long-Range FTL Travel: Teleportation 10m MegaScale (1m = 144 light-years; +5); OIF Immobile (-1½), Extra Time (journey takes 1 Minute per light-year traveled; -1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½)	24
1f	2) Short-Range FTL Travel: Teleportation 10m MegaScale (1m = 1 million km; +2½); OIF Immobile (-1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½)	12
22	Hyperspace Bridge: Flight 80m, x8 Noncombat OIF Immobile (-1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of weapons and requires use of Damage Reduction as described in the rules, always occurs; -1)	9
-12	Spaceflight Only: Ground Movement -12m (0m total)	
-2	Spaceflight Only: Swimming -4m (0m total)	

Tactical Systems

131	Main Ultra-Laser Cannon: RKA 8d6	[40]
	Increased Maximum Range (x64 range, or 76,800m; +1½), 40 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 degrees forward, only on same horizontal level; -¾)	
90	Secondary Ultra-Laser Cannons: RKA 6d6	[30]
	Increased Maximum Range (x32 range, or 28,800m; +1½), 30 Charges (+¼); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 degrees starboard; -½)	
10	Secondary Ultra-Laser Cannons: 3 more Secondary cannons (port, aft, and dorsal) (total of 4)	[30]
383	Antimatter Missiles: RKA 10d6	[40]
	Area Of Effect (20m Radius Explosion; +½), Mega-Scale (each 1m of Radius is 10km wide, broad, and deep; +1½), Indirect (Source Point is always the starship's torpedo launcher, but Path can vary from use to use; +½), Increased Maximum Range (x250 range, or 375,000m; +2), 40 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Can Be Deflected (-½)	
15	Force-Field Generator: Resistant Protection (20 PD/20 ED)	18
	OIF Bulky (generator; -1), Ablative (-½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1)	
24	Hyperspace Bridge Defensive Effect: Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, 75%, Resistant	24
	OIF Immobile (-2), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½), Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of weapons in equal proportion, see text, always occurs; -1)	
9	Ultra-Laser Point Defense System: Deflection	2
	OIF Bulky (-1), Only Against Physical Projectiles (-¼)	
Operations Systems		
114	Sensor Arrays: Variable Power Pool, 100 Pool + 100 Control Cost	var
	OIF Bulky (-1), Only For Senses And Communications (-1), Costs Endurance (-½)	
212	Long-Range Sensors: MegaScale (1 light-year per Active Point; +4) for any Sensor Pool Sense	var
	OIF Bulky (-1)	
15	Long-Range Sensors: +20 versus Range for Radio Group	var
	OIF Bulky (-1)	
117	Electronic Warfare Systems: Variable Power Pool, 100 Pool + 100 Control Cost	
	OIF Bulky (-1), Only For Electronic Warfare (-1)	
20	Electronic Warfare Defense: Radio Group Flash Defense (20 points)	0
6	Sensor Enhancements: +6 to Systems Operation	0
	OIF Bulky (-1)	
18	Internal Monitors: Clairsentience (Sight And Hearing Groups), 2x Range (up to 500m), Mobile Perception Point, Multiple Perception Points (up to eight at once)	5
	OAF Immobile (-2), Perception Point Cannot Move Through Solid Objects (-0)	
4	Navigation Computer: +4 to Navigation roll	0
	OIF Bulky (-1)	



IVV WAR CRUISER

Description: A War Cruiser is one of the largest, toughest vessels in the typical V'hanian fleet. Fast and maneuverable despite its size, it can travel up to 1,440 light-years per 24-hour day and mounts powerful ultra-lasers (it also carries antimatter torpedoes). It has a crew of 500 cosmons, plus numerous robots.

Personnel Systems

12	Life Support: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) Costs Endurance (-½)	2
6	Backup Life Support: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) Only Within Affected Area (5 x 5 x 2.5 m chamber; -2), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Month; -0)	[1cc]
40	Backup Life Support: 249 more Backup Life Support chambers (total of 250)	[1cc]
3	Food Supplies: Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat) 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Year; -0)	[1cc]
15	Thibault Gravity Plating: Telekinesis (20 STR) Selective (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1)	3

Skills/Laboratories

32	Tactical Systems: +6 with Ranged Combat Costs Endurance (-½)	5
13	Computer Programming 14-	
13	Cryptography 14-	
13	Demolitions 14-	
13	Electronics 14-	
13	Mechanics 14-	
15	Weaponsmith (Firearms, Missiles & Rockets, Incendiary Weapons, Energy Weapons) 14-	
100	Other laboratories (defined by GM or player)	

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 1,575

Total Vehicle Cost: 1,970

Value Complications

25	Distinctive Features: V'hanian military vessel (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [abject fear])
15	Physical Complication: Cannot Enter Atmospheres (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)

Total Complications Points: 40

Total Cost: 1,970/5 = 394

IVV CRUISER

Description: A Cruiser is similar to a War Cruiser, though it's slightly smaller and more agile. (It also has the benefit of the main gun being small enough that it doesn't have to be fixed, giving it a better angle of fire forward.) A common variant is the "Carrier" form of Cruiser, which brings thirty IVV Fighters to the battle and then retrieves them for storage and repair afterward.

IVV CRUISER

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
23	Size	115	400 x 400 x 200 m; mass 800 ktons; -23 KB; OCV+ 15
125	STR	0	Lift 800 ktons; 25d6 HTH [0]
18	DEX	16	
8	OCV	25	
7	DCV	20	
4	SPD	20	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
20	PD	27	
20	ED	27	
180	BODY	146	Total Characteristics Cost: 396

Movement: Ground: 0m
Flight: 90m
FTL Teleportation: up to 1,440 LY/day
Short-Range Teleportation: up to 10 million km

Cost Abilities & Equipment END

Power Systems

64	Antimatter Power Plant: Endurance Reserve (300 END, 150 REC) OIF Immobile (-½), Only Powers Electrical Devices (-¼)	0
20	Auxiliary Power: Endurance Reserve (100 END, 45 REC) OIF Immobile (-½), Only Powers Electrical Devices (-¼)	0

Propulsion Systems

24	Hyperspace Shunt Engine: Multipower, 60-point reserve All OIF Immobile (-½)	
1f	1) Long-Range FTL Travel: Teleportation 10m MegaScale (1m = 144 light-years; +5); OIF Immobile (-½), Extra Time (journey takes 1 Minute per light-year traveled; -½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -½)	24
1f	2) Short-Range FTL Travel: Teleportation 10m MegaScale (1m = 1 million km; +2½); OIF Immobile (-½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -½)	12

25	Hyperspace Bridge: Flight 90m, x8 Noncombat OIF Immobile (-½), Costs Endurance (-½), Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of weapons and requires use of Damage Reduction as described in the rules, always occurs; -1)	10
-12	Spaceflight Only: Ground Movement -12m (0m total)	
-2	Spaceflight Only: Swimming -4m (0m total)	

Tactical Systems

126	Main Ultra-Laser Cannon: RKA 7d6	[60]
	Increased Maximum Range (x64 range, or 67,200m; +1½), 60 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 degrees forward; -½)	
90	Secondary Ultra-Laser Cannons: RKA 6d6	[32]
	Increased Maximum Range (x32 range, or 28,800m; +1½), 32 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 degrees starboard; -½)	
10	Secondary Ultra-Laser Cannons: 3 more Secondary cannons (port, aft, and dorsal) (total of 4)	[32]
383	Antimatter Missiles: RKA 10d6	[35]
	Area Of Effect (20m Radius Explosion; +½), Mega-Scale (each 1m of Radius is 10km wide, broad, and deep; +1½), Indirect (Source Point is always the starship's torpedo launcher, but Path can vary from use to use; +½), Increased Maximum Range (x250 range, or 375,000m; +2), 35 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Can Be Deflected (-½)	
13	Force-Field Generator: Resistant Protection (18 PD/18 ED)	15
	OIF Bulky (generator; -1), Ablative (-½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1)	
24	Hyperspace Bridge Defensive Effect: Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, 75%, Resistant	24
	OIF Immobile (-2), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½), Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of weapons in equal proportion, see text, always occurs; -1)	
9	Ultra-Laser Point Defense System: Deflection	2
	OIF Bulky (-1), Only Works Against Physical Projectiles (-½)	

Operations Systems

103	Sensor Arrays: Variable Power Pool, 90 Pool + 90 Control Cost	var
	OIF Bulky (-1), Costs Endurance (-½), Only For Senses And Communications (-1)	
191	Long-Range Sensors: MegaScale (1 light-year per Active Point; +4½) for any Sensor Pool Sense	var
	OIF Bulky (-1)	
15	Long-Range Sensors: +20 versus Range for Radio Group	var
	OIF Bulky (-1)	
105	Electronic Warfare Systems: Variable Power Pool, 90 Pool + 90 Control Cost	
	OIF Bulky (-1), Only For Electronic Warfare (-1)	
18	Electronic Warfare Defense: Radio Group Flash Defense (18 points)	0
6	Sensor Enhancements: +6 to Systems Operation	0
	OIF Bulky (-1)	
18	Internal Monitors: Clairsentience (Sight And Hearing Groups), 2x Range (up to 400m), Mobile Perception Point, Multiple Perception Points (up to eight at once)	5
	OAF Immobile (-2), Perception Point Cannot Move Through Solid Objects (-0)	
4	Navigation Computer: +4 to Navigation roll	0
	OIF Bulky (-1)	

Personnel Systems

12	Life Support: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum)	2
	Costs Endurance (-½)	
6	Backup Life Support: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum)	[1cc]
	Only Within Affected Area (5 x 5 x 2.5 m chamber; -2), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Month; -0)	
40	Backup Life Support: 224 more Backup Life Support chambers (total of 225)	[1cc]
3	Food Supplies: Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat)	[1cc]
	1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Year; -0)	
15	Thibault Gravity Plating: Telekinesis (20 STR)	3
	Selective (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1)	

Skills/Laboratories

27	Tactical Systems: +5 with Ranged Combat	4
	Costs Endurance (-½)	
11	Computer Programming 13-	
11	Cryptography 13-	
11	Demolitions 13-	
11	Electronics 13-	
11	Mechanics 13-	
13	Weaponsmith (Firearms, Missiles & Rockets, Incendiary Weapons, Energy Weapons) 13-	
90	Other laboratories (defined by GM or player)	

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 1,497**Total Vehicle Cost: 1,893****Value Complications**

25	Distinctive Features: V'hanian military vessel (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [abject fear])
15	Physical Complication: Cannot Enter Atmospheres (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)

Total Complications Points: 40**Total Cost: 1,893/5 = 379****OPTIONS****Cost Option**

67	Carrier: one IVV Fighter
25	Carrier: another 29 IVV Fighters (total of 30)

IVV ESCORT

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
19	Size	95	160 x 80 x 80 m; mass 50 ktons; -23 KB; OCV+ 12
105	STR	0	Lift 200 ktons; 21d6 HTH [0]
18	DEX	16	
8	OCV	25	
8	DCV	25	
4	SPD	20	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
16	PD	21	
16	ED	21	
130	BODY	101	Total Characteristics Cost: 324
Movement:			
Ground: 0m			
Flight: 100m			
FTL Teleportation: up to 1,440 LY/day			
Short-Range Teleportation: up to 10 million km			

Cost	Abilities & Equipment	END
Power Systems		
64	Antimatter Power Plant: Endurance Reserve (300 END, 150 REC) OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Powers Electrical Devices (-¼)	0
20	Auxiliary Power: Endurance Reserve (100 END, 45 REC) OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Powers Electrical Devices (-¼)	0
Propulsion Systems		
24	Hyperspace Shunt Engine: Multipower, 60-point reserve All OIF Immobile (-1½)	
1f	1) Long-Range FTL Travel: Teleportation 10m MegaScale (1m = 144 light-years; +5); OIF Immobile (-1½), Extra Time (journey takes 1 Minute per light-year traveled; -1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½)	24
1f	2) Short-Range FTL Travel: Teleportation 10m MegaScale (1m = 1 million km; +2½); OIF Immobile (-1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½)	12
27	Hyperspace Bridge: Flight 100m, x8 Noncombat OIF Immobile (-1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of weapons and requires use of Damage Reduction as described in the rules, always occurs; -1)	11
-12	Spaceflight Only: Ground Movement -12m (0m total)	
-2	Spaceflight Only: Swimming -4m (0m total)	

IVV ESCORT

Description: An Escort is a fast, maneuverable mid-size ship that accompanies capital ships to provide protection from fighters and other enemy attack ships. They also perform more traditional escort duties such as leading civilian vessels through potentially dangerous areas.

Tactical Systems

120	Main Ultra-Laser Cannon: RKA 6d6	[48]
	Increased Maximum Range (x64 range, or 57,600m; +1½), 48 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (180 degrees forward; -¼)	
83	Secondary Ultra-Laser Cannons: RKA 5d6	[30]
	Increased Maximum Range (x32 range, or 24,000m; +1½), 30 Charges (+¼); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (180 degrees starboard; -¼)	
10	Secondary Ultra-Laser Cannons: 3 more Secondary cannons (port, aft, and dorsal) (total of 4)	[30]
383	Antimatter Missiles: RKA 10d6	[16]
	Area Of Effect (20m Radius Explosion; +½), Mega-Scale (each 1m of Radius is 10km wide, broad, and deep; +1½), Indirect (Source Point is always the starship's torpedo launcher, but Path can vary from use to use; +½), Increased Maximum Range (x250 range, or 375,000m; +2); OIF Bulky (-1), Can Be Deflected (-¼), 16 Charges (-0)	
11	Force-Field Generator: Resistant Protection (15 PD/15 ED)	12
	OIF Bulky (generator; -1), Ablative (-½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1)	
24	Hyperspace Bridge Defensive Effect: Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, 75%, Resistant	24
	OIF Immobile (-2), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½), Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of weapons in equal proportion, see text, always occurs; -1)	
9	Ultra-Laser Point Defense System: Deflection	2
	OIF Bulky (-1), Only Works Against Physical Projectiles (-¼)	
Operations Systems		
91	Sensor Arrays: Variable Power Pool, 80 Pool + 80 Control Cost	var
	OIF Bulky (-1), Costs Endurance (-½), Only For Senses And Communications (-1)	
170	Long-Range Sensors: MegaScale (1 light-year per Active Point; +4½) for any Sensor Pool Sense	var
	OIF Bulky (-1)	
13	Long-Range Sensors: +18 versus Range for Radio Group	var
	OIF Bulky (-1)	
93	Electronic Warfare Systems: Variable Power Pool, 80 Pool + 80 Control Cost	
	OIF Bulky (-1), Only For Electronic Warfare (-1)	
15	Electronic Warfare Defense: Radio Group Flash Defense (15 points)	0
5	Sensor Enhancements: +5 to Systems Operation	0
	OIF Bulky (-1)	
17	Internal Monitors: Clairsentience (Sight And Hearing Groups), Mobile Perception Point, Multiple Perception Points (up to eight at once)	5
	OAF Immobile (-2), Perception Point Cannot Move Through Solid Objects (-0)	
3	Navigation Computer: +3 to Navigation roll	0
	OIF Bulky (-1)	



IVV SCOUT/EXPLORER

Description: The IVV Scout/Explorer is a small vessel (most versions carry just two personnel) that serves various related functions. For the military, it mainly serves as a scout, seeking out the enemy or learning the “lay of the land” in space near the main fleet. For the Imperial Scout Service (see page 70) it’s one of the primary ships used for near-space exploration (and even a few deeper space missions). The Imperial Intelligence Command (see page 71) also uses the Scout/Explorer for various covert activities.

Personnel Systems

12	Life Support: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) Costs Endurance (-½)	2
6	Backup Life Support: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) Only Within Affected Area (5 x 5 x 2.5 m chamber; -2), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Month; -0)	[1cc]
35	Backup Life Support: 124 more Backup Life Support chambers (total of 125)	[1cc]
3	Food Supplies: Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat) 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Year; -0)	[1cc]
15	Thibault Gravity Plating: Telekinesis (20 STR) Selective (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1)	3

Skills/Laboratories

21	Tactical Systems: +4 with Ranged Combat Costs Endurance (-½)	3
11	Computer Programming 13-	
11	Cryptography 13-	
11	Demolitions 13-	
11	Electronics 13-	
11	Mechanics 13-	
13	Weaponsmith (Firearms, Missiles & Rockets, Incendiary Weapons, Energy Weapons) 13-	
80	Other laboratories (defined by GM or player)	

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 1,410

Total Vehicle Cost: 1,734

Value Complications

25	Distinctive Features: V’hanian military vessel (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [abject fear])
15	Physical Complication: Cannot Enter Atmospheres (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)

Total Complications Points: 40

Total Cost: 1,734/5 = 347

The Scout/Explorer has several features that set it apart from the larger ships described above. First, it can enter atmospheres. Usually this simply helps the crew on their missions of exploration, but in some military encounters it’s tactically advantageous as well. Second, and more importantly much of the time, it’s a sneaky little ship. The standard version has a hull that’s shaped to avoid most Radio Group-based sensor systems and is painted to blend in with the dark of space (so its penalties to Sight Group Senses don’t apply in situations where that would make it stand out). The shape of the hull has the additional benefit of making the ship look far less threatening than a typical V’hanian military vessel.

The IIC version of the Scout takes the stealth concept one step further and incorporates a full-blown cloaking field. This field isn’t compatible with the ship’s defensive force-field; the pilot has to choose to be stealthy or secure. Ships used by Scouts who explore sensitive areas of the Multiverse sometimes also come equipped with cloak-fields.

IVV FIGHTER

Description: The IVV Fighter is the standard one-man fighter of the Imperial Legions. It mounts a single ultra-laser cannon forward.

IVV SCOUT/EXPLORER

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
10	Size	50	20 x 10 x 10 m; mass 100 tons; -10 KB; OCV+6
60	STR	0	Lift 100 tons; 12d6 HTH [0]
20	DEX	20	
8	OCV	25	
8	DCV	25	
4	SPD	20	Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
12	PD	15	
12	ED	15	
50	BODY	30	Total Characteristics Cost: 200

Movement: Ground: 0m
Flight: 80m
FTL Teleportation: up to 100 LY/day
Short-Range Teleportation:
up to 1 million km

Cost Abilities & Equipment END

Power Systems

27	Antimatter Power Plant: Endurance Reserve (160 END, 51 REC) OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Powers Electrical Devices (-¼)	0
13	Auxiliary Power: Endurance Reserve (80 END, 24 REC) OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Powers Electrical Devices (-¼)	0

Propulsion Systems				
18	Hyperspace Shunt Engine: Multipower, 45-point reserve All OIF Immobile (-1½)	3	Navigation Computer: +3 to Navigation roll OIF Bulky (-1)	0
1f	1) Long-Range FTL Travel: Teleportation 10m MegaScale (1m = 10 light-years; +4½); OIF Immobile (-1½), Extra Time (journey takes 14 Minutes per light-year traveled; -2), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½)	16	Personnel Systems	
1f	2) Short-Range FTL Travel: Teleportation 10m MegaScale (1m = 100,000 km; +2¼); OIF Immobile (-1½), Increased Endurance Cost (x4 END; -1½)	12	Life Support: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) Costs Endurance (-½)	2
24	Hyperspace Bridge: Flight 80m, x16 Noncombat OIF Immobile (-1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of weapons and requires use of Damage Reduction as described in the rules, always occurs; -1)	9	Backup Life Support: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) [1cc] Only Within Affected Area (5 x 5 x 2.5 m chamber; -2), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Month; -0)	
-12	Spaceflight Only: Ground Movement -12m (0m total)	10	Backup Life Support: 3 more Backup Life Support chambers (total of 4) [1cc]	
-2	Spaceflight Only: Swimming -4m (0m total)	3	Food Supplies: Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat) 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Year; -0)	[1cc]
Tactical Systems			Thibault Gravity Plating: Telekinesis (20 STR) Selective (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Only To Pull Objects Straight Down To The Floor (-1)	3
73	Ultra-Laser Cannon: RKA 4d6 Increased Maximum Range (x32 range, or 19,200m; +1¼), 35 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (180 degrees forward; -½)	[35]	Skills/Laboratories	
9	Force-Field Generator: Resistant Protection (12 PD/12 ED) OIF Bulky (generator; -1), Ablative (-½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1)	12	Tactical Systems: +1 with Ranged Combat Costs Endurance (-½)	1
24	Hyperspace Bridge Defensive Effect: Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, 75%, Resistant OIF Immobile (-2), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½), Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of weapons in equal proportion, see text, always occurs; -1)	24	2 Computer Programming 10- 2 Cryptography 10- 2 Demolitions 10- 2 Electronics 10- 2 Mechanics 10- 50 Other laboratories (defined by GM or player)	
18	Stealth Hull: Change Environment (-6 to Radio Group PER Rolls to perceive the ship) Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Range (-½)	0	Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 643	
3	Low-Albedo Hull: Change Environment (-2 to Sight Group PER Rolls to perceive the ship) Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No Range (-½), Only When In Space (see text; -½)	0	Total Vehicle Cost: 843	
Operations Systems			Value Complications	
91	Sensor Arrays: Variable Power Pool, 80 Pool + 80 Control Cost OIF Bulky (-1), Costs Endurance (-½), Only For Senses And Communications (-1)	var	20 Distinctive Features: V'hanian military vessel (Not Concealable; Causes Major Reaction [concern/fear])	
170	Long-Range Sensors: MegaScale (1 light-year per Active Point; +4) for any Sensor Pool Sense OIF Bulky (-1)	var	Total Complications Points: 20	
13	Long-Range Sensors: +18 versus Range for Radio Group OIF Bulky (-1)	var	Total Cost: 843/5 = 169	
47	Electronic Warfare Systems: Variable Power Pool, 40 Pool + 40 Control Cost OIF Bulky (-1), Only For Electronic Warfare (-1)		OPTIONS	
8	Electronic Warfare Defense: Radio Group Flash Defense (8 points)	0	Cost Option	
5	Sensor Enhancements: +5 to Systems Operation OIF Bulky (-1)	0	+13 IIC Scout: Replace Force-Field Generator with this Multipower:	
			20 Field Generator: Multipower, 36-points reserve; all IIF Bulky (-¾)	
			1f 1) Force-Field: Resistant Protection (12 PD/12 ED); IIF Bulky (-¾), Ablative (-½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1)	
			1f 2) Cloaking Field: Invisibility to Sight and Radio Groups; IIF Bulky (-¾), Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1)	
			+0 High-Speed Scout: Decrease Extra Time on Teleportation to 1 light-year per 5 Minutes	
			14 Portal-Capable Scout: Add Extradimensional Movement (physical location in any dimension corresponding to the ship's location in the dimension it's currently in); OIF Immobile (-1½), Costs Endurance (-½)	

IV FIGHTER

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
4	Size	20	5 x 2.5 x 2.5 m; mass 1.6 tons; -4 KB; OCV+2
30	STR	0	Lift 1.6 tons; 6d6 HTH [0]
20	DEX	20	
6	OCV	15	
10	DCV	35	
4	SPD	20	<i>Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12</i>
10	PD	12	
10	ED	12	
25	BODY	11	Total Characteristic Cost: 145

Movement: Ground: 0m
Flight: 120m
FTL Teleportation: up to 100 LY/day
Short-Range Teleportation:
up to 10,000 km

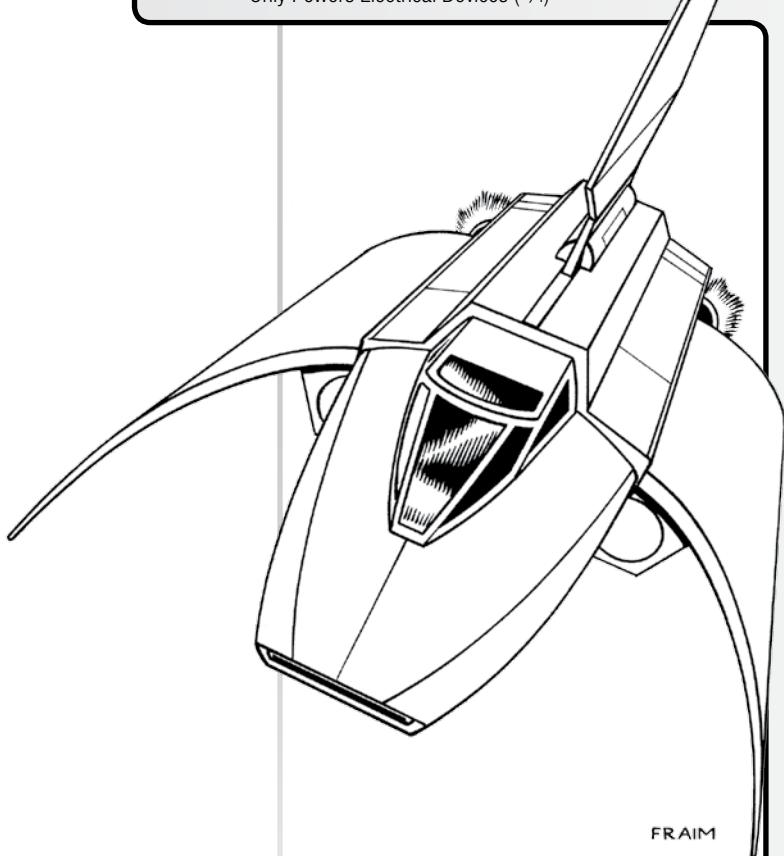
Cost Abilities & Equipment

Power Systems

27	Fusion Power Plant: Endurance Reserve (160 END, 51 REC) OIF Immobile (-1½), Only Powers Electrical Devices (-½)	0
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END

3



Propulsion Systems

8	Hyperspace Shunt Engine: Teleportation 10m MegaScale (1m = 1,000 km; +1½); OIF Immobile (-1½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	6
47	Energy Engines: Flight 120m, x8 Noncombat OIF Immobile (-1½), Costs Half Endurance (-½)	6
-12	Spaceflight Only: Ground Movement -12m (0m total)	
-2	Spaceflight Only: Swimming -4m (0m total)	

Tactical Systems

66	Ultra-Laser Cannon: RKA 4d6 Increased Maximum Range (x32 range, or 19,200m; +1½), 64 Charges (+½); OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 degrees forward; -½)	[64]
9	Force-Field Generator: Resistant Protection (12 PD/12 ED) OIF Bulky (generator; -1), Ablative (-½), Costs Endurance (-½), Increased Endurance Cost (x3 END; -1)	12

Operations Systems

6	Sensor Arrays: Variable Power Pool, 20 Pool + 20 Control Cost OIF Bulky (-1), Costs Endurance (-½), Only For Senses And Communications (-1)	var
9	Long-Range Sensors: +12 versus Range for Radio Group OIF Bulky (-1)	var
5	Electronic Warfare Defense: Radio Group Flash Defense (5 points)	0

Personnel Systems

12	Life Support: Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Radiation, Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum) Costs Endurance (-½)	2
3	Food Supplies: Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat) 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replaced from sources outside the ship; 1 Day; -0)	[1cc]

Skills/Laboratories

11	Tactical Systems: +2 with Ranged Combat Costs Endurance (-½)	2
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Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 189

Total Vehicle Cost: 334

Value Complications

20	Distinctive Features: V'hanian military vessel (Not Concealable; Causes Major Reaction [fear])
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Total Complications Points: 20

Total Cost: 335/5 = 67

V'HANIAN PLANETARY VEHICLES

The Imperial Legions groups all vehicles intended solely for travel on a planet into a broad organizational category distinct from space vessels. It includes ground vehicles, wet navy ships, and aircraft incapable of leaving the atmosphere.

IVA HOVERTANK

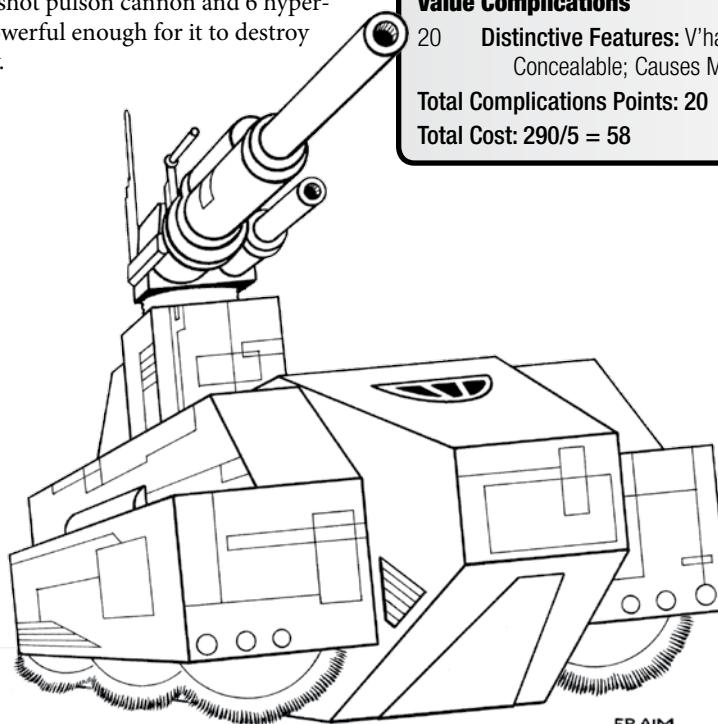
Description: The HoverTank is a standard front-line military vehicle employed by the Imperial Legions. Although the designation “tank” makes it sound like a land-bound vehicle, it’s fully hover-capable (in short, it can fly). Fast, maneuverable, well-armored, and able to carry up to half a dozen fully-equipped D-Soldiers as its crew, it packs a potent offensive punch. Its main weapon is a large pulson cannon on a 60-degree swivel mount; it has four secondary guns equidistantly spaced around the rest of its hull.

IVA TRANSPORT

Description: The IVA Transport is an example of a more utilitarian vehicle: a large, all-purpose, limited-height hovercraft designed for troop transport. It can carry a dozen D-Soldiers in addition to its pilot, or more if they’re all reallllly friendly. A smaller version that carries only three passengers is the V’hanian equivalent of a Jeep or HUMVEE.

IVA HOVERJET III-A

Description: The IVA Hoverjet III-A is one of the main fighter aircraft of the Imperial Legions. Its omnidirectional hoverjets allow it to move at high speed and with great maneuverability and its weapons — a 16-shot pulson cannon and 6 hypermissiles — are powerful enough for it to destroy most foes quickly.



IVA HOVERTANK

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
4	Size	20	5 x 2.5 x 2.5 m; mass 1.6 tons; -4 KB; OCV+ 2
30	STR	0	Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 HTH damage [0]
16	DEX	12	
5	OCV	10	
5	DCV	10	
3	SPD	10	Phases: 4, 8, 12
15	PD	19	
15	ED	20	
40	BODY	26	Total Characteristics Cost: 127

Movement: Ground: 12m
Flight: 80m

Cost	Abilities & Equipment	END
85	Hoverjets: Flight 80m, x4 Noncombat	0
-2	Hover Only: Swimming -4m (0m total)	
30	Main Pulson Gun: RKA 5d6 [16] OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -½), 16 Charges (-0)	
18	Secondary Pulson Guns: RKA 3d6 [16] OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -½), 16 Charges (-0)	
10	Secondary Guns: total of 4 Secondary Guns [16]	
16	Sensor-Scope: Radar (Radio Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Telescopic (+14 versus Range Modifier)	0
6	Communicator Panel: HRRP (Radio Group) OIF Bulky (-1)	0

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 163

Total Vehicle Cost: 290

Value Complications

20 **Distinctive Features:** V’hanian military vehicle (Not Concealable; Causes Major Reaction [fear, awe])

Total Complications Points: 20

Total Cost: 290/5 = 58

VH TRANSPORT

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
6	Size	30	8 x 4 x 4 m; mass 6.4 tons; -6 KB; OCV+ 4
40	STR	0	Lift 6.4 tons; 8d6 HTH damage [0]
16	DEX	12	
4	OCV	5	
4	DCV	5	
3	SPD	10	<i>Phases: 4, 8, 12</i>
12	PD	15	
12	ED	15	
30	BODY	14	Total Characteristics Cost: 106

Movement: Ground: 12m
Flight: 40m

Cost Abilities & Equipment END

54	Hoverjets: Flight 40m, x4 Noncombat	0
	No Turn Mode (+1/4), Sideways Maneuverability (+1/4); Must Remain Within 5m Of A Surface (-1/4)	
-2	Hover Only: Swimming -4m (0m total)	
18	Main Pulson Gun: RKA 3d6	[16]
	OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -1/2), 16 Charges (-0)	
6	Communicator Panel: HRRP (Radio Group)	0
	OIF Bulky (-1)	

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 76

Total Vehicle Cost: 182

Value Complications

20	Distinctive Features: V'harian military vehicle (Not Concealable; Causes Major Reaction [fear, awe])
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Total Complications Points: 20

Total Cost: 182/5 = 36

3

VH HOVERJET III-A

Val	Char	Cost	Notes
8	Size	40	12.5 x 6.4 x 6.4 m; mass 25 tons; -8 KB; OCV+ 5
50	STR	0	Lift 25 tons; 10d6 HTH damage [0]
24	DEX	28	
8	OCV	25	
8	DCV	25	
4	SPD	20	<i>Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12</i>
10	PD	12	
10	ED	12	
30	BODY	12	Total Characteristics Cost: 174

Movement: Ground: 0m
Flight: 120m

Cost Abilities & Equipment END

195	Hoverjets: Flight 120m, x8 Noncombat	0
	No Turn Mode (+1/4), Sideways Maneuverability (+1/4)	
-12	Flies Only: Ground Movement -12m (0m total)	
-2	Flies Only: Swimming -4m (0m total)	
24	Main Pulson Gun: RKA 4d6	[16]
	OIF Bulky (-1), Limited Arc Of Fire (60 Degrees; -1/2), 16 Charges (-0)	
82	Hypermissiles: RKA 6d6	[6]
	Area Of Effect (20m Radius Explosion; +1/2), Indirect (Source Point is always the hoverjet, but Path can vary from use to use; +1/2), Increased Maximum Range (x8 range, or 7,200m; +3/4); OIF Bulky (-1), Can Be Deflected (-1/4), 6 Charges (-3/4)	
16	Sensor-Scope: Radar (Radio Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Telescopic (+14 versus Range Modifier)	0
	OIF Bulky (-1)	
6	Communicator Panel: HRRP (Radio Group)	0
	OIF Bulky (-1)	

Total Abilities & Equipment Cost: 309

Total Vehicle Cost: 483

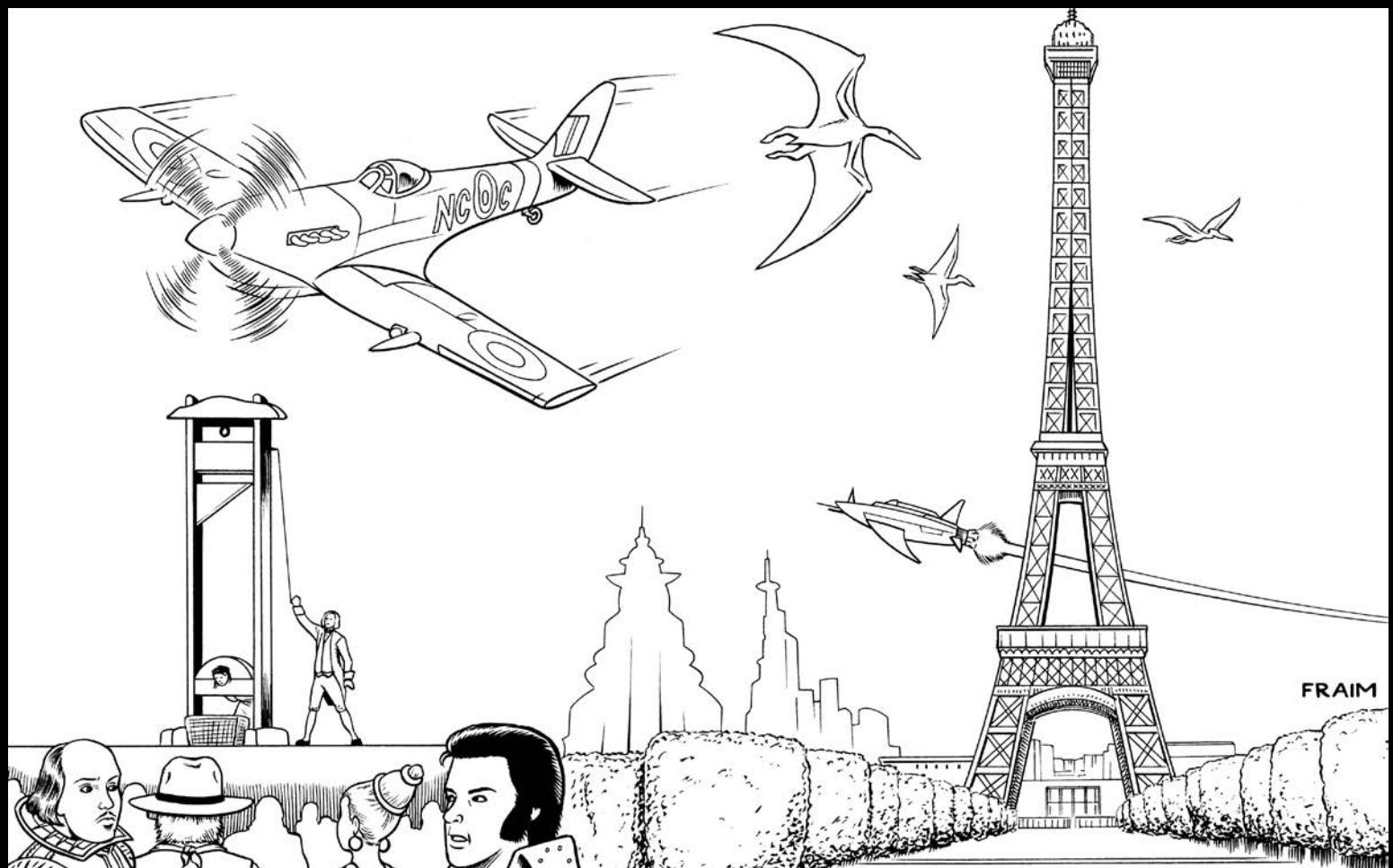
Value Complications

20	Distinctive Features: V'harian military vehicle (Not Concealable; Causes Major Reaction [fear, awe])
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Total Complications Points: 20

Total Cost: 483/5 = 96

CHAPTER FOUR



THE MULTIVERSE



THE FOUR WORLDS

The Champions Universe extends beyond Earth's space-time continuum into countless other spaces, realms, and dimensions. As a whole, these form the *Multiverse* — the totality of existence. Istvatha V'han's empire encompasses millions of these dimensions; others are ruled by Skarn the Shaper, Tyrannon the Conqueror, other powerful beings, or have no ruler at all.

Traveling through the Multiverse is most often accomplished by mystic means: spells; arcane gates; items of power. Thus the terms and framework used for studying the nature of the Multiverse tend to come from the mystic disciplines. However, it's possible to breach dimensional barriers using super-science, as Istvatha V'han and her technology so starkly demonstrate. But even though she doesn't cast spells to travel through the planes of Reality, V'han herself uses much the same mystic terminology to describe the territories of her realm and how they're accessed as, say, Witchcraft or the Demonologist would.

This chapter describes what knowledgeable beings in the Champions Universe (primarily, but not exclusively, mystics) know about their Multiverse... or think they know. For ease of campaigning you should assume that other dimensions and civilizations have (or will eventually learn) much the same information, except where the text indicates otherwise. Anyone who, like Istvatha V'han, has relevant Skills — such as Navigation (Dimensional), KS: Dimensions, or KS: Dimensional History — may know much more than average about the Multiverse and how it works.

THE BASICS OF THE MULTIVERSE

The Multiverse contains more dimensions than anyone can count — even Istvatha V'han, and she has thousands upon thousands of highly intelligent subjects who analyze such things for her. Anyone who studies the Multiverse tries to make sense of it all by classifying dimensions into some sort of structure. The structures imposed by these schools of thought often differ based on culture, species, or other factors.

On Earth, Western mystics use the language of Kabbalism to describe the general arrangement of the Multiverse as they perceive it. Many other Human occultists have adopted this scheme as well, but some use other methods, or perceive the dimensional structure differently. The V'hanian Empire uses other terms, of course, but generally arranges/categorizes the Multiverse in a very similar way.

This method divides reality into four levels of being, which mystics call *the Four Worlds*:

- *Assiah*, the Material World. Assiah contains the universes that run by the purely material principles of natural law. Earth's plane is a typical example; so are the various "alternate Earths" superheroines sometimes visit. Inhabitants of Asiatic planes may *use* magic, but their worlds typically don't *run by* magic.
- *Yetzirah*, the Formative or Astral World. The planes of Yetzirah *do* run by magic. On these dimensions, symbols and beliefs control matter and energy. An *Astral Plane* links the myriad dimensions of Assiah and Yetzirah. (That's why mystics call Yetzirah the "Astral World.")
- *Briah*, the Creative or Mental World. The worlds of Briah are completely spiritual. They embody concepts, states of mind, and abstract aspects of Reality such as Time, Death, or Number. They aren't made of matter at all. Conceptual entities — the truly cosmic beings — dwell on these dimensions.
- *Atziluth*, the Archetypal World. Atziluth contains the ultimate aspects of Reality, beyond time, space and even separation into distinct entities. Only the most powerful and enlightened mystics can even perceive Atziluthic planes in visions, let alone travel there physically.

All the myriad dimensions fit within these four layers. V'han's empire mostly consists of Asiatic and some Yetziratic dimensions, whereas Skarn and Tyrannon focus more on Yetzirah (and to a very slight extent Briah). The Atziluthic dimensions (and many Briatic ones) are too "abstract" to be part of any dimensional conqueror's empire.

THE SEPHIROTHIC TREE OF LIFE

Mystics superimpose a more detailed scheme called the Tree of Life over the general plan of the Four Worlds (scientists are more likely to refer to this scheme as the “tree of dimensions” or “multiversal system”). The Tree of Life consists of the ten “Sephiroth” (emanations from God) cascading down from Kether (“the Crown”) through various concepts to Malkuth (“the Kingdom”). Western occultists use the Sephiroth to subdivide the planes into various groupings of “related” dimensions. Mystics endlessly argue details about which planes belong in which sephiroth (and scientists have debates of their own), but they agree on the general classification scheme. The layers of Atziluth, Briah, and Yetzirah each contain three of the sephiroth; Assiah receives just one.

ASSIAH

The bottom of the Tree of Life holds *Malkuth*, the Kingdom or material world. Earth’s dimension is a Malkuth dimension, and if a world resembles Earth in important ways, most students of the subject assign it to Malkuth.

On the other hand, Assiah also includes dimensions whose systems of natural law make them very unlike Earth and its cosmos. Every Malkuth-world is in Assiah, but not every Assiatic realm is in Malkuth. Careless scholars sometimes mix up these divisions, though.

Some mystics confuse the Hebrew *Assiah* with the Greek *Asia* (from *Askia*, “Place Without Shadows,” originally a reference to southern Turkey). Mystics’ narratives of “travels in Asia” may have caused those old stories about India and Central Asia being inhabited by cyclopes, dog-headed men, and other strange creatures.

Because Assiatic realms typically don’t run by magic or feature common or widespread use of magic, they’re rarely the home of, and are of relatively less interest to, mystic dimension lords like Tyrannon and Skarn. On the other hand they’re the preferred territory of Empress Istvatha. However, some Assiatic planes possess great power or potential for power, making them desirable acquisitions for dimension lords; Earth’s plane seems particularly valuable to many such beings.

ALTERNATE EARTHS

Malkuth includes an enormous, perhaps infinite, variety of what Humans call “alternate Earths” — dimensions that are just like Earth’s except for some sort of recognizable change, be it minor or major. Examples include Britworld, Left-Handed Earth, Malvaworld, Popeworld, and Powerworld (see pages 129-38).

Dimensional travelers have long experience with powers that seem to change history, such as a demon who grants a pacter’s wish to occupy high office, or spells to pull the *It’s A Wonderful Life* trick

of showing how the world would change if a person never lived. Until the Superheroic Age, however, mystics never imagined that alternate Earths could maintain a permanent existence, as “real” as the mystic’s own world. But superheroes have visited many such alternate Earths during the Superheroic Age, and those dimensions seem to be as “real,” and to have as extensive histories as, Earth’s own.

Scholars still don’t know what to make of parallel worlds. They frequently debate several key questions. First, the use of the term “alternate” implies that there could be one “true Earth” (or true version of any other inhabited dimension that has alternates; see below) from which all “alternates” spring. If so, it might be desirable to be able to identify the “true Earth” and to study how the alternates arose and how much they vary from the true. Unfortunately no one has yet devised any reliable method for identifying the true Earth (or the true version of any other dimension). (V’han has never succeeding in doing so despite centuries of study, though she assumes her native dimension is the original for all alternate V’has.) Some mystics have tried to use methods of analysis similar to how linguists identify and extrapolate missing words from dead languages, but this has led to nothing but even more arguments. On the other hand, some scholars claim that “alternate” only means “different from the observer’s home version of that dimension,” that all alternates are equally “true,” and that any efforts to identify one dimension as the “true Earth” are an utter waste of time.

Second, does every Assiatic dimension have alternate histories? Based on both logic and a few reports from dimension-traveling superheroes, it seems that only a few Assiatic dimensions (and possibly some dimensions in other parts of the Multiverse) do (see below). However, it may be that most beings (aside from natural dimension travelers like Istvatha V’han) have difficulty reaching alternate versions of dimensions other than their own. If so, that lends credence to the theory that there’s such a thing as a “true Earth,” since presumably Human superheroes visiting other dimensions are traveling to the “true” versions of them.

Third, is there an infinite number of any given being? This one scholars can answer with reasonable assurance: yes, for *most* beings. A few powerful entities are “dimensionally unique,” meaning there’s only one of them in all the infinite realities. As discussed on page 24, Istvatha V’han is definitely one such person, as are certain ultra-powerful cosmic beings (such as the Galaxars; see *Champions Beyond*, pages 41-48). But aside from those rare exceptions, there seem to be many “duplicates” of most beings. For example, many of the alternate Earths have alternate versions of the Champions superhero team. Some are virtually identical to the Champions of Earth, while others have only the barest similarities. For example, the Champions of Left-Handed Earth (page 133) are “evil twins” of Earth’s Champions — highly-feared villains instead of beloved, respected heroes.

DIMENSIONAL SIZE

Dimensions vary greatly in size. On the upper end are dimensions such as Earth and V’ha (and their various alternates), which include more galaxies and intergalactic space than the sentient mind can comfortably encompass. Conquering such dimensions often takes Istvatha V’han decades, if not longer, though the vast resources they possess makes the effort worthwhile. On the opposite end of the spectrum are “pocket dimensions” that a traveler with a fast starship could cross in a day or less. Smaller dimensions often possess unusual physical/mystical properties that make them valuable, or are repositories for rare substances of great worth.

According to the Ministry of Interdimensional Relations, the average dimension in the V’hanian Empire is approximately twice the size of the Milky Way Galaxy, and roughly as populated with stars and planets (assuming it has stars and planets at all). Dimensions the size of Earth’s or V’ha’s constitute 22% of the imperial holdings.

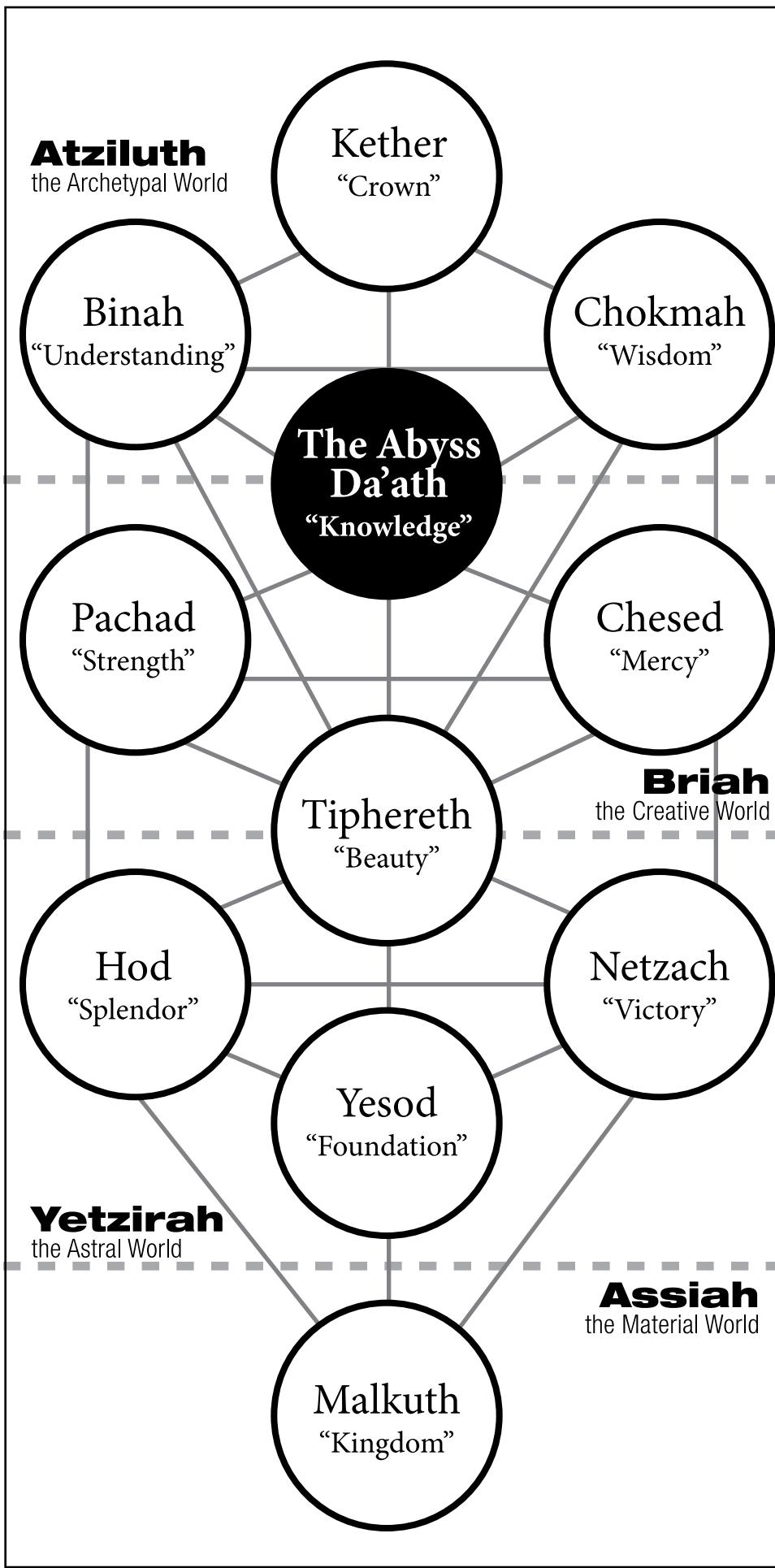
THE COSMIC AXIS

The “Cosmic Axis” is a term used by some scholars (primarily scientists, not mystics) to refer to a series of Assiatic dimensions that, according to some mapping schemes, form an “axis” running through Earth’s dimension.

According to most estimates, the number of dimensions in the Axis is about 200, though some studies claim it includes as many as 300 or as few as 60. Approximately half of them are “alternate Earth” dimensions; the others differ from Earth’s plane to greater or lesser degree (though almost all of them are Malkuth dimensions, and thus material worlds with their own systems of natural laws). Earth’s dimension is located about two-thirds of the way “up” the Axis.

For reasons not understood by Human scholars, the infamous Janus Key (see CU 16) allows its possessor to travel to any dimension in the Cosmic Axis. Most people assume the Key is a magical artifact, and it does seem to possess some mystical properties, but a few scholars argue that it’s an extra-dimensional artifact of some kind that operates on purely scientific principles not yet understood by Humanity.

4



The mystic masters of the Outer Planes don't seem to have heard of parallel dimensions; perhaps to them, all lesser planes are as one. For the most part, travel between alternate Earths is limited to time machines, dimension-traveling vehicles, and rare, innate superpowers (such as those of Istvatha V'han).

Spells for time travel or changing history call power from Brialic dimensions such as the Stream of Eternity, or cosmic entities like Los the Smith, an aspect of Urthona. Because of this, some mystical theorists speculate that alternate Earths exist in a hitherto-unknown Brialic plane where all possibilities become real. Other mystics caution, however, that the Tree of Life model may be incomplete: perhaps mystics flat-out cannot access certain aspects of the Multiverse. Only the GM knows for sure.

See page 129 for further discussion of alternate Earths.

ALTERNATE OTHER DIMENSIONS

Earth's dimension isn't the only one to have "alternate" versions. Most dimensions are unique (though there may be many dimensions that are similar to some degree to any given dimension). However, a few dimensions spawn so many alternate dimensions that determining which one was the original (if, in fact, there ever was one) has so far proven impossible. Istvatha V'han and her scientists refer to these as "keystone" dimensions, on the assumption that they're somehow fundamental to the structure of the Multiverse. Known keystone dimensions include:

- V'ha (all theoretically springing from V'ha-1, V'han's native dimension)
- Earth (including Earth-1346, the Champions Universe Earth)
- Harshazent
- Lungorin
- Sirmilor
- Tau'valion

All of these dimensions are more or less similar to V'ha's and Earth's in size and nature, though there are some differences. Tau'valion, for example, has about a fifty percent greater amount/level of magic, leading to far more sorcerers, the use of spells in place of technology in many civilizations, and so forth.

YETZIRAH

Yetzirah holds most of the dimensions mystics visit; non-mystic dimensional travelers are less likely to visit here. First come the Imaginal Realms (or Inner Planes) that accompany the Earth (and planets inhabited by other sentient species). Beyond them lie the Outer Planes, whose variety has no end.

The Astral Plane contains several sections of its own. Most importantly, mystics divide it into a Lower, Middle, and Upper Astral Plane. The Lower Astral Plane connects the Imaginal Realms to Earth and each other (and the Imaginal Realms of other species to their worlds or dimensions).

The Lower Astral also contains the Dreamzone, a psychic realm composed of all the dreams being dreamed at any given moment. See page 104 for detailed information on the Astral Plane.

YESOD: THE IMAGINAL REALMS

Yesod, the Foundation, is the first division of Yetzirah. Yesod holds the Astral Plane and Earth's psychic "Imaginal Realms," so called because human imagination creates them from the Astral Plane. Mystics also call these realms the *Parterres* (the "Lands To The Side"), and refer to the Parterres and the Astral Plane as the "Inner Planes" because they're easily reached from Earth. The chief Imaginal Realms are:

- *Faerie*, also called the Land of Legends. Faerie embodies the myths and legends of the ancient world — and some modern myths, too. Elves, nature spirits, mythological beasts, and pagan gods dwell in this Land of Legends. Such creatures tend to act amorally, following codes that pay little attention to good or evil.
- *Babylon*, the City of Man. It embodies the social settings humanity builds for itself. For better or worse, it is the epitome of cities.
- the *Netherworld*, which contains all the Hells ever imagined. It's disarmingly easy to enter... but much harder to leave.
- *Elysium*. The syncretic Heaven of Elysium, in contrast, is the most difficult Parterre to reach. This dimension of self-proclaimed pure Good can be as dangerous to visit as the Netherworld, for many lords of Elysium do not tolerate mortal imperfection.

PARTERRES OF OTHER SPECIES

Humanity is not the only species to shape the Astral Plane. Animal life on Earth creates its own Parterre called the Blood Tide. Even plants get into the act, creating the astral realm of Yggdrasil (see page 142). Humans find these dimensions extremely alien, dangerous, and hard to enter, even though they qualify as Inner Planes.

Furthermore, other species, both within Earth's dimension and from other dimensions that are home to sentient life, have their own Parterres based on their cultures, their perspectives on Reality, and so forth. Typically dimensional travelers (of any sort) are only aware of the Imaginal Realms pertaining to their own species; they can't perceive (much less travel to) other species's Parterres. That's why Humans don't find Perseids, Mon'dabi, V'hanians, or Ka-ree in Faerie or Babylon, and why those realms don't reflect other species's thoughts and beliefs. However, some powerful mystics (including the likes of Skarn and Tyrannon) can visit any Parterre they know of.

Istvatha V'han and her chief dimensional scientists are aware of the existence of separate Parterres for every species. The Empress tends to avoid any and all Imaginal Realms for the most part (even the V'hanian ones) — they're too capricious, if not actively dangerous.

HOD AND NETZACH: THE OUTER PLANES

From Yesod, the Tree of Life ascends to the sephiroth *Hod* (Glory/Splendor/Fame) and *Netzach* (Conquest/Victory/Permanence). These divisions of Yetzirah contain primarily magical worlds that have no connection to Earth/Humanity (or any single other sentient species). To reach them, travelers must pass through the Middle Astral Plane. Because of their greater “distance” from Earth, astrally speaking, most scholars call these dimensions the Outer Planes.

Mystics generally assign to *Hod* planes that run by magic but still run by themselves. In *Hod* realms, magic acts like a system of natural law, with rational, quasi-scientific rules that anyone can follow. Each *Netzach* plane, on the other hand, holds a controlling intelligence who may unite with the whole substance of his dimension. There is no natural law, only the ruling entity’s will. Thus, *Netzach* planes are also called “Dominions.” Istvatha V’han avoids *Netzachic* dimensions entirely.

The inhabitants of the Outer Planes use magic in their daily life and may possess innate supernatural powers. Outer Planes are often ruled by a “dimension lord,” a spirit or sorcerer who wields absolute power over the realm’s inhabitants. Skarn the Shaper and Tyrannon the Conqueror both call *Netzach* “home” (so to speak). Tyrannon seems far more tightly bound to his native dimension than Skarn is, but both are powerful, dangerous, and insane.

Many Outer Planes owe allegiance to the cosmic abstractions of Order, Chaos, Artifice, and Nature. The dimension lords of such planes are called “Lords of Order,” “Lords of Nature,” and so on.

DEMI-PLANES

The Yetziratic World contains countless tiny demi-planes with simple structures and contents. For instance, the Trefoil Plane consists of nothing but golden trefoil shapes floating in a cubic mile of otherwise empty air.

Scholars don’t always agree on where to include the demi-planes. Some say they belong in Yesod by default. Others suggest *Hod*, because the demi-planes seem fully supernatural but lack any spiritual aspect or a ruling intelligence. Still others list them under “Miscellaneous Yetziratic Dimensions” and leave it at that.

SMALLER GROUPINGS

Just as Earth and the Parterres form a cluster of linked dimensions, various Outer Planes may have special connections to each other. The largest such cluster consists of the many worlds ruled by Tyrannon the Conqueror. This mighty entity conquers dimensions faster than he can merge them into his native plane. Until then, he links his demesnes through interdimensional portals. (See CV1 236-59 for more information about Tyrannon and his domain.)

Other dimensional clusters occur naturally. For example, Earth’s mystics know of a federation of dimensions called the *Storlian Realms*, whose senators travel to parliamentary meetings using a spell called the *Vapors Of Vata*, now famous throughout the Multiverse. Nor is Earth the only *Malkuth*-world to bud off a set of astral realms for its gods and spirits, as discussed above.

BRIAH

Anyone can reach the planes of Assiah or Yetzirah by magic or super-science — he merely needs to know how to find his destination (which usually involves Navigation (Dimensional) or a similar Skill). The planes of Briah are different. Before someone enters Briah, he must pass through a realm called *the Veil of the Temple*, the “highest” division of the Astral Plane (see page 142). Passing the Veil takes wisdom, and no mortal is exempt, no matter how great his power. Those who fail the test are hurled back to the realms of matter or succumb to dangerous monomanias. Those who succeed pass to the realms of the gods — the Upper Planes.

It’s possible to pass the Veil using super-science dimensional travel devices, or powers like Istvatha V’han’s... but it’s rare. Most beings who traverse the Veil do so using spells or related mystic abilities. Some scholars theorize that the wisdom necessary to pass the Veil is more likely to be found among those who study Magic than those who study Science, though there’s no proof of this. V’han herself can and has crossed the Veil, though she prefers not to ascend into the Brialic realms.

No corporeal being perceives the Brialic planes as they really are. Human visitors perceive these realms as material, because Human senses and minds cannot perceive pure Spirit. Brialic realms also sometimes carry emotional auras.

The three sephiroth in Briah are *Tiphereth* (Beauty), *Pachad* (Strength/Justice), and *Chesed* (Greatness). The Veil goes in *Tiphereth*, the lowest sephira. The Prime Avatars of Order, Chaos, Art, and Nature, the highest of the Brialic powers, keep their realms in *Chesed*. Other notable Upper Planes include:

- the Garden of Earthly Delights, where all physical desires find satisfaction (see page 144);
- the Plane of Numbers, a realm of mathematical concepts;
- the City of Pyramids, a place of perfect knowledge and intellectual despair; and
- Death’s Dominion (see page 143).

Some of these planes can entrap visitors. Even the mightiest deity or dimension lord remains a finite creature, but in Briah mystics encounter entities that personify universal concepts. They call these conceptual entities the *Archetypes* or *Avatars*. Some of the more famous of these beings include Death; the Trickster; the Triple Goddess; and Kryptos, the Lord of Secrets.

The mightiest of these entities are the *Four Zoas*, or Prime Avatars. Urizen, the Archetype of Order, rules the starry wheels and labyrinths of Ulro. Urthona, Prime Avatar of Artifice, dwells in the cosmic city of Golgonooza. Tharmas, master of all Nature, commands a realm simply called Generation: things have no names in nature, so neither does his dimension. Luvah the Anarch, the Zoo of Chaos and passion, occupies an ambiguous Eden called Beulah. (See page 144 for more information on these dimensions.)

Although dwellers in the material worlds have great difficulty reaching Briah, the Brialic powers can send emissaries into the lower worlds. Sorcerers may summon such emissaries, though they run the risk of angering the spirits' masters. The Avatars themselves may send anthropomorphic personifications of themselves, of great but finite power, or they may possess the gods known to mortals. For instance, the Native American god Coyote is usually a minor deity in Faerie — but when the Trickster possesses him, he gains nigh-infinite powers of transformation, deception, and illusion. Only the most powerful sorcerers try to summon or control the Avatars, and few of them succeed.

ATZILUTH

Beyond the realms of the Four Zoas lies *the Abyss*, the edge of space, time, and division into discrete entities. The Abyss is an even more difficult barrier than the Veil of the Temple. Anyone who tries and fails to cross the Abyss is annihilated, body and soul, or warps into something monstrous beyond recognition.

In theory it's possible to cross the Abyss using super-science or non-mystic dimensional powers. In practice, if anyone's actually done this, no one's ever heard about it. Istvatha V'han has never even tried to cross the Abyss.

Atziluth contains three sephiroth, each considered a single plane by mystics. They call *Binah* (or Understanding) the Dark Sea of Being. It's an infinite reservoir of power for creation or destruction. *Chokmah* (or Wisdom) is called the Bright Sea of Forms. It contains every possible archetype of objects, actions, ideas, structures, or any other category you could name. Mystic tomes say the light of Chokmah shines on the dark waves of Binah — form combines with substance — and the sparkling reflections off the waves forms the Multiverse.

Even the distinction between form and substance breaks down in *Kether*, the Crown, the most inaccessible of the planes. Kether, also called the Primum Mobile, the Mundane Shell, or the Aleph, is the ultimate realm of indivisible being. In Kether, everything becomes One. Someone who reaches Kether will see everything, in fact *be* everything, the whole multiversal expanse of time, space, and dimension.

Reaching Kether isn't a feat for a mystic, because anyone who could reach Kether wouldn't be a mystic anymore. He'd be God — Supreme Being of the Multiverse. What's more, to those on the lower levels of reality he has always been God, because Kether stands outside Time. (Everyone else who ever has or ever will reach Kether is God too — but don't think about this too hard, you'll hurt your brain.)

The Atziluthic World also includes a fourth element, the "lost sephira" called *Da'ath*: the link between Wisdom and Understanding, balanced in the Abyss between timeless Atziluth and the realms below. Archimedes said, "Give me a lever long enough, and a place to stand, and I will move the Earth." Da'ath is that place. From Da'ath, a mystic can call on the limitless power of Binah, shape it with the archetypes of Chokmah, and cast his creation into the realms of Time. Only the mystic's intelligence, patience, and skill limits what he can create, from a flower to a galaxy. What's more, since Da'ath exists outside time, the mystic can insert his new creation at *any point in history* — past, present, or future. Da'ath's nature renders it, rather understandably, one of the greatest secrets in sorcerous lore.

THE QLIPHOThIC WORLD

Some sorcerers add a fifth level to the kabbalistic scheme, the *Qliphothic* realm — either resting below Assiah, or as a sort of dark "back side" to the Tree of Life. The Qliphothic World contains ancient dimensions whose energies decayed into forms inimical to all normal sorts of life and existence. No traveler has ever explored more than a few dimensions in the Tree of Death. Seeking knowledge of the Qliphothic Realm is morally and physically dangerous: mystics and scientists who study the Tree of Death tend to die messily, or they develop a sick fascination with destruction and oblivion.

Just as the Atziluthic world contains the fountainhead of all existence, the Qliphothic world holds the drain down which all existence eventually runs. At the absolute limit of negative existence lurks the *Solipsist*, or Decreator — the Anti-God. The Decreator itself is unknowable: Just as anyone who reached Kether would become one with the Creator and Creation alike, anyone who reached the Solipsist would join its total Unbeing and suffer profound annihilation.

The closest any being can come to the Solipsist is the entity called *Quemetiel*, the "Crowd of Gods." Quemetiel is a churning, chaotic fusion of long-defunct cosmic entities. It mindlessly sucks in anything that comes near, like a supernatural black hole. Anything eaten by Quemetiel is gone forever.

THE KINGS OF EDOM

But many other strange and horrifying beings exist in the Qliphothic dimensions. Among the most powerful are the so-called *Kings of Edom*, beings of mind-numbing mystic power who existed perhaps even before the Tree of Life fully came into existence. Parables from cosmic oracles and the ravings of mystics driven mad by studying the Kings suggest these entities came from dimensions that fell to Oblivion eons ago. For billions of years no other power could stand against them. Not one in a thousand worlds might suffer a King of Edom's visit in a million years — but where Kings of Edom came, they and their servant creatures brought incredible horror and destruction.

At last, other powers made alliances across the dimensions against the Kings of Edom. After titanic struggles whose nature Champions Universe Earth's inhabitants can only speculate about, these powers defeated and imprisoned the Kings. But their bindings were not always complete, and the Kings are not entirely forgotten. Some servant creatures and artifacts of power escaped destruction, and in time some mystics learned to contact the Kings. A few disturbed individuals even worship them.

Champions Universe Earth includes some of these individuals; Luther Black is one example (see CU 159-60), another is the Slug and his Elder Worm followers (see CV1 191). Most of them believe their masters shall reward them with dominion over the Earth as gods themselves, once they have freed them.

They could not be more mistaken. Despite bargaining with Human sorcerers, Edomite creatures are *not* demons. Demons embody *Human* evil, with Human (if unpleasant) motivations. The Kings are not even gods, or at least they are nothing like the gods of Earth. The Kings of Edom do not need their worshippers. No mystic law binds them to honor pacts. No symbols or True Names can compel them to serve. It's not even entirely certain they're aware that anyone worships them or seeks to contact them. To the extent they are, what DEMON and most other servants of the Kings don't realize is that to the Kings of Edom, dickering with Humans for power does not differ much from a Human leading a donkey with a carrot. To the Kings who are aware of Humanity, Humans are animals — at best, pets they can train, at worst, food... or vermin, to exterminate once they serve their purpose. If the Kings of Edom broke free and took Earth for their own, neither Luther Black nor any of their other Human servants would gain anything but slavery more hideous than they can imagine.

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VISITING QLIPHOThIC DIMENSIONS

Within the Qliphothic planes, devices and many types of powers don't work properly at first; they have to "adjust." A character finds out every Phase whether each of his abilities has adjusted; the GM should make the necessary rolls out of sight from the player (so the character doesn't know if he succeeded until he uses the ability). For technological devices and weapons, the character must succeed with an Inventor roll at -3. Characters with spellcasting ability must succeed with a Spell Research (Inventor) roll at -3. Characters with innate energy projection powers must succeed with both an INT Roll and an EGO Roll, both at -3. Other abilities are usually unaffected, though the GM may impose rolls on other characters as he sees fit.

SPECIAL DIMENSIONS

The Tree of Life isn't a perfect or total model of the Multiverse (in fact, perfectly or totally modeling the Multiverse is probably impossible, even for the likes of Istvatha V'han, Tyrannon, or Skarn). The GM can treat any location that's not accessible by normal travel through space as another dimension, and characters can reach such locations using Extra-Dimensional Movement. Some of these "dimensions" are well known to scholars, but are too small or localized to count as complete planes of reality. The Superheroic Age also exposes mystics and scientists to realms and aspects of reality they never imagined, such as microverses, parallel worlds, and cyberspace.

POCKET WORLDS

Pocket worlds form a notable exception to the Tree of Life model. A "pocket world" is a space entirely tucked within some object — for instance, a painting you can step into and it becomes real. A djinn bottle is another example: the interior of the bottle is a "dimension" whose defining property is that once you enter, you cannot leave until someone uncorks the bottle.

Characters cannot normally reach pocket worlds by Extra-Dimensional Movement through the Astral Plane. Instead, they must find the object that contains the pocket world. Extra-Dimensional Movement works at that point. Often, the object itself carries the power to bring people to the pocket world (in game terms, Extra-Dimensional Movement is built into the object itself, so that anyone, not just mystics, can access the pocket world).



MINDS AS DIMENSIONS

A person's mind and memories forms an entire world of their own. Characters with appropriate powers may enter another person's mind, perhaps corporeally, to explore memories or hidden thoughts. Normal astral travel can take a mystic into a person's dreams, but not into other areas of the mind: mindscapes count as their own class of dimension, distinct from astral realms.

MICROVERSES

Superbeings with shrinking powers sometimes report worlds that exist on the scale of bacteria, atoms, or subatomic particles. Mystics believe such characters find natural portals to other dimensions. Reported "microverses" seem to follow strange but consistent natural laws, so most mystics think they must be Assiatic realms. Some microversal explorers, however, tell stories of talking bacteria, a Quantum Casino where God plays dice with the universe, and other oddities. Mystics speculate that these super-shrinkers may find their way into strange Yetziratic or even Brialic realms.

Some mystics also believe that *macroverses* may exist — zones of reality only perceived and entered by creatures the size of planets, solar systems, or galaxies. A few mystics actively research hyper-Growth spells in hopes of discovering macroverses before the likes of Skarn or Tyrannon find and exploit them.

CYBERSPACE

Cyberspace falls completely outside most mystics' experience. The virtual worlds within computer networks count as a sort of dimension, but one that unlike most dimensions is far more easily accessed by Science than Sorcery. But some mystics believe Humanity's machines generate an astral realm of their own. This hypothetical realm of "machine consciousness" would not be cyberspace, exactly, but it might enable a mystic to enter such virtual realms. The Brialic Plane of Numbers might also provide a key to entering cyberspace by magic.



THE ASTRAL PLANE

VISITING AND PERCEIVING THE ASTRAL PLANE

If a character wants to travel to any part of the Astral Plane, he needs to buy Extra-Dimensional Travel to “a related group of dimensions”; travel to a single dimension has to be defined as taking him to either the Lower, Middle, or Upper Astral.

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On the other hand, if a character just wants to perceive the Astral Plane, it counts as a “single dimension” for purposes of the *Dimensional Sense* Modifier and the like.

Of all dimensions, the Astral Plane has the closest connection to Earth. (For that matter, it has a similar link to any other planet in any dimension that has life.) Every point on Earth touches part of the Astral Plane. Human souls touch the Astral Plane as well, and may travel to that dimension in dreams, or sojourn there after death. Mystics consider the ability to see the Astral Plane one of the most important occult arts. Advanced mages may even learn to leave their bodies and travel through the Astral Plane as “living ghosts.” (Non-mystics can use super-science devices to accomplish these same feats, but this is very rare compared to using magic.) The Astral Plane provides access to all the other Inner Planes, too. Characters who visit the Astral Plane soon learn, however, that it can be an interesting — and dangerous — place in its own right.

GENERAL NATURE

The Astral Plane doesn’t have geography. It has various divisions, each with its own distinctive nature and appearance, but they’re not arranged according to north or south, up or down, or other normal conceptions of space. “Here” may connect to “there” because they look like each other, or because they have a similar emotional aura.

The ability to reach one section of the Astral Plane by Extra-Dimensional Movement does not automatically grant a character the ability to reach the other divisions: in some ways, the Astral Plane actually consists of several loosely-connected dimensions. Each section contains access routes to other divisions, though.

Scholars divide the Astral Plane into the Lower, Middle, and Upper Astral.

THE LOWER ASTRAL PLANE

The Lower Astral Plane impinges directly on Earth and its dimension (or any other Malkuth realm). It includes various divisions of its own, such as the realm of dreams. Dimensions in other “levels” of the Multiverse have their own Lower Astral zones, but these tend to be rudimentary: Outer Planes realms conserve their innate magic, instead of spilling it out to form astral shadow-realms. Only the fully material worlds of Malkuth seem to generate complex Lower Astral Planes. When a character speaks of the “Lower Astral” without other qualifiers, however, he means the Lower Astral Plane of Earth (or his home planet, if he’s not Human).

The Lower Astral Plane has several “divisions,” discussed below.

THE MIDDLE ASTRAL PLANE

The Middle Astral Plane enables mystics to move between all the worlds within Assiah and Yetzirah. An astral voyager moves from Earth’s Lower Astral, to the Middle Astral, to the Lower Astral of the other plane, and from there perhaps to the dimension itself.

The Middle Astral Plane connects the Outer Planes. Travel through the Middle Astral looks like flying through a kaleidoscope. Glittering, rainbow-hued circles, ellipses, and other shapes swirl in an endless, multi-dimensional vortex. Countless smaller gyres spin within Limbo; a traveler who enters one of these vortices finds it explodes outward, revealing another level of whirling motion with its own smaller gyres.

From close up, each colorful fleck within the Middle Astral provides a view into another dimension. An astral traveler seeks the proper gyre for his target plane, then selects a portal for a specific region. The portals to a plane share a similar shape and color. Finding the right portal in the ever-changing swirl is entirely a matter of intuition and force of will, like any astral journey. A portal grows large enough to accommodate any creature who wants to pass through it. Astral voyagers constantly see strange denizens of other planes pop out of distant portals or dive into them again.

Most characters don’t spend much time in the Middle Astral. But whenever someone uses Extra-Dimensional Movement to go to or from an Outer Plane he glimpses the fractal swirl of the Middle Astral.

THE UPPER ASTRAL PLANE

The Upper Astral Plane grants access to the higher, spiritual dimensions of Briah, but mortals do not easily make the passage to the Upper Planes. See page 142 for more information about the Veil of the Temple.

ECTOPLASM

None of the Astral Planes consist of normal matter. Instead, they and their denizens are made of *ectoplasm* — a substance that bridges the gap between ideas and matter. On the Lower Astral, thought can create objects all by itself. That's how ghostly pirates get ghostly ships to sail, for example. Buildings, objects, or places that become the focus of great thought and emotion for a long time can endure on the Lower Astral long after their material form was destroyed. For example, on the Lower Astral Plane Stonehenge and the Parthenon stand undamaged. In fact, thoughts can create quasi-living beings on the Lower Astral Plane. Such spirits form a significant fraction of the Lower Astral's population.

CONNECTIONS TO OTHER PLANES

The Lower Astral Plane connects to several other dimensions that grow out of it. A character can reach the many districts of Faerie, the Netherworld, Elysium, or Babylon from the Astral Plane by normal astral movement, without using any sort of additional Extra-Dimensional Movement power. Once characters enter these realms, however, they can leave only through some sort of EDM or by pre-existing nexus points.

Human life and thought created the Lower Astral zones known to most sorcerers, but mystics know that animal and plant "consciousness" bring their own astral planes into existence. Currently, the most popular names for these dimensions are the Blood Tide and Yggdrasil. Only masters of astral travel can locate and enter these strange, inhuman dimensions.

If a mage travels in the right direction through the Lower Astral — "into the Fourth Dimension," as mystics sometimes say — he leaves Earth for the colorful, swirling chaos of the Middle Astral. From here he can reach countless other dimensions. Again, this doesn't require any sort of additional Extra-Dimensional Movement power. It's just a matter of knowing which route to take — in game terms, of the *Navigation (Dimensional)* Skill. (Characters who buy EDM powers to take them to other dimensions don't need this Skill; buying such a power confers proper knowledge of how to use it.) If anything dwells permanently on the Middle Astral, it remains unreported so far. Some characters call this dimension Limbo, or the Void, because nothing exists there except a way to someplace else.

Beyond the Middle Astral lies the Upper Astral Plane, also called the Veil of the Temple. Because of the Upper Astral Plane's importance and unusual properties, it receives a separate description (see page 142).

PERCEIVING EARTH

A person traveling in the Lower Astral sees the point on Earth (or whatever other world he's on) corresponding to his location in the Lower Astral. However, colors are washed out and everything has a silvery cast, as if it shone with a faint greyish light. This "astral glow" doesn't provide any real light; it's just an odd effect of normal light as seen from the Astral Plane. If there isn't enough light to see at that point on Earth, a character in the Lower Astral can't see anything, either. An astral traveler in a pitch-black cave would be just as blind as a normal person.

The Lower Astral mutes all other sensations, too. Sounds made in the material world come thinly, as if from a distance. Astral entities suffer a -2 penalty to PER Rolls for hearing sound from the material world. Taste and smell don't exist on the Lower Astral. The astral counterparts of Earthly objects can be felt only faintly (and cannot be picked up, thrown, or manipulated unless the character has a Transdimensional power enabling him to do so). Texture and temperature hardly exist at all. Even pain from attacks diminishes, though damage stays just the same.

ASTRAL AWARENESS

As discussed on 6E1 212, characters can apply a *Dimensional* Sense Modifier to various Senses or Sense Groups (primarily Sight) to perceive into other dimensions. One of the most common uses for this Sense Modifier is to allow a character on Earth to see and hear the Astral Plane (primarily the Lower Astral). Mystics sometimes call this "second sight." The most precise term, however, is *Astral Awareness*. Most people cannot see or hear astral travelers and spirits, because these entities exist in another reality. People with Astral Awareness, however, perceive astral entities that are in the Lower Astral location corresponding to that person's location on Earth (or whatever other world he's on). Spiritual entities look transparent and almost colorless, like a stereotypical ghost, and speak with thin, hollow voices. People with Astral Awareness also see "ghost" buildings that no longer exist in the material world, and other such "objects."

The other Inner Planes impinge on Earth in a few places. A person with the appropriate *Dimensional* Sense Modifier could see through these nexus points to the various Inner Planes, but few mystics bother to develop such talents. Nexus points leak onto the Lower Astral as well, so a person with Astral Awareness can spot a nexus anyway, and probably guess where it leads: Netherworld portals reek of evil and dread, while Faerie portals carry an aura of mystery and allure. Nexi to Babylon feel exciting, while portals to Elysium radiate peace and holiness.

DIVISIONS OF THE LOWER ASTRAL

Travel between the various divisions of the Lower Astral sometimes may be difficult, but it requires no special powers once a character gets to the Lower Astral. In other words, in the Champions Universe setting, Extra-Dimensional Movement to the Lower Astral provides a character with access to various other dimensions “for free” due to the fact that the Lower Astral “links” to so many other planes. These include: the “astral realms” described below; and the Quaternion Planes (Faerie, the Netherworld, Elysium, and Babylon).

Reaching the appropriate nexus point or “link” in the Lower Astral to a plane the character wants to visit may entail some travel within the Lower Astral itself. This may be dangerous — the fact that characters can use these nexi without paying Character Points for the privilege doesn’t mean they’re exempt from what goes on in the Lower Astral as they travel it. That’s why some characters buy better forms of Extra-Dimensional Movement that allow them to bypass the Lower Astral and travel to such planes directly. (In setting terms, they still pass through the Lower Astral; they’re just guaranteed to do so safely.) See *Travel On The Astral Plane*, page 108, for general rules about this “free” astral travel.

The list of dimensions that “link” to the Lower Astral this way isn’t exclusive. The GM can add other astral territories as desired.

ASTRAL EARTH

An astral traveler can merely skim the edge, as it were, of the Astral Plane. He exists astrally, but can still see and hear the material world, and move through material objects like a ghost. (In game terms, this typically means buying an “Astral Form” power, such as the one on *Champions Powers*, page 241, and possibly Linked powers such as Flight and Invisibility. The *Spirit Self* power on *Champions Powers*, page 303 may also be appropriate for some characters.)

Places that no one thinks about “thin out” or compress in the Astral Plane. The Lower Astral oceans, for instance, fade into grey limbo a few miles from shore, because nobody pays much attention to any particular part of, say, the mid-Atlantic. Antarctica hardly exists at all on the Astral Plane. The same fading occurs if a traveler moves up into the sky of Astral Earth, or down below the surface. An unwary traveler might stray in the trackless silver glow, and end up in another division of the Lower Astral.

Mystics call this zone of interface “Astral Earth.” Astral projectors begin on Astral Earth. From there, they can travel to other divisions of the Astral Plane — all the way to Briah, if they possess enough skill and courage.

IMAGINARY PLACES

The Lower Astral includes locations with no physical counterpart at all — they grow from the imagination. To locate most of these places, characters must abandon the guide of Earthly geography.

Some imaginary places are archetypes, generalized examples of locations. The ghost city of Windyburg, for instance, grows from memories and stories about the “age of gangsters.” Windyburg doesn’t correspond to any particular city in 1920s America, but it contains the classic elements of any city from a tale of cops, gangsters, speakeasies, and bootleggers. Other imaginary places grow from common dreams, such as the Spooky Empty House, the High School Where You’re Naked, or the Sky Where You Fly.

THE DREAMZONE

Most of the time, people’s astral selves stay safely connected to their bodies. When humans dream, however, their spirits enter a special section of the Lower Astral called the Dreamzone.

An astral traveler can enter the Dreamzone just by finding a person who sleeps and dreams. That person’s astral self now exists in the Dreamzone. A skilled astral traveler can follow the link from body to spirit, and so enter the person’s dream. (In game terms, this typically requires the *Navigation (Astral)* Skill.) Mystics enter dreams to learn about people, to deliver messages, or sometimes to torment sleeping victims.

Similar dreams tend to overlap, enabling a mystic to move from one person’s dream to another. In fact, ordinary dreamers sometimes stray into other people’s dreams without knowing it.

A mystic can leave a dream and return to Astral Earth, but other destinations are possible, too. If a dreamer wakes up suddenly, astral intruders are cast into a dark space studded with countless transparent, silver-glowing sacs of various sizes. Each womblike sac holds a transparent human form, curled in fetal position — the astral selves of everyone on Earth. The tiny sacs of unborn children glow with fierce brilliance. As people grow up, their sacs enlarge but most of them dim. When a person is awake in the material world, his astral form sleeps and becomes faint almost to invisibility. When the person dreams, his astral form’s eyes open and the dream plays out in a soap-bubble shimmer across the shining surface of the sac.

Astral projectors do not have such a Dreamzone womb; they birthed themselves into the wider Astral Plane. Either they keep their astral bodies safely locked within their bodies when they dream, or they wander the dreams of all humanity. That’s not entirely a good thing for astral travelers, because the dream-womb provides nearly indestructible protection for a soul. Astral projection means abandoning this protection from demons and other malign astral forces. Freedom, as always, has its price.

CYSTS

Powerful magic or strong, weird thoughts may create pockets of the Astral Plane with incredibly strange properties — *astral cysts*. No one could catalogue all of these pockets of strangeness. They appear and disappear without warning in the remote, unfrequented areas of the Lower Astral. Some powerful enchantments can create an astral cyst and shape it to order.

SAMPLE REGIONS

Here are some example locations astral voyagers might visit.

THE GHOST HOUSE

This house in what is now a slum district existed for almost a century. It acquired three ghosts. The real house burned down a decade ago; its lot remains vacant. The astral house still exists, though, maintained by the ghosts. The spirits are friendly in most ways, but they protect their phantom home fiercely.

PUERTO MUERTO

This ramshackle port consists of old-fashioned, run-down buildings of wood and stucco on the shore of a Caribbean-esque bay. Clumsily-built docks reach out from the sandy shore. Dilapidated boats with rotting sails are tied up at the docks or rest at anchor further out in the little bay. The whole town is totally quiet. At first, characters see no one except a fisherman mending a net out on the dock. His shabby clothes drip water. He's missing an eye, the flesh has fallen away from his bones in a few places, and he's slightly translucent. Welcome to Puerto Muerto, a real ghost town.

Visitors see the other inhabitants of Puerto Muerto only after they meet the net-mending fisherman. The village features all the people of an old-time waterfront: fishermen, floozies, sailmakers, carpenters, tradesmen and their wives, even a few guttersnipe children. Everybody is a translucent specter. Some look quite lifelike. Other ghosts range from the merely drowned or knifed, through various stages of decay, to skeletons in seafaring garb. The people don't like "breathers," as they call the living, but fear or a good bribe in booze or Spanish gold can overcome their surliness.

The best place in Puerto Muerto to meet people and get information is a sleazy waterfront dive called Cutthroat Carl's. You can see how it got its name: Carl the bartender has a slit throat. Lurly the barmaid is downright gorgeous. The way her damp, low-cut gown clings to her body could make any man ignore the seaweed in her hair. Lurly flirts with visiting men but she's a dangerous girl to romance, for her kisses literally drown men. "Lurly" is actually *Lorelei*, the ghost of a woman who drowned herself in the Rhine because of a faithless lover, and subsequently lured men to a watery doom. What she's doing in Puerto Muerto is anybody's guess.

A few miles up the shore from Puerto Muerto, another inlet holds a small, ruined fort occupied by ghost pirates. The skeletal pirates roister in Puerto Muerto now and then, or they sack the town. Fortunately, none of the people in Puerto Muerto can really die because they're already dead (or imaginary). The pirates occasionally sail their ghost ship to Earth's waters, though....

Half a mile from shore, the grey sea fades away into the grey space that lies between astral locations. The same happens only a quarter mile inland. Puerto Muerto thus consists of a strip of coastline a few miles long, fading out on every side into nothingness.

THE SPOOKY EMPTY HOUSE

This zone grew from nightmares about being chased by unseen monsters through an endless house. Once you enter the Spooky Empty House, the nightmare begins. If you let the nightmare run its course, the monsters (which you never see, only hear) chase you for several minutes. Eventually you open a door and fall down an endless precipice back to the general Dreamzone, or back to Astral Earth — wherever you encountered the Spooky Empty House. A character who succeeds with an EGO Roll can break out of the dream's storyline and change its course, such as turning and facing the monsters. The monsters turn out to be less terrible than he imagined.

NEW GOLGOTHA

This cyst consists of a few distorted, night-marsh city blocks. It folds back on itself: moving four blocks in any direction brings you back where you started. New Golgotha grew from a paranoid's fantasies of power and persecution. He believed he was Jesus and that the CIA was after him with pain-ray projectors. As a further complication, the paranoid died long ago but his ghost keeps the fantasy running. To escape, characters must confront the paranoid's ghost and make a convincing effort to counter his delusions. Not only do the CIA Men in Black stalk the lost characters, the paranoid responds to challenges by calling blue bolts from Heaven.

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ASTRAL INHABITANTS

Many sorts of beings visit the Astral Plane. Some creatures dwell there permanently. Normally, everyone on the Astral Plane is visible and solid to everyone else, though astral beings may be harder to damage than physical creatures.

GHOSTS

Large numbers of ghosts dwell on the Lower Astral Plane. Most ghosts spend only a short time (if any) on the Lower Astral before they evaporate and the person's soul moves on to its eternal reward, but Earth's vast population ensures a steady supply of new ghosts. A few ghosts endure for decades or even centuries. Ghosts usually stay in Astral Earth, but some of them move to imaginary places or other astral regions.

DREAMERS

Dreamers stay within the Dreamzone, but occasionally they venture into the general Lower Astral without realizing it, as spontaneous astral projectors. Dreamers can also enter the Lower Astral through dreams that become so common they achieve independent existence and generate locations in the Astral Plane. Common nightmares like the Spooky Empty House, for instance, can act as portals from the Dreamzone to the rest of the Astral Plane.

People who die while dreaming may endure as ghosts. Some move from the Dreamzone to Astral Earth, while others remain caught in a dream that never ends.

IMAGINARY PEOPLE

Many of the imaginary locations come with imaginary people to complete the scene. The Spooky Empty House has its elusive monsters, while Puerto Muerto boasts a complete population of imaginary fishermen, sailors, and tradesmen. Most of these imaginary people seem like ordinary humans except they never really die and they cannot leave their assigned roles. For instance, Cutthroat Carl cannot leave his bar in Puerto Muerto, while characters can never persuade New Golgotha's Men In Black to stop pursuing the paranoid who dreamed them into existence.

ATAVISMS

When humans experience strong, visceral emotions such as rage, pain, ecstasy, or terror, they create a grotesque little spirit on the Lower Astral — an *atavism*. These spirits might evaporate in a few days, or hang around for centuries. Most atavisms are not actually evil, but they embody raw emotions and drives most good magicians prefer to restrain. Some evil magicians deliberately create and control atavisms.

A creature who kills and eats an atavism experiences the sensation or emotion that created the spirit. Since most atavisms owe their creation to very unpleasant feelings, spirits leave most atavisms alone. On the other hand, atavisms from sex and other strong pleasures seldom survive long before someone eats them. The massed thought of religious ceremonies can create strong positive atavisms. In particular, spirits flock to ceremonies in which an animal is killed, cooked, and eaten, because that lets the ghosts smell and taste food again. Demons, on the other hand, feast on the most negative atavisms.

VISITORS FROM OTHER PLANES

Spirits from Elysium and the Netherworld enter the Lower Astral to observe human affairs and prompt good or evil thoughts. Entities from Babylon or Faerie may visit the Lower Astral too. For instance, an astral traveler might encounter a mythological god moping around a shrine where mortals once worshipped him, or a demon whispering temptations into a mortal's ear. Rare astral travelers from the Outer Planes visit as well. Not all the visitors from other planes are friendly... some are indifferent to humans, and some are astral predators.

THE DRAGON

The Dragon — the supreme Power of Human Evil, born from the Human mind and unable to truly be destroyed so long as Evil exists in Human thought — is the most powerful dweller in the Astral Plane. (Other sentient species have their own versions of the Dragon, but members of one species generally cannot perceive or interact with another species's "Dragon.") It falls in a class by itself, as a god to the gods. The Dragon ceaselessly watches the Dreamzone's myriads of silver bubbles from across the Void of Dreamless Sleep, and it watches every bubble at once. Its belly holds the Netherworld and Faerie rests on its back. Men give the Dragon

many names — Tiamat, the Midgard Serpent, Satan — but these myths capture only a fraction of the Dragon's awful reality. (For more information about the Dragon, see page 138 of *The Mystic World*.)

TRAVEL ON THE ASTRAL PLANE

Distance doesn't mean the same thing on the Astral Plane as it does on Earth. Places can be "near" or "far" based on their similarity. To an experienced astral voyager, the grainfields of Kansas are nearer the grainfields of the Ukraine than to the mountains of Colorado. Astral Colorado, in turn, is not far from Astral Chile or Astral Switzerland — they are all lands of high, rugged mountains.

Characters have three options for astral travel. First, they can travel through Astral Earth by following landmarks on Earth. Second, they can travel more quickly, using "astral shortcuts," if they have enough will and skill. Third, a skilled traveler may be able to travel instantly from one point on the Astral Plane to another.

MUNDANE TRAVEL

A traveler on Astral Earth can follow the material world's geography using his normal movement abilities. All the freeways, road signs, and cities remain visible from the Lower Astral. Many of the most interesting parts of the Astral Plane are purely imaginary, however, and do not correspond to any specific place on Earth. A character cannot reach them unless he uses the *Navigation (Astral)* Skill.

FAST TRAVEL (SHORTCUTS)

Characters may want to bypass normal geography, or reach imaginary locations such as Puerto Muerto. To do this, a character thinks about the desired location as strongly as possible, and keeps moving. It doesn't matter whether he walks, flies, or rides an astral train. Eventually he arrives. A character taking an "astral shortcut" like this can lead other characters with him.

How quickly the scenery shifts depends on the character's mental discipline (*i.e.*, his EGO) and experience (*i.e.*, his *Navigation (Astral)* Skill). A successful shortcut requires nothing more than a successful EGO Roll, but the character may use *Navigation (Astral)* as a Complementary Skill Roll. The GM may rule that some shortcuts aren't possible at all unless the character has *Navigation (Astral)* as a Skill.

A "shortcut" journey never takes more than one hour, or less than one minute. A trip between similar locations takes less time than a trip between very different locations. A character can move quickly and easily reach a familiar locations than ones he knows little about. If people travel in a group, they all travel at the rate set by the person with the highest EGO. A character who succeeds at an *Navigation (Astral)* skill roll automatically beats anyone who didn't, even if he doesn't have the highest EGO.

Gamemasters who want a more precise system can start by assuming that an astral shortcut takes 20 minutes, and adjust the duration up or down the Time Chart based on how well the character succeeded at his EGO Roll, the similarity or familiarity of the regions, and other factors. See the accompanying text box for modifiers.

Characters can never leave the Lower Astral through shortcuts. Reaching other Inner Planes or the Middle Astral always requires use of the *Navigation (Astral)* Skill.

If two characters would make an astral journey in the same time, as indicated by the chart, use the differences between their EGO scores, Navigation (Astral) rating, and target familiarity to determine who arrives first. If he prefers, the GM can ignore such complexities and simply decide who arrives first. As a genuinely supernatural place, the Astral Plane doesn't have to follow consistent, scientific rules (as much as super-scientists who study it would like it to!).

If a character fails the EGO Roll to take an astral shortcut, he can try again and again if need be — but he cannot be sure he failed until an hour has passed. A character with MegaScaled movement may find it quicker and easier to eschew astral shortcuts, at least if he stays on Astral Earth.

ASTRAL SHORTCUTS

Modifier Time Chart Adjustment Factor*

+1	Destination resembles starting location (example: desert to desert, city to city)
+1	Destination is a mystic site
+1	Destination is a focus of great emotion and attention (example: the Statue of Liberty)
+1	Willing to spend an hour reaching destination
+1	Familiar with target location (example: the character's best friend's home)
+2	Intimately familiar with target location (example: the character's own home)
+1	Maintain a Mind Link or a basic Mind Scan lock-on to a person at the target location
+2	Maintain an EGO +10 Mind Scan lock-on to a person at the target location
+3	Maintain an EGO +20 Mind Scan lock-on to a person at the target location
-1	Target is in another section of the Lower Astral (Dreamzone, Astral Earth, or the like)
-2	Target is an imaginary location or astral cyst
-3	Character is lost and lacks the <i>Navigation (Astral)</i> Skill

*: The base time for an astral shortcut is 20 Minutes. A "+" indicates to take a step or steps up the Time Chart, which reduces the time needed; a "-" to take a step or steps down the Time Chart, which increases the time needed. The GM can vary the time as desired instead of sticking rigidly to the Time Chart steps if he prefers (for example, he could rule that a "5 Minutes" result is actually 6.5 minutes, or 8 minutes, or the like).



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INSTANTANEOUS TRAVEL

Some spirits and experienced astral voyagers can move anywhere in the Astral Plane at the speed of thought. A character who succeeds at a *Navigation (Astral)* roll can disappear from one place and appear at another. The character doesn't need any special Power to perform an "Astral Jump." Such instantaneous travel is a property of the Astral Plane. A character using instantaneous astral travel cannot take other characters with him, or lead them to where he's going (nor can he take large amounts of matter with him, like a Vehicle).

For instantaneous travel within the Lower Astral, modify the *Navigation (Astral)* Skill Roll using the same chart as for astral shortcuts, applying the modifiers to the Skill Roll rather than the Time Chart. For instantaneous travel to another dimension or division of the Astral, such as reaching the Middle Astral or one of the Parterres, a character simply has to make an unmodified *Navigation (Astral)* roll to find the appropriate "link" or "nexus" (or just to cross over into the next "layer" of Astral space).

The catch with instantaneous travel lies in arriving at the right place. If a character fails his *Navigation (Astral)* roll, he doesn't appear where he wants. Failing the roll by 4 or more guarantees he becomes utterly lost: he isn't even in the same zone of the Lower Astral. He might find himself in an astral cyst, in the Dreamzone, or shunted to one of the other Inner Planes.

MegaScaled Teleportation on the Lower Astral follows the rules for instant travel, unless the character moves to a Fixed Point on the Astral Plane. The entire Lower Astral counts as one dimension for purposes of Teleportation, but remember that some locations (such as dreams) may cease to exist after a time.

Of course, a character can buy an Extra-Dimensional Movement power that takes him directly to a plane such as the Middle Astral or Babylon. In game terms, that lets him bypass all the Skill Rolls and other such difficulties. In setting terms, he still travels through the Astral Plane to get there, he just does so unerringly and without difficulty (unless the Limitations on the powers expose him to difficulties...).

GETTING LOST

As long as a character remains in the same division of the Lower Astral, such as Astral Earth or the Dreamzone, getting lost doesn't present serious problems. He can "shortcut" back to a familiar location and start over. Occasionally, however, characters run into difficulties.

Astral cysts and other weird and disorienting locations that lack connections to Earthly geography can be hard to leave. A character cannot just attempt Skill or EGO Rolls over and over. Characters must wait a while between attempts, which means they must interact with the new environment.

ASTRAL VERSUS DESOLIDIFICATION

Anyone on Astral Earth is effectively Desolidified to anyone in the material world, and Invisible to anyone who lacks Astral Awareness. Any attack with the *Affects Desolidified* Advantage can affect entities in Astral Earth, however; so can Mental Powers and other abilities that can affect Desolidified beings.

Characters who are astral beings, or who have "Astral Form" powers or the like, have to pay Character Points for these abilities (Desolidification [affected by magical attacks or the attacks of astral beings] and Invisibility, for example). Some, like certain ghosts, have such strong connections to Earth that they don't buy any sort of Extra-Dimensional Movement power — they simulate their "astral-ness" with just the Desolidification and Invisibility (and possibly other powers reflecting aspects of those abilities, adding *Affects Physical World* to attacks so they can hurt solid beings). Others have Extra-Dimensional Movement so they can place themselves fully in the Astral Plane, then use powers with the *Transdimensional* Advantage to affect the world (such a character would even need Transdimensional Images just to allow people on Earth to see him).

Normally, everyone on the Astral Plane is solid to each other, whether they dwell permanently in that dimension, reach it through Extra-Dimensional Movement, or have Desolidification defined as "astral form." Characters with suitable special effects for Desolidification may interact with astral entities, too, but they cannot leave Astral Earth or employ shortcuts or instant travel: they remain too bound to the material world.

The GM decides how long characters wait before they can try again to escape. As a suggestion, however, the character's condition must change and he must experience a dramatic scene of some sort. At its simplest, this scene could consist of the character(s) exploring the location and discovering a route back to the normal Astral Plane. To raise the drama level, perhaps the character must experience some emotion or perform some action before he can escape. In such cases, the GM should provide plenty of clues about what the character should do. After all, this is an interruption, not an adventure of its own.

Some locations may include inhabitants who help or hinder lost characters. Lost travelers may need to face some danger or gain the help of a local spirit to escape. Strange locations may sport equally strange inhabitants. Indeed, some bizarre pockets of the Astral Plane can be intrinsically damaging in physical or mental ways.

ADVENTURE USE

Characters most often use the Astral Plane as a route to other places, but the divisions of the Lower Astral may themselves become the site of adventures.

Astral Earth's chief value for characters lies in surveillance. From the Astral Plane, a character can spy on people in the material world with no chance of discovery... unless the target has Astral Awareness or similar abilities (in which case the subject may perceive that someone's watching him, or get an uncomfortable feeling that he's being observed).

The Dreamzone provides a somewhat unreliable view into other people's memories and motivations. For instance, the dreams of a supervillain may provide clues to his current activities as well as his past and his Psychological Complications. The GM may rule that a character who wants to obtain information from dreams needs PS: Dream Interpretation.

Astral cysts and imaginary locations provide unusual locations for adventures. For instance, characters could try a little swashbuckling in Puerto Muerto. If no one in a group of mystics can reach the Outer Planes, astral cysts and imaginary places offer a second-best substitute as unearthly, magical environments.

Both heroes and villains can come from the Astral Plane. Ghost characters, for instance, normally exist on the Astral Plane (even if they buy Desolidification to represent walking through walls and similar abilities). Characters with "dream powers" typically have some connection to the Astral Plane, whether they're trained mystics or not. For instance, a character could merge with his "dream self" to become a superhero. You could even create a "Haunted Hero" campaign in which all the characters are ghosts, mediums, or astral-projecting mystics.

FAERIE: THE LAND OF LEGENDS

Faerie, sometimes called the Land of Legends, is the home of nature spirits and pagan gods — beings born when people imagined everything in Nature possessed a human will. For millennia before the “ethical religions” pushed the Godhead beyond the sky, every stream, mountain, and forest grove had its ruling spirit. Greater gods spoke in the crash of thunder and the ocean waves. These gods and spirits were not abstract or symbolic. Few people did *not* encounter a god, elf, or spirit sometime in their lives. Faerie and Earth intertwined.

Did human beliefs change and push the gods and spirits from the world? Or did Faerie pull away from Earth, and mortals responded by inventing new faiths? The gods themselves don’t know. By around 500 BC, however, Faerie became a recognizable dimension of its own and the “legends” became legendary. Spontaneous nexus points from wilderness areas still cast the occasional human into Faerie, or let an elf or satyr visit its former haunts. As humanity cut the forests, plowed the land, and bound the world in concrete and steel, such nexus points became more rare. Century after century, the Ban on travel between worlds became tighter.

But gods now walk the Earth again — mortal gods, bound by no mystic law or covenant. The ancient Ban crumbles in the new Age of Heroes. Ancient powers wake, eager to reclaim their empires, unwilling to sleep again. (See CV1 227 for more on the Ban.)

GEOGRAPHY

Faerie has forests, seas, meadows, deserts, mountains, and all the other landscapes of the natural world. Nexus points to Faerie always lead from an Earth location to a very similar region in the Land of Legends, so a person could walk through Faerie for hours without knowing it.

The Land of Legends, however, is a “good bits” version of the mortal world. Large, homogeneous, *boring* regions such as oceans, deserts, or steppes are smaller in Faerie than on Earth. Faerie holds nothing the size of the Atlantic Ocean, Sahara Desert, or American Great Plains. A few days by boat or horseback suffices to cross any district of the Land of Legends.

Faerie geography doesn’t make sense on the large scale. Landscapes flow into each other in impossible ways: mountain into swamp, jungle into desert. Different regions can experience different seasons — it might be snowing in one region while the area right next to it is humid and swampy in the summer sunshine.

Connections between regions aren’t consistent, either. For instance, suppose two travelers set out from the same location in the Faerie. One traveler goes 100 miles north, then 100 miles east. The other traveler goes 100 miles east, and then 100 miles north. They probably won’t arrive at the same place! Connections between regions can change depending on the time of day, the weather, the emotional state of the traveler, or other factors.

Faerie does, however, possess structure on the largest scale. It is flat, not a sphere. The sky is a dome of unbreakable blue glass during the day, star-spangled black glass at night; the Sun and Moon move along their tracks by hooks hanging from the dome (or are carried in chariots by gods).

The Land of Legends also has a bottom. It rests on the back of an immensely, impossibly huge dragon: *the Dragon*, chained beneath Faerie until the end of the world. Beneath the Dragon lies Chaos — the Astral Plane.

LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS

Certain elements occur again and again in Faerie landscapes. The most wondrous, unearthly regions are set on islands, mountains, or underground. The Land of Legends has no modern cities, but spectacular, fairy-tale castles dot some regions. These castles can be made of gold, or perch on clouds or pillars, or spin like tops. Other traditional elements include fountains, jewels, caves, and gardens with miraculous trees or flowers. Many regions seem caught in perpetual spring or early summer. Evil regions look ugly and frightening. Faerie includes nightmare forests of twisted, dead trees and deathly fungi, and wastelands inhabited by slinking abominations. It also has plenty of caves and caverns, some of which give way to an entire “Sunless Realm” of various subterranean races and monsters (the Onyx Kingdom, described below, is one part of this region).

PANTHEON REALMS

The lesser spirits, such as the elven-folk, hold most of Faerie in common. Old (and not so old) pantheons such as the Greco-Roman, Celtic, Norse, Yoruban, and Shinto gods rule pockets of the Land of Legends. These regions are called by names known to Humans familiar with mythology: the Greco-Roman gods live on Mount Olympus (see *Achaea*, below); the Norse gods inhabit the Nine Worlds (with their homes proper in the world Asgard); the Aztec gods reside in the Upper Worlds (thirteen heavens, the best-known of which is Tlalocan); and so on.

The pantheons once kept to themselves and closed the borders of their demesnes. In recent centuries, however, the pantheons have communicated more. Even if Humans stopped believing in some of them, they could believe in each other and live off the immense reserve of stored belief that is the Land of Legends itself.

SAMPLE REGIONS

Here are a few notable locations within Faerie.

ACHAEA

The demesne of the Greek gods takes as its name the most ancient appellation for Greece. Zeus, Hera, and the other Olympian gods rule over a realm of nymphs, centaurs, satyrs, and other sylvan creatures, as well as thousands of humans. Every “city” (actually, fortified villages) has a patron god. Half-divine kings, heroes, and warlords battle monsters and each other for glory, revenge, lust, or booty. The gods themselves live atop Mount Olympus, in the middle of the realm, while lesser spirits (such as river-gods and dryads) reside in bodies of water, trees, and other natural features closer to mortals. Achaea is much smaller than the historic Greek realm, but shows Greece’s characteristic landscape of rugged mountains and an island-studded sea.

THE HIGHER LANDS

The gods and spirits of the Chippewa live in this part of Faerie, which adjoins territories controlled by the gods of the Iroquois, Lakota, Haida, Pueblo, Cherokee, and other American Indian tribes (though those lands aren’t as large as once they were, as discussed below). The land roughly resembles that of the Great Lakes region, though spirits, including the fearsome cannibalistic Wendigo, lurk among the forests. The hideous demon Baykok (CV3 26-27) comes from here.

THE ONYX KINGDOM

A cave in the Dragon Mountains leads through miles of passages to a huge cavern hung with gigantic stalactites. Equally huge stalagmites squat about the cavern floor. All the cavern, however, is made of black onyx. Dim light shines from huge jewels hung from the stalactites on silver chains. The largest stalagmites bear delicately carved little onyx palaces. This is the Onyx Kingdom, principality of the svartalf Clan Ectol, and the original home of Vilsimbra (see CV2 92). The Dark Elves devote their immortal lives to endless, tangled intrigues for prestige. They try to ensnare mortal visitors into these plots and counter-plots.

THE SHADOW REALM

Brangomar the Shadow Queen (CV1 169), a dragoness who can assume Human form, rules over this part of Faerie, which derives from the vision of classic European fairy tales (though as the name implies, Brangomar’s evil and tyranny cast a gloom over the land much of the time). It’s filled with enchanted castles, ogres who live in caves and eat Humans, plucky young woodcutters who brave all sorts of peril to rescue beautiful maidens, princesses suffering from curses that only a hero can break, and wise talking animals ready to offer advice. The superhero Bravo, a member of the Justice Squadron, comes from here and can return more or less at will.

THE EVEN WILDER WEST

North American Indian gods and spirits once controlled much larger sections of Faerie than they do today — but even here, the white man invaded. A flood of dime novels and movies created a surge of old-style mythic belief about the Western Frontier. That belief grounded in the section of Faerie most like the mortal West. At first, the Native American mythic realm swelled (or at least lost no territory).

Native Americans themselves became the first inhabitants of the changing realm. Sometimes, the Ghost Dance really worked. Hundreds of Native Americans transported themselves to the Land of Legends, where the buffalo roamed and the white man did not. As the myth of the West grew, however, Faerie insisted on players to fill *all* roles. Nexus points sucked in cowboys, homesteaders, outlaws, Ambrose Bierce, and anyone else convenient. Within a few decades, the Even Wilder West took shape, and many of the Indian lands were diminished... or found themselves in a state of perpetual warfare with white settlers.

The land itself encourages mortal visitors to act like cowboys, sheriffs, prospectors, schoolmarms, and other classic roles. It even supplies clothing and other necessary props through outrageous coincidence. Visitors and residents interact with Native American tribes, but also with Native American-styled elves, gods, spirits (“manitous”), and monsters. The whites have guns (which hardly ever need reloading); the Native Americans have magic and the friendship of the supernatural powers. Unlike the real world’s history, the two sides are quite evenly matched.

WONDROUS ISLANDS

Many islands dot the seas of Faerie, and they tend to be quite strange. A few have useful or dangerous features or inhabitants; most are just colorful bits of scenery to pass by. For instance, a spike-topped brass palisade carrying a brass fishnet encircles one island. The wind in the net makes a menacing hum. A dense forest of wild shrubbery and gloomy cypresses covers most of the island. The center holds a natural fountain of water perfumed with bittersweet myrrh. This “Water of Death” repairs any damage to a corpse, but infallibly slays any living creature that drinks it. The magic water also acts as a *Dispel Magic* 15d6 when sprinkled on something or someone.

For inspiration, see accounts of the voyages of Maeldun, St. Brendan, or Sinbad the Sailor, all of whom clearly spent much of their time sailing Faerie's seas.

XLOPTUN

This portion of Faerie resembles mythic Russia, complete with likes of Baba Yaga, Koschei the Deathless, vodyanoi, domovoi, and the bogatrys of legendary Kiev. It features thick forests, lush meadows, and a climate that's harsh winter nearly three-fourths of the time. The demonic being Eretsun, who plagues Russia in not only the Champions Universe Earth but various alternate Earths, comes from Xloptun.

INHABITANTS

Faerie's inhabitants are as diverse as mythology itself. In some parts of Faerie, legendary creatures now live all mixed together, without regard to their mythology of origin. Visitors might encounter North European elves, Greek satyrs, the Finnish witch Louhi, and Japanese tengu in the same forest. In other parts, beings remain strictly segregated by culture and the like. Fortunately, in Faerie everybody (including visitors) speaks the same language. The inhabitants fall into six general categories.

FAIRY-FOLK

Cultures around the world believe in a humanoid but supernatural race. Europeans called them Sidhe, Tylwyth Teg, or Fays (among many other names). The Persians call them Peris. Cherokee legend describes the Nunnehi — and that's only the beginning of the roster. For convenience, they can all be called by their most familiar name: elves.

Some traditions divide the elves into "good" and "bad" tribes, such as the Gaelic Seelie and Unseelie Courts or the Norse Light Elves and Dark Elves. None of the fairy-folk, however, are truly "good" in a human sense. Some races of elves simply do not actively seek to harm humanity. The careless immortals of folklore are capricious, deceptive, and dangerous. Elves are amazingly generous when it suits them, but they can just as easily wreck a mortal's life for sport.

Elves live in forests, grottoes, or palaces under hills. Variant races live in other environments. Undines, for instance, reside in lakes or beneath the sea; the sinister svartalfar, the Dark Elves, dwell in caverns deep underground and fear the sun.

The ranks of the faerie-folk also include numerous intelligent but distinctly nonhuman races, such as Greek centaurs and satyrs, Norse giants and dwarves, and Japanese tengu. As with the elves, these are flesh and blood creatures like humans, rather than spirits. Some of these races have magical powers; others do not.

See *The HERO System Bestiary* for character sheets for dozens of such beings.

TRUE NATURE SPIRITS

The fairy-folk often show strong connections to the powers of Nature, but the Land of Legends also holds spirits who embody specific natural

phenomena. Dryads, for instance, are the spirits of the trees; they wield magic powers over vegetation. Air-spirit Sylphs dwell in the clouds. Naiads live in rivers, lakes, and fountains; Oreads in mountains.

Nature spirits wield great magical control over their own home, and some count as low-powered gods. For instance, the Wild Huntsman or the supernatural hag Baba Yaga are powerful enough to fight whole superhero teams with a good chance of winning.

MYTHOLOGICAL MONSTERS

Many cultures tell tales about monsters. All of them now live in Faerie. Listing all the mythological monsters possible would take a very large book, but *The HERO System Bestiary* has information about many of these creatures.

GODS

Not every godling or tribal spirit survives. Lots of people must believe in a god for hundreds of years before it coalesces out of the Astral Plane and takes up residence in Faerie. The gods of small tribes are usually just different names for the same spirits held in common by a wider culture.

Some pantheons command more power than others. The old European and Middle Eastern gods barely scrimp by after two millennia of Christianity and Islam, though modern interest in mythology has done much to keep them alive (and even strengthen them). Still-worshipped pantheons such as the Hindu, Japanese, and West African gods remain powerful and active. The gods of weakened pantheons, however, still wield much greater power than most superhumans — at least within their own demesnes. The mightiest mythological gods can overpower even the most formidable mortal.

The different cultural pantheons don't necessarily like each other, any more than different human cultures like each other. The mutual threat posed by the "ethical religions," however, prompted an indefinite truce between most pantheons. This unprecedented contact between pantheons has resulted in inter-cultural amours, and even a few children — new godlings unknown to mythology. These nascent demigods have power comparable to powerful superhumans. Similarly, extra-dimensional threats such as Skarn (see CV1 173) can bring diverse gods together in common cause.

TALKING ANIMALS

Faerie includes Earthly wildlife. Some animals can talk or display other remarkable powers. In fairy tales and legends, talking animals help the hero in return for some favor the hero did for them. But talking animals seldom fight — they're advisors, wish-granters, and givers of gifts, not another notch on the sword.

HUMANS

Humans still slip into Fairyland now and then. Not all of them get out again. Mortals who live in the Land of Legends must find roles for themselves suitable for a myth or fairy tale. Faerie accepts humans who become hermits, consorts to elfin lords or ladies, peddlers, knights, poor but honest woodcutters, and the like. Some regions, like the Even Wilder West, come with their own

set of archetypal roles. A Human who finds a place among the mythic races — with the satyrs, centaurs, dwarves, or tengu, for instance — transforms into a member of that race after a few days.

The elves eventually capture Humans who refuse any sort of assimilation and place them in an enclave with other stubborn Humans. This little village of exiles lies within the Sullen Country. Treacherous, viper-infested bogs completely surround this drab moor. As long as the exiles don't try to leave, the faerie-folk let them farm in peace. The exiles have a hard life, with the dubious compensation of immortality.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS

Faerie is not just Earth with magic — its fundamental laws of reality change in far-ranging ways. Representing these differences in terms of game mechanics is often difficult, and usually pointless. Fortunately, GMs can simply treat them as plot devices, as much a natural part of the world as air or gravity on Earth.

FLEXIBLE TIME

The passage of time in Faerie bears little relation to time on Earth. A person can spend months in Faerie, yet return to Earth mere hours after he left — or he can return from a night's revels in Faerie and find that decades passed back home. The difference between Earth time and Faerie time is usually less extreme (in game terms, only 1 step difference on the Time Chart either way) — but you never know. Time remains consistent only within a group of visitors. If anyone leaves the group for more than a few minutes, time might go funny for him.

The GM shouldn't impose severe time differentials arbitrarily or often. Minor time differentials simply emphasize how the heroes passed "beyond the fields we know." The threat of more severe time distortion gives heroes an added reason to stay together in Faerie: characters will think twice about striking off on their own if they know they could come back a day later and find the rest of the group gave them up for lost and returned to Earth weeks ago.

On the other hand, if circumstances separate one hero from the group, a time differential can create mind-blowing effects. The separated PC might experience an adventure lasting weeks or even years (narrated in summary by the GM) — then rejoin the other PCs and find he was gone only a few minutes! In short, the GM should use time differentials to enhance a story, not just to make the characters' lives more difficult.

Gods and the greater faerie lords can control the time differential. For instance, if the heroes please the elf-king Oberon, he might make their two-week quest through Faerie take only two hours on Earth. Conversely, if the PCs visit an elf-mound and give offense, their host might make their night in Faerie last a century on Earth... but only if the GM wants to do a time travel adventure next.

The time distortions become especially severe in the Australian section of Faerie, called the Dreamtime. (A few scholars claim the Dreamtime is actually a separate dimension "next to" Faerie.) Here, time hardly exists at all. Events replay themselves, and even death is not permanent. Mortal visitors to the Dreamtime soon feel like they were always there, and always will be. Perhaps, in some sense, they are. Even other faerie-folk find the Dreamtime uncanny.

RETARDED AGING

The natives of Faerie remain one age forever. Human residents and visitors may gain the same benefit in some regions, or if a powerful spirit or faerie lord wills it. In most realms, Humans age slowly but consistently, equal to 1 to 4 points of Longevity. The exact amount depends on the gods or creatures who dominate a demesne. In Achaea, the district of the Greek gods, mortals receive two points of Longevity. The Egyptian gods' demesne grants 4 points of Longevity: the Egyptians placed great store on an immortal afterlife. The Even Wilder West grants just one point of Longevity. The Sullen Country makes all residents completely immortal... but Faerie's agelessness carries a curse as well as a blessing.

In the Land of Legends, mortal fertility drops as lifespans lengthen. Mortals completely exempt from time cannot have children. Any children who enter Faerie remain children forever, like Peter Pan. Gods or elf-lords can suspend this effect if they choose, at least long enough for a child to be born or grow up. Pantheon leaders typically extend this benefit to their realms, so that their mortal subjects can breed more of themselves.

Sometimes aging is merely deferred, not avoided completely. On returning to Earth, a person might gain back lost aging — based on the passage of time on Earth rather than Faerie. If the deferred aging amounts to decades, returning home can be a shock, as Rip Van Winkle found out! Legends speak of gods or elf-lords storing the deferred aging in a small box they give to a returning mortal, with instructions never to open it. Unfortunately, the Human never receives an explanation of why the box should remain closed... so eventually someone opens it, and the person instantly grows old.

FIXED PATHS

The Land of Legends tries to ramrod visitors into its ancient story motifs, and sometimes it isn't at all subtle. A danger foreshadowed becomes a danger unavoidable: if the PCs learn the route to their goal holds certain hazards, Faerie might not let them bypass those hazards. For instance, if a hermit says you must face a monster to get through a mountain pass, it's no good trying to fly, teleport, or tunnel past the monster. The pass just goes on forever, and when you finally stop, there's the monster again, waiting to ask its riddle, demand its tribute, or issue its challenge.

This doesn't mean a whole adventure in Faerie must run on rails. Characters can always choose how they deal with a foreordained situation. The Land of Legends even adjusts itself to reflect the characters' choices. For instance, if visitors insist on fighting every adversary, Faerie reacts by casting them as warrior-heroes like Beowulf and supplies more monsters to battle. If the characters try to outwit opponents, Faerie offers riddles, illusions, and other chances for heroes to show off their cleverness.

The GM can reflect this "story reality" by applying bonuses to Skill Rolls if the characters actively try to play out legendary roles and storylines. In Faerie, what *Champions* refers to as "appropriate unlikely actions" (i.e., dramatically, if not realistically, proper conduct) become more likely to succeed than they would on Earth. The Land of Legends seldom, if ever, imposes penalties for refusing to follow a *particular* style or story, however. Heroes who refuse to follow one plot create a new story of their own — a new legend for the Land of Legends.

CURSES

Any permanent resident of Faerie can curse anyone who deeply wrongs him. Typical situations for laying a curse include: a dying person, upon his killer (if he didn't die in a fair fight); a host, against a treacherous guest; a guest, against a treacherous host; a parent, against an ungrateful child; or on yourself, as a penalty if you break an oath. People can also lay a "whoever" curse, linked to a place or item, such as the curse Alberich placed on the Rhinegold when Wotan robbed him. A person must possess a genuine grievance for a curse to work, such as murder, theft, or betrayal of trust. Merely disliking someone doesn't suffice.

Game mechanics cannot easily represent a proper Legendary Curse because its effects are so complex and far-reaching. If GMs absolutely must represent a Legendary Curse as an attack, treat it as a Major Transform: Person to Cursed Person. Since this power operates only within Faerie, however, the GM can leave it as a plot device. The curse's effects, however, can hound a victim through the Multiverse.

A Legendary Curse doesn't involve direct attacks. Instead, it manipulates future events to the victim's detriment. Curses can wait for years to act. No one can avoid a Legendary Curse: the very actions the victim takes to block a curse can set its effects in motion.

Legendary Curses often backfire, making the curse a hollow vengeance. A classic case forms the plot of the *Iliad*. The Greek hero Achilles asks his mother (a goddess) to make the Greeks lose battles until the Greek leader Agamemnon apologizes for an insult. The curse works: the Greeks suffer a crushing defeat and Agamemnon grovels... but Achilles's best friend Patroclus dies in the battle.

The person who set a curse can revoke it. A few extremely powerful persons — pantheon heads and the mightiest faerie monarchs — can lift *some* curses. So can most cosmic entities. Persuading someone to break or revoke a curse usually requires

some difficult and/or dangerous act of atonement. Some curses come equipped with atonement loopholes: "Henceforth, you will suffer [fill in the torment] until you [fill in the task]."

The GM should use Legendary Curses with caution. Curses are a threat to prevent PCs from charging through Faerie as if it were a shooting gallery or a monster-filled dungeon crawl. One good curse from an elf they beat up should convince most PCs to mind their manners in the future.

A Legendary Curse can drive an adventure, even when the heroes aren't the target. A really big curse can start wars, manipulate kingdoms, propagate through generations, and drag in the gods themselves.

ADVENTURE USE

Faerie can easily become an important part of a campaign, since a GM can work with all of mythology and folklore. A quest through the Land of Legends can make an uncommonly memorable adventure. The goal of the quest matters less than the striking characters the PCs meet along the way: tricky elven nobles, helpful talking animals, pagan gods, wicked witches in gingerbread houses.... Mythic quests often include contests where things are not as they seem (perhaps because an opponent is disguised through illusion, or because of some danger a hero didn't know about).

Questing heroes can seek many useful things and people in Faerie. If a recipe for a magic potion calls for dragon scales or centaur blood, characters must go to the Land of Legends. What's more, some of the Land's inhabitants know much that is hidden, or have special magic powers. The trick is getting them to help. Gods or wizards of long ago might hide powerful magic items in remote corners of Faerie.

Faerie makes an excellent source for heroes and villains. In the Champions Universe, super-beings create new legends every day. What could be more natural than for some of the old legends to join them? *Champions Villains* describes four characters (the dark elf Vilsimbra, the fairy-tale hag Mother Gothel, the Shadow Queen, and the god Tezcatlipoca) who bring their evil to Earth. Gods can project avatars or empower mortals; the new generation of demigods may seek adventure on Earth as well. Mortals cast into Faerie may return with magic weapons or powers.

A daring GM can even set campaigns in Faerie — after all, it's a place built on stories. The characters could be anything from mortal children cast into Faerie to aspiring demigods hoping to make new legends. For a twist on an old story, maybe the characters are Heroic-level Faerie denizens hurled to a disbelieving Earth, who must complete a quest to go home before they end up shot, in jail, or in an insane asylum. A sneaky GM could even start a campaign that seems to be set in mythic Greece, a Weird Wild West, or some other fantasy setting — and let the players gradually discover the setting is actually much wider and much stranger.



THE NETHERWORLD

The Netherworld is the Imaginal Realm built from Human ideas of evil. Here dwell the demons, incarnations of hate, fear, rage, and all other negative emotions, in a chaotic landscape as hostile as themselves. The Netherworld isn't just Hell: it's every Hell ever imagined, mashed together.

GEOGRAPHY

The Netherworld has no consistent, large-scale geography. It can seem completely different from visit to visit. Particular regions are locally stable, but the connections between them remain fluid. Large sections of the Netherworld seem to follow some overall plan, but different visitors can find completely different geographies. On one visit, heroes might land in the nine descending circles of Dante's Inferno. On a return visit, they might find the city of Pandemonium from Milton's *Paradise Lost* instead. If a visitor travels long enough, though, eventually he can find any Hell he wants.

LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS

The Netherworld's landscape varies widely but it is all unpleasant, composed of elements that people find ugly or frightening. There's lots of traditional fire, smoke, lava, and barren stone. Most of the Netherworld is dimly lit and the air reeks. Other traditional features for Netherworld scenery include: sandy desert; glaciers and plains of ice; pits and trenches; swamps; rivers and lakes of fire, boiling blood, pitch, slime, or icy black water; garbage and offal; dark, trackless forests; reptiles; vicious beasts; insects, worms, and maggots.

CULTURAL HELL

The Netherworld includes more than the Judeo-Christian-Islamic ideas of Hell. A Hindu visitor arrives in that religion's demon-realm of Naraka. A Taoist or Buddhist encounters the Chinese Hells. Even the Greek Hell of Tartarus and the Norse Hell of Hel survive, although visitors probably wouldn't appear in them spontaneously. In fact, no matter what Hell a character appears in, he can enter other cultures' Hells — for instance, he could descend a crevasse in the icy ninth circle of Dante's Inferno and end up in equally chill part of Hel.

DEMON LORD FIEFDOMS

The more powerful demon lords shape stable, personal desmesnes according to their tastes. Here they torment the souls of former pacters and people whose ruling passion placed them in the demon's jurisdiction. The tortures of the damned often show a certain rough justice... or would if they weren't infinite punishment for finite crimes.

PERSONAL HELL

The Netherworld also tucks in very personal Hells. Everyone has "personal demons" — private fears, feelings of guilt, situations they dread facing. A visitor to the Netherworld can turn a corner and step into his private Hell. Personal Hells need not be confined to a single location: they can take the form of a subplot or a sequence of characters threaded through other sections of the Netherworld.

The GM should design a "personal Hell" scene for at least one character on any adventure to harrow the Netherworld, using the character's personality and history as a guide. Encountering a personal Hell might be no more than a jab at a character's Psychological Complications, or it might put a hero in deadly peril.

Of course, everything that heroes hear and see in their private Hells is a lie: all the characters they encounter who accuse them and play on their guilts, fears, hatreds, and desires are demons in disguise or illusions, and they're lying their heads off. One seldom finds *truth* in the Netherworld.

SAMPLE REGIONS

Here are a few regions characters might find in the Netherworld.

BU JING SUO

The Chinese possess hundreds of Hells, each specializing in its own punishment for particular malefactors (see the list on HSMA 282-83 for a representative sample). These are arranged in ten tribunals, overseen by the Yama-Kings and a bureaucracy as large (and bribeable) as the old Imperial government. Unlike the Abrahamic Hells, most Chinese Hells are temporary. Sinners expiate their crimes, then have their memory erased before reincarnation.

Bu Jing Suo, in the first tribunal, punishes lazy Buddhist priests, monks, and nuns who did not perform the prayers and devotions that other people paid them to, and so endangered their clients' souls. These dishonest clerics must copy the prayers and scriptures they neglected, over and over, in a cold and windy schoolroom, with no light except a tiny, flickering oil-lamp.

HEL

Hel is the Norse Hell, the destiny of those who died "straw deaths" as cowards. (The *Prose Edda* says this included all men who died of sickness or old age, but other epics tell of men who died peacefully yet achieved Valhalla. The GM can decide the truth of the matter.) Hela, daughter of Loki, rules Hel. She is normal flesh color on one side of her body and the blue-black of dead flesh on the other.

Icy fog wreathes dark Hel. The fortress hall of Hela is named Sleet-Cold; its threshold, Falling To Destruction. Hela's dish is Hunger; her knife, Famine; her servant, Idler; her maid, Sloven; her bed, Disease; and her bed cover, Unhappiness. A gigantic dog called Garm, whose breast is sprinkled with blood, guards Hela's hall.

Hel includes a special hall for the very worst sinners, set apart on Nastrand, the Shore of the Dead. As the *Prose Edda* explains, "It is all woven of serpent backs like a wattle house; and all the snake heads turn into the house and blow venom, so that along the hall run rivers of venom; and they who have broken oaths, and murderers, wade those rivers." Some tales say the dragon Nidhogg lives here and sucks on the corpses of men.

THE LABYRINTH OF GREED

The Lord of Avarice, Lucifuge Rofocale, owns a spectacular desmesne of twisting, jewel-studded caverns. Magical darkness shrouds the caverns, however, because Lucifuge Rofocale is so greedy that he can't stand the thought of anyone but him even *looking* at his possessions. Here avarice demons oversee chain gangs of pirates, con men, industrial robber barons, petty thieves, bankers, and princes — all people whose lives were ruled by greed, slaving for eternity among unseen riches.

MOUNT MULCIBER

Mulciber, Hell's greatest smith and artificer, maintains a very small desmesne. The Demon-Smith keeps his forges and workshops in the cavern-riddled depths of a barren, black volcano. Since very few people fall into evil through a passion for craftsmanship, Mulciber buys damned souls from other demon lords. But they are raw materials, not slaves — Mulciber does his best work in soul-alloyed metal.

PANDEMOMIUM

The town-sized palace of Pandemonium is the seat of government for the Descending Hierarchy. Here Mephistopheles, the Lord of Pride, files the pacts between devils and mortals and coordinates the ceaseless war against God for Human souls. All the demon lords of the Descending Hierarchy keep apartments in Pandemonium, and the palace forms the principle setting for their intrigues.

Pandemonium is built entirely of gold and jewels; mortal visitors describe it as gaudy and tasteless, but with a certain grotesque grandeur from its sheer size. The palace-city is built on the shore of a lake of all-destroying fire. According to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the rebel angels fell into this lake of fire and emerged as devils. According to the Book of Revelations in the Bible, at the Last Judgment God will consign all the devils and the damned to this lake. The fire shall destroy them instantly and utterly, but the smoke of their burning shall rise forever.

THE WAR ZONE

Baphomet, Lord of Wrath, receives the souls of people who lived by anger and violence. His desmesne is a patchwork of the battlefields of Humanity's dirtiest wars, from the jungles of Vietnam to the trenches of Gallipoli. Here damned soldiers and terrorists fight and re-fight their wars for eternity, against each other and against the gangs of thugs and brigands who revelled in brutality. Superhero visitors to Baphomet's war zone will certainly meet a few deceased supervillains — and maybe a former hero or two.

INHABITANTS

All the Netherworld's inhabitants are spirits. They fall into two main groups: the demons and the damned.

DEMONS AND DEVILS

The dominant inhabitants of the Netherworld, of course, are the demons. Gamemasters can get a lot of gaming mileage from demons based on Judeo-Christian-Islamic mythology, but a little research in mythology and folklore can turn up fascinating demons from other cultures, such as Hindu Rakshasas or the plague-causing Maskim from Mesopotamian myth. Several gods of evil or death from defunct mythologies remain active as demon lords. In fact, famous demons like Beelzebub and Astaroth started as the gods of nations competing with the ancient Hebrews (most notably the Phoenicians and Syrians).

Mystics sometimes call the demons of the Abrahamic traditions "devils," to distinguish them from the evil spirits of other mythologies. The lords of devilkind hold feudal ranks such as Earl, Marquis, Prince, and King, in an infernal Descending Hierarchy. Some devils also claim titles such as Chancellor or Knight Commander. Devils even boast their own order of knighthood, the Order of the Fly, whose members compete in deeds of awfulness. The Descending Hierarchy is not very orderly: Devils may hold multiple ranks, and their intrigues for power surpass the Borgias for ruthless treachery. The mightiest archdevils call themselves the Sin Emperors — supreme exemplars of one particular brand of evil. Mephistopheles, Prince of Lies, claims the title of Emperor of Pride; Baphomet styles himself Emperor of Wrath; Beelzebub, leader of the cohort of fallen Middle Eastern gods, became Emperor of Envy through jealousy of the God who supplanted him.

DEMONIC ANIMALS

In some parts of the Netherworld, animals assist the demons. Many demon lords ride some sort of beast: the grimoires describe demons riding horses, wolves, and crocodiles. Infernal “hell hounds” are traditional, too. (*The HERO System Bestiary* describes both hell hounds and demon steeds.) Dragons, vipers, and other vicious beasts also help the demons torment their charges.

DAMNED SOULS

Damned human souls form the largest bloc of the Netherworld’s inhabitants. The damned usually look just as they did at their time of death — aside from any damage inflicted on them by their torments. Depending on what punishment they receive, the damned might be naked, dressed in tattered clothes they wore in life, or something more exotic. In Dante’s *Inferno*, people who sold holy offices had to walk in immensely heavy cowled robes of gilded lead. In some cases, the damned might be altered in strange and horrible ways. In Dante’s Wood of the Suicides, for instance, the damned are turned into bleeding, speaking trees.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS

The Netherworld and its denizens follow a number of special rules. The GM doesn’t have to represent these special conditions in terms of game mechanics, any more than he needs to write up Earth’s gravitational field as Telekinesis: they’re intrinsic features of the dimension itself.

INDESTRUCTIBLE SPIRITS

None of the Netherworld’s inhabitants can truly die or lose consciousness no matter what torture or mutilation they endure, because they’re already dead. Conditions that would mean death for a living person (sufficient negative BODY) merely incapacitate a damned soul. Given time, the demon or damned soul regenerates at a rate of 1 BODY per Turn. Likewise, negative STUN simply means a damned soul cannot act. The person remains aware of what happens around him, or to him, as if he were continually Stunned. This lets the demons do truly horrible things to their charges... and the damned stay conscious through it all.

On their home turf, demons share these immunities. They can’t be dispelled, and they ignore pentagrams and magic circles. Certain special methods can, however, truly destroy a demon or a damned soul. Being eaten is one method: demons and devils feed upon damned souls. The more refined demon lords have their own version of gourmet cooking. Lesser demons who fail in their assignments may end up on the dinner table, too.

Some kinds of magic might permanently destroy a soul or spirit. These should be fairly exotic attacks, such as AVAD Killing Attacks or Adjustment Powers. A Killing Attack whose only defense is a Mental Defense Force Field, a Penetrating BODY Drain, or a strong enough Dispel once a demon or soul is incapacitated by BODY loss *might* suffice. Avarice demons Transform the damned into metal and stone, then break them up for raw materials for their craftsmanship; this is pretty final, too.

Any method chosen to kill a Netherworld inhabitant should be somewhat difficult. Christian theologians call Hell “the Second Death.” Delivering a third and ultimate death to a spirit should be a momentous event that holds serious consequences — not something a character does lightly.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

The highest ranks of the Netherworld’s lords, the true Arch-Devils and Demon Kings, wield special power over their personal demesnes. This is really a power of the demesne itself, to respond to its master’s desires. A demon lord’s large Variable Power Pool can generate these effects. In most cases, though, GMs do not need exact numbers. They are plot devices. None of these environment-control effects cost any END.



CHANGE ENVIRONMENT

A Netherworld demesne's master can produce any environmental condition that has no significant combat effect (*i.e.*, no more than a single -1 penalty or the like) and is even remotely appropriate for the master's territory. This can cover as much of the demesne as the demon lord wants. Typical effects include greater light, gloom, wind, rain, heat, cold, or odors.

TOPOGRAPHIC CONTROL

A demon king can change its demesne's landscape at will to create or destroy hills, valleys, rivers, gorges, and other landforms. The demon cannot use this by itself as an attack, though topographic control may serve as the Special Effect of an attack (see below). Changing the landscape can still inconvenience intruders. For instance, a demon king might fracture the land with a network of canyons to hinder someone who tries to escape from him on foot.

ILLUSIONS

A demon king can create wide-area, virtually undetectable illusions in its demesne. Archdevils use illusions to deceive intruders about where they are, who they face, and what sort of danger they're in. Any combat automatically breaks the illusion. Illusions are especially popular with the subtler sort of demon lord, who would rather trick and seduce the heroes.

LIMITED OMNISCIENCE

The master of a Netherworld demesne has great awareness of local events. The demon king effectively has Clairsentience with all its Senses, enabling it to "look" anywhere in its demesne that it pleases. The demon king can also Mind Link with any of its minions at will. Fortunately for heroes, archdevils don't spend all their time spying on their fiefdoms — only if they have reason to suspect a threat, or once in a while just to keep their minions paranoid.

ENVIRONMENTAL ATTACKS

Demon lords can evoke and control features of the environment as attacks. In a volcanic demesne, for instance, a demon king can create small eruptions (RKA Area Of Effect Explosion) and streams of lava (RKA with Area Of Effect [Line]). In a swamp, a ruling spirit can lay down belts of quicksand (Entangle with Area Of Effect and Limitations) and animate the plant life to clutch and strangle (Telekinesis, Area Of Effect Nonselective).

If the GM doesn't want to create environmental attacks through a Variable Power Pool, simply set the Active Point cost of such attacks at about the same as the demon king's main attack powers, but give them the following Power Advantages for free: Constant, Uncontrolled, Indirect, and No Range Modifier.

The GM should give long-distance environmental attacks a fairly low OCV: it's no fun for a player to have his character exterminated by an enemy he never sees. Environmental attacks should also come with fair warning, such as a small earth tremor and wisps of smoke a Phase before a volcanic eruption, or a light sprinkling of acid rain a Turn before it becomes a deadly downpour. Environmental attacks serve to weaken and hinder heroes, not kill them outright, and to demonstrate a demon lord's power on its home ground.

Once the heroes face the demesne's master directly, though, GMs can suspend this gentlemanly code. A demon lord can use its environmental attacks simultaneously with its personal attacks (remember, the land itself attacks, not the demon), and the demon uses these powers to maximum effect in combat. Doubling a demon lord's attack capability is not in the *least* bit fair to the players... but what sort of idiot expects fair play in Hell?

SAMPLE TORMENTS OF THE DAMNED

In the unlikely event that a GM lacks a suitably sadistic, perverted imagination, here are some typical punishments for the damned. They come from that excellent guide to the Netherworld, the *Inferno* of Dante Alighieri.

THE LUSTFUL are blown about like leaves in perpetual storms.

HOARDERS AND WASTERS, natural enemies, spend eternity trying to smash each other by rolling huge rocks around.

HERETICS are sealed into tombs of red-hot iron.

MURDERERS wade through a river of boiling blood. Centaur archers on the banks prevent them from getting out.

FLATTERERS march through excrement that comes from their own mouths.

FORTUNETELLERS march with their heads twisted backwards; nevermore will they see where they're going.

SOWERS OF DISCORD get sliced up by demons, over and over.

TRAITORS are frozen into a lake of ice.

4



ELYSIUM

4

The realm of Elysium formed from human ideals of Goodness; more specifically, the ideals set by the so-called “ethical” religions. Elysium coalesced out of the Astral Plane around the fifth century BC. The previous 400 years saw a remarkable wave of religious reformers, prophets and mystics. In China, Lao Tzu revealed the mystic vision of Taoism; Confucius proposed a more worldly philosophy of good conduct and social contracts. In India, Siddhartha Gautama became the Buddha — the Enlightened One — and set forth a path of inner peace and transcendence. Vardhamana, founder of Jainism, preached a doctrine of total nonviolence and reverence for all life. In Persia, Zoroaster proclaimed the duty of every person to choose the right side in the eternal war of Good and Evil. The Jews in Palestine reformed the Torah after their captivity in Babylon, and so laid the foundations for Christianity and Islam as well. In Greece, philosophers like Thales and Pythagoras explored rational inquiry and humanism.

All these thinkers rejected the capricious, all-too-human gods of their time. They created new moralities based on higher laws than mere tribal custom and the whims of fickle deities. They intended their new laws for all people and all circumstances. New beliefs created new spirits and new spirit-realms that gradually pulled away from the Land of Legends, even as Faerie pulled away from Earth.

GEOGRAPHY

Elysium is the most difficult Imaginal Realm to reach from the Astral Plane. Without an invitation from a resident or a total religious commitment, all attempts to reach Elysium suffer a -5 penalty on Navigation (Astral or Dimensional) rolls. The GM may even want to require a roll from characters whose Extra-Dimensional Movement powers normally work automatically.

It's not easy to go from one section of Elysium to another, either. In the other Parterres, connections between regions are easy and visible: it's just a matter of traveling the right path. In Elysium, however, the regions did not grow together tightly. To pass from one region to another, a traveler must locate hidden nexus points, or use Extra-Dimensional Movement powers. As a general rule,

the Heavens of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) have pretty good access to each other. The Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist Heavens also enjoy good connections, and even admit each other's existence. Between the Eastern and Western Heavens, however, there is no direct contact. A traveler from one set of demesnes to the other must find paths through small, marginal regions of Elysium.

On the other hand, nexus points link Elysium to the other Imaginal Realms — even its enemy, the Netherworld. The Abrahamic Elysians carefully guard all nexus points from the Netherworld and Babylon, but the zones of the Eastern religions maintain strong, even promiscuous, connections to regions within the Netherworld and Faerie. Taoism, for instance, is only half an ethical religion: popular Taoism retains its ties to older, animistic beliefs in gods, nature spirits, and ancestor worship. The Celestial Emperor's court in Elysium rules the Chinese sections of Faerie and exchanges diplomatic missions with the Yama-Kings in Chinese Hell.

LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS

Many cultures imagine Heaven in terms of gardens and palaces. Even when the abode of the blessed features mountains and forests, these are stylized, well-behaved landscapes, with terraces and pavilions from which characters can enjoy the view.

All the symbols of ease, pleasure, and wealth show up repeatedly in Elysium. Palaces, fountains, and even trees are made of silver and gold. Jewels appear as gravel in streambeds, or form the pavement of halls. Fruit trees and flowers abound. The blessed wear clothes of costly fabrics and dine on the finest food and drink, but no one has to do laundry or go to the bathroom.

The regions where the Great Powers themselves dwell, however, go for grandeur instead of luxury. Here the scenery runs to mammoth temple-palaces of gold, marble, and jewels, with rivers of fire, blazing light, and hosts of spirits singing praises.

RELIGIOUS HEAVENS

Most regions of Elysium derive from the Heavens or Paradises envisioned by a particular religion. Here you find the luxurious Seven Heavens of Islam, the paradisaical island of P'eng-lai from Chinese mythology (and many more — popular Taoism and Buddhism have invented dozens of Heavens). Since human ideas of Paradise

are often quite fuzzy, many regions in Elysium merely echo general ideas of what a Heaven should be, without following specific myths too closely.

The Jewish, Christian, and Muslim demesnes form the most isolated bloc of Elysian regions. These regions communicate somewhat because the three religions share their God (even if they disagree on His message). The Abrahamic spirits, however, refuse to admit the existence of the other Heavens. In fact, the angels are under orders not to tell the blessed of each religion that believers in other Abrahamic faiths made it to Heaven. The Eastern-bloc spirits (Buddhism, higher Taoism, and higher Hinduism) think this is funny.

Ironically, the region that gave Elysium its name is small and isolated from the rest of the dimension. The original Elysium was the Paradise envisioned late in the history of Greek religion, when Pythagoras and other mystics created an ethical religion on a mixture of Greek, Middle Eastern, and even Hindu ideas. Pythagoreanism lasted until at least the second century AD, but the triumph of Christianity stifled it.

POPULAR HEAVENS

Several of Elysium's regions were never formally defined by dogma. These Paradises grew from the popular imagination. Here, for instance, one finds the Heaven of folk Christianity, all fluffy white clouds and harp music. Specialized Heavens for particular occupations fall into this category too, such as Gourmet Heaven (all dining room) and Doctor's Heaven (a golf course). There's a Lawyer's Heaven too, but it's completely empty.

SAMPLE REGIONS

Here are some examples of Elysian demesnes. Some come from "official" religious doctrines (with descriptions drawn from various scriptures), while others come from popular mythology.

THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels.... The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel... and the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass... And the city had no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

—Revelation 21:12-23

The Christian districts of Elysium all connect to the Heavenly Jerusalem. The most devout of the blessed dwell within. The Book of Revelation says that after the final defeat of Satan, this divine city shall manifest on a transformed Earth. Until then, anyone who seeks a face-to-face meeting with the saints must dare the city's golden streets. The truly righteous and redeemed may enter in safety, but any mortal who is less than perfectly devout and penitent commits blasphemy just by passing the city gates. The Heavenly Jerusalem's guards punish such blasphemy with death and consignment to Hell.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east.... And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

—Genesis 2:8-9

Four rivers spring from the hill where the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge grow. Eden never sees rain, but a mist periodically rises from the ground to water the plants. All kinds of animals dwell in peace within the Garden, except the accursed serpent.

Unlike most paradises, Eden looks relatively natural. The trees and plants bear flowers and fruit continuously, and the animals are all vegetarians, but the plants are still just plants and the animals are just animals: they aren't made of gold or anything like that. Even the Trees of Knowledge and Life look like regular fruit trees — an apple and a peach, as it happens.

Although Eden connects to other Abrahamic Heavens, access is forbidden. Angelic guards with flaming swords stand at Eden's access points with orders not to let any Human enter for any reason.

POP HEAVEN

Countless movies, cartoons, and TV commercials portray Christian Heaven as a realm of puffy clouds inhabited by white-robed men and women with white wings and tinsel haloes. Some of them carry little harps. Pop Heaven is entered through a gate of golden filigree. The gatekeeper, St. Peter (or at least someone who *says* he's St. Peter) owns a book listing who's due to arrive.

JANNAT

The Koran describes Jannat ("Garden"), the Heaven of Islam, thus: "This is the similitude of Paradise which the godfearing have been promised; therein are rivers of water unstaling, rivers of milk unchanging in flavor, and rivers of wine — a delight to the drinkers; rivers, too, of honey purified; and therein for them is every fruit, and forgiveness from their Lord" (Sura 47:16).

Other stanzas mention the houris, the beautiful, dark-eyed and perpetually virginal maidens who wait to pleasure the faithful Muslim man when he wants a change from drinking water, milk, honey, and the wine that was forbidden to him in life. The Koran is a little fuzzy about any corresponding rewards for faithful Muslim women. Muslim theologians say the rewards of Jannat are symbolic, and therefore gender-neutral. As always, however, the popular imagination stays firmly literal.

P'ENG-LAI SHAN

These three islands form the Eastern Paradise of popular Taoism. Here life is all ease and pleasure. The houses are built of gold and silver, and the trees bear coral and pearls. The snow-white birds and animals drink, like the inhabitants, from the Fountain of Life. Flowers scent the breeze with delicious perfumes, and their seeds grant immortality to whoever eats them. P'eng-lai's most famous inhabitants are a group of deathless sages called the Eight Immortals.

Legends claim that P'eng-lai is hard to reach even for an Earthly paradise. The water around the islands has no buoyancy, so ships sink; the three islands can only be reached by magic. Actually, P'eng-lai never existed on Earth at all, but it's still true that no one can sail or swim in the waters around these blessed isles.

AMITABHA

Amitabha is only the most well-known of the Buddha-land Heavens. Amitabha features lotus ponds, avenues of trees decorated with jewels, birds that sing in tune with spirit musicians, perfumed air, and gemstones strewn like gravel. Buddhas, bodhisattvas (Buddhist "saints"), angelic spirits, and minor gods dwell in Amitabha along with other blessed souls.

Unlike most religions, the Heavens of Buddhism are not places for permanent residence after death. They merely serve advanced souls as pleasant way-stations between incarnations. The real goal of Buddhism is *nirvana* — dissolving the self into the Cosmic Mind that is the only true reality. The wise inhabitants of Amitabha are just a few steps from this goal, or have done so but resumed mortal limitations to teach the rest of humanity. The blessed who attain Amitabha learn how to take those final steps, and the Buddha-land's sages know many great secrets of the Multiverse.

ROCK CANDY MOUNTAIN

"Oh, the buzzing of the bees in the peppermint trees, and the soda water fountain...." The modern version of the garden of luxury, as envisaged by a hobo, features candy growing on trees and other tasty surprises. A fellow can loaf to his heart's content, or tease the ineffectual, wooden-legged cops and the dogs with rubber teeth. Rock Candy Mountain gets boring after a while, though.

No supernatural powers have yet claimed this pagan bit of Paradise. Rock Candy Mountain is one of the safest parts of Elysium to visit. It also contains hidden nexus points to other folk Heavens and the Land of Legends.

INHABITANTS

The inhabitants of Elysium lack the diversity of Earth's other Parterres, but they include some of the most powerful of spirits. Billions of people actively worship the gods of Elysium, so they receive abundant magical energy to share with their subordinates.

Some of the Elysian spirits have roles in more than one religion. The Archangel Gabriel, for instance, is an important figure in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Gabriel must hop between demesnes and pretend in each one that the other Heavens don't exist; he is not a happy archangel.

All Elysians are good, by the standards of the religions that spawned them. They're not necessarily gentle, merciful, or in other ways "nice." Most religious codes of morality place a strong emphasis on punishment... or at least most believers think so, even if the official doctrine centers on forgiveness or renunciation of violence.

ANGELIC SPIRITS

Each of the ethical religions defines its own classes of servitor spirits. The Abrahamic traditions call them angels. The *amschaspands* and *yazatas* of Zoroastrianism are very similar. Hinduism and Buddhism share the *devas*. Popular Taoism describes assorted fairies and genies called *shen*. Confucianism propounds no spirits of its own, but advises followers to revere their ancestors and the gods of Taoism, because they are part of tradition.

The Abrahamic angels are currently the most active and militant Elysian spirits. Most of them are not warm and fuzzy benefactors of mankind. Only the Angels of Mercy fit that modern, watered-down conception. Older lore says that angels punish as often as they reward or assist.

BLESSED SOULS

Just as notably evil souls go to the Netherworld, the souls of notably good (or at least notably religious) people go to Elysium when they die. Elysium's population of former mortals is considerably smaller than the Netherworld's.

SAINTS AND SAGES

The mightiest among the blessed are the saints. Their "god" delegates power to them; some saints developed magic powers of their own, before their death; some even receive significant worship on their own. The term "saint" here refers not just to Christian figures, but also to Hebrew prophets such as Elijah and Isaiah, Muslim imams and Sufi mullahs, great Hindu gurus and yogins, Buddhist bodhisattvas, and Taoist and Confucian sages. Even a few secular people whose virtues brought them reverence become saints in Elysium, including rare, saintly wizards such as Apollonius of Tyana.

Having been mortal themselves, saints feel more sympathy for the problems of ordinary people than the great lords of Elysium ever do. The Ban seldom permits saints to help people on Earth directly. They may help the faithful through visions, however, or through subtle miracles on behalf of mortals who are themselves holy.

GODS AND DEMIGODS

The gods of the various religions dwell in Elysium. Their ranks include Jehovah/Christ/Allah, Shang Ti the Celestial Emperor, and deified founders of religions such as the Buddha and Lao Tzu. These powerful figures tell the angelic spirits what to do, and bear the responsibility for their actions.

Worship by billions of mortals makes the gods of Elysium tremendously powerful by mortal (or even super-mortal) standards. There's no point in writing up such powerful characters (even if doing so would not be deeply offensive to many believers). In most case, the GM can treat the gods as plot devices: they talk, and if need be can do pretty much anything they want, but heroes and villains chiefly interact with the saints and angelic spirits.

For all their power, however, the rulers of Elysium are not the cosmic figures that official doctrine claims. They merely embody mortal ideas about gods. The Jehovah who rules the Heavenly Jerusalem is not the Supreme Being and Creator of the Universe; neither is the Buddha found in Elysium the actual, historic Buddha. The gods of Elysium are not all-knowing or truly all-powerful. They make mistakes and have temper tantrums. Kabbalistic mystics refuse to call the God in Elysium by the name of Jehovah. Instead, they call him the *Shekhinah*, or "Countenance" — the mask of God. Most Christian and Muslim sorcerers also follow this practice, while Eastern mystics refer to Elysium's gods and Buddhas as avatars. The Elysians may help simple folk approach the divine, but the wise treat them as conduits for worship rather than the subjects of worship in their own right.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS

Like the other Parterres, reality in Elysium follows certain rules that visiting characters must keep in mind. Some of these rules echo the conditions in the Netherworld.

INDESTRUCTIBLE SPIRITS

Like the demons and the damned of the Netherworld, the blessed spirits of Elysium cannot be destroyed by any normal means. "Death" on other planes just dispels them back to Elysium, and "death" in Elysium itself just forces a temporary disorporation. The spirit eventually forms again. Certain terrible magic spells can bring true death to an Elysian — but if giving the final death to one of the damned is a thing not done lightly, think how portentous it must be to kill one of the blessed!

IMMORTALITY

In all the districts of Elysium, there is no sickness or death (at least, no natural death). While in Elysium, mortals become immortal: all diseases are healed and aging stops for the duration of the visit. Visitors easily become permanently immortal (*i.e.*, they can buy Life Support [Immunity and/or Longevity]), if one of the Great Powers concurs; stealing immortality is more difficult and a character can make powerful enemies that way.

In fact, some districts of Elysium contain items that cure disease and prolong life even if taken to Earth, such as the Peaches of Immortality from Chinese mythology.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Just as the chief powers of the Netherworld can control the environment or their personal demesnes, the Great Powers of Elysium can manipulate the Heavens under their control. (See the Netherworld description for details.)

ADVENTURE USE

With all the enemies heroes have, they'd like a few powerful friends. Elysium would seem to offer such allies... but in truth, Elysium offers fewer friends than PCs might expect.

The Great Powers of Elysium aren't especially cordial. Some gods won't offer anything but advice. Others expect a complete religious commitment from anyone who asks for help. Elysians may demand that characters prove they deserve any help, and they have very high standards. The Elysians certainly insist on favors in return.

What's more, misery on Earth is not necessarily bad for Elysium. Secularism presents as great a threat to the gods of Elysium as any evil power of the Netherworld. Religion — all religion — flourishes in times of trouble. As long as a menace doesn't directly threaten to reduce their worship, Elysium's gods might not care.

Desperate characters may try to *steal* some aid from Elysium. For instance, a person with a DNPC dying of cancer or AIDS might try to steal an all-curing apple from the Tree of Life in Eden. This would lead to conflict with Elysian spirits, either in Elysium or on Earth afterward.

Since the religions that created Elysium don't all tolerate each other, neither do the Elysian powers. Religious conflicts on Earth may invite supernatural intervention — for example, heroes who try to stop a "holy war" may find themselves fighting against Elysian spirits. After that, one of the Great Powers might put them on a hit list. Elysians may also be deceived, deluded, or misguided, or just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Elysium makes an excellent source for heroes, though. An angel or bodhisattva could decide his duty lies on Earth, among mortals. Such a hero probably suffers a form of exile for placing mortals above doctrine, but sets an example of virtue second to none. Wizard-saints like Albertus Magnus or Lao Tzu could also give superpowers to people of great moral courage, to help humanity fight the Netherworld's minions.

Supervillains may come from Elysium as well, but these villain are not so much evil as inflexible. For example, a warrior angel exists to destroy the enemies of God. He wasn't created to make moral judgments of his own. Left unsupervised, he might attack pornographers, "infidel" (*i.e.*, Hindu or Buddhist) temples, or people who work on the Sabbath.



BABYLON: THE CITY OF MAN

Babylon completes the Great Quaternion of the Inner Planes. This dimension was once very small, but it exploded in size and power as the human race multiplied and bound the Earth in railroads, highways, and cities. The lords of Elysium and the Netherworld view Babylon's rise with both hope and fear, for it tips the ancient balance of power. An alliance with Babylon could give either realm a final victory... or Babylon might conquer all the Parterres and make Man truly the measure of all things.

Babylon echoes all the great cities of the past and present, real and imagined — perhaps even cities to come. Mere size doesn't confer greatness: a city must radiate its image into men's thoughts, so it became a thing of symbol as much as of wood and stone and steel, before Babylon reflects its qualities. The London of Queen Victoria is more real than the London of today — at least in Babylon. Hiroshima, whose famous cherry groves bloom a short walk from humanity's most terrible feat of destruction, echoes more powerfully in Babylon than does Osaka, a sprawling megalopolis that exists only because it's useful.

Babylon thus resembles every great city on Earth, only more so. Its skyscrapers tower impossibly high. Its freeways sprawl wider than football fields; its back alleys form a cramped and tangled maze. It's built on a bay, a river, a crossroads, and an oasis. Like Rome and San Francisco, it has seven hills. In its malls, department stores, arcades, and bazaars you can buy anything possible to Human art or fancy — but some things cost more than money.

Babylon is, above all, the realm of secular ambition. Power, money, and skill rule affairs in Babylon. The world's great religions often place their hearts in cities (Jerusalem, Rome, Mecca, Benares...), and Babylon holds many a temple, cathedral, and mosque. But the cities find so much more to occupy men's minds, so many ways to distract people from religion. Saint Augustine advised Christians to renounce the City of Man for the City of God. As fewer and fewer people take his advice, Babylon grows. What happens to the gods when Humanity realizes it can build a new Heaven and new Earth all by itself?

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GEOGRAPHY

Characters can journey to Babylon directly, or approach it from the Astral Plane. From the Astral Plane, Babylon looks like a tightly bounded blur of towers. Once you enter the city gates, however, Babylon explodes outwards and you stand in the thick of the city. From the inside, in fact, Babylon doesn't seem to have an outside: whichever way a character goes, he finds more city. Babylon's main streets seem to go straight but actually form closed loops. You can find the city gates again and leave for the Astral Plane, but you must know the proper route.

The city contains many districts, each with its own character. The districts interpenetrate, appearing and disappearing like overlaid mirages. A flight of steps might connect imperial Beijing to a Middle Eastern bazaar or a modern mall. Walking down a single road, a character might see examples of the architecture and customs of cultures separated by thousands of miles and thousands of years standing side-by-side, or just across the street from each other. Somewhere in Babylon — it's not shown on any map — a subway leads to the city of Pandemonium in the Netherworld, and an elevator reaches the New Jerusalem in Elysium.

Characters can buy guides to the mazy, shifting streets of Babylon, but interpreting the multi-dimensional maps is a task fit for an Einstein. Inexperienced visitors should hire expert help, such as a cabby or a street urchin.

HISTORICAL DISTRICTS

Most districts of Babylon mimic the great cities of the past and present, from ancient Athens to modern Los Angeles. Some of the oldest districts are fading, though. Only fragments remain of cities from more than 2,000 years old.

IMAGINARY DISTRICTS

Babylon also contains hints and fragments of imaginary cities such as the Emerald City of Oz or the sky-piercing spires of the Traditional Science Fiction city, complete with monorails and hovercraft pads. Visitors may see these districts in the distance, but it's quite difficult to actually reach them.



ABSTRACT DISTRICTS

Some districts are based on abstract, stripped-down aspects of cities. Babylon includes a neighborhood where only the plumbing of the buildings stands; a huge, tangled cloverleaf where it's always rush hour and the traffic is always jammed; and a district entirely composed of funeral parlors and tombs.

SAMPLE LOCATIONS

Here are a few of the unusual or important places within Babylon.

FUTUROPOLIS

This classic Sci-Fi movie city features mile-high, Art Deco skyscrapers and aircars flitting about. Everyone is Caucasian and wears a silver jumpsuit. Fins make buildings, vehicles, and machines look aseptically high-tech, in a quaint and clunky sort of way. There's no sign of plant or animal life, wild or domesticated.

BYZANTIUM

Artifice shows itself most beautifully in the administrative district of Babylon. Byzantium features broad streets and plazas lined with stately public buildings and villas, with lots of white marble, columns, domes, mosaic floors, and carved friezes. Even the apartment buildings, shops and taverns on the district's fringe show a crisp, Classical dignity (regardless of what cultural or architectural style they embody).

In the middle of Byzantium stands the palace compound of the Emperor. The vast, labyrinthine place includes gardens and barracks. The huge throne room features a vaulted roof of dark blue lapis lazuli set with jeweled constellations. Absolutely everything in the palace is beautiful, or at least not ugly. The palace contains enough Greek statues, Ming vases, Japanese scroll paintings, jeweled Fabergé knicknacks, and Persian carpets to pay off the debts of every nation on Earth. Whole businesses in Byzantium work full time creating more *objets d'art* to divert the Emperor and his court.

In some ways, the Imperial Palace is a microcosm of Babylon, just like Babylon is a microcosm of Earth. The Palace extends into several districts of Babylon, where it takes the form of celebrated palaces from history and legend. In the Old China districts, the Palace resembles the Forbidden City. In Istanbul, you enter it through a copy of the Topkapi Palace. In Victorian London, the Palace looks and feels like the Tower of London.

THE LIBRARY

The Library's hushed chambers hold copies of nearly every book or magazine ever formally published on Earth, and a lot that weren't. It is the greatest repository of information in the Parterres. A character with a borrower's card can read newspapers, novels, or magazines in languages he doesn't actually know: Everyone within the Library's walls receives the *Universal Translator* Talent for purposes of reading the Library's contents.

The most amazing materials reside in the closed stacks. The Library boasts extensive collections of works lost to Earth, such as the plays of Sophocles that burned with the library of Alexandria, or the histories that the first emperor of China burned so people would know nothing from before his reign. Special vaults hold scrolls, tablets, and tomes from lost civilizations, all the way back to mankind's earliest civilizations (such as Atlantis) and beyond, though these collections are far less complete.

The Library's acquisitions program extends to books that might never exist. One endless room in the Library's basement holds millions of automated printing presses churning out every book that could ever be written. For centuries, the presses simply printed pages of random letters, on the theory that eventually they would print out everything. In 1973, however, the master wizard Archimago gave the Library a spirit of Artifice that sifts meaningful information out of random processes. The spirit ensures that the presses print *syntactically meaningful* statements — real words in real languages, not gibberish. Archimago's gift vastly accelerated the Library's program, though the librarians still face the problem of finding out what stuff is actually true. The spirit knows nothing but grammar; it can't sort truth from falsehood.

A borrower's card for the Library of Babylon is a 1-point Fringe Benefit. This lets a character use the Library's reference services at a low level. Effectively, the Library has at least an 11- rating in every conceivable Knowledge Skill. Reference searches take hours to days, at GM's whim, with no benefits for extra time. A card-holder cannot consult the closed stacks, however, without special permission from a librarian or various city officials.

A privileged membership costs 5 Character Points. This raises the Library's effective knowledge rating to at least 13-, and lets the character can use the closed stacks (though he still cannot check out these special books). No PC can start as a high priority user. The Library grants this Fringe Benefit only in return for a bequest as magnificent as Archimago's information-spirit.

THE ROOKERIES

The name comes from Victorian London, but most major cities contain these noxious, violent, crowded slums — the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, the ghettos of modern American cities, and more. Babylon's Rookeries are the worst of all. The slab-like public housing high-rises of concrete jostle smaller tenements of decaying red brick. Streets and alleys between buildings have been roofed over and divided into rooms. Shanties perch on the rooftops; improvised bridges, tunnels, and ladders connect the various structures. The chief industry is crime; the inhabitants see all intruders as targets for robbery and murder. If a criminal escapes into the Rookeries, nothing short of magic can locate him or drag him out again.

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VICTORIANA

This part of Babylon derives from steampunk fantasy versions of Victorian England and the Industrial Revolution. London's usual foggy gloom is made worse by the belching of smokestacks. Scientists and adventurers equipped with clockwork gadgetry and chemistry that owes as much to alchemy as to Faraday battle (or create) various menaces. Airships traverse the skies. Modern super-scientists using technological devices to visit Babylon are likely to end up here... regardless of which part of the City of Man they were aiming for.

INHABITANTS

A city is made of people as much as streets and buildings. The people of Babylon are as remarkable as their home.

HUMANS

Most inhabitants of Babylon are just ordinary Humans, gathered from all the great urban civilizations. Most Babylonians live with their own kind in their own districts, but they travel through the city freely. Walking down a street in Babylon, visitors see a Chinese rickshaw dodge an elephant bearing a sumptuous Indian howdah, a medieval bishop arguing theology with a Greek philosopher, pinstriped Chicago mobsters eyeing Los Angeles gangbangers strutting in their colors, a French courtier dripping with lace and jewels, Victorian streetwalkers, spacers from future cities in the asteroid belt, and merchants of Timbuktu.

Every native of Babylon speaks at least three languages fluently. This usually includes English. More people live on Earth now than in all of history put together, so the languages that are most popular on modern Earth are also the most common languages in Babylon.

CONURBITES

This magical race is analogous to the elves of Faerie. The conurbites live TV-commercial lives of glamor and conspicuous consumption. They look *mostly* Human; some of them sport "cyborg" machine parts, and their skin has a plastic sheen.

Like the faerie-folk, conurbites possess innate abilities. Conurbite powers usually deal with controlling or reshaping matter. Each one also has a special attack form based on an appliance, such as "morphing" a hand into an electric carving knife (HKA) or a super-powerful blow dryer (Blast with Double Knockback). The conurbite race is very new, and hasn't found its final form yet.

POP ICONS

People, real or imagined, can materialize in Babylon if enough people think about them. John F. Kennedy and Elvis live in Babylon. So do Sherlock Holmes, Bugs Bunny, and Ronald McDonald. Watch out for Jack the Ripper: Babylon's version is as lethal and unstoppable as people *imagine* Jack to be, making him far nastier than the real Ripper. Iconic real people never appear in Babylon until they die.

THE EMPEROR

The Emperor of Babylon might be Human, but then again he might not. Nobody knows what the Emperor looks like, because he always goes masked or in disguise. The Emperor often moves about Babylon incognito. He's reputed to be an extremely powerful magician or spirit; that would explain how he balances the many competing factions of Babylon and keeps the city from self-destructing.

The Emperor doesn't care about good or evil; he simply tries to keep Babylon from tearing itself apart. He is The Man — authority without a face. Anyone who wants his help must show some respect for procedure, and explain why a course of action benefits the city. Still, the Emperor is a bit of a trickster, too. Petitioners sometimes find the minor functionary they badgered for an audience was actually the Emperor himself.

INTELLIGENT ANIMALS

Just like cities on Earth, many animals live in Babylon. The city's rats, pigeons, and roaches, however, are sometimes intelligent. The sentient animals set up their own communities outside the view of most Humans. The rat cities among the sewers and other underground tunnels are particularly extensive.

LIVING MACHINES

Everybody treats the machines in their lives as though they had thought and will... so in Babylon, some of them do. Earthly cities have to deal with packs of stray dogs; Babylon has problems with packs of stray cars.

LIVING ART

People in Babylon encounter the occasional living statue, store mannequin, or gargoyle. Even if these creatures can't move, they can talk. Talking paintings are common, too. In Babylon, anything that counterfeits the Human form tends to come to life.

REALLY WEIRD THINGS

Babylon now generates strange creatures worthy of the wildest urban legends. More than one hook-handed serial killer stalks Babylon's streets. You really don't want to meet the mutant alligators in Babylon's sewers, or the elementals of smog and toxic waste. This is final proof, if any were needed, that Babylon has come of age as a dimension: it generates places, creatures, and images of its own, instead of merely copying directly from Human imagination.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS

Except for its geographic peculiarities, the dimension of Babylon has few physical conditions that could affect adventures. In many ways it is the most Earthlike and "Human" of the Parterres. Most of Babylon's "special conditions" are social or economic. For instance, how does Babylon feed its population? It's magic... and anyone who wants more of an explanation must discover the truth for himself.

FINDING YOUR WAY

All movement within a district follows normal rules. Travel between districts, however, becomes more problematic.

Like the Astral Plane, distance in Babylon depends on the traveler's will and how much the destination resembles the starting-point. Use the rules for astral shortcuts to find how long a character takes to find a particular district: such travel takes a base time of 20 minutes and involves crossing several districts. You can attempt a quicker, more direct journey, but at less chance of getting where you want to go. But Navigation (Astral) doesn't Complement the EGO Roll to reach the desired location; instead, characters can buy CK: Babylon and use it as a Complementary Skill. See the accompanying text box for additional modifiers; as with astral shortcuts, these indicate steps up or down the Time Chart from 20 Minutes, not dice roll modifiers.

For every 2 points by which a character succeeds with his EGO Roll, the duration of his journey improves by one step up the Time Chart (minimum of 1 Minute). Failing the roll means he ends up somewhere he didn't plan, but carries no worse penalty.

A character's actual movement rate doesn't affect cross-district travel. A character who flies at 100 miles an hour, for instance, arrives no sooner than a person who simply walks: he moves faster, but passes through many more districts.

Teleportation doesn't work between districts unless the destination is a Fixed Point or the character can actually see his target location. If a character looks down a cross-street and sees another district, he can Teleport there. Characters who want to travel instantly to locations in other districts must use Extra-Dimensional Movement and succeed with a CK: Babylon roll, with the same modifiers as normal movement. The character may use Navigation (Astral) as a Complementary Skill Roll.

BABYLON TRAVEL

Modifier	Time Chart Adjustment Factor	Destination
+1		Destination comes from the same time period as the starting district
+1		Destination comes from the same culture as the starting district
+1		Destination is a major city landmark (example: Acropolis of Athens)
+2		Destination is Byzantium
-1		Destination is a city from more than 2,000 years old that no longer exists
-1		Destination is a non-historical district (example: Futuropolis)
-2		Destination is an abstract district (example: Plumbing District)

ADVENTURE USE

Babylon's merchants can obtain just about anything (if the price is right). Its library infinitely surpasses anything on Earth. Finding an object or consultant in Babylon, however, can be an adventure in itself — especially if someone else doesn't want the PCs to succeed. Of course, mystic villains can exploit Babylon, too. Villains of all types find Babylon especially useful as a hideout, since location spells and powers are nigh-useless in the City of Man.

Both real and imaginary celebrities manifest in Babylon. The City of Man gives PCs a chance to team up with Sherlock Holmes or superheroes from their favorite comic books. On the other hand, heroes might have to fight Al Capone's gang or Jack the Ripper — or both!

Heroes and villains themselves could come from Babylon. The City of Man could produce urban analogs to "tall tale" characters like Paul Bunyan or Pecos Bill. Such characters could have adventures both in Babylon and on Earth. Babylon also permits characters who seem to come from other periods in history, without the need for actual time travel. On the other hand, urban legends could inspire some very grim villains, too.

You could even create campaigns set in Babylon. For instance, a "Cops in Babylon" campaign could combine the police of all ages, from Roman city guards to futuristic "Science Police" — with equally diverse perps. For a lighter campaign, "Be Prepared" takes on new meaning for the young heroes of a Babylon scout troop.

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LONG-RANGE SCANNING

Babylon's twisted, interwoven, many-folded space makes it both easier and difficult to locate things at a distance (as by Mind Scan or Telescopic Enhanced Senses). For purposes of scanning, nothing in Babylon is more than 1 kilometer away. After that, Range modifiers stop. On the other hand, characters cannot register the *direction* of anything more than 100 meters away. A scan beyond this range registers a shimmer of readings from all directions, appearing and disappearing as the districts rearrange themselves. Babylon is a great place to hide.

MIND SCAN IN BABYLON

Characters can still use Mind Scan to form a mental link across districts of Babylon, or to target Mental Powers. (Similarly, they can maintain a Mind Link across districts, unless the GM rules otherwise based on special effects, dramatic sense, or other considerations.) To target other characters across districts, however, requires that the Power used have the Advantages *Indirect* (at least at the +1/2 level to change the power's Path) and *Transdimensional* (to or within Babylon; +1/2). The character still doesn't know his target's actual location, no matter how good a Mind Scan lock-on he obtains.

Most districts have a population in the thousands. Mind Scanning such districts suffer a penalty from -6 to -8. If a character doesn't know what district his Mind Scan target occupies, he must scan the entire dimension at a -14 OMVC penalty — equal to scanning the largest cities on contemporary Earth.

MONEY

Babylon accepts all forms of currency, from all periods in history. You may have trouble finding a shop that accepts stone disk money from Yap, but the banks can handle it. You can pay for something in florins and receive change in a mixture of dollars and denarii.

None of the money in Babylon, however, is quite like any on Earth. Archaic money looks *new*. An Earthly numismatist might pronounce it a fair copy of an old coin, but worthless except for the metal it contains. Contemporary paper money isn't even a convincing fake. A Babylon dollar, for instance, looks like *Monopoly* money.

You can spend Earth money in Babylon. In fact, it's worth more in Babylon than on Earth — about five times as much! The Babylon government, however, frowns on people tossing Earth money around freely. Any honest citizen directs visitors from Earth to the nearest bank, where they can exchange their cash or (in modern districts) withdraw money from their Earthly checking accounts in Babylon currency. Dishonest citizens accept the Earth money, but lie about how much it's worth, or do not offer the full exchange rate.

Money from Earth has such value in Babylon because money is concentrated secular power — a talisman carrying the power of the State, and that's big magic. The Netherworld takes power from damned souls; Babylon takes power from money. As more money from Earth lodges in Babylon,

the city-dimension becomes more real and gains a tighter connection to Earth.

SECRET SOCIETIES

Politics turns bizarre in Babylon. The diverse population holds no consensus about how to rule the city. To make things worse, beings from other dimensions — demons, gods, and dimension lords — lobby and conspire for influence. The result is a plethora of scheming secret societies. A major fraction of Babylon's population belongs to one society or another. Mystics often lead these societies, and the Emperor personally infiltrates most groups. Here are two of the largest conspiracies:

THE SHADOW CABINET

The Shadow Cabinet serves the cause of Order. It seeks to subvert the government of Babylon and create a regimented society as prelude to taking over the Earth itself. Many rich and powerful people in Babylon belong to the Shadow Cabinet. The supreme leaders, however, all serve various Lords of Order, such as Bromion (see CV3 52-56). The Shadow Cabinet offers group solidarity and protection, a religious experience of the Great Unity, and the promise of power and influence in the New World Order.

The Shadow Cabinet controls an array of spirits with strange powers and even stranger appearances. These include the War Pigs, large hogs with self-working machine guns mounted on their backs; the Futures Traders, two-faced men in suits who talk backwards and forwards and remember the future as well as the past; and the Young Pioneers, truculent boys in coonskin caps, armed with oversized hatchets and paralyzing squirt-guns.

THE FOOL'S PARLIAMENT

The Shadow Cabinet's chief enemy promotes Chaos through a program that outsiders describe as "political surrealism" but which the leaders describe as "Jell-O wrestling with penguins." Order-lovers often deride individuality and impulse as foolish. The Fool's Parliament replies that if freedom is folly, they are glad to be fools — and dress the part, too.

Membership in the Fool's Parliament offers some practical benefits. The secret society acts as a labor union of sorts, helping workers deal with management injustice or financial problems. Those who want a pietistic religious experience can find one with a Lord of Chaos. Some people join for a chance to strike back at society, or for a chance to wear a silly outfit. A few people even join for serious philosophical reasons.

The Parliament's greatest weapon is Carnival. By declaring Carnival, the Fools can paralyze whole districts of Babylon as revelry draws people from work to jam the streets. Carnival can force business leaders to take the Parliament's demands seriously. The Fools can also cause or provoke sabotage, walkouts, and other labor actions. Against politicians, they prefer weirder methods such as guerilla home redecoration.

The Fool's Parliament controls its own strange creatures and agents, such as living toys; the insidious Men In Plaid with their hypnotic googly-eye glasses; and the enigmatic Balloon Man.

ALTERNATE EARTHS

The dimensions PCs in many Champions campaigns are most likely to visit are alternate Earths, which are discussed in general on page 97. Here are several briefly-described examples the GM can use, either as-is or as inspiration for his own creations. Most of them involve changing some significant historical detail (like a major sociopolitical trend not developing [or developing differently]), or some key resource not becoming available. All of these are Asiatic worlds in the sephiroth of Malkuth.

BRITWORLD

In the alternate Earth of Britworld, the United Kingdom, not the United States, is the dominant superpower in the world, as it has been for nearly two centuries, and colonialism still flourishes as of 2011. This has come about as a result of several historical factors that developed differently than they did on Champions Universe Earth.

First, the American Revolution didn't happen — or perhaps more accurately, it happened, but it wasn't really a "revolution." Instead of continuing to harshly tax the American colonies and giving them no representation in government, Parliament chose to respond to American grievances by allowing the "colonies" to go their own way. As a result Britain lost no resources to fighting the Revolution or the War of 1812.

Second, the nineteenth century saw less conflict between the great European powers. Plenty of minor wars flared up as Britain, France, and other nations sought colonial possessions in Africa and Asia, but those pitted poorly-equipped natives against modern European weaponry and rarely lasted long. As a result, weapons technology and military tactics didn't develop at quite the same rate.

Third, as a result when World War I broke out in 1914, it was fought less with trench warfare and more with methods similar to those of the last quarter of the nineteenth century on Champions Universe Earth. Furthermore, America entered the war in early 1916 and as a result the conflict ended by the end of that year. The social pressures that brought about significant upheaval and change during the Twenties and Thirties were thus diminished... but not removed.

When World War II broke out in 1943, Japan's neutrality was bought by recognizing its "colonization" of northern and eastern China, allowing the United States to focus all of its efforts and industrial base on supporting its ally Great Britain in Europe. The Nazis didn't stand a chance, particularly when Stalin abrogated the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact in 1944 so he could grab his share of the spoils. British and Soviet forces met in Berlin in early 1945, captured most of the German high command (including Hitler), and eventually tried and executed nearly all of them at Nuremberg.

In the over sixty years since, the Cold War and arms race that developed were between Britain (backed by its chief ally the United States, rather than vice-versa) and the USSR. The Great Powers of Europe have seen much less diminishment of their power and prestige than they did in Champions Universe Earth, and thus were able to resist what pressures arose regarding independence for their colonies (which were also much less than in CU Earth).

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE WORLD

Without a full World War II to push development, technology in Britworld lags behind that of Champions Universe Earth. As of 2011, the tech there is roughly the same as that of 1970-75 on CU Earth.

The colonial system that was so prominent a part of Champions Universe Earth geopolitics from the sixteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries remains in full effect in Britworld. The British Empire is larger than it ever became on CU Earth, and there are no "dominions." Many other European powers also have colonies, though their holdings aren't as extensive. Here's how the possessions line up:

Great Britain: Canada, Jordan, all of eastern and southern Africa not colonized by Italy (see below), India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, parts of Indonesia, Hong Kong, over half of Oceania, Australia.

France: Syria, Lebanon, most of western Africa (including Morocco and the Congo), Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, parts of Oceania.

Germany: None (stripped of all colonial possessions following World War I).

Spain, Portugal: None (lost to Great Britain or France in various minor conflicts).

Netherlands: Those parts of Indonesia not colonized by Great Britain, parts of Oceania.

Italy: Libya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, parts of Somalia.

USSR: None, since colonies are just a form of imperialist control of the masses. Mongolia is a department of the Soviet Union, though, like Kazakhstan, and Iran is as closely tied to the Soviets as Latin America is to the US.

United States: The US doesn't have colonies *per se*, but the European powers recognize that South and Central America (including Mexico and the Caribbean) are "America's backyard" and don't go there without permission. The nations of South and Central America are nominally independent, but in fact are so closely tied to the US (and US corporations) as to be American territories.

Japan: Northern and eastern China, some parts of Oceania.

The primary geopolitical conflict is the ongoing "Cold War" between the UK and the USSR, which affects all sorts of activities in the unaligned Third World. Japan is also considered ambitious. It wishes more territory in Oceania and Asia, and an alliance between the Soviet Union and the Empire of Japan is something the British and Americans deeply fear.



CAHOKIAN EARTH

The Champions Universe Earth supervillain the Cahokian (CV2 138) comes from an alternate Earth that's similar to CU Earth except for some major geopolitical changes. Put briefly, many major nations of CU Earth are split up into groups of smaller nations on Cahokian Earth, whereas some areas where CU Earth has many nations only have one on Cahokian Earth. Specifically:

- the United States doesn't exist. In its place are: New England (a republic including CU Earth New England, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland); the Desotan Empire (all the states east of Texas/Oklahoma and south of Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio); the Empire of Cahokia (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan); the Texas Republic (Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico); the Kingdom of California (Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon); the Deseret Republic (Utah); and the Northern Republic (Washington, Idaho, Montana, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Wyoming). Compared to Champions Universe Earth, several of these states (such as Cahokia and the Texas Republic) have larger populations of American Indians, who are far more involved in mainstream life and politics.
- Canada doesn't exist. Most of its territories are independent nations, though Quebec includes the Maritimes in its territory. Ottawa and Quebec are bitter enemies who frequently go to war (and often try to lure Cahokia or New England into the fray).
- Europe is united as the Empire of Europe. England and Russia are independent sovereign states; Russia remains an empire ruled by the House of Romanov and includes Iran and Afghanistan among its territories.
- Africa is home to several major nations. The Empire of Egypt controls the Middle East (and there is no Israel), the Arabian peninsula, North Africa, and the Sahel states. The republics of Kenya, Nigeria, Congo, and South Africa balance it by controlling eastern, western, sub-Saharan central, and southern Africa, respectively.
- India is an independent empire; its territories include India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand. For years it has fought wars hot and cold with its arch-enemy, Indonesia, for control of the Malaysian Peninsula and various island territories. The Empire of Japan and republic of Australia also contend for power in the Oceania and Indian Ocean regions.
- China is divided into half a dozen nations, and Tibet is an independent theocracy ruled by the Dalai Lama.

Compared to Champions Universe Earth, superhumans in Cahokian Earth are far more likely to work directly for their governments as soldiers, spies, or in other capacities. With so many more nations, warfare is far more common, even in First World areas like North America, and every side needs superhumans to maintain its strategic and tactical effectiveness. On the bright side, such a heavy reliance on superhumans has kept the nations of the world from developing nuclear weapons; instead, researchers mainly try to find ways to reliably create more superhumans.

EMPEROR MARTINEZ EARTH

On this alternate Earth, history proceeded more or less the same as on Champions Universe Earth until 1980. In January of that year the arch-villain Dr. Destroyer unleashed one of his projects, the twin mentalists Menton and Mentalla, on the world in the form of a plot to attack the United States government with mind-controlled supervillains. On CU Earth, superheroes foiled this scheme. On Emperor Martinez Earth, things went differently in two important respects.

First, the attack by mind-controlled supervillains succeeded to a much greater extent. Under Menton and Mentalla's control hordes of villains attacked two major targets: Washington, DC, where they killed most of the top American elected officials and bureaucrats (including President Reagan, who'd been inaugurated just days before); and New York City, where they virtually leveled Manhattan and severely disrupted America's financial markets.

Second, Menton proved to be even more powerful than he is on CU Earth. After Dr. Destroyer concluded the operation, Menton decided he wasn't interested in taking orders from Destroyer or anyone else. He burned out Destroyer's brain, killing him, and took over his organization.

For the next four years Menton and his forces, including not just Destroyer's agents and robots but his sister Mentalla and dozens of other psionics drawn to their cause by the promise of power and wealth to come for *homo psionicus*, fought the forces of law and Justice. It was a long and bitter battle that cost millions of lives and nearly saw Menton become the ruler of Earth. If not for the heroic efforts of UNTIL and numerous superheroes, things would have become much, much worse...

...but one might argue that in this case, victory was just defeat of a different color. After UNTIL agents killed Menton and Mentalla in 1984, Menton's criminal empire collapsed. The worldwide public backlash against mentalists was intense, with many of them being lynched by angry mobs. Even superheroic psionics who'd fought against Menton were looked upon with strong suspicion.

Juan Martinez, Secretary-Marshal of UNTIL and a political opportunist and schemer of the first water, played upon these fears and his

organization's record in the recent conflict to have himself appointed Secretary-General of the United Nations, and then to obtain greater powers for the UN as a whole. He promised to put an end to "the mentalist threat" once and for all, and established special squads of UNTIL agents to hunt out and capture... or "kill while resisting arrest"... "rogue" mentalists. By 1988 he arranged to have the mere possession of mental powers declared a crime both internationally and in most nations.

He didn't stop there. Since most psionics were mutants, by 1990 he'd played upon public concerns enough to expand his crusade to *all* mutants, not just those with mental powers. Unable to deal with the problem individually, the grateful nations of the world voted Martinez and the UN more and more power so he could hunt the "muties" down and protect normal Humans from them. Martinez's scientists invented special "Hunterbots" that could locate mutants and then help UNTIL agents battle them.

Naturally, mutant superhumans didn't go to their destruction quietly. Secret resistance cells sprang up, sometimes aided by normal Humans who despised what was happening. The greatest leader of the resistance was Kinematik (CV1 71). He and his people fought back for years, but it was a losing cause. One by one mutants were captured and sent to concentration camps, or simply killed. By 2004 even Kinematik realized the cause was lost; he fled his world for CU Earth, where he now fights to prevent a similar tragedy from occurring there.

In 2006 the anti-Martinez forces got a brief boost when the psionic Lancer, who'd escaped from Hunterbots years before by being sent to CU Earth by one of her comrades, returned at the head of a small army of mutants (mostly mentalists) to try to restore the rightful order of things. She failed miserably. Since she left her home dimension, Martinez's rule had become even more entrenched, and the power of UNTIL and his Hunterbots greater. Her small group of partisans didn't stand a chance. They fought the good fight for several years and achieved a few victories, but Martinez's forces steadily attrited their ranks. The remaining superhumans, including Lancer, were ambushed during a 2008 attack on an UNTIL armory in Toronto and wiped out (though rumors persist that Lancer herself and one or two others escaped the slaughter).

As of 2011, "Emperor Martinez Earth" remains a hellish place for some and a paradise for others. Martinez himself, his life extended by super-science treatments, remains Secretary-General of the United Nations. The countries of the world have so vastly increased the power of the UN that it amounts to a world government, and Martinez himself is often referred to as "Emperor" behind his back or by his enemies. Mutants are still hunted and persecuted; fetuses are tested for mutations before birth, and if any are found the mother is required by law to abort the baby. UNTIL is Martinez's personal army and police force. On paper, it's still only supposed to protect the world from superhuman menaces and the like. In practice it combats all types of crime (and has vastly increased

in size and authority as a result), and its “Special Security Operations” branch serves as Martinez’s secret police. Anyone who speaks out against “the Emperor” too loudly often ends up getting dragged out of his house in the dead of night, is thrown into an UNTIL van or hovercraft... and is never seen alive again by his loved ones. Superheroes are discouraged, and those few who remain active must (a) register with the UN, and (b) are watched very, very closely.

Most people of the world don’t mind these changes; they agree with Martinez’s propaganda that the world’s a safer, more prosperous place with the UN in control. But there are those who think harder and look deeper, who realize the truth: that Martinez is a ruthless dictator and that no amount of “security” is worth sacrificing freedom. Some of these people have formed underground movements to try to oust Martinez and scale back the UN, but so far they haven’t made much progress. Perhaps your heroes can help them....

FOXBATWORLD

When your heroes are in the mood for a more lighthearted stop during their dimensional journeying, send them to Foxbatworld — the Foxbatliest place in the Multiverse! In this version of Champions Universe Earth, the fantabulous Foxbat has become the most important superhuman in the world, and the most beloved. He’s simultaneously the greatest supervillain (able to pull off heists and clever capers no other villain would even dare attempt!) and greatest superhero (he defeated Dr. Destroyer and Mechanon singlehandedly!) in the world. No one seems to notice or care about the apparent contradiction.

As if that weren’t enough, Foxbat’s also the richest, most popular man in the world. His product endorsement deals alone earn him billions, and his face can be seen on everything from billboards, to cereal boxes, to television ads and website banners. His first rock album, *Foxbat For Your Love*, broke sales records worldwide, and the albums he’s released since then have sold nearly as well (his venture into heavy metal, *Föxbät*, was particularly well-received). He’s starred in half a dozen blockbuster films (including the animated “Foxbat Adventures” series), plays power forward in the NBA, has his own NASCAR team, and won 57 gold medals in the 2008 Olympics. Hollywood starlets line up just for the chance to go on a dinner date with him.

And how, you ask, did this amazing state of affairs come to be? No one’s quite sure. Perhaps the Foxbat of this alternate Earth — who is, of course, a prince of a guy — got his hands on a magic ring that granted him a wish, or made friends with a djinn who altered reality to suit his new bestest buddy. Or maybe the Foxbat of CU Earth was granted a wish by some god for some reason, and his wish to be the most awesomest, popular guy on Earth split off Foxbatworld as an alternate reality. Or, strangest of all, perhaps Foxbatworld is the *true Earth*, with all other Earths but pale, distorted reflections of the Way Things Should Be.

Whatever the reason, the Multiversal Powers What Are suggest that your heroes find a way to fix it. Fast.

LAURENTIA

As if Britworld weren’t a strange enough permutation of Champions Universe Earth geopolitics, consider Laurentia. In this alternate Earth, Christianity never arose — the dominant faith of the ancient world was the worship of Cybele, the mother goddess of ancient Anatolia (modern Turkey). This religion evolved in strange ways, developing a mix of pagan ceremonies (including bloodletting) and what would seem to a CU Earth visitor like medieval Roman Catholic rites transposed to the worship of the ancient mother goddess.

In the late nineteenth century, a monk named Sister Yvette discovered an alien artifact called the Foundationstone buried in northern Quebec. The artifact established a telepathic link with her and quickly determined that her greatest desire was to spread the Holy Mother Church worldwide. The Foundationstone downloaded the advanced scientific knowledge of its civilization into Sister Yvette and reshaped itself into a super-technological facility: the *Real Cathedral*, a techno-medieval gothic masterpiece in the heart of Quebec City.

But knowledge is only the beginning. It took many years, but using what she’d learned Sister Yvette constructed the *Meter Theon Machina* (“Mother Goddess Machine”). This psionic device telepathically broadcast her religious beliefs around the globe, forcing people to convert to her faith and live their lives as devout Catholic Cybelites. For those whose will was strong enough to resist her powers, she built the *Norn Cathedrists*, suits of sacred powered armor that could only be worn by eunuchs of her faith. The armies of the rest of the world didn’t stand a chance against them.

By the second quarter of the twentieth century, the leaders of the Catholic Cybelites controlled the entire world. They consolidated both secular and temporal power in Quebec City, which they renamed True Paris to celebrate its prominence. They replaced most of the world’s major languages with Quebec French (with Latin as the ceremonial language), declaring the use of any other tongue a crime.

LAURENTIA TODAY

Modern Laurentia is a unified world ruled by the Catholic Cybelite Church (and thus by French Canada). The Supreme Chatelaine, overseer of the Catholic Cybelite faith, dwells in luxury and power in an enormous, luxurious cathedral-palace complex in True Paris that’s one of the architectural and artistic marvels of the world. (The Real Cathedral occupies the heart of this facility.) Thanks to the ongoing effects of the Meter Theon Machina (not to mention well over a century of custom and tradition), every single human being on Laurentia Earth is a devout Catholic Cybelite. In the rare event that anyone breaks free from the faith, commits a crime, or causes trouble, the

Norn Cathecists put a stop to the trouble quickly. In many respects it's a peaceful, ideal civilization... albeit one built on a lie.

Catholic Cybelite society is extremely repressed, staid, and proper. The Church encourages Intellectual pursuits (especially the sciences) and forbids most physical pastimes such as sports and dancing; it allows art only in service of the faith. But every year there's an anarchic winter festival with blood-letting rites and emotional catharsis (in other words — rioting) to honor the Mother Goddess. During the ten days of the festival, the mask of Laurentian rigidness falls aside to reveal raw, unfettered human emotions and desires.

Analogs of most individuals from CU Earth exist on Laurentia, though none other than those gifted by the *Machinism Ascensus* (see below) have genuine superpowers. However, magic is present in Laurentia (though at a fraction of its potency on CU Earth). Many people can cast simple folk magic spells (such as blessings and minor curses). Full-blown rituals are forbidden except during the winter festival or when sanctioned by the Church as part of the worship of the Mother Goddess.

Laurentia is more technologically advanced than CU Earth, with numerous astronomical and medical breakthroughs as well as advanced weapons and material sciences that on CU Earth are unknown or limited only to superhumans. Without this technology Laurentia would pose no threat to CU Earth.

LAURENTIAN CONTACT WITH CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE EARTH

Laurentia first came into contact with CU Earth in 1924, when Church scientists discovered CU Earth's existence and sought to expand their faith to other worlds. The Catholic Cybelites' first attempt to invade CU Earth was foiled by the efforts of the famed Quebec mystic Brother Joseph, who was aided by a band of Quebecois pulp adventurers. During their time in Laurentia these heroes made sure to destroy all information about and evidence of CU Earth to prevent another invasion.

The Laurentians didn't regain contact with CU Earth until 1996, when they rediscovered the existence of other dimensions. They tried to invade both CU Earth and the alternate Earth of Cabotia (where English Canada rules much of the world), but were foiled by the combined forces of the Northern Guard and Cabotia's official superteam, the Imperial Sword. They attacked CU Earth again in 2009 through a portal that opened in Montreal, but L'esprits Gardiens, Quebec's premiere superheroes, beat the invasion back and sealed the portal.

Despite these failures, the Supreme Chatelaine wants nothing less than total dominion over every alternate Earth, starting with CU Earth. Seeing the effectiveness of Earth's superheroes, the Catholic Cybelites have built a device called the *Machinism Ascensus* to create low-grade superhumans to bolster their next invasion attempt.

V'han has sent spies into Laurentia to monitor its technology and invasion schemes. She's considering trying to co-opt it by posing as the Mother Goddess herself.

LEFT-HANDED EARTH

Among the infinite possibilities of the Multiverse, a hero can find some strange places... but few as strange as Left-Handed Earth.

LE Earth is just like Champions Universe Earth — but everything is the opposite of what it is on CU Earth. The average person is left-handed rather than right-handed. The same languages are used, but they're spoken backwards. In a few cases, genders even change. The sun rises in the west and sets in the east. Evil, cruelty, treachery, and injustice are regarded as virtues (or at least, ordinary behavior), while Justice, hope, and charity are sinful. On LE Earth, things that are good on CU Earth become bad or dangerous; things that are already bad or dangerous on CU Earth may become beneficial... or just get worse.

LEFT-HANDED VILLAINS AND HEROES

Most intriguing to CU Earth superheroes who have the misfortune to visit this unpleasant dimension is the fact that the moral roles of criminal and crimefighter are reversed. Heroes are villains the public lauds for their power and viciousness; villains are heroes fighting against the evil status quo. A few examples:

- the Champions are *the Ravagers*, and the members are: Assault (who wears black, red, and gold powered armor with spiked gauntlets, spiked elbow and knee pads, spiked shoulder pads, and a helmet shaped like a stylized skull); Ironclad (whose skin is rusty and corroded-looking, and who uses his gladiatorial sword far more often than his CU Earth counterpart); Kinetik (whose costume is black with red lightning bolts); Sapphire (who wears enveloping robes with a cowl that hides her face); and Witchcraft (who wears a revealing costume consisting of a mini-skirt and see-through blouse).
- Black Mask is a ruthless killer and thief; her costume is a dominatrix-style black leather outfit, and she wields a whip with deadly accuracy.
- Dr. Silverback is far more bestial-looking, and is a true mad scientist, willing to experiment upon people without regard for their health, safety, or willingness to be involved with his projects.
- UNTIL and PRIMUS agents wear uniforms reminiscent of Nazi and Soviet secret police organizations: lots of black and grey, rank symbols involving birds of prey and lightning, and so on.
- Foxbat is an outright villain, not a buffoon who thinks he's living in a comic book. He carries a powerful handgun instead of a ping-pong ball gun, wields razor-sharp "foxbat throwing blades," and has a far more predatory look to his costume.



- the members of GRAB are vicious murderers who leave a trail of bodies behind them whenever they rob someone — after all, it's safer to kill all the witnesses, and more fun to boot.
- the powered armor-wearing Professor Preserver champions the causes of the downtrodden and oppressed against the tyranny of super "heroes" and the world's governments.
- the beneficent robot Organitron seeks to create a utopian world where man and machine co-exist peacefully.
- Takofriel the Arch-Angel was sent to Earth by God to try to mitigate Human suffering and evil... but hasn't had much success so far.
- master geneticist Teleios seeks to use his research skills to end disease and genetic disorders worldwide, but governments and pharmaceutical companies who want to exploit the poor and sick seek to stop him.
- Dr. Yin Wu uses his magic powers to keep one part of China free from all evil influences and oppression, while the Communist Chinese government (and its Dragon Squad of superhuman agents) want to crush him and rule his people with the same iron fist it uses on the rest of China's millions.
- the sky-blue-skinned Grond, a highly intelligent scientist-turned-superhero by a lab accident, uses his great strength to fight evil, stop crime, and free people from oppression.

CHANGING CU SUPERHUMANS

The exact appearance of the Left-Handed superhumans (and normal people, corporate logos, and the like) is in the GM's capable hands, but here are some ideas:

- Reverse the color scheme or darken the colors of a superhero's costume. For instance, Victory's costume changes from gold to a fiery burnt orange. Similarly, supervillains favor lighter, more pleasant colors: Firewing's costume is a noble gold and red; Mechasentinel (rather than Mechassassin) has light powered armor that's royal blue and silver.
- Less costume and more skin. For example, Lady Blue's form-fitting bodysuit is really more of a bikini on LE Earth. This trick also works in reverse: a CU Earth hero who wears a revealing costume might cover himself completely on LE Earth.
- Skulls and spikes. One sure way of telling how bad the bad guy is: count the skulls.
- Reverse or otherwise change the logo, color scheme, or the like. For example, Bulldozer's tattoo is on his left arm, not his right (and on LE Earth, he's as big a bad-ass as he only thinks he is on CU Earth).

JANUS AND THE DOORWAY

In 1987, two scientists — Dr. James Sullivan of Champions Universe Earth, and Dr. Janice Stevens of Left-Handed Earth — simultaneously discovered a pocket dimension containing a 20m radius spherical device they later dubbed “Doorway.” Doorway is a link between CU Earth and LE Earth, but the two scientists kept it secret so they could have a love affair. Their son, Janus, a strange mingling of CU Earth and LE Earth genetics and morality, was born in 1988. His parents disappeared in 2005 and have never been found, despite all his searching. With powerful technology in his possession and access to both dimensions, Janus could pose a threat to the stability of both planes.

For more information on Janus and Doorway, see *Teen Champions*, pages 137-40.

USING LEFT-HANDED EARTH

Left-Handed Earth is an example of that classic comic book story, the dimension where the heroes encounter their Evil Twins. Not only does this lead to some fun stories with tense, slam-bang battles, it saves the GM a lot of work because he doesn’t even have to come up with any new character sheets! Just change the paint jobs on existing ones, and perhaps tweak a power or two, and you’re set.

The downside is that Left-Handed Earth isn’t a place the heroes can “rescue.” It’s contrary/evil nature is as much a part of its “fabric” and “self” as “right-handedness” is to Champions Universe Earth. All they can achieve is the small victory of helping a few of the good guys for a little while and making some peoples’ lives a bit easier... but perhaps that’s enough. On the other hand, Left-Handed villains (such as the heroes’ doppelgangers) may see Champions Universe Earth as soft, weak, and ripe for the picking — unless the heroes act fast and fight hard, they may end up facing a full-scale dimensional invasion!

Since people on Left-Handed Earth speak “backwards” from CU Earthers, characters from one dimension can’t communicate with characters from the other unless they use Universal Translator, Mind Link, Telepathy, some similar method, or good old-fashioned ingenuity. Even if they can communicate, though, Left-Hand and Right-Hand Earth superhumans tend to have a certain native antipathy that’s hard to overcome... particularly when they’re on opposite sides of the law.

Janus, of course, is a wild card in all this. Lacking any true morality other than loyalty to himself and his desires, he could wreak havoc in both dimensions while searching for his parents (or anything else he decides he wants). The PCs and their Left-Handed counterparts may have to find a way to team up to defeat him.

THE LITTLE BANG

As discussed on page 97, not all dimensions are equal in size. The “Little Bang” plane is one that got the short end of the stick back at the time of creation. The cosmic explosion that created it wasn’t nearly as energetic as the one that created the dimension of Champions Universe Earth. As a result the entire dimension is roughly the size of the Milky Way Galaxy.

What’s even more unusual is that space has some unusual properties there. The entire dimension has a sort of “spherical” shape. If it were viewed as a two-dimensional map a traveler could fly off one edge of the map and instantly appear at the same place on the opposite side of the map. It’s possible to navigate along the outer edge of the dimension the way people travel on the surface of a planet. In fact, that’s often quicker than traveling through the center of the dimension, since time along the outer edge is oddly “compressed” in a way that makes movement effectively faster.

Fewer sentient species have evolved in the Little Bang dimension than in the Milky Way. The best guess of Earth superheroes who’ve visited the Little Bang is that it has only about one-fourth as many, and none that they’ve encountered have been alternate Earth-style variations on sentient species known to them. The most advanced of them is the Elepstorians, who as of 2011 have low-speed FTL starships and are slowly establishing an interstellar empire. They’re a mammalian humanoid species superficially similar to Humans, but with greenish skin and significant internal differences. Their chief rivals for dominance on the dimensional stage are the Plar, a dark-skinned reptilian race ruled by a fascist-like government.

4

MALVAWORLD

Champions Universe Earth isn’t the only Malkuth dimension Istvatha V’han’s tried and failed to conquer. Another alternate Earth that’s evaded her clutches so far is Malvaworld. In this plane, the Malvans defeated the Elder Worm much more quickly and thoroughly than they did in CU Earth (see *Champions Beyond*, pages 101-03), and the Elder Worm never cursed them into decadence. As a result the Malvans went right on exploring, conquering, and researching. By 400,000 BC they ruled the entire Milky Way Galaxy... and then kept right on going.

As of 2011, the Malvans rule not only Earth’s galaxy but the Magellanic Clouds, the Sagittarius and Canis Major dwarf galaxies, the Omega Centauri Galaxy, and the Andromeda Galaxy, and are currently bringing the Virgo Stellar Stream under their sway. Perhaps more importantly, they’ve continued to develop their technology for the past half-million years, which as a result is far more advanced than that of the Malvans in CU Earth. In fact, it may be the most advanced technology in the Multiverse.

USING MALVAWORLD

If your PCs get involved in a major conflict with Istvatha V'han, the Malvans of Malvaworld represent that rarest of assets: potential allies with the power to stand up to the Empress of a Billion Dimensions. However, it's possible that recruiting the Malvans to their cause may simply be trading one master for another, since the Malvans might decide that their home plane would make an ideal first dimensional conquest....

4

In Malvaworld, every inhabited planet in the galaxies controlled by the Malvans is ruled by a Malvan “chancellor” or by an ultra-tech robot who looks like one (depending on the planet’s perceived importance). The Malvans are generally benevolent rulers, since they can destroy nearly any rebellion or pockets of discontent with casual ease, but they insist on all sorts of grandiose trappings of empire. For example, there isn’t a major city on any of their planets without a colossal statue of Valzad XIII (or whichever of his predecessors had one built there), and all subjects of the empire are forced to learn and speak a sort of “pidgin Malvan” instead of using translation devices. In short — a person can’t go very far or spend very much time awake without being starkly reminded that he’s a subject of the Phazor.

Istvatha V’han discovered the Malvaworld dimension thirty years ago, but after one brief attempt has taken no further steps to invade it. While she knows she has vast numerical superiority over the Malvaworlders, their technology is so much more advanced than hers that she’s not certain she could conquer them. In fact, she’s concerned that if they ever conquer their entire dimension and decide to invade other dimensions they could become a serious threat to her. (This is unlikely, though, since there simply aren’t that many Malvans, and they generally don’t trust other species with positions of responsibility in their empire.) For now she uses her own technology to keep a covert watch on them, and devotes a staggering amount of resources to the creation of a Maginot Line-like system of defenses to wall Malvaworld off from her territory.

THE MULTIFARIAN

Of all the alternate Earths known to Humanity, the strangest, perhaps, is the dark and dangerous realm known as Multifarian Earth, or simply “the Multifarian” (or “Multifaria”). Less than half a dozen mystics have visited it throughout Earth’s history, though in recent years contact has increased thanks to the machinations of the fiendish supervillain Shadow Destroyer (see below). It’s a place where Science exists, but Magic rules, and a strange darkness underlies all.

What makes the Multifarian so unusual is that its timestream doesn’t flow in the ordinary linear way time does in nearly every other dimension. It’s not a straight line; it swirls and eddies, bringing together people, places, and things that cannot possibly co-exist on Champions Universe Earth at the same point. Past, present, and future history mingle together in ways that someone from CU Earth (or any other alternate Earth, for that matter) might find baffling, and where historical dead-ends on CU Earth sometimes continue on to bear strange fruit. A section of Victorian buildings

stands right next to glittering twenty-first century skyscrapers in New York. Overhead, dirigibles, da Vinci flying machines, 1970s-era fighter jets, and super-tech hovercraft all traverse the sky... and sometimes a bat-winged demon can be seen flapping its way across the clouds on some mission for whatever master it serves. A twenty-fourth century space station rides the heavens as a twin to the Moon. As you walk down a London street, you might pass Benjamin Disraeli, then Shakespeare, then Tony Blair, then the 38th century warlord Forsythe the Rutledge... none of whom might be present in the city tomorrow.

Fortunately for PCs who might end up visiting the Multifarian, time doesn’t flow at the same pace there as on CU Earth. Thus, Luther Black comes to the Multifarian in 1896 to obtain the *Liber Terribilis*, and Shadow Destroyer destroys Detroit in 1992 — nearly a century’s difference. But in the Multifarian it was but a few years between one event and the next, and mere months after his own destruction of Detroit that Shadow Destroyer had gathered the power needed to bring himself and his followers and resources to CU Earth to aid Black’s plan. None of this troubles or inconveniences Shadow Destroyer at all, but it may cause *serious* problems for heroes who visit his home realm... then return to discover that years or decades have passed in the space of what seemed to them days. On the other hand, if they fail and Shadow Destroyer captures them, when they escape his concentration camps years later and make their way home it may be that just a week or two has passed on CU Earth.

To add to visitors’ confusion, while most people from CU Earth (particularly famous or important people) have their Multifarian counterparts, those doppelgangers may differ from them in ways subtle or not so subtle. For example, in the Multifarian, Shakespeare is a cold-hearted wastrel who steals the works of talented men and passes them off as his own, Foxbat is a competent and respected crimefighter, Ronald Reagan is a radical California liberal, Genghis Khan is a holy man of peace and wisdom, and late twenty-first century religious reformer Carla Atwood is ruthless, pragmatic opportunist who doesn’t hesitate to have her political opponents “removed.”

Most intriguingly, the natural laws that cause this “time confusion” to occur also “balance the scales” so that most forms of technology remain equally effective despite advances that rendered them obsolete on CU Earth. For example, in CU Earth, an air battle that pits jetfighters against zeppelins means the zeppelins don’t stand a chance. But in the Multifarian the natural laws somehow “tilt the balance” so that early twentieth century airships are just as tactically viable and effective as advanced warplanes — it all boils down to the skill of the user and the tactical situation more than the technological “imbalance.”



MULTIFARIAN SUPERHUMANITY

Superhumans exist in the Multifarian, though as noted above they're often very different from their CU Earth versions — many CU Earth villains are kinder (or even heroic) in the Multifarian, while CU Earth heroes become cruel-hearted villains (or at least apathetic men and women more interested in their own pursuits and pleasures than crimefighting).

The most notable Multifarian superhuman, and certainly the one best known to CU Earth, is Shadow Destroyer (see CV1 153-68 and CU 153-54). The James Harmon IV of the Multifarian, he commands the powers of both Science and Sorcery, and rebuilt ruined Detroit as New Harmon, a nation he rules as absolute dictator. It occupies most of what would be the north-central United States on CU Earth. Some of his chief enemies include Dr. Yin Wu and Mechanon, both of whom are far more beneficent than on CU Earth; Teleios is a sometimes ally. Gravitar, Holocaust, Borealis, Sunburst, and Joseph Otanga are all rivals — they, too, rule large nations they've conquered with their powers. But his chief political adversary at this time is Invictus, who rules a nation consisting of New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and most of the eastern seaboard down to Virginia — territory Shadow Destroyer would very much like to add to his own empire.

There is no Multifarian equivalent of Takofanes the Arch-Lich. Some mystics speculate that the Undying Lord's spirit somehow "resides" in Shadow Destroyer and is what gives him such vast arcane power.

POPEWORLD

Laurentia (see above) is far from the only alternate Earth where the history and nature of the Roman Catholic Church differs from that of CU Earth. Consider, for example, perhaps the most extreme example of what Human scholars call "Catholicized" Earths: Popeworld.

The history of Popeworld diverges from that of CU Earth in the late eleventh century, during the First Crusade. On CU Earth, the First Crusade succeeded. On Popeworld, it succeeded *phenomenally*, allowing the forces of Christianity to shatter the military might of the Muslim world so thoroughly that the Near East, Arabia, and North Africa all quickly came under European control. The Second Crusade, rather than being directed against the Turks, was an attack on the Eastern Orthodox Church. It sacked Byzantium, slaughtered Emperor Manuel I Comnenus and all his relatives, and destroyed every building, relic, and priest associated with the Eastern version of Christianity. It then turned northward into the Russias and wiped out all traces of Eastern Orthodoxy there.

The next thousand years of Popeworld history are a chronicle of further crusades against the non-Catholic regions and religions of the world: Africa and its animistic faiths; India, where Hinduism and Buddhism were wiped out in cold-blooded massacres that reduced the subcontinent's population by more than 50% over the course of several centuries; the New World, where primitive Mesoamerican and American Indian civilizations were unable to resist the religious fervor and superior armaments of the conquistadors; and lastly the Far East, where hundreds of years of struggle were required to eradicate Buddhism, Taoism, and Shintoism.

Today Popeworld is an almost-unified Earth ruled from Rome, where Pope Nicodemus XXIII holds sway. The nations are more or less the same as those of CU Earth, but nearly all of them are theocratic regimes where the true ruler is the Roman Catholic Church — the cardinals, archbishops, and bishops wield the rule power, as do priests at a local level. A rather strict, conservative form of Catholic doctrine and custom applies to most activities and aspects of daily life. For example, contraception, abortion, and sex before marriage are highly illegal and harshly punished; divorce is extremely rare; women are generally expected to stay home and raise the children, and comprise only 18% of the work force on average; Catholic interpretations of history, science, and other subjects are taught in all schools. Italian is the official world language and spoken (in varying degrees of fluency) by over 95% of Earth's population, with Latin used for Bibles and much Church business.

However, the Church's dominance doesn't amount to mind control. More than a few people resent Catholic policies, want religious freedom, or simply object to the Church's tyranny in general. Underground resistance cells (or terrorists, depending on their conduct) exist in every major city and region. The largest and most popular of these is *Arbor Libertas*, the Tree of Freedom, which seeks gradual, ongoing change in Church policies through largely peaceful (albeit sometimes sneaky) means. On the other hand, groups like the Sword of Progress resort to outright attacks on churches and other Catholic institutions.

POPEWORLD SUPERHUMANITY

Superhumans exist in Popeworld; most superhumans of CU Earth have counterparts there. However, Church doctrine regards superpowers (including super-technology) with suspicion, regarding them as bordering on "black magic" and as a blasphemous attempt to steal or ape the power of God. Thus, only superhumans who work directly for the Church and are forced to lead their lives according to special doctrines of constant penitence are allowed to exist unhindered. Those who resist the Church's beneficent instructions in these matters are hunted down, captured, and sent to monastery-prisons for life.

Superhumans who actually use magic are regarded as Devil-worshipping blasphemers and destroyed out of hand unless they can make a convincing case that their powers come from God rather than the Devil. A superhuman with "holy light" spells, or one whose incantations depend on gematria, could probably persuade the Church to let them live... but the likes of Witchcraft, not to mention Talisman or the Demonologist, end up executed and buried in an unhallowed grave with no last rites.

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POWERWORLD

Of all the alternate dimensions they're likely to visit, your PCs may find Powerworld the most disturbing... because it's the one where they're not really special at all.

Powerworld is pretty much the same as Champions Universe Earth in most respects, but there's one important difference: *everyone* has superpowers. Literally everyone is born with them or develops them in childhood; tests performed during pregnancy can usually identify the general nature of a child's powers before he's even born. But of course, not everyone has an equal level of power — thanks to the luck of the draw some people get minor or not very useful powers, while others are incredibly powerful or blessed with a power they can use to become rich and successful.

In Powerworld, people tend to join professions their powers suit them for. People with powerful offensive, defensive, or sensory abilities often become soldiers or cops, whereas people with various forms of super-intellect favor teaching, science, or the law. The GM can use the tables on the following page to randomly determine the general type of superpowers any given NPC has, if he doesn't just want to make something up that's suitable for that character; choose specific powers from *Champions Powers*, if desired.

USING POWERWORLD

Powerworld presents some intriguing role-playing opportunities. In most dimensions (including CU Earth), what makes the PCs special is that they have superpowers — they can do things other people can't. But that's not the case on Powerworld, where the average person they meet is likely to be as superpowered as they are, if not moreso. The average person's powers may not be as useful for crimefighting and saving the world, and he certainly may not have the adventuring experience they do, but he has the same raw power.

That being the case, the PCs have to find other ways to distinguish themselves — specifically, their Skills/knowledge, their heroic attitude, and roleplaying. Without the "crutch" of their powers to set them apart, they'll need something else to make themselves useful to the authorities. Otherwise they'll probably be told to go away and let the professionals handle things.

WALKINGWORLD

In the panoply of alternate Earths, some dimensions barely change compared to Champions Universe Earth, some “get lucky” and are significantly better in some way, and some are much, much worse. From many perspectives Walkingworld fits squarely in the latter category.

Two simple, yet profound, changes make Walkingworld a very different place from CU Earth. First, no large, tameable draft or riding animals evolved there. Walkingworld has no horses, camels, cattle, llamas, yaks, or the like. It has some similar beasts (zebras and antelopes, for example), but for reasons of biology, temperament, or geography they've never been successfully tamed on any large scale. It does have domesticated animals for food (such as pigs, sheep, and chickens), but nothing big enough to pull a loaded cart.

Second, there's almost no oil and comparatively little coal, making the development of most types of engines effectively impossible. Walkingworld has water-wheels and the like to power immobile machines (such as wheat and lumber mills) to grind grain, but no automobiles, planes, gasoline generators, or the like.

The result is a world where travel and technology are both extremely limited. Since the only real means of transportation is walking, and the only way to carry large burdens is Human porters or travoises-like devices, large political entities, trading houses, and similar institutions never evolved. The entire planet is a patchwork of thousands of relatively small political units whose reach extends only as far as they can keep an army or navy supplied... which isn't very far.

Walkingworld also suffers in one other important respect: magic is at a very, very low ebb in this dimension. Since the existence of ambient magic makes not only spellcasting but superpowers possible in the Champions Universe Multiverse, there are no superheroes in Walkingworld, and the only mystics are just philosophers (or con men). What's worse is that if superpowered beings enter Walkingworld, their powers may no longer function! When PCs (or other superhumans) enter Walkingworld, their powers immediately acquire a 16- Activation Roll. Each hour the Activation Roll for each power drops by 1 point (to 15-, 14-, and so on). (This also applies to super-technology and the like.) When a character fails a roll to use a given power, that power stops functioning until such time as the character leaves Walkingworld. Thus, the odds are that in less than a day, a superhuman in Walkingworld will find himself totally powerless... and quite likely trapped.

Istvatha V'han is aware of Walkingworld and its nature. As a result, she avoids the place like the plague. She has considered using either Walkingworld itself or one of the dimension's other habitable planets as a prison for superhuman criminals (who'd no longer be superhuman there), and may consider exiling any meddling CU Earth superheroes who invade her territory there as a “test case” for the project.

RANDOM SUPERPOWERS TABLE

Roll (first d6)	Roll (second d6)	Roll (third d6)	General Nature Of Powers
1-5	1	1	Acid
1-5	1	2	Air And Wind
1-5	1	3	Animal powers
1-5	1	4	Body Control
1-5	1	5	Chaos and Entropy
1-5	1	6	Cosmic Energy
1-5	2	1	Cyberkinesis
1-5	2	2	Darkness
1-5	2	3	Density Alteration
1-5	2	4	Dimensional Manipulation
1-5	2	5	Duplication
1-5	2	6	Earth And Stone
1-5	3	1	Electricity
1-5	3	2	Emotion Control
1-5	3	3	Energy Manipulation
1-5	3	4	Fire And Heat
1-5	3	5	Force
1-5	3	6	Gravity
1-5	4	1	Hyper-Attributes
1-5	4	2	Ice And Cold
1-5	4	3	Illusion
1-5	4	4	Kinetic Energy
1-5	4	5	Light
1-5	4	6	Luck
1-5	5	1	Magnetism
1-5	5	2	Matter Manipulation
1-5	5	3	Mental And Psionic
1-5	5	4	Precognition
1-5	5	5	Radiation
1-5	5	6	Shape Alteration
1-5	6	1	Size Alteration
1-5	6	2	Sleep And Dream
1-5	6	3	Solar And Celestial
1-5	6	4	Sonic
1-5	6	5	Speedster
1-5	6	6	Spirit Projection
6	1	1-3	Strength And Toughness
6	1	4-6	Stretching
6	2	1-3	Telekinetic
6	2	4-6	Teleportation
6	3	1-3	Time
6	3	4-6	Vibration
6	4	1-3	Water
6	4	4-6	Weather
6	5	1-3	Wood And Plant
6	5	4-6	Miscellaneous superpower(s)

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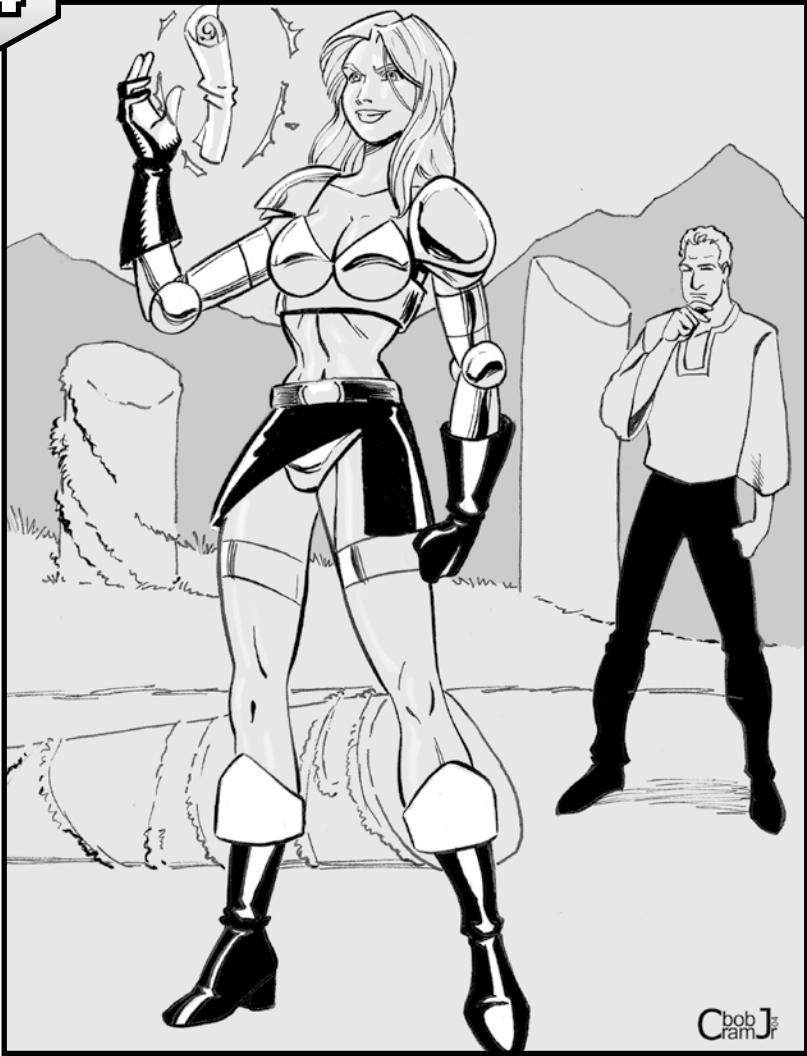
LEVEL OF POWER TABLE

Roll (2d6)	Level Of Power
2	Very Weak (NPC is built on approximately 100-150 Total Points)
3-6	Weak (NPC is built on approximately 151-300 Total Points)
7-9	Average (NPC is built on approximately 301-400 Total Points)
10-11	Powerful (NPC is built on approximately 401-600 Total Points)
12	Very Powerful (NPC is built on approximately 601 or more Total Points)

OTHER EXAMPLE DIMENSIONS

Not all dimensions call for the detailed treatment suggested for the Astral Plane and the Parterres. These brief sketches illustrate the sorts of planes found in the various divisions of the Multiverse (aside from alternate Earths, which are featured in the preceding section of this chapter). If a dimension isn't meant to become an important setting within a campaign, you don't need more than a few striking images and important characters. If the players enjoy their characters' visit to a dimension, or want to create PCs from that world, you can invent more details. Some dimensions could become the settings for major story arcs or whole short-term campaigns.

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Bob Cram Jr.

MALKUTH: LOEZEN

A dying green star gives this tiny ancient dimension, and its primary world of the same name, a tenth as much light as Earth receives from its sun. Bright stars remain visible even during the day. Life persists on Loezen thanks to magical megaliths that boost the sun's light for miles around them, giving light equal to a heavily overcast day on Earth. The civilized folk of Loezen dwell near the megaliths. Beyond the areas of full effect, the light gradually dims and the land becomes colder and wilder.

Humans, or beings much like Humans, form a majority in the civilized regions. Loezen also holds Human-animal hybrids, such as the pterodactyl-like rhamphors, and wholly alien intelligences. About half a million years ago, Loezenian mages explored other planes and imported numerous species from them, including some that were sentient. Other things came too, unbidden — subtle forces that the wizards did not detect until it was too late to control or dispel them. One of these caused the sun's decline: a Qliphothic entity entered the heart of Loezen's sun and has grown larger for hundreds of millennia, draining away the sun's energy.

Long ago, Loezen's mages created the megalith network to delay planetary death and hold back the monsters. Since the Time of the Blazing Star, however, the greatest magical knowledge has been lost. As the emerald sun weakens and erosion and mischance take their toll, a megalith falls every few centuries; less often, a Loezenian mage repairs one. The wild regions grow, and the monsters become bolder and more powerful. By now, some former settlements couldn't be restored even if someone drove away the monsters. Ancient spells mixed and decayed there, producing perils to the soul as well as the body.

The perils of the wildlands include many terrifying monsters: "They Who Laugh and Leap," degenerate hyena-like humanoids; Spidertrap Vines, which telepathically lure victims to the deadly heart of their nets of tendrils; the three-headed Slow Howlers; and the Specter Groves, where bizarre mutilations of the spirit take place. Some of Loezen's more prominent sorcerers include: the Sacred One, who wields incredible telekinetic powers from within the sarcophagus that holds his aged body in suspended animation;

Norom Barcaldine, the Prince Who Never Was, who erased his kingdom from history through an ill-considered experiment with time magic; and Queen Charsadda of the city of Olm, whose eternal youth and beauty may have some connection to the Talisman of Invulnerability she inherited from her late husband, Olm's last king.

Loezen stands out from most sentient-inhabited worlds in having almost no astral extension. The planet's Lower Astral Plane is dark and wracked with fierce spiritual winds. Anything caught in the wind blows further and further from Loezen until the astral storm carries it into the sun. Loezen's gods all tie their spirit realms to the planet as pocket worlds so they don't blow away. No ghosts haunt this ancient world: the astral storm takes any deceased spirit who lacks a god to offer refuge.

Clearly, Loezen is a doomed world. The ancient wizards understood this. They intended the megaliths as a stopgap measure. In time, they folded Loezen's god-realms into the Blazing Star and most Loezenians departed for another world, leaving the planet with its maimed Astral Plane. Some people, however, stayed behind. Rescuing Loezen from its slow doom would be an impressive quest for Human super-mages. Many powerful mystics still live on Loezen, but they're all too jealous of their own power and independence to work together. Most of them would rather flee to another world, such as Earth, and leave the rest of their world to die.

MALKUTH: LYTHRUM

Lythrum is what scholars refer to as a "high Assiatic" dimension — one that, while subject to the typical natural laws of a material realm, has sufficient magical energy that it "borders on" Yetzirah. The inhabitants of such planes often use magic as much as, or sometimes more than, science.

Lythrum fits this category to a T. Although inhabited by a species that's basically identical to Humans both internally and externally, Lythrum is a realm suffused with dark mystical energies where people accomplish things with sorcery as often as science. In fact, Lythrum's science mixes magic and technology in ways that would baffle Human scholars (and utterly fascinate Professor Paradigm). Compared to Champions Universe Earth, scientists tend to prefer to work alone, perhaps helped by apprentice-like assistants. They're aware of the existence of other dimensions and often enjoy traveling to them to explore or study.

The magical energies of Lythrum are referred to as "dark" for two reasons. First, they often manifest as various forms of shadow, darkness, or gloom. Human scientists who've studied Lythrum speculate that the "dark matter" in the Lythrum universe is actually a magical, perhaps even semi-sentient, force that mystics can manipulate with spells. Second, the nature of this mystic shadow-stuff tends to be a corrosive force that corrupts the soul if one lacks the willpower to control it instead of being controlled by it. Many a Lythrum

sorcerer (or scientist) has turned to evil as a result of this effect, forcing the better-natured Lythrum mystics to spend a great deal of time and effort combating them.

Lythrum is a small dimension, and is named by Humans after the planet best known to them. This is the homeworld of the father of the superheroine Black Rose, a member of the Sentinels and also of the Lythrum royal family. The Sentinels have visited Lythrum with her several times. By their description (and her own), Lythrum is an often-dangerous place where political intrigue, espionage, assassination, and clever social maneuvering are much more a part of society than on CU Earth.

MALKUTH: THE SIXTH DIMENSION

While Assiatic realms generally follow material, natural laws the way Champions Universe Earth's dimension does, that's not to say they follow the *same* natural laws as CU Earth, or are structured the same. In some of these planes fundamental forces CU Earth takes for granted (like gravity) don't exist or function differently; in others natural laws no one in CU Earth's ever heard of or theorized apply.

One such dimension, known to CU Earth Humans from only a few scant instances of contact, is the so-called *Sixth Dimension*. The supervillainess Tesseract has mentioned this place on several occasions; her powers may have some connection to it. The Japanese supervillain Teikei ("Trapezoid") claims to be *from* the Sixth Dimension; that his powers bear some similarity to Tesseract's may support his story. In either case the term "Sixth Dimension" isn't the plane's real name, simply a term CU Earth Humans have learned to refer to it by.

The inhabitants of the Sixth Dimension apparently occupy six dimensions of space, instead of the three CU Earth inhabitants are accustomed to. In theory this would allow them to reach "through" or "into" three-dimensional space to achieve seemingly impossible effects that three-dimensional beings could not perceive, or would perceive oddly (much as the one- and two-dimensional inhabitants of Edwin Abbott's *Flatland* can only partially perceive their three-dimensional visitors). That could explain the reality-warping powers displayed by Teikei and Tesseract, as well as Teikei's unusual appearance).

Similarly, if a being from a three-dimensional plane such as CU Earth were to visit the Sixth Dimension, his perceptions and ability to move would theoretically be restricted, at least until he acclimated to the dimension or received some help from its residents. Since Teikei claims to be a "criminal from the Sixth Dimension," it seems likely that the Sixth Dimension has societies with "people" of different moral persuasions, so finding assistance isn't beyond possibility. There might even be sixth dimensional superheroes and villains!

YESOD: YGGDRASIL, REALM OF PLANT LIFE

Yggdrasil is most simply defined as the Astral Plane created by plant consciousness, but this requires some explanation. Plants possess no consciousness in any Human sense, but they react to their environment and to each other. An individual plant's "mental" field is much weaker than a Human's, or even an animal's, but there are an awful lot more plants on Earth than there are sessile creatures! Yggdrasil, the ash tree supporting the world in Norse myth, supplies the most popular name for the dimension created by these massed "mental" fields.

Unlike Faerie, which grew from Human ideas *about* Nature, Yggdrasil is truly a realm apart from Humanity. A wizard who enters Yggdrasil — physically, astrally, or clairvoyantly — finds nothing comprehensible in Human terms. Sight and sound do not exist in Yggdrasil. Something like touch, taste, and smell exist in this dimension, since plants react to tissue damage and chemicals, but even these senses register in ways alien to Human minds. Just learning to interpret the sensations of Yggdrasil can take years.

Yggdrasil is deadly. Humans who think plants are placid and gentle don't know much about the vegetable kingdom. Plants compete with each other, as individuals and as species. The trees in a forest strive to overspread each other and claim a greater share of precious light. Different species secrete chemicals to attract or repel insects, or to boost or inhibit another species' growth, a vegetable diplomacy known to every master gardener. Parasitic plants slowly, vampirically feed upon their hosts. Forests and fields are places of silent, ruthless war.

Yggdrasil reflects this war. Human visitors to Yggdrasil encounter the psychic equivalent of chemical warfare, parasites burrowing into their bodies, and even less comprehensible attacks, all driven by passionless, relentless hunger. Yggdrasil doesn't ignore animal intruders: to the spirits of Yggdrasil, animals are fertilizer that needs to stop moving. Visitors must leave quickly or go mad... or maybe not leave at all.

HOD: THE CITY-STATES OF YONG

On the plane its inhabitants call Yong, the largest bodies of matter are no more than a few miles in diameter. These planetoids have surface gravities comparable to Earth, but the gravity fades quickly with altitude. Yongese animal life looks reasonably Earthlike as well, though the plants resemble giant mushrooms and fungi. The inhabitants look like Caucasian Humans, except for catlike eyes and hair colored black, green, blue, or purple, fading to grey or white as they age. Orbiting rings of glowing, yellow-white rocks illuminate these small worlds. Meteor streams of such rocks occur naturally.

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Groups of these planetoids form the City-States. A cluster has just one city. Notable city-states include Yelbock in Pinchwell cluster, Vimpstead in Skartaven, and Pelferlost (cluster and city have the same name).

A council of each cluster's leading merchants elects an Autocrat. To cement the election, the new Autocrat receives superhuman magical powers. The Autocrats are all intense rivals, though the physical nature of the plane makes real war and conquest impractical. Espionage is an accepted part of inter-city relations, and has a code of professional ethics of its own. Most of the Yongese are farmers, but a sizable minority lives in the cities as tradesmen and artisans. Pirates raid the remote clusters.

The entire plane is filled with air. Pterodactyl-like riding beasts and magical flying boats carry people and goods between planetoids. The little worlds within a cluster are only a day or so apart, whereas travel between clusters can take up to a month. Of course, Yong doesn't actually have "days" or "months." Instead, Yongese tell time by "oscillations" of the rings, which last from 16 to 48 hours.

The Yongese accept magic as a normal part of life. Yongese magic always requires lengthy rituals, so sorcerers prefer to craft magic items for ready use. All magic items incorporate *yongspar*, the glowing mineral that makes up the rings.

Autocrats gain their powers through a somewhat risky magic ritual, but few are themselves sorcerers. No two Autocrats receive exactly the same powers, but physical enhancement and energy projection are common results. The ritual is kept a great secret, because it strains the fabric of Yong's reality and can have unpredictable side effects. For instance, the ring around Pelferlost City is pale green instead of yellow, because the empowerment ritual was used three times in a single day.

Yongspar retains some of its magical value on other planes. In game terms, incorporating *yongspar* into an enchanted item contributes 1 Character Point to the item's Real Cost. The very rare *yongspar* crystals act as 10 point Variable Power Pools that add to a sorcerer's existing spellcasting, but these crystals never hold more than 6 Charges of this effect, and cannot be recharged.

TIPHERETH: THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE

Beyond the Middle Astral lies the endless, rippling greyness that every visitor first sees on entering the Upper Astral — the Veil of the Temple. Actually, the Upper Astral Plane is a very important dimension, but by its nature, very little about it can be defined in advance. What characters encounter in the Veil of the Temple depends entirely on them and the GM.

The Upper Astral Plane is almost infinitely responsive to thoughts — so responsive that it externalizes and makes real any hopes, fears, or expectations a visitor has. A character can materialize whole phony dimensions from the Veil of the Temple. On the Upper Astral, all gods and beliefs become true, because the dimension shapes itself to fit.

The great challenge of the Veil, in fact, is to stop projecting onto it. The Upper Astral can copy *anything*. Does the character keep on his guard against attack? The Veil obligingly creates enemies. Does a character seek Enlightenment? God Himself appears to give it... but this God says nothing the character did not think already. Within minutes of a character's arrival, the Upper Astral Plane cocoons him in a pocket dimension patterned on his personality.

Mystics call this plane the Veil of the Temple because it blocks access to the Brialic Planes of pure Spirit. To enter the realms of the cosmic conceptual entities, characters must confront their own minds. Successfully passing the Veil is one of the greatest initiations a wizard can undergo. (Characters who travel the dimensions using non-mystic powers or technology rarely, if ever, cross the Veil into the Higher Realms; Istvatha V'han can enter Brialic and Atziluthic dimensions but almost never does.)

Pocket dimensions created by the Veil have any attributes the GM wants. Anything can happen in them, for essentially the characters are subjected to a Mental Illusion of unlimited power. Characters can revisit their own past, meet omnipotent gods (or experience godhood themselves), die and be reborn — anything. But none of it is real; none of it has any effect outside the astral pocket, except for what the characters may learn about themselves and each other.

Adventures in the Veil tend toward psychodrama. The Veil of the Temple chiefly responds to the unconscious minds of visitors: it isn't an Instant Magic Wish-Fulfilling Dimension. The Veil builds its pocket dimensions based on visitors' memories, deep-seated attitudes, and mythic archetypes. Visitors to the Veil often find painful memories replaying themselves, perhaps in disguised form. Phobias, obsessions, and other neuroses find expression. In short, the Upper Astral Plane wrenches characters by their Psychological Complications.

Visitors to the Veil may even become more than one person. The Veil often externalizes suppressed aspects of a person's psyche. A macho, tough-guy character might encounter his Anima, the suppressed feminine side of his personality. A character much concerned with virtue might meet his Shadow, a compilation of amoral drives he never wanted to face. Conversely, a cynical villain might be shocked to encounter his own lost idealism in the person of his younger self... and if this sounds a lot like "A Christmas Carol," well, it is. Dickens wrote an excellent model for adventures on the Upper Astral Plane.

All this psychological wrenching has its rewards, though. An adventure in the Upper Astral gives characters a great excuse to buy down a Psychological Complication that has become too great a nuisance. Cosmic entities may use the Veil of the Temple as a testing ground for PCs, to see if they deserve a boon.

Anyone who wants to gain access to the Brialic dimensions must run the gauntlet of the Upper Astral. Characters can pass the Veil in two ways.

The usual way is to show spiritual progress in a psychodrama. A character could encounter an "other self" and reconcile with it in a convincing display of roleplaying; or he might triumph over an important Psychological Complication. Instead of Experience Points, the character receives the Fringe Benefit *Access To Briah* (3 Character Points).

Alternatively, however, a character might pass the Veil by totally, dismally *failing* the Veil's challenges. Every Psychological Complication challenged in the psychodrama gains 5 points of effect — either the character becomes more fanatical, or becomes more sensitive to circumstances that could trigger the Complication. (The character doesn't receive any extra Character Points because of this.) For instance, a character with the Psychological Complication, *Vengeful* (Common, Strong) could have his obsession become Total (he *cannot* keep himself from seeking revenge), or Very Common (*any* insult or defeat becomes grounds for considering revenge). Only a few Brialic planes become accessible to a person who becomes crazier in the Veil — the ones belonging to the cosmic entities most related to one's obsessions.

TIPHERETH: DEATH'S DOMINION

Everyone has his own image of Death's Dominion. For one person, Death might be a desert under starlight. Another person might see the realm of Death as an endless graveyard, while a third person might imagine Death's Dominion as an infinite slaughterhouse where the dead hang on hooks like so many slabs of beef.

Whatever form it takes, Death's Dominion is cold, still, and dark. The dead wait, buried or not, patient and unmoving as a trunk of forgotten magazines in the attic. Nothing moves, for this is where all stories end.

Only the living can bring change to Death's Dominion. Living visitors, who cast no shadows here and leave no footprints, can briefly rouse the dead. In most cases the dead merely speak for a few seconds but do not move. The specters of family, friends, and loved ones can be roused to movement and speech for a few minutes, but no more. Visitors find the dead who matter to them more easily than they find strangers, but there's no rush. It's too late for Time.

Sooner or later, a visitor comes to the one fixed part of Death's Dominion, a palace of ebon stone. The doors stand always open. A tall, vaulted passage leads to Death's throne room. Light comes from torches on the walls, their heatless white flames caught in mid-flicker forever. Death's stark, angular throne looks empty... but anyone who looks upon it somehow knows that it is occupied. To speak for Death, a visitor's deceased relative or loved one stands at the foot of Death's huge throne. The living cannot see or hear Death itself, no matter what their power.

Aside from being creepy, Death's Dominion follows several rules of its own.

The GM picks one character to supply the image for Death's Dominion. This might be the character with the highest EGO, or the GM can choose randomly. Ask the player how his character imagines Death.

Everything in Death's Dominion is absolutely indestructible, except visitors. What visitors do to each other is their own business. Characters have no way to harm the dead, or even to take a souvenir from this plane.

Time in Death's Dominion is an illusion. No matter how long a visitor stays in Death's Dominion, he returns to the worlds of time and matter at the same moment he left. Visitors do not need to eat, excrete, or sleep, and nothing in Death's Dominion could cause them harm except Death itself, who usually won't bother. Heroes may fight Death's avatars — mere gods of death, the "masks" it wears to make itself seen and heard by mortals in the lower worlds — but on its home turf, Death wears no mask and cannot be fought. No one can even target Death, no matter what Enhanced Senses the character might possess.

Characters can bargain with Death to restore someone to life, but Death always demands a life in return: If someone lives beyond the span of years allotted by fate, someone else must take their place in Death's Dominion. Sometimes, Death demands that heroes fetch to its Dominion someone who cheated Death and lived too long, such as by becoming undead or by stealing other people's bodies.

The true measure of Death's power comes with the restoration to life if a bargain is fulfilled. This is no vulgar opening of tombs. Death simply rewrites the past so the person didn't die: the fatal bullet missed, the heart attack wasn't quite so bad, or the medics arrived sooner. Only the people who went to Death's Dominion know that history changed; even the person restored to life won't remember. The resurrection, however, is not a rejuvenation. If the person died when old, he remains old when he comes back.

Alternatively, Death can restore a person through transmigration. Someone must offer to die so the other person can live again — to sacrifice all his remaining years. In this case, Death puts the resurrected person's soul in the selfless person's body, to live out that person's destined lifespan. Death never says how long that will be.

The final mystery of Death's Dominion concerns its relationship with the lower astral realms such as the Netherworld and Elysium. How can the deceased exist in both Death's Dominion and whatever afterlife his religion decrees, or as a ghost on the Astral Plane? Some mystics propose that people have multiple souls, with multiple destinies after death. Others say that Death can fetch souls out of any "afterlife" whenever it pleases and lodge them in its Dominion for visitors to meet, or that the solid specters in Death's Dominion are mere "records" of the dead, like a photo album equipped with memories. No one knows for sure... except Death, and he isn't telling.

4

PACHAD: THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

At first, visitors to the Garden of Earthly Delights might think they landed in a section of Elysium. The Garden is just that — a lush, fantastic garden or park filled with fruit, flowers, and brilliantly colored birds. This dimension's magic surpasses Elysium, however. In the Garden of Earthly Delights, anything a visitor wishes for, becomes real.

Anything.

That is, anything *physical*. The Garden cannot grant knowledge or wisdom. It can, however, satisfy any desire for pleasure, possessions, power, or nearly anything else. It materializes whatever objects, people, or other "props" it needs. Want to be Emperor of the World? The Garden of Earthly Delights creates a whole phony Earth if it must.

So what's the catch? Simply this: nothing that happens in the Garden is real. It seems real by any test that any visitor could attempt, but nothing created by the Garden can pass beyond it. The luxuries, the perfect friends and lovers, the powers given by the Garden vanish the moment you try to take them from the Garden to another dimension. The Garden is the sweetest, most seductive trap imaginable: everything a character could want, with no responsibility, forever. But a gilded, upholstered, perfumed cage is still a cage.

The ultimate futility of the Garden's pleasures is best shown by two visitors trying to fight. The Garden accommodates them both by tracelessly substituting a fake for each opponent. That way, both people can win — and yet neither of them really achieved anything. They both received private fantasies of victory, and the Garden keeps them separate to preserve the delusion.

The Garden is limited by the visitor's imagination — the one thing this dimension *can't* create is a surprise. By the time the Garden becomes boring, though, a visitor might lack the will and discernment to leave: he wants to go, so the Garden makes him a Gate... that leads to another simulation conjured from his memories.

CHESED: REALMS OF THE FOUR ZOAS

Chesed holds the four highest astral realms, the domains of Order, Chaos, Art, and Nature — the four great abstractions that contend in the lower worlds, personified by the cosmic entities called the Prime Avatars, or the Four Zoas. Each of these dimensions flickers between a set of images. In fact, mystics say the realms of the Four Zoas are really just one dimension, viewed four different ways. The best evidence for this view comes from the dark forest called Entuthon Benyton, which exists in all four realms.

ULRO

Ulro is the realm of Urizen the Prince of Light, Prime Avatar of Order. Ulro shows four faces to the visitor. First a visitor sees the Forest of Entuthon Benyton. The entire forest grew, banyan-like, from the Tree of Mystery that sprang up under Urizen's heel as he sat writing his books of laws. The tree trunks rise like pillars; the leafy branches interlace in a dense web, creating dark, vaulted spaces like caves, the second image of Ulro.

In this view, Ulro becomes a labyrinth of caverns, with the peculiar property that every path, from every point, leads downhill. You cannot backtrack, because the caves change behind you. Crystals in the walls and ceilings glitter with points of light like stars in the night sky, the third image.

Ulro becomes a huge void holding layer on layer of slowly turning, concentric rings bearing stars and planets, like an old armillary sphere model of the Solar System. The rings themselves are made of crystal, only visible by an occasional glint of reflected light. The sky of Ulro is full of clockwork.

Each star or planet is an entrance to a shining, crystalline space, the fourth face of Ulro, where dwell the spirits who serve Urizen. The "sun" in the center of the starry wheels is Urizen's palace of marble and crystal, blazing with light to illuminate all the space around it. Around the palace are Urizen's garden and orchard, including the Tree of Mystery, which easily expands and darkens to become the Forest of Entuthon Benyton again.

Urizen is not always found in his palace. Sometimes he explores the cave and forest with a globe of fire in his hands, seeking he knows not what. Sometimes he makes adjustments to his starry wheels. He often goes to the Tree of Mystery to argue fruitlessly with Orc — one of the forms taken by the Prime Avatar of Chaos.

BEULAH

The demesne of Luvah, Prime Avatar of Chaos and emotion, is a moonlit realm of summer nights and perfumed bowers. It also manifests as the wilderness of Entuthon Benyton in its fiercest aspect. Beulah changes to echo the mood of visitors. The Realm of Chaos can become a maudlin romance-land, a garden for play, a hellish waste of hate and violence, or anything in between — but the moonlit, summer garden of love and the wilderness of tortured, twisted passions are its most common forms. In the latter form, Luvah takes the form of Orc, a young giant wrapped in flames, chained to the Tree of Mystery. In the romance-land version of Beulah, Luvah and his feminine aspect Vala appear as young lovers. Luvah and Vala take many other forms as well, one for every passion ever felt by mortals.

GENERATION

The realm of Tharmas, Prime Avatar of Nature, has no proper name. Names do not exist in Nature. "Generation" describes what Tharmas does: he creates and maintains the blind cycles of birth, life, and death.

Under the influence of Tharmas, Entuthon Benyton becomes wild and tangled, almost a jungle, with spirits resembling wild animals. The forest can change without warning to other images, such as a forest-like kelp bed (but visitors can breathe underwater), or the tangled jungle of veins, nerves, and tissues inside a vastly magnified living body.

The central image of Generation, however, is a wild and rocky shore. Entuthon Benyton surrounds a dark and bitter lake called Udan Adan. This lake can expand in a moment to a seashore, with Tharmas rising from the water like a tidal wave.

GOLGONOZA

Golgonoza is the city of Urthona, Prime Avatar of Art. The forest of Entuthon Benyton completely surrounds the city, with the farmlands of Allamanda as a buffer zone. Golgonooza is a square, fortified city with castellated, golden walls, four gates in each wall, and four massive statues by each gate. Golgonooza's walls are low but the interconnected buildings within tower thousands of feet into the air.

Golgonoza lacks most of the features of a real city, like shops or vehicles. This architectural fantasy of towers, terraces, streets, and courtyards is more an idea of city-ness than a city itself.

In the middle of Golgonooza stand the twin citadels of Luban and Cathedron. Luban holds the great forge of Los the Smith, one aspect of Urthona. Cathedron holds the looms of Enitharmon the Weaver, Los's wife and another aspect of Urthona. There do Los, Enitharmon, and their children create spaces and times for other beings to inhabit. Anyone can see that Luban and Cathedron have a top, but no one can ever reach it, no matter how far or how fast they travel.

The character of Golgonooza changes to suit the visitor's mood. The buildings of Golgonooza can be made of gold like the walls, or silver, iron, or brick and stone. The city may hold crisp, Art Deco spires like something from an old Science Fiction illustration; or lush palaces with carved walls, onion domes, and minarets; or the grim, forbidding skyscrapers of an urban nightmare. Golgonooza shows all the faces of Artifice, from the best to the worst.

QLIPHOThIC: THE SHINING DARKNESS

Nearly everything in this mystical cosmos is black, in a multitude of shades and hues. Darkness itself becomes a form of radiation in this dimension. Human eyes do not like to see the Shining Darkness. Many sorts of Qliphothic entities dwell in this plane; though it cannot be said that such creatures “live” in most beings’ sense of the term.

In the Shining Darkness, huge, angular masses rise from vast, warped planes in utter disregard for gravity. Indistinct *things* flop and writhe between them. Every few miles stands a loose cluster of Humanoid statues like huge, squatting fetuses made of compacted grey ash. Qliphothic horrors nest in the empty eyesockets of their oversized heads.

Humans and other organic beings face danger just from being in this realm. The darkness slowly leeches away life energy and replaces it with the plane’s own mysterious energies. In game terms, mortal visitors suffer a Severe Transform 1d6, Penetrating every 10 minutes. As the Transform proceeds, a visitor’s skin darkens. When the Transform is three-fourths complete, the character’s body turns completely black and starts to glow with the Shining Darkness’s radiance. When the Transform completes, the being’s body crumbles and the victim becomes a Qliphothic entity.

If the victim returns to Earth from the Shining Darkness before the Transform is complete, he radiates a 2m radius field of Darkness to Sight Group for one minute for every point of Transform damage taken over the victim’s BODY. (This would make a great mystical “radiation accident”)

Mundane light sources such as flashlights or matches *explode* the moment someone activates them in the Shining Darkness — the dimension rips out their stored energy. A simple kitchen match becomes an RKA $\frac{1}{2}$ d6, Area Of Effect (1m Radius Explosion); a flashlight or cigarette lighter full of fluid becomes an RKA 2-3d6, Area Of Effect (2-3m Radius Explosion); a more powerful light source produces an even more powerful blast. Other energy-emitting Powers and devices suffer a similar effect, turning into RKA Explosions of $1\frac{1}{2}$ x the Active Points of the Power and using up triple END or Charges.

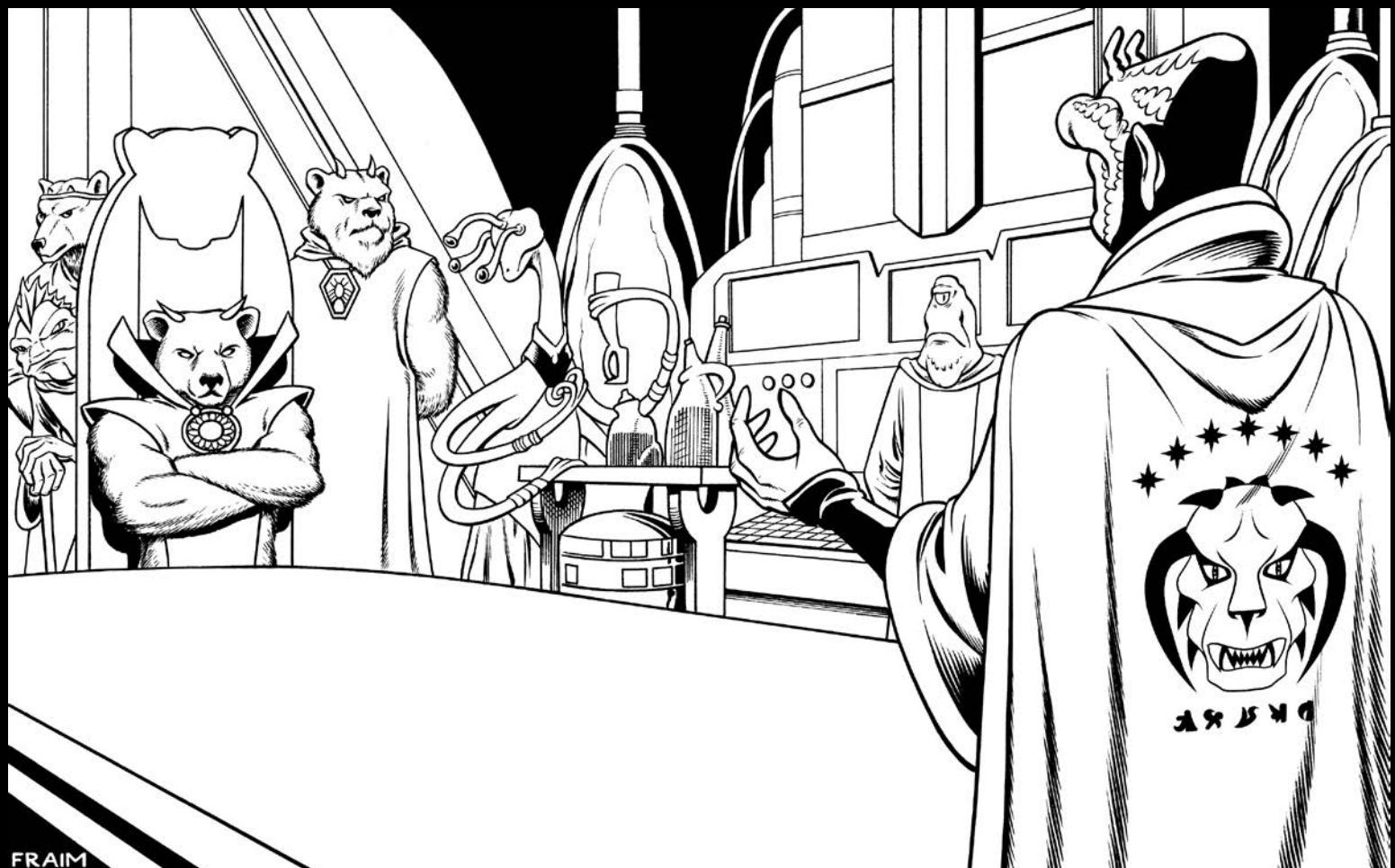
QLIPHOThIC: TATTERDEMAlION

This Qliphothic dimension might be better described as an agglomeration of *leftover* dimensions. As planes of reality decay or corrode and become Qliphothic, sometimes they tear apart or shrink. By a process not even mystics understand, dozens of these “dimensional fragments” have become attracted to one another by some gravity-like extradimensional force and coalesced to form a patchwork reality Humans would call Tatterdemalion.

In Tatterdemalion, the “landscape” (such as it is) can change entirely over just a few miles as a traveler crosses from a fragment of one dimension to a fragment of another. Where the two fragments were previously similar or have “knitted together” well, this change may be gradual and subtle, but in most cases it’s as abrupt as a cliff’s edge. And since they’re rotten pieces of ancient dimensions, none of the “zones” of Tatterdemalion are in any way pleasant.

The creatures and beings who once inhabited the various component realms of Tatterdemalion have mingled and interbred throughout the eons, creating things monstrous and strange even by Qliphothic standards. Some of them that Champions Universe Earth superheroes have encountered include: Carrionites, whose semi-undead flesh constantly remodels itself into different forms; the Foul-Skinned Men, humanoid warriors whose very touch is corruptive both physically and spiritually; Orons, invisible *things* who seem to be composed entirely of fanged mouths; Skeinrippers, who have the power to harm living beings by attacking their destinies; and Zodiac Beasts, predators said to be made of the stuff between constellations.

CHAPTER FIVE



THE V'HANIAN EMPIRE



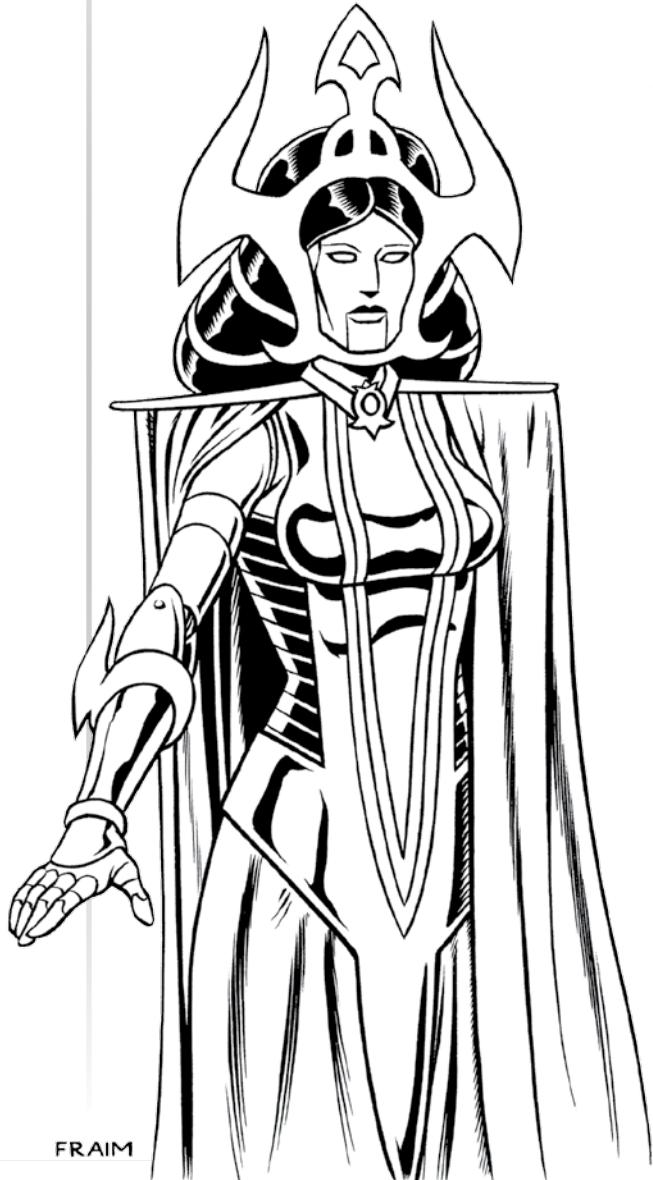
STRUCTURE OF EMPIRE

The V'hanian Empire is a vast, sprawling government that rules a hundred million dimensions and hundreds of octillions of subjects. Reconciling the various needs, wants, and interests of those subjects, governmental agencies, interests groups, and organizations is a non-stop task; sometimes it requires a scalpel, sometimes a sledgehammer. More than one person has remarked that Istvatha V'han's greatest super-power isn't dimensional travel or time travel, it's her ability to manage and administrate her empire so successfully for so long.

THE HIERARCHY OF POWER

At the top of the imperial hierarchy is, of course, the Empress herself — the absolute, unquestioned ruler of the greatest empire in the known history of the Multiverse. Technically speaking, not only is her word law, but everything in the Empire belongs to her. However, preferring to rule benevolently whenever possible and to let her subjects enjoy the fruits of their labor, V'han takes some pains to make things appear otherwise. First, she doesn't usually pass laws swiftly or on a whim. Most imperial laws are first proposed to her by the Imperial Law Council (see page 164) or some other division of the government, and are carefully studied by various government agencies and other interested parties before the Empress makes a final decision. It's not unknown for her to simply make a decree based on her personal inclinations or experiences, but she recognizes that this generally isn't a good way to rule and avoids it unless she's strongly moved to act.

Second, except on rare occasions the Empress never enforces her claim to possession of all property in the Empire. She'll lay claim to something if it's necessary for imperial purposes, but even then she compenses whoever it was taken from. She realizes that one of the best, easiest ways to keep her subjects content is to let them prosper and own things, so that's exactly what she does. After all, one of her chief promises to potential or recent conquerees is to improve their standard of living, and that's not likely to happen if she takes most of what they own or produce. (Similarly, she makes sure local officials obey relevant imperial laws and don't take her subjects' possessions without cause.)



REGENTS AND VICEROYS

Even a dimension-hopping time-traveler can't be everywhere at once in over a hundred million dimensions, so Istvatha V'han needs capable people to rule at a local level on her behalf. But finding trustworthy underlings isn't always the easiest thing to do. So at the highest levels of imperial rule the Empress usually resorts to the use of sentient robots who are programmed to think like her and to be utterly loyal to her. A *Regent Robot* rules entire dimensions in the Empress's name (or dimensional sectors — the same as those used by the Imperial Legions); a *Viceroy Robot* rules entire galaxies (or sometimes just one or more extremely important planets). These robots have extensive built-in weapons and defenses and are capable of fighting superheroes if need be. They can also travel dimensionally just like their creator does (though they lack the *Access To Briah* Fringe Benefit, barring them from certain higher planes.)

A Regent Robot looks just like Istvatha V'han wearing elaborate gold and purple robes. However, its facial features, while accurate, are obviously robotic — no one could mistake a Regent Robot for the Empress herself (except perhaps in bad light). A Viceroy robot is similar, but slightly shorter and dressed in red and black.

IMPERIAL DESIGNEES

Below the level of the Regent and Viceroy robots, the Empress prefers to rely on flesh-and-blood officials, since they're more likely to have daily contact with the people they rule. As a class, they're referred to as *imperial designees*, since they're appointed by V'han's decree. Typical designee positions include:

- Star Governor (chief administrator of an entire sector of space within a galaxy)
- Planetary Governor (chief administrator of a planet; sometimes upgraded to "System Governor" in the case of star systems with multiple inhabited planets)

On particularly important planets the Empress may also designate *Continental Governors* or *Regional Governors*, who report to the Planetary Governor, or even *City Governors* over key urban areas.

During Stage Zeta (Integration) of a dimensional conquest (see page 182), one decision V'han has to make is whether to leave existing local officials (the surviving ones) in positions of power as imperial designees, or replace the "old regime" with people of her own choosing. (The latter may or may not be locals. An appointment to a position of significant authority in a dimension may be a reward for a loyal courtier, supporter, or retiring military officer... or a *de facto* exile for a nuisance Istvatha V'han prefers to get out of her hair.) The Empress prefers to keep local officials on in new

capacities if she's satisfied as to their loyalty to her, and their general competence. She doesn't want to get rid of a useful underling, but neither does she want to solidify bunglers or bullies in power or give official "sanction" to longstanding abuses of political power.

In situations where the former rulers haven't done a good job, have oppressed large segments of the population, or are likely to cause trouble, she has them removed (usually executed, but sometimes sent to a distant planet or dimension) and replaces them with a native who's more fit to lead. If problems persist (as they often do in cases of longstanding racial or religious differences), it's not unknown for her to resolve the issue by killing *everyone* involved — in short, by committing genocide on a massive scale — and then opening the territory for settlement by more rational, mature people. For example, if the Empress ever conquers Champions Universe Earth, it's likely that significant portions of the Middle East, Africa, and the Indian subcontinent will be "scoured" (as the Imperial Legions puts it) and then made available for other Humans to settle. The Empress expects her subjects to behave so they can take advantages of the opportunities being an imperial subject offers — and if they don't behave, she will punish them.

THE IMPERIAL BUREAUCRACY

Below (or sometimes to the side of) the level of imperial designees are the vast ranks of the imperial bureaucracy. Typically these functionaries answer to the higher-ups in their ministry (see below) first and local officials second, but there are enough exceptions to that rule, enough unwritten rules, and enough exceptional circumstances to make many a bureaucrat's life "interesting."

Istvatha V'han takes an unusually high level of interest in the workings of her bureaucracy. Many of the reports she reads each day are from major and minor departments within the bureaucratic halls, not just from the dimensional or galactic level but right on down to individual planets and cities. She expects her "court officials" (as they're formally known) to serve her subjects, and to do so as competently and swiftly as possible. There's no tenure, no unions, and no guarantee of job security other than doing your job well. She expects public employees who can't live up to standard to be fired by their bosses or moved into a different position where they can do better. And woe be unto the bureaucrat who takes bribes, engages in influence-peddling, or uses his office for the benefit of himself or his friends. That sort of corruption quickly reaches the level of being a capital offense in the Empire; even lesser offenders are often subject to severe corporal punishment and/or prison terms. The Empress does not suffer those who take advantage of her power, or abuse her subjects in her name, gladly.

V'HANIAN REGENT ROBOT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	40	19-	Lift 25 tons; 10d6 HTH damage [5]
20	DEX	20	13-	
30	CON	20	15-	
25	INT	15	14-	PER Roll 14-
10	EGO	0	11-	
30	PRE	20	15-	PRE Attack: 6d6
8	OCV	25		
8	DCV	25		
3	OMCV	0		
8	DMCV	15		
6	SPD	40		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
30	PD	28		Total: 30 PD (30 rPD)
30	ED	28		Total: 30 ED (30 rED)
20	REC	16		
60	END	8		
20	BODY	10		
70	STUN	25		Total Characteristics Cost: 335

Movement: Running: 24m
Flight: 40m

Cost Powers

Cost	Powers	END
90	Weapons Array: Multipower, 90-point reserve	
9f	1) Pulson Bolt (Offensive Mode): Blast 18d6	9
9f	2) Pulson Bolt (Defensive Mode): Blast 12d6 Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
9f	3) Autofire Pulson Bolt: Blast 9d6 Autofire (5 shots; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	3
7f	4) Focused Pulson Bolt: Blast 12d6 Armor Piercing (+¼)	7
9f	5) Neuro-Blaster: Blast 10d6 NND (defense is Mental Defense or not being a living organic being; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	3
5f	6) Tangle-Cable: Entangle 6d6, 6 PD/6 ED 12 Charges (-¼)	[12]
4f	7) Flare: Sight Group Flash 8d6 Area Of Effect (16m Cone; +½); No Range (-½)	6
8f	8) Neuro-Interference Ray: Drain Characteristics 4d6 Expanded Effect + Variable Effect (any two Character- istics at a time; +1)	8
7f	9) Built-In Mini-Rocket Launcher: Blast 10d6 Area Of Effect (12m Radius; +¾); 12 Charges (-¼)	[12]

15	Robotic Form: Hardened (+¼) for 30 PD/30 ED	0
37	Robotic Form: Resistant (+½) for 30 PD/30 ED Hardened (+¼)	0
10	Psi-Shield: Mental Defense (10 points)	0
10	Structural Support Field: Power Defense (10 points)	0
10	Hardened Visual Sensors: Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points)	0
10	Electronic Countermeasures: Radio Group Flash Defense (10 points)	0
12	Heavy: Knockback Resistance -12m	0
10	Emotional Control: +20 Presence Only To Protect Against Presence Attacks (-1)	0
35	Robotic Form: Life Support: Total	0
45	Dimensional Travel: Extra-Dimensional Movement (any physical location in any dimension)	4
67	Foot-Jets: Flight 40m, x4 Noncombat Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
12	Robotic Legs: Running +12m (24m total)	1
5	Visual Sensors: Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	Visual Sensors: Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)	0
10	Visual Sensors: Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) (Sight Group)	0
10	Visual Sensors: x100 Microscopic for Sight Group	0
9	Visual Sensors: Telescopic (+6 versus Range for Sight Group)	0
15	Auditory Sensors: Active Sonar (Hearing Group)	0
3	Auditory Systems: Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)	0
27	Radio Sensors: HRRP (Radio Group), Dimensional	0
15	Radar: Radar (Radio Group)	0
6	Sensor Enhancements: +2 to PER Rolls with all Sense Groups	0
20	Imperial D-Link: Mind Link, specific group of up to any 16 minds (Istvatha V'han and other Regent/Viceroy/ Herald robots), Dimensional, No LOS Needed Only Can Be Maintained With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1), Flashed As Radio And Hearing Groups, Not Mental Group (-½)	0
57	Self-Destruct System: RKA 7d6 [1nr] NND (defense is ED Resistant Protection defined as a force-field or the like; +1), Does BODY (+1), Trigger (encrypted radio signal from self, Istvatha V'han, or other authorized personnel; +¼); Self Only (-1), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4)	

Talents

3	Absolute Range Sense
3	Absolute Time Sense
3	Bump Of Direction
5	Eidetic Memory
3	Lightning Calculator
6	Speed Reading: x100 times normal speed
20	Universal Translator 14-

V'HANIAN VICEROY ROBOT

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 HTH damage [4]
20	DEX	20	13-	
25	CON	15	14-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
10	EGO	0	11-	
30	PRE	20	15-	PRE Attack: 6d6
7	OCV	20		
7	DCV	20		
3	OMCV	0		
7	DMCV	12		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
25	PD	23		Total: 25 PD (25 rPD)
25	ED	23		Total: 25 ED (25 rED)
20	REC	16		
60	END	8		
16	BODY	6		
60	STUN	20		Total Characteristics Cost: 273

Movement: Running: 24m
Flight: 30m

Skills

40	+4 with All Combat
3	Computer Programming 14-
3	Cryptography 14-
3	Deduction 14-
3	Electronics 14-
19	AK: The V'harian Empire 30-
3	Mechanics 14-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Tactics 14-
3	Teamwork 13-
3	Scholar
2	1) KS: Dimensional History 14-
18	2) KS: Dimensions Of The Multiverse 30-
28	3) KS: Everything 40-
18	4) KS: What Goes On In The V'harian Empire 30-
Total Powers & Skills Cost: 807	
Total Cost: 1,142	

400 Matching Complications (75)

25 **Hunted:** Tyrannon (Frequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Destroy)

10 **Physical Complication:** can be affected by Mental Powers that affect either the Human or Machine class of minds (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)

25 **Psychological Complication:** Utterly Loyal To Istvatha V'han (Very Common, Total)

Total Complications Points: 60

Experience Points: 747

Cost	Powers	END
80	Weapons Array: Multipower, 80-point reserve	
7f	1) Pulson Bolt (Offensive Mode): Blast 15d6	7
7f	2) Pulson Bolt (Defensive Mode): Blast 10d6 Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
8f	3) Autofire Pulson Bolt: Blast 8d6 Autofire (5 shots; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	3
7f	4) Focused Pulson Bolt: Blast 12d6 Armor Piercing (+¼)	7
7f	5) Neuro-Blaster: Blast 8d6 NND (defense is Mental Defense or not being a living organic being; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	3
5f	6) Tangle-Cable: Entangle 6d6, 6 PD/6 ED [12] 12 Charges (-¼)	
4f	7) Flare: Sight Group Flash 8d6 Area Of Effect (16m Cone; +½); No Range (-½)	6
8f	8) Neuro-Interference Ray: Drain Characteristics 4d6 Expanded Effect + Variable Effect (any two Characteristics at a time; +1)	8
6f	9) Built-In Mini-Rocket Launcher: Blast 9d6 Area Of Effect (12m Radius; +¾); 12 Charges (-¼)	[12]
12	Robotic Form: Hardened (+¼) for 25 PD/25 ED	0
31	Robotic Form: Resistant (+½) for 25 PD/25 ED Hardened (+¼)	0
10	Psi-Shield: Mental Defense (10 points)	0
10	Structural Support Field: Power Defense (10 points)	0
10	Hardened Visual Sensors: Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points)	0
10	Electronic Countermeasures: Radio Group Flash Defense (10 points)	0
12	Heavy: Knockback Resistance -12m	0
10	Emotional Control: +20 Presence Only To Protect Against Presence Attacks (-1)	0
35	Robotic Form: Life Support: Total	0
45	Dimensional Travel: Extra-Dimensional Movement (any physical location in any dimension)	4
52	Foot-Jets: Flight 30m, x4 Noncombat Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0
12	Robotic Legs: Running +12m (24m total)	1
5	Visual Sensors: Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	Visual Sensors: Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)	0
10	Visual Sensors: Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) (Sight Group)	0
10	Visual Sensors: x100 Microscopic for Sight Group	0
9	Visual Sensors: Telescopic (+6 versus Range for Sight Group)	0
15	Auditory Sensors: Active Sonar (Hearing Group)	0
3	Auditory Systems: Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)	0
27	Radio Sensors: HRRP (Radio Group), Dimensional	0
15	Radar: Radar (Radio Group)	0
6	Sensor Enhancements: +2 to PER Rolls with all Sense Groups	0



20 **Imperial D-Link:** Mind Link, specific group of up to any 16 minds (Istvatha V'han and other Regent/Viceroy/ Herald robots), Dimensional, No LOS Needed 0
Only Can Be Maintained With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1), Flashed As Radio And Hearing Groups, Not Mental Group (-½)

49 **Self-Destruct System:** RKA 6d6 [1nr]
NND (defense is ED Resistant Protection defined as a force-field or the like; +1), Does BODY (+1), Trigger (encrypted radio signal from self, Istvatha V'han, or other authorized personnel; +½); Self Only (-1), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4)

Talents

3 Absolute Range Sense
3 Absolute Time Sense
3 Bump Of Direction
5 Eidetic Memory
3 Lightning Calculator
6 Speed Reading: x100 times normal speed
20 Universal Translator 13-

Skills

40 +4 with All Combat
3 Computer Programming 13-
3 Cryptography 13-
3 Deduction 13-
3 Electronics 13-
20 AK: The V'hanian Empire 30-
3 Mechanics 13-
3 Stealth 13-
3 Tactics 13-
3 Teamwork 13-
3 Scholar
2 1) KS: Dimensional History 13-
19 2) KS: Dimensions Of The Multiverse 30-
29 3) KS: Everything 40-
19 4) KS: What Goes On In The V'hanian Empire 30-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 761

Total Cost: 1,034

400 Matching Complications (75)

25 **Hunted:** Tyrannon (Frequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Destroy)
10 **Physical Complication:** can be affected by Mental Powers that affect either the Human or Machine class of minds (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
25 **Psychological Complication:** Utterly Loyal To Istvatha V'han (Very Common, Total)

Total Complications Points: 60

Experience Points: 649

5

THE IMPERIAL MINISTRIES

Over the centuries, Istvatha V'han has organized the machinery of her government into several dozen Ministries of varying size and importance. Within each Ministry are various Vice Ministries, then Subministries, and finally Bureaus, as needed. A Minister oversees each Ministry, making him one of the highest-ranking figures in the imperial government. Nearly all Ministers are native V'hanians, the people Istvatha V'han most trusts, but she makes some effort to include other species when she finds a qualified candidate. The ranks of Vice Ministers, Subministers, and Bureau Directors are filled by members of thousands (if not millions) of different species.

Most of the Ministries maintain their headquarters on V'ha, along with all the other major governmental offices (see below). However, each also has other major offices scattered throughout the V'hanian Empire based on its need and mission. The headquarters buildings are typically city-sized complexes precisely organized according to rank and function. By knowing where a Ministry employee's office is in relation to that of the Minister, and its size, one can easily judge where he stands in the Ministry's pecking order (and probably make a strong educated guess as to exactly what his job responsibilities are).

Some of the major Ministries include:

THE GRAND CHANCERY

The office of the Grand Chancellor is essentially that of a "chief of staff" to the Empress. These are her right-hand men, the officials responsible for helping her with day to day affairs, controlling access to her, and generally making her life easier. Among other things, the Grand Chancellor coordinates the activities of the other Ministers, making sure they know what they're responsible for, what the Empress expects, and where their jurisdiction ends. It's a small Ministry compared to most of the others, but its influence and power far exceed its size.

GRAND CHANCELLOR CHITTHORAM

The Grand Chancellor, head of the Chancellery and the Empress's right-hand man, is Chitthoram, a rare example of a Minister who's not V'hanian. He's a member of the Ka-ree, a species of five foot-tall humanoids from the V'ha-1 dimension with bulbous heads, reddish-pink skin, and three fingers on each hand. He wears a beautifully-made caftan-like open robe embroidered with the imperial symbol, a short tunic, pants, and shoes. He usually carries an ultra-advanced portable computer.

Chitthoram's qualifications for his position are many. First, his species is quite long-lived compared to most sentients, so the Empress doesn't have to train a new Grand Chancellor every few decades. Second, his mind is nearly as good as her own in general, and his memory is as perfect as hers. Between the two of them there's no detail of high-level imperial government that escapes their notice and recollection. Chitthoram also makes a point of pride of knowing the name of every imperial bureaucrat down to the mid-Bureau level. Any time the Empress needs to know who's handling a particular situation, he can tell her — or at least tell her who knows.

In fact, Chitthoram is so invaluable to Istvatha V'han that she's made a point of gathering up all the Chitthorams from all the alternate V'has she's conquered and putting them to work under him. Many of the high-level officials of the Chancellery are Chitthorams; all of them but the first wear slightly different clothing from him, and their identification badges prominently indicate their number along with their name.

THE MINISTRY OF DIPLOMATIC AFFAIRS

Despite her well-deserved reputation as a warmonger, Istvatha V'han recognizes the value of diplomacy and negotiation. Sometimes it's easier, faster, and cheaper to negotiate for what you want instead of just trying to take it. When that's the case, she calls on her Ministry of Diplomatic Affairs to handle the situation.

Diplomatic Affairs's responsibilities cover many aspects of formal, peaceful interaction between sovereign or semi-sovereign entities and the Empire. For example, Ministry officials are responsible for protocol at all state dinners and similar functions. But perhaps their best-known (and most dangerous) job is to convince potential targets of conquest to join the Empire peacefully. Before she sends in her conquering Legions, the Empress often sends a legation of diplomats. Their message: agree to join the Empire now, without quarrel or conflict, and you'll be spared the horrors of war. This isn't always an easy sell, because the diplomats aren't really empowered to offer any concessions — a civilization that joins the Empire voluntarily doesn't retain any special freedom to govern itself, isn't spared any taxes or obligations, and doesn't necessarily get to keep its current government or other institutions. All the diplomats can promise is this: your cities won't be destroyed; your sons and daughters won't die in a needless war; and you'll receive the benefits of being an imperial holding more quickly and extensively than if the Empress takes your world by force (see page 182). For more than a few worlds that's enough incentive to sign on the dotted line.



THE VICE-MINISTRY FOR FIRST CONTACT

The most important Vice-Ministry of Diplomatic Affairs is *First Contact*. After the Imperial Scout Service discovers a civilization that has no contact with its galactic or dimensional society (see page 70), it reports this to Diplomatic Affairs. The Vice-Minister then sends veritable brigade of diplomats, sociologists, anthropologists, and other social scientists to study the planet and its civilizations and determine the best way to "introduce" the Empire to them. Depending on the nature of the cultures involved, this ranges from a smooth and generally trouble-free process to situations where the First Contact personnel are in serious danger of being lynched or imprisoned. (If the latter happens, First Contact immediately calls in the Imperial Legions, and the offending society quickly learns the consequences of xenophobia.) In the "typical" case, a first contact is generally peaceful but not without its "growing pains" and societal upheavals for the civilization involved.

After the initial task of revealing the existence of the Empire (and the greater multiversal civilization in general) has been performed, First Contact's job is done. It turns the civilization over to other branches of the imperial bureaucracy, primarily the Vice-Ministries of Unification and Technological Analysis (see below).

THE MINISTRY OF ENERGY

Like any other advanced civilization, the V'hanian Empire requires copious amounts of energy — its technology, and the economic advancements and creature comforts technology provides, depend on power. The Ministry of Energy's job is to ensure that all parts of the Empire have enough energy, and that it's properly "transported" from wherever it's generated to wherever it's needed. Fortunately, imperial technology generally makes this a routine affair; anti-matter, fusion, and solar power are all available in copious quantities. The Ministry of Energy is far from the most glamorous division of Istvatha V'han's government, but it's one of the most crucial, and she never forgets that.

THE MINISTRY OF HISTORY

Unsurprisingly, as an immortal time-traveler Istvatha V'han is keenly interested in history. Not only does she want to know What Has Gone Before, she wants every aspect of her government and civilization to be recorded for posterity. This is the responsibility of the Ministry of History.

TEMPORAL SENTINEL TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

- 3 +3 CON
- 5 +5 INT
- 5 +5 PRE
- 3 Acting
- 5 Cramming
- 3 Disguise
- 3 KS: History Of Technology (INT)
- 6 KS: Imperial History (INT +3)
- 3 PS: Use Time Travel Device (INT Roll)
- 3 SS: Time Travel Theory And Mechanics (INT Roll)
- 2 SS: Physics 11-
- 3 Stealth 11-
- 2 Systems Operation 10-
- 5 Fringe Benefit: Temporal Police Powers

Cost Equipment

- 34 **Time Travel Belt** (or sometimes bracelet, pendant, or the like): Extradimensional Movement (any moment in time, same physical location); OIF (-½), Requires A PS: Use Time Travel Device Roll (-¼), Side Effects (end up in wrong time and can't time travel again for at least 1d6 Hours; -½)
- 15 **Chrono-Communicator:** HRRP (Radio Group), Dimensional (including through time, in this case); IIF (-¼), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities And Equipment: 100

Value Complications

- 5 **Distinctive Features:** TSP Uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
- 20 **Social Complication:** Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Value Of Template Complications: 25

Under the able leadership of Imperial Historian Jorgon Baren, a V'hanian whom the Empress has granted a vastly extended lifespan via imperial technology, the Ministry of History tries to chronicle every event or statistic of significance throughout the Empire. Perhaps more importantly for the Empress's purposes, it's also responsible for promulgating the official version of imperial history, which omits details that don't show the Empress in a good light and presents others in a way that shows her to best advantage. *The Chronica Imperialis V'han'a*, as it's known, is already tens of millions of words long and grows with every passing year. Most imperial subjects own an electronic copy; truly loyal subjects often spend the money for elaborately-bound printed editions, which they display proudly in their homes.

Unlike most Ministries, History maintains only a small office on V'ha. Its true headquarters is the planet Zendaris, located a hundred light-years from the seat of imperial power. The Ministry controls the entire planet; everyone who lives there either works for it, or provides some necessary service for those who do. Its record computers and archives are the most extensive in the Empire and contain, among other things, the *true* history of the Empress and her Empire. Non-unique items are copied or backed up to dozens of other facilities on other planets throughout the Empire; unique items are kept far underground in the most secure holding vaults the Empire can create.

THE TEMPORAL SECURITY PATROL

As the Empress well knows, time travel can interfere with history, changing a known event into something completely different (or preventing it from happening at all). She doesn't want anyone but herself affecting the imperial timeline (or existence) in any way. As much as possible she wants history to be "locked" into what she considers the "correct" version, changed only by her when she thinks it's absolutely necessary. Unfortunately, she's not the only person through the timeline of Reality who has the ability to travel through time — and thus the ability to alter imperial history.

To prevent this from occurring, she established the *Temporal Security Patrol* as a branch of the Ministry of History. (It's technically a Vice-Ministry, but no one ever refers to it that way outside of the most formal government documents.) The officers of the TSP use imperial technology to monitor the timeline in search of unauthorized time travelers, possible undesired changes to imperial history, and the like. They're also in charge of overseeing all imperial time travel technology (and related devices) and authorizing trips to the future or past by imperial personnel. (The latter is something they very rarely allow. The Empress prefers not to let her subjects use time travel unless it's absolutely necessary, though she's far less concerned about using chrono-viewers to watch the past in the interest of gathering historical data or the like. Watching the future, on the other hand, can rise to the level of a capital offense.)

Temporal Sentinels — the dedicated agents of the TSP — are a tireless group who take their heavy burden of responsibility quite seriously; their intense outlook on life is often the subject of jokes and metaphors. While they spend most of their time in the present monitoring the Empire's past timeline remotely, popular thought (and more than a few holo-entertainments) prefers to focus on their more colorful (and dangerous) duty: traveling into the past to prevent "time criminals" from committing crimes or, worse, changing history.

THE MINISTRY OF INTERDIMENSIONAL RELATIONS

Since the Empire consists of approximately one hundred million dimensions, there are a nearly infinite number of ways for those dimensions and their inhabitants to interact with one another, and with the Empire itself. There's also a nearly infinite array of resources for the Empire and its subjects to take advantage of — everything from spectacular natural locations that attract tourists from across the Multiverse, to new sources of energy or trade items, to ways for one dimension to communicate with another.

All of this falls within the purview of the Ministry of Interdimensional Relations. Compared to the modern United States in Champions Universe Earth, Interdimensional Relations fulfills many of the same functions as the Department of the Interior, the president's press secretary, and the Federal Communications Commission, plus as a "department of propaganda." It's responsible for managing imperial natural resources properly (and seeing that the commercially exploitable ones are exploited to the correct extent in the correct manner), for ensuring that the lines of communication throughout the Empire remain open, and for communicating official messages to all imperial subjects.

THE VICE-MINISTRY FOR UNIFICATION

Every year Istvatha V'han conquers new dimensions... and she needs to integrate those dimensions into her Empire as quickly and smoothly as possible. And that's the responsibility of the Vice-Ministry for Unification. Unification's job is to ease the transition from "not imperial territory" to "imperial territory" as much as possible. A certain amount of tension and problems are to be expected, but the experienced officials of Unification have seen it all (or nearly all) before and usually have a solution. They often work closely with their counterparts in Diplomatic Affairs, Technological Resources, and Technological Analysis.

IMPERIAL HERALDS

There are times when the Empress wants to make an announcement to a planet or dimension in a particularly impressive, spectacular, or majestic way, or when she wants to convey how important she thinks something is by sending a personal message rather than communicating electronically. In either case she calls upon her *Imperial Heralds*, special robots who work for Interdimensional Relations.



Imperial Heralds are designed to fly at great speed to any location within the Empire, deliver a message, and if necessary convey any response to the Empress. They're among the most sophisticated devices in the imperial arsenal, since their systems include starship hyper-travel and power systems in a human-sized frame. They have built-in blasters to protect themselves or eliminate obstacles if they have to, but if attacked usually flee to bring word of this grave insult to V'han. Assaulting a Herald is a good way to get an army of Imperial Legions soldiers and/or Imperial Security Force officers sent to "take charge of the situation" (*i.e.*, kill anyone who resists or causes trouble, pacify everyone else). Their most impressive "weapon," though, is the Planetary Announcement System that allows them to tap into any sort of communications network, take it over, and broadcast the Empress's message around the globe. (In the case of civilizations that don't have widespread radio, television, or better, a Herald simply has to travel from place to place making vocal announcements at the top of its considerable "lungs." This can damage the hearing of people near the Herald, break glass, and so forth, so if necessary they're careful about where they do this.)

Imperial Heralds wear simple red robes with gold accents and highlighting (compared to many imperial uniforms and fashions, a Herald's robes could be considered ostentatious in their simplicity). They carry short gold staffs topped with small plaques bearing the imperial "lion" symbol.

V'HANIAN IMPERIAL HERALD

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 HTH damage [3]
20	DEX	20	13-	
20	CON	10	13-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
10	EGO	0	11-	
40	PRE	30	17-	PRE Attack: 8d6
6	OCV	15		
6	DCV	15		
3	OMCV	0		
7	DMCV	12		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
20	PD	18		Total: 20 PD (20 rPD)
20	ED	18		Total: 20 ED (20 rED)
20	REC	16		
60	END	8		
20	BODY	10		
60	STUN	20		Total Characteristics Cost: 242

Movement: Running: 24m
Flight: 120m
Teleportation: 1m-1,440 light-years

Cost Powers

Cost	Powers	END
60	Pulson Blaster: Blast 12d6	6
57	Planetary Announcement System: Multipower, 115-point reserve All Set Effect (-1)	
6f	1) Tap Into Global Communications: Sight and Hearing Group Images, +6 to PER Rolls Area Of Effect (1m Radius; +1/4), MegaScale (large enough to cover pretty much any inhabited planet; +2 1/4); Set Effect (only to make announcements/broadcast messages; -1)	11
3f	2) Loudspeakers: Hearing Group Images, +6 to PER Rolls Area Of Effect (1m Radius; +1/4), MegaScale (1m = 10 km wide, broad, and deep; +1 1/4); Set Effect (only to make announcements/broadcast messages; -1)	5
10	Robotic Form: Hardened (+1/4) for 20 PD/20 ED	0
25	Robotic Form: Resistant (+1/2) for 20 PD/20 ED Hardened (+1/4)	0
48	Hyperspace Bridge Defensive Effect: Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, 75%, Resistant Costs Endurance (-1/2), Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of weapons in equal proportion, see text, always occurs; -1)	12
10	Psi-Shield: Mental Defense (10 points)	0
10	Structural Support Field: Power Defense (10 points)	0
10	Hardened Visual Sensors: Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points)	0
10	Electronic Countermeasures: Radio Group Flash Defense (10 points)	0
12	Heavy: Knockback Resistance -12m	0
10	Emotional Control: +20 Presence Only To Protect Against Presence Attacks (-1)	0

35	Robotic Form: Life Support: Total	0
45	Dimensional Travel: Extra-Dimensional Movement (any physical location in any dimension)	4
60	Hyperspace Shunt Systems: Multipower, 60-point reserve	
2f	1) Long-Range FTL Travel: Teleportation 10m MegaScale (1m = 288 light-years; +5); Extra Time (journey takes 1 Minute per light-year traveled; -1 1/2)	6
4f	2) Short-Range FTL Travel: Teleportation 10m MegaScale (1m = 10 million km; +2 1/4)	4
87	Hyperspace Bridge: Flight 120m, x8 Noncombat Side Effects (reduces effectiveness of Pulson Blaster and requires use of Damage Reduction as described on page 82, always occurs; -1/2)	13
12	Robotic Legs: Running +12m (24m total)	1
5	Visual Sensors: Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	Visual Sensors: Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)	0
10	Visual Sensors: Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) (Sight Group)	0
10	Visual Sensors: x100 Microscopic for Sight Group	0
9	Visual Sensors: Telescopic (+6 versus Range for Sight Group)	0
15	Auditory Sensors: Active Sonar (Hearing Group)	0
3	Auditory Systems: Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)	0
27	Radio Sensors: HRRP (Radio Group), Dimensional	0
15	Radar: Radar (Radio Group)	0
6	Sensor Enhancements: +2 to PER Rolls with all Sense Groups	0
20	Imperial D-Link: Mind Link, specific group of up to any 16 minds (Istvatha V'han and other Regent/Viceroy/Herald robots), Dimensional, No LOS Needed Only Can Be Maintained With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1), Flashed As Radio And Hearing Groups, Not Mental Group (-1/2)	0
49	Self-Destruct System: RKA 6d6 [1nr] NND (defense is ED Resistant Protection defined as a force-field or the like; +1), Does BODY (+1), Trigger (encrypted radio signal from self, Istvatha V'han, or other authorized personnel; +1/4); Self Only (-1), 1 Charge which Never Recovers (-4)	
3	Talents	
3	Absolute Range Sense	
3	Absolute Time Sense	
3	Bump Of Direction	
5	Eidetic Memory	
3	Lightning Calculator	
6	Speed Reading: x100 times normal speed	
20	Universal Translator 13-	

THE MINISTRY OF MILITARY AFFAIRS

The Imperial Legions is a separate “branch” of the imperial government from the Ministries and answers directly to the Empress herself. However, there are still plenty of issues related to the military that Istvatha V’han needs someone to handle. These include various aspects of logistics and procurement; studies of military effectiveness by outside, impartial observers; the development of military technology (and the transition of less advanced technologies from “classified” to “available to the general public”); services for Legions veterans; and so forth. These duties are all taken care of by the Ministry of Military Affairs.

The Ministry has no authority over the military at all (though it’s not unknown for the Empress to take the Ministry’s advice on some military matter over that of Legions personnel). Relations between it and the Legions are sometimes antagonistic; some officers view Military Affairs inspectors and scholars with all the enthusiasm and camaraderie that a modern Human police officer feels toward the Internal Affairs division. Ultimately, though, the Legions are loyal to the Empress, and if Istvatha V’han tells them to cooperate with Military Affairs, cooperate they will... or else.

Skills

40	+4 with All Combat
3	Computer Programming 13-
3	Cryptography 13-
3	Deduction 13-
2	Electronics 10-
20	AK: The V’hanian Empire 30-
2	Mechanics 10-
17	Navigation (Space, Dimensional) 20-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Scholar
2	1) KS: Dimensional History 13-
19	2) KS: Dimensions Of The Multiverse 30-
29	3) KS: Everything 40-
19	4) KS: What Goes On In The V’hanian Empire 30-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 898

Total Cost: 1,140

400 Matching Complications (75)

- 25 **Hunted:** Tyrannon (Frequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Destroy)
- 10 **Physical Complication:** can be affected by Mental Powers that affect either the Human or Machine class of minds (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 25 **Psychological Complication:** Utterly Loyal To Istvatha V’han (Very Common, Total)

Total Complications Points: 60

Experience Points: 755

THE MINISTRY OF MYSTIC AFFAIRS

Since so much of the structure and nature of the Multiverse depends on magic (or at least is best understood as a mystic phenomenon), Istvatha V’han doesn’t ignore the existence of magic the way so many of her subjects do. Instead she has millions of scholars devoted to studying mysticism in all its many forms and facets. But they do more than just study it — they recommend ways for the Empress to use her magical resources for the benefit of the Empire and her subjects as a whole. This includes providing mystic advisors to the Imperial Legions, suggesting ways to use mass magics to improve manufacturing or society, and so on.

A serious division exists within the Ministry between “mystics” and “scientists.” The former consider magic a purely arcane matter, one that’s not subject to any scientific laws and that can only be understood at its most fundamental level in a philosophical/metaphysical way. The latter think that magic is merely a form of science that has so far defied understanding (much the same way that phenomena like gravity, light, and FTL travel once did). They think that with enough study scholars can eventually discern the scientific laws that govern how magic works (and thus in theory make it usable by anyone). The Empress’s sympathies are definitely with the scientists, but she does nothing to interfere with the ongoing debate, since she knows that truth and understanding come from a free exchange of ideas.

THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

One of the largest and most important Ministries is Science and Technology, which deals with matters ranging from the cutting edge of theoretical science to regulating technologies that subjects of the Empire use every day. “S&T” (as it’s widely known) studies almost every sort of scientific subject known to the Empire, provides grants for independent research conducted at universities and corporations, funds exploratory expeditions of scientific merit, and educates the public on relevant issues.

The head of S&T is Minister Hovmen Trena, a V’hanian with advanced degrees in physics, chemistry, and dimensional engineering. He’s a polymath whose career highlights have included two Imperial Science Prizes (the highest such award in the Empire), winning the Imperial *Chugara* Tournament last year (he now holds the lifetime rank of Grandmaster in the game), and being one of the Empress’s lovers several years ago. But he’s also a gifted administrator who manages to keep all the competing prima donna scientists and their wildly divergent theories working toward their common goal of improving the technological level of the Empire (see page 172 for more on imperial technology).

THE VICE-MINISTRY OF TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Two of S&T's Vice-Ministries are heavily involved with the process of integrating new worlds and dimensions into the Empire. The first is Technological Resources, which works with other offices such as the Vice-Ministry of Unification to spread the Empire's technological bounty to its subjects. The Empress isn't willing to give just any sort of technology to any world, but she wants to show her subjects that being a part of her Empire has benefits, and one of them is an improvement in their level of technology. Technological Resources is responsible for handling this with minimal disruptions to the societies involved.

THE VICE-MINISTRY OF TECHNOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The other is the Vice-Ministry of Technological Analysis, which in some ways is the opposite of Technological Resources. Instead of finding ways to distribute imperial technology to new subjects, Technological Analysis studies new worlds' technologies and science in search of inventions, discoveries, or developments that might benefit imperial science as a whole. By this stage of the Empire's evolution it's rare for a newly-conquered world to have any sort of technology the Empire doesn't already possess, but most worlds have at least a few interesting "twists" on existing technologies or devices that Technological Analysis considers worthy of inclusion in the overall imperial technological "portfolio."

IMPERIAL AWARDS AND COMMENDATIONS

Like any other government, the V'hanian Empire likes to recognize the greatest achievements of its subjects with various awards, medals, rewards, and commendations. Some of the highest awards imperial subjects can aspire to include:

Military: The Imperial Service Ribbon (given to anyone who serves ten years in the Legions; additional ribbons recognize each successive five years); the Award of Valor (copper, silver, or gold "wings" given in recognition of particularly brave acts in battle); the Imperial Lion (copper, silver, or gold "lions'" heads given in recognition of bravery above and beyond the call of duty, often awarded posthumously); and the Empress's Orb (for Legionnaires for whom even the Imperial Lion is insufficient recognition).

Civilian: The Imperial Science Prize (given for the most noteworthy contributions in the fields of science); the Imperial Service Medal (for significant service to the imperial government or people, often awarded to important bureaucrats when they retire); the Trinatha Medals (given for noteworthy accomplishments in the arts); and the Imperial Star (the highest award given by the Empress to a civilian, often for lifesaving acts during a crisis).

THE MINISTRY OF SECURITY

The highly important (and quite large) Ministry of Security is responsible for the internal safety and peace of the Empire. Since the Imperial Intelligence Command handles counterintelligence duties for the most part, primarily this means managing the Empire's police (the Imperial Security Force), court systems, and prisons. See page 164 for more information on these institutions.

Leading Security is Minister Trelan Morla, a V'hanian who served as an ISF officer for nearly forty years before transitioning into administration. Despite his experiences, and the fact that his job often requires him to be hard-nosed and ruthless, Minister Morla isn't a mindless thug. He prefers to try to understand why lawbreakers do what they do and to respond with the minimal force necessary, rather than to simply "nuke" the problem with a violent response. This puts him at odds with some of his officers, many of whom are veterans of the Imperial Legions and absorbed its philosophies and practices from an early age. But despite the fact that some of his men don't entirely trust him, the Empress does, and that means he's not going anywhere anytime soon.

THE MINISTRY OF TRADE AND ECONOMICS

Aside from military matters, economics is perhaps the Empress's strongest interest, so it comes as no surprise that the Ministry of Trade and Economics is one of the largest Ministries in her government. Like History, it maintains a relatively small headquarters on V'ha, but has an entire planetary system — Karespa Viranus, located about thirty light-years from V'ha — dedicated to its use. It also maintains prominent offices on every major imperial world (and most of the minor ones).

T&E's job is to facilitate economic exchange both within the Empire, and between the Empire and similar sovereign entities (though there's relatively little of that). This includes both trade within a given dimension, and between different dimensions. The Ministry's responsibilities include advising the Empress and Imperial Law Council on laws and regulations it considers necessary for improving trade, building and managing infrastructure primarily related to trade (such as highway systems on imperial worlds, and space-lanes between them), managing the imperial economy to prevent undesirable consequences such as inflation and unemployment, running the Imperial Bank and related financial institutions, gathering and studying economic data, and overseeing other matters related to the imperial economy. It's a gigantic task, and one involving phenomena that aren't entirely controllable, but T&E does the best job it can and the Empress usually has no complaints.

See page 170 for more on imperial trade.

LIFE IN THE V'HANIAN EMPIRE

With hundreds of octillions of subjects on trillions of worlds across a hundred million dimensions, it's impossible to label any one way of life or style of daily existence as "typical" of the V'harian Empire. But there are certain basic realities about life in Istvatha V'han's realm that all of her subjects have to deal with.

IMPERIAL POLITICS

Even with an Empress as powerful as Istvatha V'han on the throne, the game of politics is still constantly played in the V'harian Empire, with every major figure in her government struggling and strategizing about how to preserve his own power while obtaining more at the expense of his rivals and enemies.

THE PALACE IMPERIAL

The seat of the imperial government is the Palace Imperial, Istvatha V'han's city-sized "home" on the planet V'ha in the dimension V'ha-1. Centuries ago it started as a more or less ordinary palace in the heart of the city of Gaburi, the capital of the planet. Over the decades it became larger and larger as Istvatha V'han's empire, and thus her needs and her perquisites of power, grew. By the Earth year 2011 it encompasses more than three thousand square miles of land.

PALACE TRAVEL

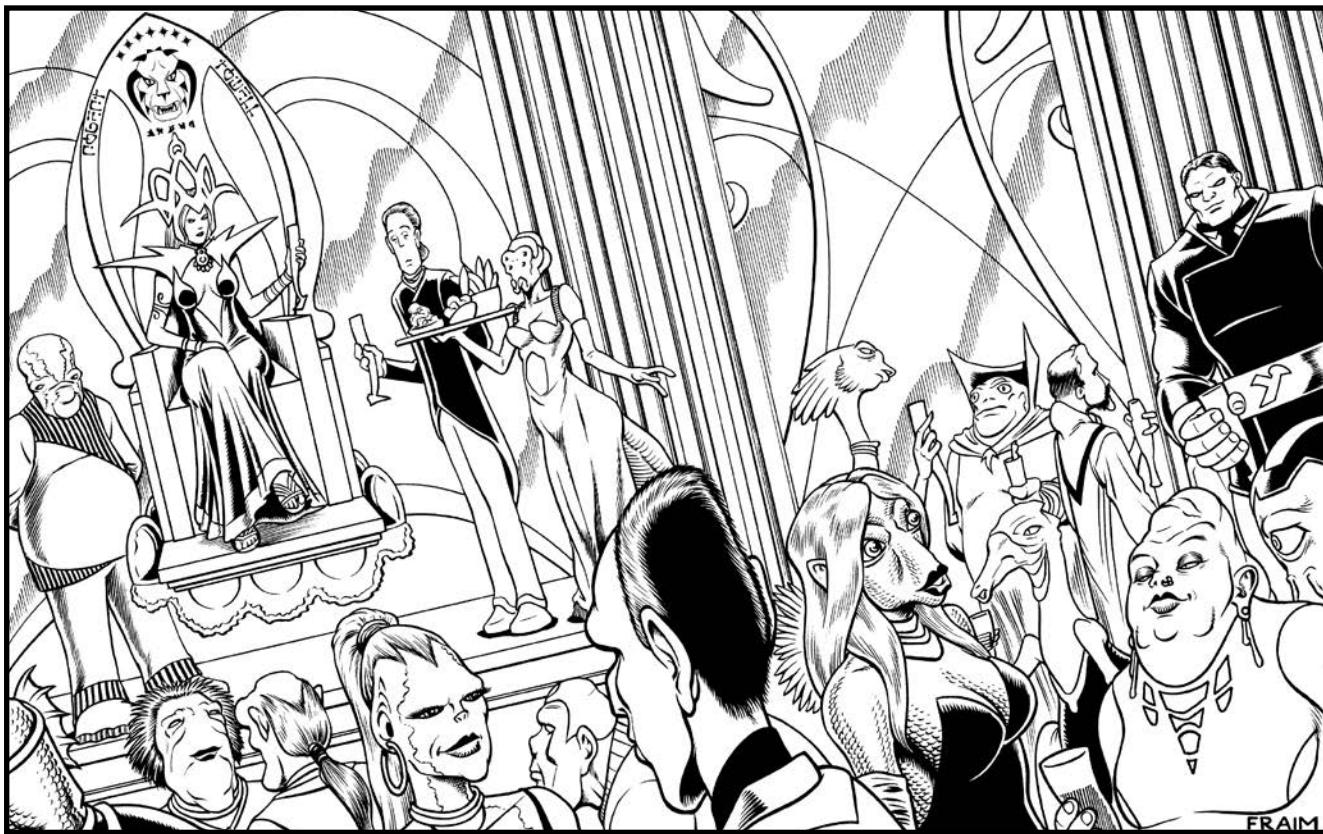
Given the Palace's size, just moving around inside it takes some effort. For destinations not within easy walking distance most people rely on a network of underground high-speed hover-trains the Empress had installed centuries ago (and has periodically improved and refurbished since then). However, the Empress herself, as well as certain top imperial officials and favored courtiers, use a network of teleportation platforms. Being granted the right to use the platforms is regarded as a sign of V'han's favor and a valuable perk. (In *HERO System* terms, it's a 1-point Fringe Benefit for imperial characters.)

The Palace also features numerous landing pads for hovercraft on its roof (and in some courtyards). Wealthy courtiers and visitors typically prefer to use this more "prestigious" form of travel than the underground railway.

PALACE SECURITY

The security of the Empress and her subjects within the Palace is ensured by the Palace Guard, a unit of specially-trained and -equipped D-Soldiers (see accompanying Template, which is in addition to the standard D-Soldier character sheet from Chapter Three). Pairs of them can be seen standing at every major corridor intersection and important doorway in the Palace, and patrols of them walk the hallways day and night; their distinctive red, gold, and black uniforms are instantly recognizable by any imperial subject. But those Guards, while as competent as any of their brethren, are mostly just for show. There are also plenty of Guards around during most imperial functions who *aren't* so obvious — either they're working behind the scenes or they're in the crowd in disguise. The relatively placid appearance of the uniformed Guards is belied by the constant hum of Guard activity that the imperial public ideally never sees or hears about. While outright assassination attempts are rare, the fact remains that the Empress has many enemies (including Tyrannon and Skarn) and her life is constantly in danger. To protect her the Guard subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) inspects the rooms of the Palace, searches visitors, taste-tests her food, and mystically and mentally scans the Palace and its surroundings for potential threats.

Additionally, the Guard can call on robotic assistance. It has an army of several thousand "Type 1" Securitybots, humanoid constructs that help it keep the peace, perform inspections, and protect the Empress. The Type 1 robots are designed to look impressive but not frightening to visitors and are only lightly armed. When true danger rears its ugly head, the Guard breaks out its force of approximately one hundred "Type 2" Securitybots. Type 2s are only partly humanoid and are designed for combat; they carry enough weaponry to level the entire Palace if need be. (For Type 1s, use the Guardbot character sheet on CV1 54; for Type 2s, use the Type I-37 Combat Unit on CV1 114.)



PALACE GUARD TEMPLATE

Cost Ability

2	+2 STR
4	+2 DEX
3	+3 CON
5	+5 INT
5	+5 EGO
10	+2 OCV
10	+2 DCV
9	+3 DMCV
10	+1 SPD
3	Bureaucratics
3	Concealment
3	AK: The Palace Imperial (INT Roll)
3	KS: Palace Imperial Personnel (INT Roll)
16	Martial Arts (a Jujutsu-like style focused on grabs, holds, disarms, and nerve strikes more than punches and kicks)
3	Genetic Modifications: Life Support (Diminished Sleep: no need to sleep)

Cost Equipment

20	Palace Guard Uniform: Resistant Protection (12 PD/12 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (-¼)
5	Palace Guard Helmet: Mental Defense (8 points); OIF (-½)
6	Palace Guard Force-Field Belt: Power Defense (8 points); IIF (-¼)
13	Palace Guard Communicator: HRRP (Radio Group), Dimensional; OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)

Total Cost Of Template Abilities And Equipment: 133

LIFE AT COURT

Daily life in the Palace Imperial is an odd blend of high-level government functions and a gala social calendar. Living and working in the Palace is unlike any other sort of existence in the Empire; many subjects work and plan their whole lives for a chance at a job there, or to get invited to court.

WHO'S WHO

Millions of permanent and temporary residents call the Palace Imperial home (or live elsewhere on V'ha, since any place on the planet can be reached in minutes via teleportation platforms or high-speed transport). By and large they fall into one of several categories:

IMPERIAL BUREAUCRATS AND WORKERS

As the seat of Empire, the planet V'ha in general, and the Palace Imperial in particular, are home to all sorts of major imperial officials (including most of the Ministers; see above). In fact, V'ha and every other inhabitable planet in its system are given over to nothing but imperial government jobs, or jobs that support imperial workers (such as running a restaurant where bureaucrats eat lunch, or operating a cleaning service for their homes). At most places and times at least four out of five people you see walking the halls of the Palace Imperial are officials or bureaucrats of Istvatha V'han's government.

COURTIERS

Like any other powerful person, Istvatha V'han attracts a huge number of wealthy and/or influential people who seek her favor, want her to do something for them, try to make money from her government, or simply enjoy being at the absolute center of the imperial social scene. These people are

generally referred to as “courtiers,” though many of them never show up at any official government function the Empress presides over, and most never get to speak to her directly. The most influential courtiers are, of course, the ones the Empress knows personally and speaks with frequently — the members of her own social circle, in other words.

Becoming a courtier is a relatively easy matter, though it's not cheap. Anyone who can afford to do so can petition for residence at the Palace Imperial. Assuming he passes the Palace Guard's intense security check and can provide some plausible reason for living there, officials of the Vice-Ministry for Palace Imperial Affairs (a division of the Grand Chancellery) will grant his request. There's always room; for every person whose petition is granted there's at least one who has to leave the Palace for some reason (typically death, disgrace, a new assignment, or poverty).

Once someone becomes a Palace resident, the next step is to get involved in the social whirl somehow. This isn't easy; existing courtiers won't allow just anyone into their sphere. The usual methods of worming one's way onto the right invitations lists are:

- be perceived as having the Empress's attention or favor;
- be perceived as being “important” for some other reason;
- make friends with someone who's already a part of the social scene (typically by meeting them through volunteer work, at public places of entertainment, or the like);
- be in some way impressive or intriguing to the right people (in some cases, simply being highly attractive or very wealthy may be enough); and
- bribery.

IMPERIAL GUESTS

At any given time tens of thousands of people come to the Palace Imperial as guests of the Empress (even though she may never actually see or speak to them). These include dignitaries and officials from various parts of her Empire, ambassadors and diplomats from other sovereign entities, artists she's interested in, noteworthy imperial subjects come to receive an award or some other sort of official recognition, and the like.

IMPERIAL HOSTAGES

One way that Istvatha V'han both defuses the possibility of rebellion in her Empire, and extends her influence over generations of its leaders to come, is to require powerful or influential families from conquered dimensions to send children and other family members to her as “guests” — which is to say, hostages for good behavior. The Palace Guard watches these people carefully to make sure they don't conspire against the Empress, but for the most part they're well-behaved and take advantage of the tremendous opportunities being a hostage can present. The Empress tends to take a healthy interest in her hostages, making it possible for many of them to potentially become influential (or at least get invited to a lot of great parties). By the time most of them are allowed to go home again, they have more in common with the Empress

than with their own families. On the other hand, if a hostage's family back home doesn't behave as the Empress wishes it to, their hostage will soon find his life cut short in a most unpleasant way no matter how fond of him the Empress may be.

VISITORS

The Palace Imperial is a popular tourist destination for many imperial subjects. Millions of them come each month to tour the public areas of the Palace and participate, however indirectly, in court social life.

THE DAILY ROUTINE

As discussed on page 26, it's difficult to say that Istvatha V'han herself has any sort of specific daily routine; since she doesn't have to sleep or eat and can travel in time, she can arrange her day however she sees fit, and “re-do” parts of it if something doesn't work out as intended. But her servants and subjects don't have the same luxury; they need schedules and routines to keep the Palace Imperial functioning at the Empress's expected level of efficiency.

The Palace officially “opens for business” at 0600 hours (V'ha has a 24-hour day, just like Earth; this forms the basis for Imperial Standard Time, which is used throughout the Empire in addition to local methods of gauging the passage of time). Various servants are on duty or working throughout the night, of course, but 0600 is when everyone thinks of the day as beginning. The “standard breakfast” time is 0700, but people who don't have to worry about work and meetings often prefer a “late breakfast” at 0800 or 0900, or just go straight to brunch/lunch.

After the morning meal, bureaucrats and workers go to their jobs; those who are independently wealthy or have some outside source of support pursue whatever activities interest them. For most workers the most important meetings of the day occur now, usually around 0900 or 1000 hours.

The midday meal occurs somewhere in the 1100 to 1300 range, depending on personal preference and the demands of the workplace. For those who don't have to work, lunchtime is usually when the daily social calendar really gets moving. Lunch dates lead to a round of spectator sports, art presentations, shopping expeditions, and afternoon “salons” that attract those who are looking to stave off the ever-present threat of boredom.

For most imperial personnel the workday concludes at 1700 or 1800, though some jobs require more time or allow workers scheduling flexibility. For many people the evening meal follows about an hour after that, though social dinners usually wait until 2000 or later.

By 2200 or so nightclubs and other evening entertainments have begun and the true “social season” of the day begins. For those with the stamina, parties, dancing, and related activities can go on nearly until dawn. Part of the attraction for the social set is that since the Empress never sleeps, there's always the chance she might show up at some particularly fabulous or intriguing social event late at night.

FACTIONS AND MOVEMENTS

Although Isvatha V'han is the absolute ruler of the V'hanian Empire, that doesn't mean she acts without seeking the advice of knowledgeable people, or can do whatever she wants whenever she wants. There are literally millions, if not billions, of people trying to influence what she does every single day. Some of the major factions and "movements" that are a part of the imperial political scene include:

HAWKS

At nearly all times the Empire's at war on numerous fronts as Istvatha V'han seeks to extend her Empire... or protect it from the likes of Tyrannon and Skarn. Despite this there are those who want to see *more* wars of conquest — particularly against dimensions like Earth-1346 that have previously defied/defeated the Empress, or against Tyrannon and/or Skarn directly. These "hawks," many of them current or former members of the Imperial Legions, believe that as the Empire's grown in size it's also grown "soft," as the demands of ruling what she's conquered have sapped V'han's ability to focus on further military campaigns. Hawks argue for greater military spending, more scientific and mystical research with military capabilities in mind, and an increase in the number of dimensional invasions.

DOVES

On the other hand, there are those among the exalted ranks of imperial officials and subjects who think that less war, not more, is the best course of action for the Empire. They'd prefer to see time and resources devoted to developing existing territories and resources, making even more improvements in the lives of the Empress's subjects, and finding non-military applications for advanced technologies. They see the constant campaigns of expansion as draining the Empress's time and resources to no good purpose — she already has a hundred million dimensions, how many more does she really need? They recognize the need for defense against the Empire's enemies and support that wholeheartedly, but beyond that would prefer to see military operations reduced to, at most, consolidation of existing gains rather than seeking new ones.

ECONOMIC ADVOCATES

Related to the doves are various related factions collectively thought of as "the economic advocates." These people and organizations argue in favor of channeling some military spending into economic improvements — things that enhance trade and prosperity. Their views on how best to do this vary wildly, though. Some of them want the Empire to build more roads, establish more spacelanes, make more D-Portals available for civilian use, and/or build more mass transit. Others want sweeping reforms to certain laws (such as the ones pertaining to rents or property taxes) and more public funds devoted to correcting the problems the former laws caused (e.g., more money for affordable housing).

Some want to see advanced technology spread more quickly. And some of them want all of these things at once!

PRO-MARRIAGE

A not-inconsiderable segment of the imperial population think the Empress ought to get married and have children. Despite the fact that she's immortal and thus technically doesn't need an heir, there's always the chance she'll be killed by some enemy or in a tragic accident. The pro-marriage faction doesn't want to see the Empire disintegrate into war-torn fragments if that happens, and that means there has to be a legitimate heir for a regency council and the Imperial Legions to support. V'han treats this faction with mild amusement but doesn't pay much attention to it otherwise.

BUREAUCRATIC REVISIONISTS

There are some within the Empire who feel (and not without some justification) that the imperial bureaucracy is too extensive and powerful. Even an immortal, dimension-crossing time traveler can't be everywhere at once, which means the Empress has to depend on underlings and minions to run most aspects of her Empire on a day-to-day basis. That puts a lot of power in the hands of the bureaucracy — too much, the bureaucratic revisionists argue. However, different factions within this group each have their own preferred solution for this problem. Some want the bureaucracy reduced and the imperial government to maintain less oversight of the average subject; some want most major bureaucratic offices to be filled by election rather than imperial appointment; some simply want more rigorous standards for who's appointed to a position and how he's managed.

PERSON-SPECIFIC FACTIONS

Many important or wealthy people in the Empire (such as some of the movers and shakers described below) have their own groups of supporters and sycophants. These "minions" do whatever they can to support their "candidate," such as trying to persuade imperial officials to give him a job he wants. Typically they do this because they hope to ride along on his coattails and benefit from his success (in the form of jobs or prestige for themselves, for example).

FREEDOM FACTIONS

The term "freedom factions" describes a huge number of "lobbying groups" that try to persuade the Empress to release some planet or dimension from her Empire, or at least to grant its inhabitants greater liberties of some sort. Few of them ever make any progress at all, and certainly none has ever succeeded at persuading V'han to give up some part of her Empire entirely.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Aside from the Empress herself, the most important people in the Palace Imperial (and thus on V'ha) tend to be high-level imperial officials and bureaucrats like the Ministers and Vice-Ministers. But they're certainly not the only ones who wield influence. Some other movers and shakers that a newcomer would often do well to become acquainted with include:

TRUBOKC HANNTA LE'AZH STREL

A staggeringly wealthy member of the Hnutru species from Hnuan VII in the dimension Polariion, Trubokc Hannta Le'azh Strel began life as a simple textiles merchant but eventually parlayed that business into a vast financial and industrial empire. He basically owns Hnuan VII; most of what he doesn't own is public property he can't buy. A few years ago he left the business in the capable hands of his four sons and three daughters and came to enjoy life at the imperial court. He frequently "lobbies" the government on matters pertaining to high finance and related subjects, but he also spends a great deal of time on the social circuit, where his jovial, gregarious nature makes him a hit at any party. Between his connections and his money he can get into any social event he wants.

PRINCE PELDON G'ARNETH

Centuries ago, long before Istvatha V'han was born, V'ha went through a medieval period similar in many respects to that of Earth. During this time a number of families came into power and became hereditary royalty and nobility. Many died out or were destroyed over the years, but some survived and prospered, becoming fabulously wealthy as well as powerful. Even after society adopted different forms of government, they remained part of the social, political, and business elite.

Once Istvatha V'han conquered V'ha, any shred of formal power these old noble families might still have possessed was lost forever, but that didn't mean the end of the families themselves. Recognizing that they were no real threat to her, V'han allowed them to continue to exist as a sort of morale booster for a populace often fascinated by their escapades and adventures. In turn they tended to become strong supporters of her.

Peldon G'arneth, Prince of Trulassia, is the latest scion of a family that once ruled a major kingdom on one of V'ha's continents. With a family fortune so large it's virtually inexhaustible to draw on, he's one of the glittering lights of court. He cares nothing for politics, but any social occasion he attends is by definition a hit. His interests include sailing, sports hovercraft, court gossip, and beautiful women; he's widely considered one of the most eligible bachelors at court despite having never given the slightest indication of any desire to marry.

LADY RANJA MTUO

The Mtuo family rules most of the planet Thalavar in the dimension Bazinaq... or they did until Istvatha V'han conquered that dimension. Thalavar was the scene of some of the fiercest fighting in that campaign, and to ensure the planet's loyalty V'han summoned Ranja, the young daughter of the Mtuo patriarch, to court on V'ha.

Fully aware of the nature of her situation, Lady Ranja takes it all in stride and tries to enjoy the opportunities that come her way. Dazzlingly beautiful, insightfully intelligent, and a witty conversationalist, she's very much in demand on the social scene. Unfortunately for her, the conquest of Thalavar left the Mtuo family without most of its ancestral wealth, so she's constantly struggling to make ends meet on the relatively small allowance the Empire gives her.

Lady Ranja is more or less on the "outermost edge" of Istvatha V'han's social circle. She's actually met and spoken with the Empress twice, and impressed her by making just the right observations. If she plays her cards right, she could easily end up as one of V'han's confidantes.

CORRANA UNA'MO'THEF

Corrana Una'mo'Thef is one of the pillars of the imperial court's social scene. The widow of a wealthy financier, she has a large, lavish home in the Palace Imperial and loves to throw parties. Rarely does a week go by when she doesn't host at least one event at her home, and sometimes it's as many as five. Her parties have a reputation for attracting a combination of all the "best sorts" of people along with a smattering of "interesting" guests that she meets in her various doings, so invitations are very much in demand.

On top of that, Una'mo'Thef has a well-deserved reputation as a matchmaker. She seems to have a marked aversion to seeing people in her circle single and does her best to pair them up with *just* the right person... regardless of whether they want to be paired or not. But given the number of weddings, bonding ceremonies, and contractual unions that have resulted from her "meddling," one has to concede that she has a certain wisdom about these matters.

LAW AND CRIME

In addition to defending itself and its subjects from external threats such as Tyrannion, the Empire also does its best to ensure the internal security of its subjects. In short, it passes and enforces laws to protect people and ensure the smooth and productive functioning of society. Unfortunately, even in a state as relatively well-run and well-policed as the V'hanian Empire, many sorts of crime continue to exist... and sometimes even flourish.

LOCAL LAW VERSUS IMPERIAL LAW

While imperial law applies to all of Istvatha V'han's subjects, the Empress allows some aspects of the legal system to vary from world to world, dimension to dimension. As a way of demonstrating her benevolence, the Empress lets some local laws that don't conflict with imperial policy remain as they were before her conquest. This gives her subjects the comfort of long-standing customs and practices, though it sometimes makes things difficult for the Imperial Security Force.

The most common examples of this are so-called "morality crimes" such as prostitution, drug use, and adultery. In some parts of the Empire the sex trade and drug use are entirely legal, and adultery is seen as a private matter. In others, prostitution, drugs, and adultery are harshly punished by the authorities. Imperial officials see this as beneficial to the economy and the morale of the Empress's subjects; someone who doesn't like the legal regime where he's living can move to a place where the laws are more in tune with his lifestyle.

THE IMPERIAL LAW COUNCIL

In the Empire, all laws are decreed by Istvatha V'han... but she doesn't think them all up and write them all down herself. Most of the work of suggesting and creating laws to her is performed by a group called the *Imperial Law Council*. ILC members hear proposals from other branches of government and civilians for new laws, study the issues involved, debate the public policy implications, and then make recommendations to the Empress (with a draft law for her consideration, if merited).

The ILC is a 10,000-person strong agency whose members are appointed by the Empress for four-year terms. Most of the members have some background in law, public policy, or the social sciences, but the Empress makes sure that at any given time at least ten percent of them are ordinary subjects selected more or less at random. (In a sense it's like modern American jury duty, except that it lasts a lot longer, pays a lot better, and is a prestigious duty few people ever try to avoid.) Although some members are so wise or useful that the Empress has re-appointed them again and again for decades, typically she tries to ensure a certain amount of turnover so that fresh perspectives are always available.

At the start of every imperial year the ILC elects a president and a twelve-member Leadership Committee. These thirteen people then appoint other ILC members to fill committee chairmanships and other positions within the organization. This creates a certain amount of internal tension and even dissent, but overall the system seems to work well and the Empress doesn't seem inclined to change it.

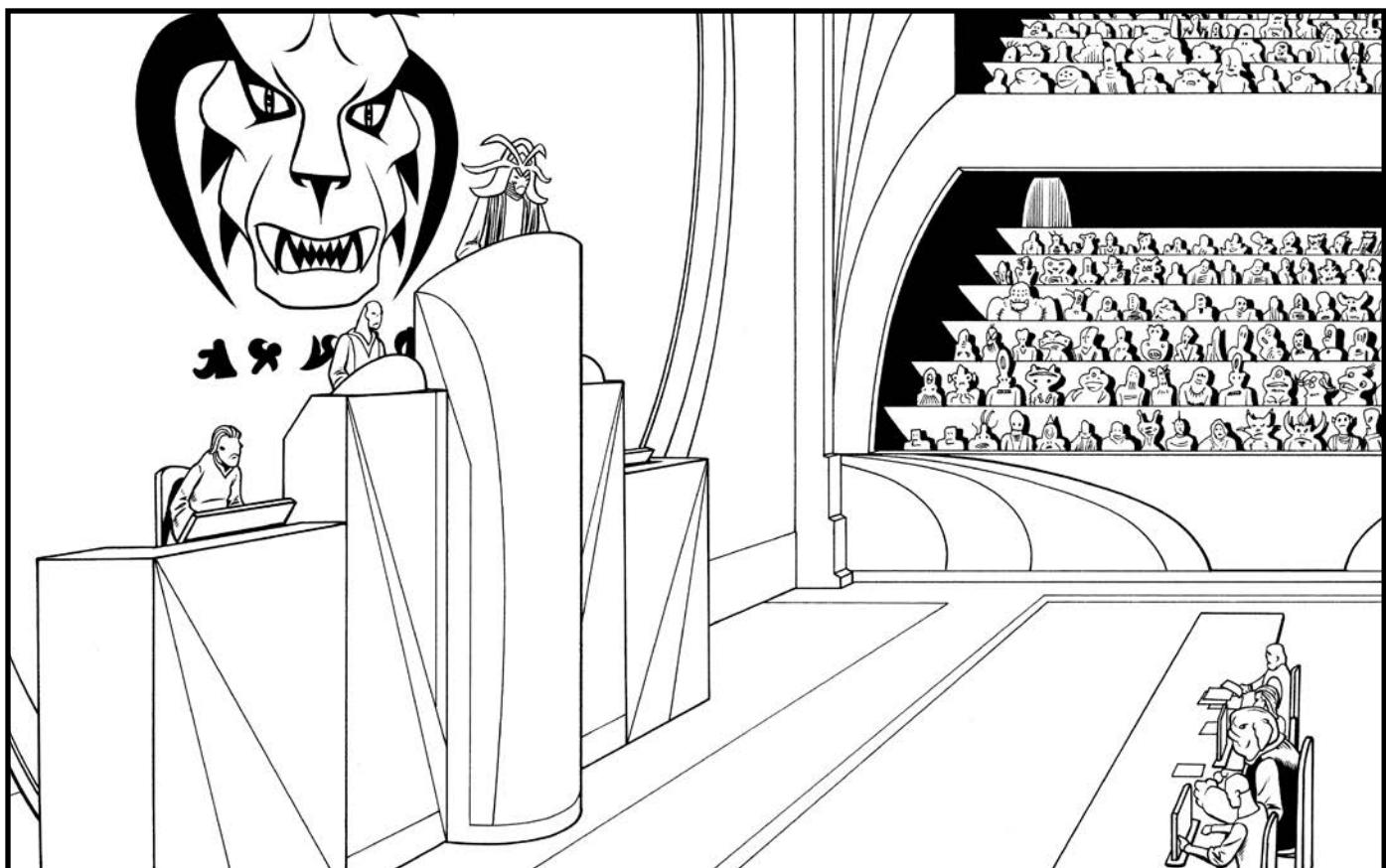
Over the years the Council has frequently been criticized for being too powerful and influential, too stuck in its ways, too willing to make change for the sake of change, too elitist, too populist, or committing just about any other sort of sin a group like that could commit. At various times and to various extents, all of these complaints have some measure of truth — but with the possible exception of the one about being too powerful and influential, most of them are generally wrong. The ILC is too large, and has too many issues to deal with, to follow any one course consistently for any length of time. Even if it wanted to, that would simply make the Empress more inclined to ignore the ILC's suggestions and advice, thus weakening the organization. Generally speaking the members of the ILC prefer to try to serve with sincerity and loyalty; that's the best way to get their voices heard and maximize the chance for a rich reward from the Empress upon retirement.

THE IMPERIAL JUDICIAL CORPS

The imperial court system is known collectively as the *Imperial Judicial Corps*, or IJC. The use of the word "Corps" is deliberate; the Empress wants her courts to function with military efficiency and her subjects to be as awed of them as they are of an army of D-Soldiers. Despite the fundamental reality that her word is law, she prefers to govern according to an established rule of law, and she considers the majesty and dignity of the court system an important part of that.

The IJC is organized in multiple "tiers" similar to the Imperial Legions. At the top stands the Imperial High Court — the highest court in the Empire whose rulings apply throughout the Empress's territory unless she herself specifically changes or abrogates them. Immediately below the IHC are two layers of courts of appeal, the Courts of Second Appeal and the Courts of First Appeal. Getting your case heard by either is extraordinarily difficult, and only the thorniest legal issues actually make it to the High Court.

Next come the hundred million Dimensional High Courts, whose rulings apply only in the dimension each of them has jurisdiction over. Depending on the size of the dimension and how long Istvatha V'han's controlled it, a DHC may be one of the most important entities in the dimension or have no real impact at all. Cases come to the DHC from the various Galactic High Courts, which hear cases from a specific galaxy (or region of space). Within a galaxy there are Sector High Courts, then Planetary High Courts, then court systems with jurisdiction over specific continents or other regions of a world.



LEGAL PROCEDURE

A panel of three judges hears each criminal case (there are no juries in the imperial legal system). The accused is considered guilty unless he can prove his innocence to the court's satisfaction. However, the Imperial Advocate (the lawyer representing the Empire) must present the court with a *Basis Of Accusation* explaining what occurred and why the accused is believed to have committed the crime. If the court finds the Basis insufficient it throws out the case regardless of the presumption of guilt. If the Basis is adjudged sufficient the accused is allowed to present his case; he may hire a legal advocate but has no right to one. If the judges find that the accused is in fact guilty, they assess an appropriate punishment, ranging from a fine to execution (see *Crime In The Empire*, below).

Civil cases, on the other hand, are heard only by a single judge in most instances. Each side presents its case according to certain formal rules, and the judge then makes his decision. Once filed, a case proceeds on a very tight deadline that can rarely be changed or extended; if the plaintiff can't finish assembling his case for presentation by his scheduled court date, his case is dismissed with prejudice (meaning he can never file it again).

Since judicial resources aren't unlimited, the Empire frowns on people or organizations who bring frequent litigation (with allowance for the size and complexity of an organization, of course). An entity who files too many civil cases may be accused and convicted of the crime of "abuse of the judicial process," which can be punished by by, among other things, depriving him of the ability to ever file any more lawsuits.

THE IMPERIAL SECURITY FORCE

The organization most imperial subjects associate with the law is the Imperial Security Force — the Empress's police department. Its billions of officers and administrative personnel work hard to ensure the safety of V'han's subjects, capture wrongdoers, and prevent crime.

ORGANIZATION

The ISF is organized along more or less the same lines as the Imperial Legions (an organization it frequently works together with, particularly the Imperial Intelligence Command in its counterintelligence role). A Director of Imperial Security heads the organization from the ISF's large and elaborate headquarters in the Palace Imperial. Sector Directors responsible for entire dimensional sectors report directly to him; each of them has an entire planet (sometimes more) for his command offices. Under the Sector Directors are Dimensional Directors, Star Sector Directors, Galactic Directors, Sector Directors, Planetary Directors, and finally directors in charge of specific regions, nations, or cities on a given planet. Within each jurisdiction are chains of command based both on rank and on divisions of labor (such as the Investigators' Unit, the Major Crimes Unit, the Piracy Unit, the Treason Investigation Unit, and so forth).

ISF DIRECTOR BLUNRA PEN'REL

As of the Earth-1346 year 2011, the Director of Imperial Security is Blunra Pen'rel, a V'hanian woman who transitioned into the ISF after a short but distinguished career in the Imperial Legions and soon began rising through the ranks.

At heart she's still a pavement-pounding "beat cop" who sympathizes with the average officer, a sentiment she indicates by wearing her old uniform and sidearm to the office most days.

That aside, Director Pen'rel is generally regarded as a very *unsentimental*, hard-nosed, by-the-book leader. She doesn't tolerate inefficiency, incompetence, or excuse-making in her high command, and expects lower-ranking directors to adopt the same attitude for their personnel. Despite that she's a talented negotiator who's good at balancing the sometimes competing needs of the various branches of the ISF, and at obtaining whatever the ISF needs from the Empire. She's seen as one of the Empress's most valued and frequently-consulted advisers; indeed, the two could be considered friends, since they do sometimes socialize together.

Although her job usually demands around-the-clock attention (she's even received the special imperial treatments that remove her need to sleep), Director Pen'rel strives to carve out some family time to spend with her three children every day. The stress of her job broke up her marriage long ago, but she's determined to minimize its impact on her kids as much as she can.

OFFICERS

The accompanying character sheet describes a typical ISF officer (you can use the D-Soldier Generator Table on page 63 to determine an officer's species, general appearance, and so on if desired).

Officers typically join the Force either after graduating from the Imperial Security Academy (which most attend right after completing their secondary education) or after retiring from the Imperial Legions. Most begin their careers patrolling the streets of some city (or the spacelanes of some region of space), and many never go much beyond that. But an officer with enough smarts and experience can aspire to specialized training (see below) or to rise up the ranks into administration.

SPECIALIZED OFFICERS

The options for the accompanying character sheet represent several types of ISF officers with specialized training:

Advanced Weapons & Tactics:

These officers handle situations calling for quasi-military force and tactics. They were light powered armor and carry military blaster rifles.

5



FRAIM

ISF OFFICER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
14	DEX	8	12-	
13	CON	3	12-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
5	OCV	10		
5	DCV	10		
3	OMCV	0		
3	DMCV	0		
3	SPD	10		Phases: 4, 8, 12
5	PD	3		Total: 13 PD (8 rPD)
5	ED	3		Total: 13 ED (8 rED)
6	REC	2		
30	END	2		
10	BODY	0		
30	STUN	5		

Total Characteristics Cost: 59

Movement: Running: 12m

Cost Powers

END

20	ISF Sidearm: Multipower, 30-point reserve 50 Charges for entire Multipower (+½); OAF (-1), Beam (-¼)	[50]
1f	1) Standard Setting: Blast 6d6 OAF (-1), Beam (-¼)	
1f	2) High-Frequency Setting: RKA 2d6 OAF (-1), Beam (-¼), Requires 3 Charges (-¾)	

Interrogations Specialist: An officer trained in special techniques of interrogation and interviewing (this includes some forms of torture, though generally the ISF frowns on torture as an unreliable means of gathering accurate information).

Investigator: A detective, in Human parlance — an officer who looks into significant crimes and does the legwork and deductive work necessary to solve them.

Piracy Unit: Space piracy is a problem in some parts of the Empire, and Piracy Unit officers are trained to track down, defeat, and capture such outlaws.

Riot Control: In parts of the Empire that are past the stage of open rebellion but not yet truly loyal, anti-imperial riots sometimes occur. Riot Control officers are trained to deal with these events; their specially-padded uniforms and advanced helmets protect them from the mob's impromptu weapons, while their stunners and other weapons let them break up the riot without having to resort to lethal force.

Undercover Officer: An officer trained to infiltrate criminal organizations by pretending to be a criminal himself.

30	Combat Stick: Multipower, 60-point reserve All OAF (-1)	
1f	1) Striking: HA +3d6 OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-1/4)	1
1f	2) Blocking: +3 DCV OAF (-1), Costs Endurance (-1/2), Only In HTH Combat (-1/2)	1
2f	3) Stunner Tip: Blast 6d6 NND (defense is Resistant ED defined as a force-field, an insulated suit, or the like; +1); OAF (-1), No Range (-1/2), 8 Charges (-1/2)	[8]
8	Armored Uniform: Resistant Protection (5 PD/5 ED) OIF (-1/2), Activation Roll 14- (-1/4)	0
6	ISF Communicator: Radio Perception/Transmission (Radio Group) OIF (-1/2), Affected As Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-1/4)	0
3	Observant: +1 to PER Rolls with all Sense Groups	0

Perks

4	Contacts (4 points' worth)	3
1	Fringe Benefit: V'hanian Law Enforcement Rank: Officer	5
2	Fringe Benefit: Local Police Powers	3
1	Fringe Benefit: Weapon Permit	

Skills

4	+2 OCV with ISF Sidearm
1	Combat Driving 8-
3	Criminology 11-
2	AK or CK appropriate to job or jurisdiction, 11-
2	KS: V'hanian Criminal Law And Procedure 11-
2	KS: The Law Enforcement World 11-
2	PS: ISF Officer 11-
3	Streetwise 12-
2	WF: V'hanian Small Arms

6	6 points' worth of Skills from the following list: Acting, Bribery, Bugging, Bureaucratics, Climbing, Combat Driving, Combat Piloting, Combat Skill Levels, Computer Programming, Concealment, Conversation, Deduction, Demolitions, Disguise, Electronics, Fast Draw, Forensic Medicine, Gambling, Interrogation, Lockpicking, Martial Arts, Navigation, Paramedics, Persuasion, Security Systems, Shadowing, Skill Levels, Stealth, Tactics, Weapon Familiarity, Weaponsmith, any Background Skill, Contacts, Deep Cover
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Total Powers & Skills Cost: 108**Total Cost: 167****100 Matching Complications (30)**

5	Distinctive Features: ISF uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
10	Hunted: ISF Internal Affairs (Infrequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
15	Psychological Complication: Loyal To Istvatha V'han (Common, Strong)
20	Social Complication: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 30**Experience Points: 67****OPTIONS****Cost Power**var **Military Veteran:** upgrade any Characteristics below
those of a D-Soldier (page 64) to D-Soldier levels**Advanced Weapons & Tactics:** Add the following:+16 **ISF Light Powered Armor:** Increase Resistant Protection
to 12 PD/12 ED and remove Activation Roll; ISF
Communicator is built into Armor3 **ISF LPA Helmet:** Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OIF
(-1/2)3 **ISF LPA Helmet:** Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group); OIF
(-1/2)
+17 Change ISF Sidearm to the V'hanian Energy Rifle from the
D-Soldier character sheet (page 64)**Interrogation Specialist:** Add the following:3 Conversation
5 Interrogation (PRE Roll +1)
3 Persuasion**Investigator:** Add the following:2 Criminology 10-
3 Deduction
2 Forensic Medicine 10-
+2 +1 to Streetwise
+1 Increase Fringe Benefit: Law Enforcement Rank**Piracy Unit:** Add the following:3 Combat Piloting
2 Navigation (Space)
2 Systems Operation 10-**Riot Control:** Add the following:+12 **Protective Gear:** change Armored Uniform to: +6 PD; OIF
(-1/2) plus Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-1/2)
60 **Riot Control Weapons:** Multipower, 90-point reserve; all
OIF (weapons harness; -1/2)
4f **1) Stunner:** Blast 8d6, NND (defense is Resistant ED
defined as a force-field, an insulated suit, or the
like; +1), 32 Charges (+1/4); OAF (-1), Limited Range
(150m; -1/4)
3f **2) Sleepygas Grenades:** Blast 6d6, NND (defense is Life
Support [Diminished Sleeping or appropriate Immunity];
+1), Area Of Effect (8m Radius; +1/2); OAF (-1),
Range Based On STR (-1/4), 8 Charges (-1/2)
2f **3) Stickyfoam Grenades:** Entangle 4d6, 4 PD/4 ED, Area
Of Effect (8m Radius; +1/2); OAF (-1), Range Based On
STR (-1/4), 8 Charges (-1/2)**Undercover Officer:** Add the following:3 Acting
5 Cramming
2 Disguise 10-

CRIME IN THE EMPIRE

Despite how many Imperial Legions soldiers and ISF officers Istvatha V'han has, she can't entirely eliminate crime from the Empire — it's a part of some sentients' natures to want illegal things, to act according to impulse rather than rational thought, to want to profit from the weaknesses or misery or others, or simply to be bad people. (And that's not even taking into account the crime of rebelling against the Empress; see *Rebels Of The Realities* later in this chapter.)

V'ha-1 and most of the core dimensions of the Empire are largely crime-free; they're very safe places to live and work. The further out from the core one goes, the less control the Empire tends to have over its subjects, and thus the greater the possibility for crime. No part of the Empire is truly lawless, but some regions have significantly fewer ISF officers and installations than others.

ORGANIZED CRIME

Since the Empire's subjects belong to billions of sentient species and there's significant scope for travel and immigration, the typical prerequisite for organized crime — a minority some of whose members are willing to become criminals to exert control over and make money from their fellows within a larger society — exists in many, many places. Thus, minor organized crime groups, those confined to a particular city or planet, are fairly common outside of the core realities. The ISF combats these with standard police tactics. As part of her "make life better for my new subjects" policies, it's not unknown for Istvatha V'han to institute incredibly draconian and ruthless measures on a new imperial planet to wipe out local organized crime, then revert to ordinary law enforcement when the problem is deemed resolved.

However, some such groups are so successful that they're able to transcend their humble beginnings to become a threat on a much larger scale. These groups control criminal empires covering star sectors, galaxies, entire dimensions, or even that span multiple dimensions. As such, they merit special attention from the ISF. Some of the more dangerous of them include:

THE COVEN OF THE BLACK PORTAL

The Empire's conquest of the planet Srodanga in the dimension Torudha left it war-ravaged and partly uninhabitable, resulting in a massive exodus of Srodanganese — a species known for the prevalence of mystics among its population. A group of less than ethical sorcerers decided this situation provided the perfect opportunity to get rich by preying on their fellow refugees. Beginning on the world Doroma III, they committed robberies, set up protection rackets, and became the chief purveyors of vice and other illegal services to the Srodanganese. They were so successful (thanks in large part to adroit use of magic) that they soon

expanded beyond their native community and came to dominate organized crime first on that planet... then in that galaxy... and then throughout Torudha. All this time the ISF fought them tooth and nail, but the wily criminal conjurers always survived the setbacks and found a way to thrive.

Today the Coven of the Black Portal (named for the mystic devices it uses to enable cross-dimensional smuggling) is in the eyes of most ISF officers the chief organized crime threat facing the V'hanian Empire. It routinely flouts the Empress's laws about dimensional travel (and sometimes even time travel/viewing) and is a blot of corruption on several dimensions. The Empress is eager to wipe the group out and has authorized staggering amounts of funding and other resources for anti-Coven operations. Unfortunately the Coven's widespread use of magic — most members can cast at least simple spells, and all the higher-ups are accomplished super-mages — would make it difficult to destroy even if it didn't have its tentacles in so many aspects of society in the dimensions where it's active.

THE GIOLNI URETZA

Many criminals who go into Istvatha V'han's prisons never come out again... but some who do learn dangerous lessons and make dangerous friends on the inside. The *Giolni Uretza* (a term in the main language of the Vvendaxi species roughly meaning "Guardian Brotherhood") got its start as a minor jailhouse gang on the prison planet Chugori VII in the dimension Oralithtanjru. Several inmates banded together to protect themselves from prison violence, but soon the group grew large and powerful enough to take over some of the prison's underground economies. When *uretzori* (as members were called) were released, they got together on the outside to continue the group's illicit activities.

Thanks to its members' intelligence and ruthlessness, the Giolni Uretza succeeded to such an extent that today it's the dominant criminal force in the dimension Heçkilgon. Despite the best efforts of the ISF and Imperial Legions, the uretzori virtually rule countless cities across the dimension. They're smart enough not to expose themselves to imperial reprisal by doing anything that invites too much attention or presents too big a target... but there are lots of ways to make a living at crime while sticking to the shadows.

According to the ISF's best intelligence, the leaders of the Giolni Uretza are a fifteen-member council known as the *Amovodru* ("the Head" or "the Command"). It's said they almost never gather in the same place, instead maintaining contact via encrypted transmissions and similar methods. Each member of the Amovodru commands a "brigade" of roughly 1/15 the organization, though of course underlings and minions handle the day-to-day business of the group so the leaders can maintain deniability.

THE KURATI SYNDICATE

Kurati is a large galaxy in the dimension Taraxn. However, unlike the Milky Way and many similar galaxies, its planets inhabitable by Human-like sentient life are few and far between. In the parlance of some ISS scouts it's an "archipelago galaxy."

When Istvatha V'han conquered Taraxn nearly three hundred years ago, most species in Kurati either hadn't achieved spaceflight, or had reached space but not yet developed the FTL drives that would let them reach other, distant, inhabitable worlds. The V'hanian Empire changed that, raising the technology level and the standard of living across the galaxy. As usual, this created some social turmoil... and a group of criminals found a way to take advantage of that. Some refugees from the planet Vangaut III stole a poorly-guarded imperial ship and used it to become pirates. Their early successes attracted other outlaws, and eventually they had a small criminal fleet under their command.

Eventually the fleet became so large it was unwieldy to command and too much of a target for the Imperial Legions. So the Vangauti split it up, transforming it into a criminal confederation where each "sub-fleet" controlled a specific territory. That turned out to be a wise decision; if any part of the Kurati Syndicate (as they now called themselves) were destroyed by the authorities, the other parts remained viable and could soon replace what was lost.

In recent decades the Syndicate has grown strong enough to expand into other galaxies near Kurati. Their experience controlling an archipelago galaxy's underworld has served them well as they make their way across the vast intergalactic gulfs to other swirls of stars. The ISF fears that if it doesn't strike a serious blow against the Syndicate soon, within a century it will dominate all of Taraxn the way the Giolni Uretza do Oralithtanju.

THE RUNDORRU

Taking its name from a word meaning "to threaten," the Rundorru began as allied groups of smugglers working together to evade the authorities on Lrotan II (their native planet, in the dimension Dorax). As members of the Torrog, a religious minority oppressed by the authorities and popular prejudice, the only way they could earn a good living was crime. As the Lrotani advanced technologically and moved out into space, the Rundorru adapted, taking their criminal empire to the stars.

The V'hanian conquest 137 years ago gave the Rundorru new power. While regular social mechanisms crumbled under the impact of war and the changes brought about by becoming part of the V'hanian Empire, the Rundorru were used to dealing with adversity and easily weathered the storm. Today they dominate the underworld throughout much of Dorax and in many places are considered the true government despite a barrage of imperial propaganda stating otherwise.

One of the things that binds the Rundorru together is its religion. Anyone who joins must convert to the Torrog faith (though the vast majority of Rundorru "members" don't actually join, they're just associates and hangers-on). This creates a common bond above and beyond the more tawdry connections of profit and power, giving the organization a cohesiveness that many organized crime groups lack.

DISORGANIZED CRIME

Not all crime within the Empire qualifies as "organized." Despite the efficiency (and often near omnipresences) of the ISF, many people still find ways to make a living illegally. Some crimes of note in imperial territory include:

GLADIATORIALISM

Istvatha V'han finds most bloodsports disgusting and generally outlaws them regardless of local custom or tradition. (She makes some exception for athletic fighting competitions where all participation is voluntary and carefully regulated.) But in some cultures the concept of gladiatorial fighting, or even animal bloodsports, is so ingrained that they can't let it go simply because a woman ten million dimensions away says they should. On such worlds the gladiatorial matches simply move underground, away from prying imperial eyes. Every time the ISF raids one secret arena it seems like another one springs up.

SLAVERY

Similarly, slavery isn't unknown among the billions of cultures in the Empire — but it's absolutely anathema to Istvatha V'han. There is no slavery within her realm. Anyone who holds slaves will be punished if caught, and the punishment ranges up to the death penalty in cases of serious abuse, extensive slaveholding, or being a slave trader.

SMUGGLING

In an Empire as vast as the V'hanian, with so many different species and civilizations, so many different products, and so many variations in local law pertaining to things like drugs, smuggling inevitably arises. The vast majority of smuggling in the Empire is intradimensional — from one planet or galaxy to another within the same dimension. However, the existence of D-Portals and related technology has created the potential for interdimensional smuggling (from one dimension to another). This is much more difficult due to the way the Empire controls access to all forms of dimensional travel, but that just makes success all the more profitable for the smuggler.

PUNISHMENT

ISF officers usually get their man... and that means he's going to suffer whatever punishment the law prescribes for his offense. Istvatha V'han likes to think of herself as a firm but fair ruler, so she takes her job of protecting her subjects very seriously. And that in turn means that anyone who's caught committing a crime is going to suffer.

CAPITAL OFFENSES

The Empress is not at all shy about imposing the death penalty on those who flout her most important criminal laws. Imperial technology coupled with the aid of psionics and mystics usually makes it a relatively easy matter to determine who committed a crime and what his state of mind was, so it may not take long from the time a criminal's captured to the time the executioner relieves him of his head (metaphorically speaking, that is — the standard method of execution in the Empire is a robotic firing squad).

Some imperial capital offenses include:

- murder
- bureaucratic corruption or influence-peddling (see page 149)
- unauthorized time travel
- unauthorized viewing of the future
- treason
- aggravated sedition
- committing three or more major felonies

IMPERIAL PRISONS

However, most crimes aren't capital offenses. The typical penalty for most minor crimes is a fine and/or some jail time; the typical penalty for most serious crimes is a prison sentence.

V'hanian prisons fall into two categories. The first would be recognizable to a twenty-first century Human; it's a large, heavily-secured building where inmates are segregated into small cells most of the time. These facilities are usually run by a combination of living imperial subjects and robots. The use of robots minimizes contact between the living guards and potentially dangerous inmates, though imperial penologists recognize that it's unhealthy for prisoners to have no contact whatsoever with living authority.

The most serious offenders don't end up in a normal prison, though. Throughout her Empire Istvatha V'han maintains thousands of "prison planets" for criminals too dangerous to mix with less hardened criminals but not dangerous enough to merit the death penalty. These are worlds on the bare edge of habitability — not suitable for colonization without extensive effort, but where a small, determined population might survive if it struggles hard enough. Prisoners who receive life sentences are often sent to one of these worlds and left there with nothing more advanced than medieval technology. Periodically a robotic probe from the Vice-Ministry for Prison Maintenance surveys these worlds to ensure that no one's smuggled more advanced technology onto the planet, or that the "natives" have developed it on their own somehow. If advanced technology is detected, the ISF or Imperial Legions show up and remove it.

TRADE

The V'hanian Empire has a vast, vibrant economy with a near infinity of products, commodities, and consumables available to most imperial subjects. In part the strength of the imperial economy derives from its large number of inhabitants and vast fund of natural and manufactured resources. But the fact that the Empire's constantly on some degree of "war footing" also keeps the economic engines running at full speed. Between the needs of the military and the needs of the bureaucracy alone, the Empire pumps quadrillions of credits into the economy every imperial month.

From a broad perspective, the imperial economy can be divided into two categories: *intradimensional trade* and *interdimensional trade*. Intradimensional trade — trade within a single dimension, whether that's from country to country on a planet, planet to planet within a galaxy, or galaxy to galaxy — constitutes approximately three-fourths of all economic activity within the Empire. Most manufacturers and companies don't have the reach to extend their sales into other dimensions, or don't offer anything for sale that people in another dimension want. However, the existence of D-Portals that civilians can use has created interdimensional trade — trade between people in one dimension and people in another. This is most common with luxury items, rare consumables, pharmaceuticals, and rare or unique items (such as works of art or antiques), but it exists across the manufacturing spectrum to some degree.

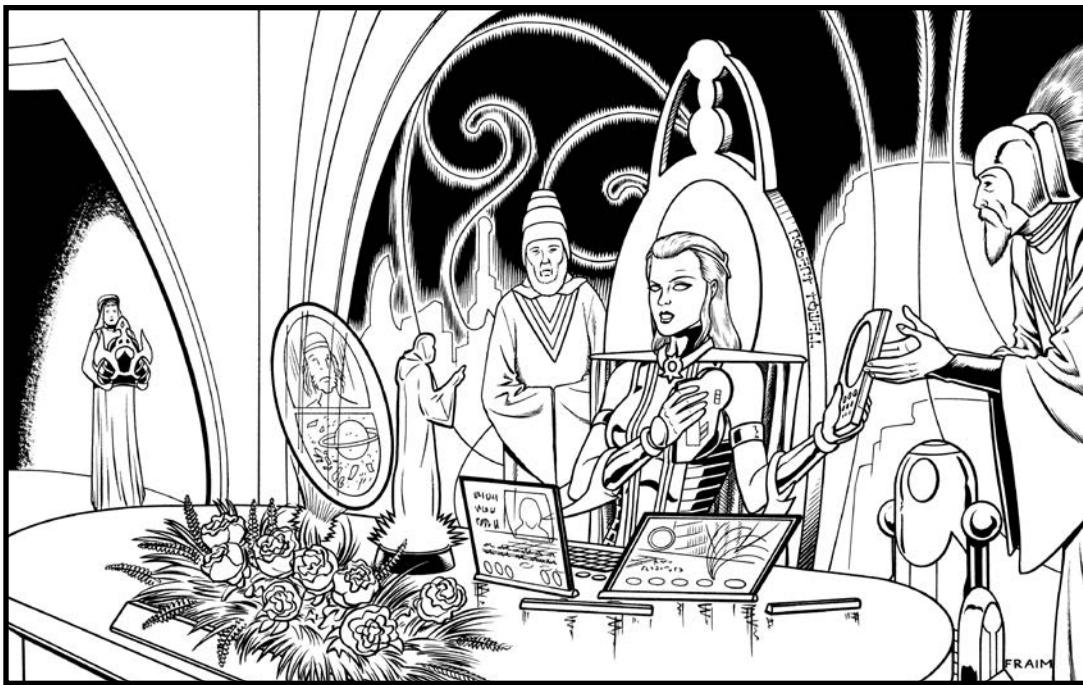
The dream of many companies is to come up with a product so popular or sought after that it sells throughout the Empire. Some of the Empire-spanning brands as of 2011 include Krellingerite (a sort of soft drink), Porthuva's (a restaurant and food chain), NeuTronix (an electronics manufacturer), Mandarra (a line of personal hovercraft), and Colaggia's (a chain of food stores).

CURRENCY

The standard currency of the Empire is the *venar*, or V'hanian credit, whose value is set by the Ministry and adjusted periodically as needed. Credits are primarily an electronic form of money, but the Vice-Ministry for Printing and Engraving is responsible for manufacturing coins and paper money for those who require or prefer it.

IMPERIALLY-APPROVED PRODUCTS

Sometimes a product earns renown throughout the Empire because the Empire itself buys it! When the Empire needs large quantities of something — and it needs practically everything somewhere at some time — it has officials from the Ministry of Procurement research the available options. The Ministry then either chooses one, or opens the process to bidding by potential suppliers it approves of. If the chosen company is willing to provide the Empire with a discount, for the duration of the contract it can refer to the product as "The Official [whatever it is] of the V'hanian Empire." This usually leads to an increase in sales that more than makes up for the discount. In some cases entire



commercial empires have arisen because decades or centuries ago a predecessor company obtained an “imperial official” designation for a product, then funneled the vast profits earned into growth and expansion.

Even more prestigious is the designation, “By Appointment to Her Sovereign Majesty,” which indicates a product Istvatha V’han uses personally. Millions of manufacturers send free products to the Empress every year, and her staff winnows out all but a few of the highest quality for her to try. If she likes one enough to continue using it, she’ll favor the manufacturer with “imperial preferred” recognition. (She’s also been known to send rewards to the inventor and other people associated with the product, not just the company whose name’s on the label.)

COMMUNICATIONS

The V’hanian Empire maintains a vast communications network, both for its own use and for the use of its subjects. The network reaches across all the dimensions of the Empire (though of course there are sub-networks within specific dimensions, galaxies, star sectors, and the like). As a whole it’s referred to as *the Imperial CommuniNet*.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Subjects of the Empire can use the Imperial CommuniNet to talk to one another and access the Imperial DataNet (the Empire’s equivalent of the Internet, roughly speaking). There are multiple levels of service — some free, some for pay, and some restricted.

The *Obsidian* levels of access are restricted to the government and the military, with numerous gradations of access depending on one’s security clearance, job, and the like. Only the Empress herself and a handful of high-ranking personnel have completely unrestricted access to the entire CommuniNet and DataNet.

The *Gold* levels of access are the highest a civilian subject can purchase. The Tier 1 Gold level allows access to all non-classified broadcasts and data in the Empire, a flood of information so vast no one can follow more than a minuscule fraction of it. The Gold levels are most commonly purchased by corporations, hard-core data and computer usage junkies, and the like.

The *Silver* levels of access are the ones most commonly purchased throughout the Empire. They allow nearly all forms of video and audio communications and access to the majority of imperial broadcast channels (see below) and DataNet sites. Various levels are tailored to specific needs (such as families, people primarily interested in sports or finance, and so on).

The *Bronze* levels of access are much more restricted than the Silver. They allow most audio and some video communications, and access to roughly half as many broadcast channels and DataNet sites (mostly major government, commercial, and basic information sites). The less well-off subjects of the Empire usually settle for Bronze.

The lowest form of access are the *Iron* levels, which allow only basic audio communications, a small number of broadcast channels, and government DataNet sites. Iron access is free to all subjects of the Empire.

(In game terms, Gold access is a 3-point Fringe Benefit, Silver a 2-point Fringe Benefit, and Bronze a 1-point Fringe Benefit. Obsidian Access can’t be purchased; it’s obtained by buying the appropriate *Security Clearance* and other Perks in addition to Gold access.)

BROADCASTING

By Imperial law, all broadcasting of information or entertainment is under the control of the Empire and/or organizations it licenses to perform this function. The Ministry of Communications oversees this function of government, ranging from the administrative nuts and bolts to the creation of entertainment programs.

Channels 1 to 1000 are reserved for various sorts of official government broadcasts. If necessary the Empire can override all other broadcasts and force all receivers to show something on one of these channels, and can even turn on receivers that are turned off so they can show an official broadcast. (Owning a receiver that's had this feature removed or disabled, or removing or disabling it one's self, is a serious crime.)

The remaining channels are devoted to various sorts of information or entertainment programming. Most of what's shown on these channels is produced by the Empire itself, but some is produced by outside companies and sold to the Empire, or created under imperial license.

TECHNOLOGY

The Empire is highly technologically advanced. While its technology isn't the equal of Malvan technology, it's still one of the most technologically sophisticated entities in the known Multiverse (and certainly the largest state with such advanced science). This is the result of several factors.

First, to a greater or lesser extent the Empire's always on a "war footing." The needs of war drive technological advancement like almost nothing else, and in time those advancements trickle down (in some form) to the civilian population of the Empire.

Second, the Empire's vast population allows for equally vast synergies that give rise to new technologies. The Empire has an entire Vice-Ministry, Technological Analysis, that studies the technologies of newly-conquered civilizations to determine what, if anything, they have to offer to imperial technology as a whole. Anything of benefit is quickly made known to the rest of the Empire... and then countless scientists, researchers, inventors, and technorati go to work on it, finding ways to improve it, adapt it, or combine it with other technologies to create something new and useful. The constant stream of improvements and inventions is so large that just keeping up with "what's coming" is a big part of any technologist's job.

CUTTING-EDGE AND MUNDANE TECHNOLOGIES

Like any other government, the V'hanian Empire tends to keep the most recent, important, valuable, or militarily useful technologies to itself, at least for awhile. Thus, the everyday technology found throughout the Empire lags behind the best of what the Imperial Legions and some other branches of government have access to.

The most advanced technologies available to the V'hanian government include:

- fast FTL drives for starships
- antimatter power generation
- teleportation
- limited matter transmutation
- genetic tailoring able to create some types of superhuman powers

- advanced weaponry such as powerful blasters, powered armor, and the like
- picotechnological devices for various applications
- weather control technology for terrestrial planets

As a general rule of thumb, many of the most advanced devices in the Empire can be roughly one-tenth the size and/or up to five times as durable as comparative devices on modern Earth.

The more basic technologies generally available throughout the core dimensions of the Empire, and often beyond that, include:

- medium-speed FTL drives for starships
- cold fusion power generation
- genetic tailoring that allows subjects to determine the basics of a child's appearance (hair and eye color, height, and so on); wealthier subjects can also afford to make their children smarter, stronger, more dexterous, and the like
- nanotechnological devices for various applications

As a general rule of thumb, many of the daily devices in the Empire can be roughly one-seventh the size and/or up to three times as durable as comparative devices on modern Earth.

IMPERIAL TECHNOLOGY LEVELS

The Ministry of Science and Technology ranks the technological advancement of a society according to a 21-point scale. At the bottom level is -10, representing the most primitive stone and bone tools prepared by prehistoric sentients. At the top is 10, representing the most advanced technology known to the Empire (theoretical advancements which do not yet actually exist aren't considered in this scale).

The technology level 1 — representing roughly what the United States had in the 1970s — is generally Istvatha V'han's acceptable "minimum" for any of her subjects. Any species or civilization she conquers which isn't yet at that level will be raised to Level 1 as soon as practical. How long that takes depends on how far there is to go, and how disruptive the changes will be. A Bronze Age society might be raised at the rate of 1-2 technology levels per decade, whereas one with nineteenth century or early twentieth century technology might be raised to Level 1 immediately.

If a society's already at Level 1 or higher, the Empress has to decide how far to "upgrade" it, and how quickly. (Fortunately, advanced societies can more easily deal with the social shocks of rapid technological improvements than primitive ones.) V'ha and the core dimensions of her Empire tend to be at 10, or close to it; beyond the core she usually prefers to limit her subjects to Level 7-8, generally (though inevitably some types of higher technology trickle out to the peripheries of the Empire quicker than others). In theory the plan is that some day nearly all the Empire will be at Level 10; it's just a question of allocating resources, dealing with the consequences, and making sure her base of power remains strong enough to repel all threats.

DOMAINS OF EMPIRE

Chapter Four describes many dimensions that Istvatha V'han doesn't control. Here are descriptions of just a few of the hundred million realities that comprise her Empire. These are all Asiatic planes.

Broadly speaking, Istvatha V'han divides her Empire into four "spheres":

- *core imperial dimensions*, which she controls entirely (many of these are "close" to V'ha, hence the name);
- *first sphere dimensions*, of which she controls 75-99%;
- *second sphere dimensions*, of which she controls 50-74%; and
- *third sphere dimensions*, of which she controls less than 50%.

Approximately 62% of the Empire consists of core and first sphere dimensions. In all first, second, and third sphere realities, the Imperial Legions are fighting hard to bring the rest of the dimension under imperial control. There are few things Istvatha V'han likes less than a dimension she only partly rules.

NAMING DIMENSIONS

When one rules a hundred million dimensions, naming them can become something of a problem... and it gets even worse when one jumps backward and forward in time so that the two thousandth dimension that became part of the Empire (as the Empress perceives things subjectively) was actually conquered before the thousandth dimension was (as her subjects perceive things objectively). The Ministry of History has established an elaborate set of procedures for naming dimensions, which by and large boil down to the following:

1. Each dimension is assigned a code number indicating the order in which it was conquered according to the Ministry's objective perception. These numbers are rarely used outside of official records, though.
2. If the inhabitants of the dimension are sufficiently unified and knowledgeable to have given their dimension a name, the Empire usually adopts that name (assuming a V'hanian can speak it). If only some of the inhabitants are

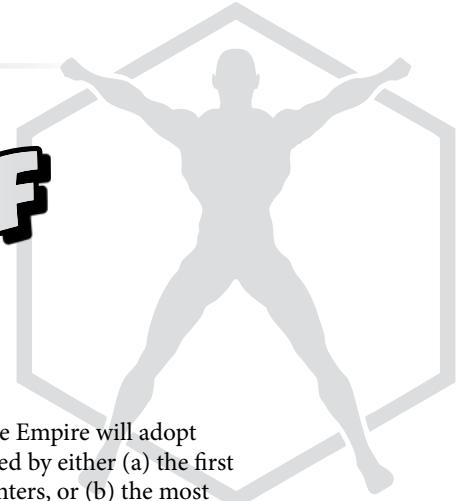
"dimensionally aware," the Empire will adopt the dimensional name used by either (a) the first such civilization it encounters, or (b) the most important or powerful civilization it encounters.

3. Keystone dimensions (see page 99) are identified by both name and number; the number indicates the order in which the dimension was first discovered by V'hanian scouts (which usually corresponds roughly to the order the dimensions were conquered in). Thus, V'ha-1 is Istvatha V'han's native plane; Earth-1346 is the Champions Universe Earth, Lungorin-73 is the seventy-third version of Lungorin catalogued by imperial personnel.
4. If the dimension is unique and the inhabitants have no name for it, the Ministry of History usually names it after the first named planet discovered there, or the most important/prominent planet there. In written communication, a person referring to the dimension rather than the planet indicates this with a (D) after the name (for example, Earth(D) if Earth's dimension were unique); in spoken communication whether one's talking about the dimension or the planet has to be made clear in context.
5. If none of the above applies, Ministry computers will make up a unique name for the dimension.

ALTETHRYA

A core dimension of the Empire that's relatively "close" to V'ha as imperial personnel measure these things, Altethrya was the twelfth dimension the Empress conquered. More importantly from the perspective of imperial history, it was the first one she conquered that had substantial magic.

As compared to V'ha's or Earth's dimensions (which are both three times as large), Altethrya's natural laws are about 50% physical, 50% magical. Among most species native to the dimension, knowledge of science and spellcraft grew hand in hand so that there's no real distinction between them in most peoples' minds. A Human from Champions Universe Earth would have a hard time determining where one begins and the other ends.



The dominant species of Altethrya, the Munahr, are maroon-skinned humanoids who have a sort of “blocky” look compared to Humans because their bones and muscles are much heavier (the average Munahr has STR 15, rather than STR 5-10 as for Humans). Prior to Istvatha V’han’s invasion they controlled a space empire spanning about a third of the dimension. Initially they resisted her as hard as they could, but they couldn’t stand up to her constant stream of reinforcements and supplies. After she defeated them the rest of the dimension fell quickly. Despite the usual initial discontent and minor flarings of rebellion, in time the Altethryans accepted their lot. They’ve gone on to become loyal imperial subjects, and their quality of life has risen accordingly. Technological Analysis and Mystic Affairs continue to study Altethryan mystico-mechanics extensively but have made few discoveries worth using in most of the Empire; Altethryan technology simply doesn’t work in less magic-rich dimensions.

BALGARABA

Not every dimension is a success story. Some exist for a time, then flare and die, or are destroyed in some multiversal catastrophe. Balgaraba is one such dimension. Istvatha V’han “conquered” it over 150 years ago, but given that almost nothing lives there, the conquest was more like moving into an empty house.

Balgaraba has reached the end of its entropic life and has nearly decayed into nothingness; in another few thousand years, at most, it will be gone. Its stars have almost all burned out; the few planets that haven’t collapsed into fields of rubble are simply large rocks hanging in the vast cold blackness of a space unlit by suns. Almost nothing moves; even gravity, momentum, and inertia seem weak, tired out, moribund.

Since it’s not really a fit place for anyone to live, the Empire found another use for Balgaraba: as a dimensional junkyard. It uses Balgaraba as a vast receptacle for duodecillions and duodecillions of tons of imperial waste. A few imperial subjects have found a way to make a living scavenging through the scrap for potentially usable/repairable bits and pieces, but the vast majority of what’s tossed into Balgaraba is of no use to anyone. Imperial scientists wonder what will happen to the trash (and any other matter there) when Balgaraba finally “dies” and vanishes.

BOTANOWORLD

Nearly all of the dimensions Istvatha V’han rules are inhabited by physical beings, and nearly all of them that are sentient are descended from some form of animal or animal-like creature (much as Humans evolved from apes). Botanoworld (a popular nickname used by imperial subjects) is a definite exception.

In Botanoworld, a first sphere dimension that’s about one-fifth the size of Earth’s reality, animals

larger than great cats haven’t evolved on any world V’hanian personnel have discovered, and they’re never very numerous. Instead the dominant lifeforms are all botanical. Many of them would seem like “ordinary” plants to Humans (sessile living things that create their own “food” from soil, water, and sunlight), though their sentience would come as a surprise (assuming Humans could even understand their speech). But others are wholly alien — plants that have evolved the ability to move, even fly. None of them are exactly “plant-men” in the sense used in some Human fiction, but across the dimension planet after planet has seen sentient plant species evolve and create civilization. All the civilizations have one thing in common: a deathly fear of fire. Starting a fire is a capital offense in many of them; using fire as a weapon in war is the equivalent of launching a nuclear bomb. As a result, Botanoworld’s technology has evolved in very different ways from that of most dimensions; it’s much more “organic” and doesn’t “mix” well with other dimensions’ technology.

Botanoworld has one significant advantage for Istvatha V’han: its version of Yggdrasil (page 142) is particularly large and “rich” in certain resources... and it’s very, very easy for V’han or her people to reach via Botanoworld. They still haven’t found a really good way to exploit it, since sentient animals have difficulty remaining sane and alive in a dimension manifested by sentient plants, but its promise is so great they keep trying.

CORYPHALON

A dimension roughly the size of Earth’s plane, and similar to it in nature, Coryphalon exists on the current frontier of the V’hanian Empire. Technically speaking it qualifies as a first sphere dimension, since when she invaded a few decades ago V’han went in fast and hard and overwhelmed the often warlike inhabitants (most of whom possessed highly advanced technology and were “dimensionally aware” prior to her attack). However, in some respects Coryphalon might best be described as “pacified” rather than “conquered.” All the inhabitants remember what life was like before the V’hanian Empire. While the downtrodden, oppressed, and poor are quite happy with the current state of affairs, the more prosperous and those who were in power generally are not.

In the past year alone, two major and four minor rebellions have flared in various parts of Coryphalon. The major ones center in the Andusha and Skyflare galaxies, but both have spread beyond that. With a fleet of vehicles cobbled together from dozens of species the rebels face massive logistical problems in addition to the threat of V’han, but they seem determined to win their freedom or die trying.

The Imperial Legions maintains a strong presence in Coryphalon, including the fortress planets Tuvald III and Wxtr’aa II, and is doing its best to stamp out the rebellions. Given the extent of the crisis, the Empress has sent one of her best military men, D-Admiral Nolos vaan Dereth, to take charge

of the Legions there and resolve the situation. A hard-bitten man not given to philosophizing, D-Admiral Vaan Dereth is ramping up the size of his forces and repositioning them for some major assaults that he expects will break the backs of the rebellions. But it may be that only time and dimension-wide demonstrations of the benefits of belonging to the Empire will quell the fierce Coryphalones spirit.

Given its size and nature, some of V'han's dimensional scientists have speculated that it might be another keystone dimension (see page 99). However, despite extensive searching by imperial scouts, no alternate Coryphalons have been located so far.

THE EMANATIONS OF VYRON

While most of the dimensions in the V'hanian Empire are more or less "normal" as V'hanians (or Humans) would define the term, more than a few are decidedly odd. The Emanations of Vyron definitely falls into the latter category; in many ways it's an object lesson for the Empress and her chief enemies.

The Vyron from whom the dimension takes its name is a powerful supermage... or was, uncounted millennia ago. After he came into the fullness of his power, he aspired to be what V'han, Tyrannon, and Skarn are: a ruler of dimensions. Like them, he first started with his own dimension, whose name in his language (or any other) has been lost to history. After he has brought all its peoples under his sway, in a fit of hubris he decided to establish his power over them permanently by making them all "aspects" of himself. No thing would exist, no person would live, but that he willed it so, and all would be as he wished it to be. To achieve this aim he cast a great spell — the greatest ever seen in that plane of existence, and perhaps in any plane of existence.

The spell worked... but not as he'd intended. In his pride and folly he'd underestimated his understanding of reality-altering magics that worked on such a vast and fundamental scale. He achieved his aim in part, but other parts of the spell did not work as intended. The dimension became nothing but a part of him, and he nothing but a part of it, creating an endless mystic cycle where each was dependent on the other. In the end he had control over the dimension and its people, but it had opened up his mind to itself in ways that drove him catatonically insane.

When V'hanian scouts found the dimension decades ago, the mage Vyron had grown to nearly the size of a planet from absorbing dimensional energies. He floated, curled into a fetal ball, at the dimension's very center, with all its galaxies orbiting around him in their great cosmic dance. The living beings of the dimension, all "linked" together at a sort of subliminal level through and because of him, worshipped him as a god. But they could not tell if he really heard their prayers. At

times strange things would occur at random — perhaps in response to a prayer, perhaps because one of Vyron's random thoughts reached enough lucidity to make it so, or maybe for no reason at all. Some of the changes were disastrous, shattering entire worlds or displacing entire species; others immensely beneficial.

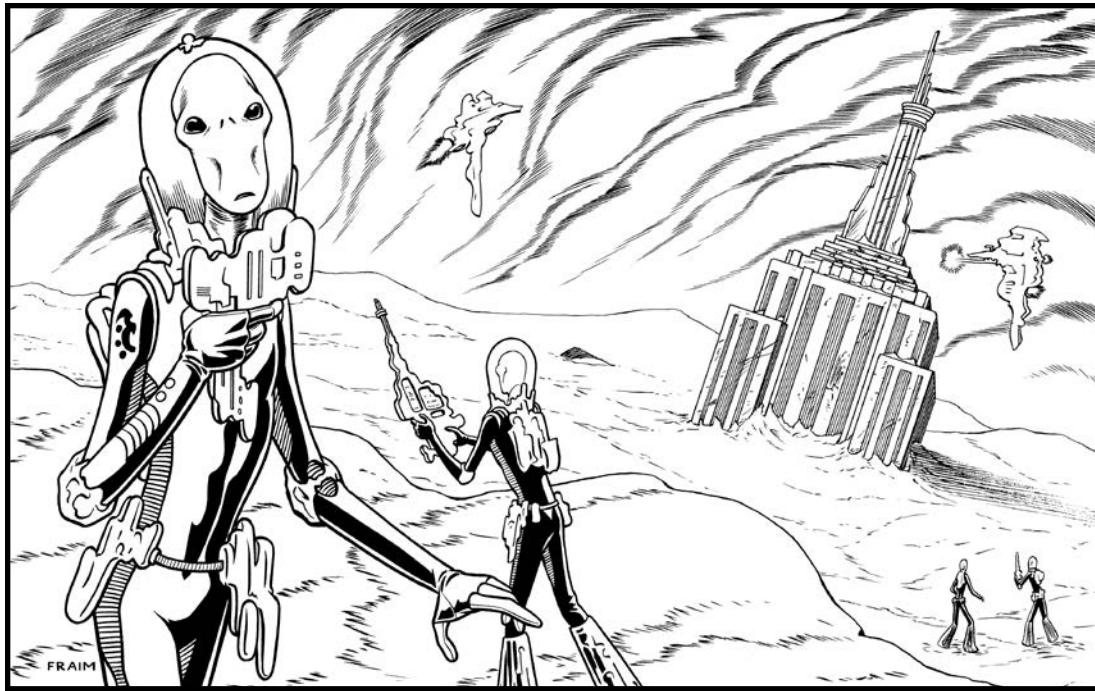
It didn't take long for the Imperial Legions to conquer the Emanations of Vyron (as V'han's mages dubbed the dimension). Its people had never fought since Vyron's spell "linked" them, so they had no real hope of resistance other than Vyron himself. And the god-mage did nothing, so perhaps it was his will that the burden of leadership be turned over to one who'd succeeded where he had failed. Since then most of the inhabitants of the Emanations have become imperial bureaucrats and officials; they work together with phenomenal efficiency. But they hate to leave their home dimension, for doing so cuts them off from the dimension-wide "link" until they return. The Empress has assigned two of her mystics to "keep watch" on Vyron at all times, for he remains too much of an unknown quantity for her comfort.

HADLA DORANA

Another of the more unusual dimensions in the Empire is Hadla Dorana, which was conquered about 135 years ago. When ISS scouts first entered it, they found a plane about the size of the Milky Way Galaxy. Their sensors registered extensive life, yet they couldn't find a single inhabited planet or sign of civilization.

It took several years of exploration, study, and analysis, but they finally realized that the life-forms of Hadla Dorana were the planets themselves! Its worlds are all sentient beings — gargantuan entities moving only at the whim of gravity and inertia. They're unable to speak but can communicate with each other (and some humanoids) through what imperial mentalists call "geotelepathy." They have the ability to sense each other across the intragalactic gulfs, and as a result friendships and rivalries have arisen over the eons. They can send gifts (such as crystals and gems) to one another by gently "shooting" them to another planet via volcanic action; they can attack one another the same way.

Hadla Dorana has relatively little to offer the Empire, since the Empress has no intention of slaughtering these unique beings simply to obtain their mineral resources. Instead the dimension has become something of a tourist destination. Some of the world genuinely enjoy being visited by "tiny moving thinking things" (as they put it) and often get involved in extensive philosophical discussions with humanoids. Sometimes the conversations bog down for lack of a common frame of reference, but some concepts are eternal. A few Doranan worlds have expressed an interest in seeing other dimensions, but the Empress has not yet seen fit to devote the resources necessary to move an entire world through a D-Portal.



MARSWORLD

“Marsworld” is a slang term for one of the alternate Earth dimensions Istvatha V’han has conquered — Earth-1218, by imperial reckoning. In this reality time seems to run more quickly than in most alternate Earths, for it’s thousands of years later than 2011 — V’hanian scientists approximate the date to 6346 AD. Human civilization long ago collapsed; as near as ISS scouts can determine, the Human species went extinct roughly five thousand years ago. But another has arisen to take its place.

On the fourth world from Sol — Mars — sentient life evolved at about the same time as on Earth, but progressed up the ladder of civilization more slowly. Long before it had the ability to look closely at other planets, Humanity was gone, leaving only the remnants of its cities and other artifacts. And long before Martian explorers were actually able to visit Earth and learn more about it first-hand, Humanity’s home had assumed a place in its fiction and folklore not only as a potential source of danger, but a possible site for colonization or source of strange, ancient wonders. In short, Earth became to them what Mars is to modern-day Humans in the Champions Universe Earth.

When the Imperial Legions arrived, the Martians were just beginning to test their earliest faster-than-light drives. Lacking any real means to fight back, they quickly fell before the V’hanian military machine, which went on to conquer the entire dimension. The Martians have since become loyal subjects of the Empire; the last Martian who was alive in pre-imperial times died nearly half a century ago.

The Martians of Marsworld are tall, thin, reddish-skinned beings with angular features. Their body chemistry is based more on nitrogen than on oxygen and water. They have a strange, acrid odor to many other species, but their highly-evolved senses of smell causes them to label many other

species as “bland.” As a species they seem to have a strong streak of curiosity; Martians often join the ISS or become civilian explorers. They also have a higher than usual percentage of psionics among the population.

NARGAROTH

Nargaroth is a small dimension that Istvatha V’han conquered nearly a century ago... and she’s been wondering if it’s worth the trouble ever since.

In Nargaroth, magic is a much more common and potent force than in most Asiatic dimensions. In fact it’s so strong that it’s not entirely controllable, even by the most powerful mystics. At unpredictable intervals, in unpredictable locations, an arcane natural phenomenon known as a “manastorm” occurs. Manastorms typically manifest as gigantic, swirling fields of colored light and mist. They’re not in any way physical; they can pass through solid objects as easily as through air or space. They move at unpredictable speeds in unpredictable directions, and where they pass, reality changes. Entire species might be wiped out, though it’s more likely they’ll change into something different. Worlds are remade or repositioned, physical things change, the very laws of physics might turn topsy-turvy.

When the Imperial Legions first invaded, all went well, though the high number of mystics made the Nargarothians much harder to fight than the average dimensional population. But then the Empire’s soldiers experienced their first manastorm, and their offensive ground to a screeching halt. It took years for the Legions’ scientists to find a way to protect the Empress’s soldiers against manastorms. They did this primarily by establishing “Stasis Fortresses” — facilities that are immune to manastorms — and by providing D-Soldiers in the field with short-term force-fields that incorporate the same technology. Thus, when a manastorm

occurs, troops in the field can protect themselves long enough to retreat to a safe area.

Those inventions made the conquest of Nargaroth possible, but the Empress still isn't sure exactly what to do with it. Establishing large-scale mining or trading operations is difficult when reality around you can change in an instant! For now she's leaving it as an open playing field for adventurous explorers, prospectors, and traders (all of whom have to apply for a permit to go there, and sign a waiver), but if they ever uncover anything really valuable she'll find a way to turn it to the Empire's advantage somehow.

NOCTARIS

Like Altethrya, the dimension of Nocutaris was one of Istvatha V'han's earliest conquests. Lying "close" to V'ha (multiversally speaking), it was the twenty-fifth plane to fall before the Empress's inexorable march. It's since become one of the most important realms of the Empire because of one unusual property: it has a remarkably high percentage of terrestrial planets compared to the "average" V'ha- or Earth-like dimension (and more of them than usual never developed native sentient life). In the early years of the Empire it attracted a great deal of colonization and settlement; many planets went from being devoid of sentient life to heavily settled in a matter of decades.

Eventually the Empress decided there was a better use for Nocutaris. She decreed laws that stemmed most forms of immigration and encouraged a specific industry: agriculture. She knew that the teeming masses of her growing Empire needed food and lots of it, so she decided to devote as much of Nocutaris as possible to food production. Her plan worked superbly; Nocutaris is now widely known as "the breadbasket of the Empire."

However, Nocutaris also represents something of an Achilles's heel for V'han. Also unlike most similar dimensions, Nocutaris is relatively difficult for dimensional travelers to reach. Neither the Empress nor her scientists have ever figured out why this is, though some theorize that whatever causes this phenomenon also gives rise to the large number of terrestrial worlds. Since establishing and maintaining portals into Nocutaris is difficult, most of the ones that exist are primarily used to export foodstuffs... and they could relatively easily be cut off, inflicting significant hardship on the Empire. To prevent this, the Empress has strongly fortified every Nocutaris D-Portal and maintains a much stronger military presence in the dimension itself than in almost any other core dimension.

STALOSIA

Stalosia has the distinction of being the part of the Empire that the Imperial Legions had the most difficulty conquering. This is because it reverses the usual "pattern of existence" found in most dimensions. In a typical dimension, material objects (planets, for example) sometimes inhabited by living beings orbit (or are otherwise "connected

with") sources of energy (such as stars). Not so Stalosia. In this bizarre plane, there are no stars or other such energy sources; what little matter exists is usually in a form that V'hanians or Humans would call "crystalline." The lifeforms are even stranger. Most of them are beings made of light/heat who essentially provide all their own energy (and energy for things around them). They live "inside" some of the crystalline structures, though they can travel freely through space under their own power. Additionally, there seem to be some species made not of light but of shadow. They're inimical to the light-beings and used to war with them constantly. Since the V'hanian conquest the Empire has largely exterminated them because they refused to obey orders to stop fighting the light-beings, but some rebellious pockets of them exist here and there.

Fighting nigh-immaterial energy beings was a new experience for the Imperial Legions, who had to invent new weapons that would affect them and devise new strategies for dealing with an enemy who was even more mobile than a D-Soldier. It took two decades and trillions of imperial credits, but V'han finally defeated Stalosia and made it a part of the Empire. Since then the Stalosians have largely kept to themselves, though some find the thought of exploring other dimensions or taking specialized, high-paying jobs among the "fleshly ones" irresistible.

ÜBERMENSCHENWELT

Übermenschewelt is another of the many "alternate Earth" dimensions the Empire's conquered over the centuries. This plane diverges from Champions Universe Earth during World War II. In Übermenschewelt, der Sturmvogel, Earth's first true superhuman, revolts against Adolf Hitler in 1943. After killing the Führer he takes Hitler's place as leader of Germany, though he definitely leads from the front as much as from the staff room. With Sturmvogel in the lead, Germany's legions of superhumans helped the Wehrmacht win the war. After crushing the Soviet Union, Germany's military turned its attention to Western Europe, completing the conquest of Britain by the end of 1945.

Next it was America's turn. With superhumans manifesting in Germany at an unprecedented rate, the United States simply couldn't keep up. It fought long and hard, but in 1948 surrendered unconditionally to spare the civilian population. By 1953 the rest of the world had either been taken over by Germany or was in the orbit of the Third Reich.

In the fifty years between then and the V'hanian conquest, Germany's hold over the world only increased. Jews and other "undesireables" were either exterminated on a vast scale, or confined to parts of the world where Germans could control them without having to interact with them any more than necessary. German became the world's official language; dozens that were widely spoke in the Forties and Fifties were largely forgotten. Native-born Germans were assured of good,



high-paying jobs, while everyone else was a second class citizen. Berlin was the glittering capital of the world, while every major non-German city seemed run-down and grimy by comparison.

Germany was just planning to extend its empire to the planets, and eventually the stars, when Istvatha V'han invaded. As powerful as the Third Reich was, it wasn't nearly strong enough to withstand the Empire's attack. That Earth, and eventually all of its dimension, fell to the Imperial Legions.

Since then there's been significant upheaval on Übermenschewelt Earth. Germany still rules the world, either directly or effectively; the Empire hasn't changed that. What it has changed is German policies regarding other races and nations. The Empress insists that everyone be treated equally and that segregationist and genocidal programs against certain races end immediately. Übermenschewelt Germany has complied with poor grace; mutterings of discontent are often heard in the streets (but never publicly rise to the level of sedition). The rest of the world is cautiously optimistic, eager for a return to freedom but still fearful of Germany lest this new ruler from another dimension abandon them somehow.

V'HA

V'ha-1, Istvatha V'han's native dimension, is the glittering heart of the V'hanian Empire. Its inhabitants, particularly the natives of the planet V'ha, are the Empress's favorite subjects and enjoy the highest standard of living in the Empire (including universal access to the most advanced technology made available to civilians). Nearly all of them work for the imperial government in some respect (usually for very good pay), or have jobs supporting those who do. It's the dream of many an imperial subject to get to live in V'ha-1 someday — the

Empress strictly controls immigration to prevent overcrowding and a worsening of general living conditions.

As a dimension, V'ha is similar to Champions Universe Earth's dimension in most respects (size, proportion of planets that give rise to native sentient life, physical laws, and so on), though its galaxies seem to have a higher percentage of Type O and B (blue and blue-white) stars. Thanks to the Empress's power and influence, every sentient species is dimensionally aware, and interstellar/intergalactic travel are as common as airplane travel is on modern-day Earth. To Human visitors the whole dimension would seem like a science fiction paradise, where a happy populace works hard at meaningful jobs and has no real cares or social problems to worry about thanks to high technology.

The crown jewel of V'ha-1 is, of course, the planet V'ha itself, the site of the Palace Imperial and the seat of the Empire (see page 159). Everything V'ha-1 is, the planet V'ha is even more. Every city is clean and productive, every natural area is achingly beautiful, every resident is content with his lot in life if not deliriously happy.

While ISF officers and D-Soldiers aren't obviously standing around anywhere in V'ha-1, the dimension as a whole is highly secure — the Empress wouldn't have it any other way. Powerful security robots remain in hiding until activated by some emergency, superhuman ISF officers mingle with the population undercover, and at least one fortress planets manned by some of the Legions' best can be found in every star sector. On the surface V'ha-1 may look like a soft, sometimes even decadent, dimension that would be easy pickings (especially for a powerful, mobile strike force of superheroes)... but in fact it's armed to the teeth and quite ready to defend itself.

THE MARCH OF CONQUEST

Although she already rules a hundred million dimensions, Istvatha V'han is always eager to expand the size of her Empire. But despite her power and vast resources, conquering an entire dimension is no easy matter. It's not something that can be done on a whim; it requires careful planning, preparation, and execution.

CHOOSING HER TARGETS

Before she can even think about launching another campaign of conquest, the Empress has to decide which dimension to target. She makes these decisions with the help of advisors from the Imperial Legions, the ISS, the Ministry of Diplomatic Affairs, and other imperial agencies. Some of the factors she considers include:

- how easy or difficult it will be to invade and conquer the dimension (including logistical matters);
- what resources the dimension possesses (raw materials, species with useful abilities and/or superhumans, inhabitable planets, advanced technology, and so on);
- the strategic benefits and drawbacks of controlling this dimension in light of her ongoing conflicts with Tyrannon, Skarn, and other enemies (and of launching a new military campaign in that dimension at this time); and
- how easy or difficult the dimension will be to pacify and integrate once conquered.

STAGE ALPHA: PREPARATION

Before V'han can launch an invasion, she has to prepare for such an extensive undertaking. Several potential problems have to be addressed.

First, she has to make sure she has sufficient military personnel and equipment available to conduct the campaign. Although the Imperial Legions is enormous, it also has enormous demands on its resources. Some D-Soldiers are already fighting in ongoing campaigns; others quell rebellions, stand guard in dangerous areas, and perform thousands of other crucial duties.

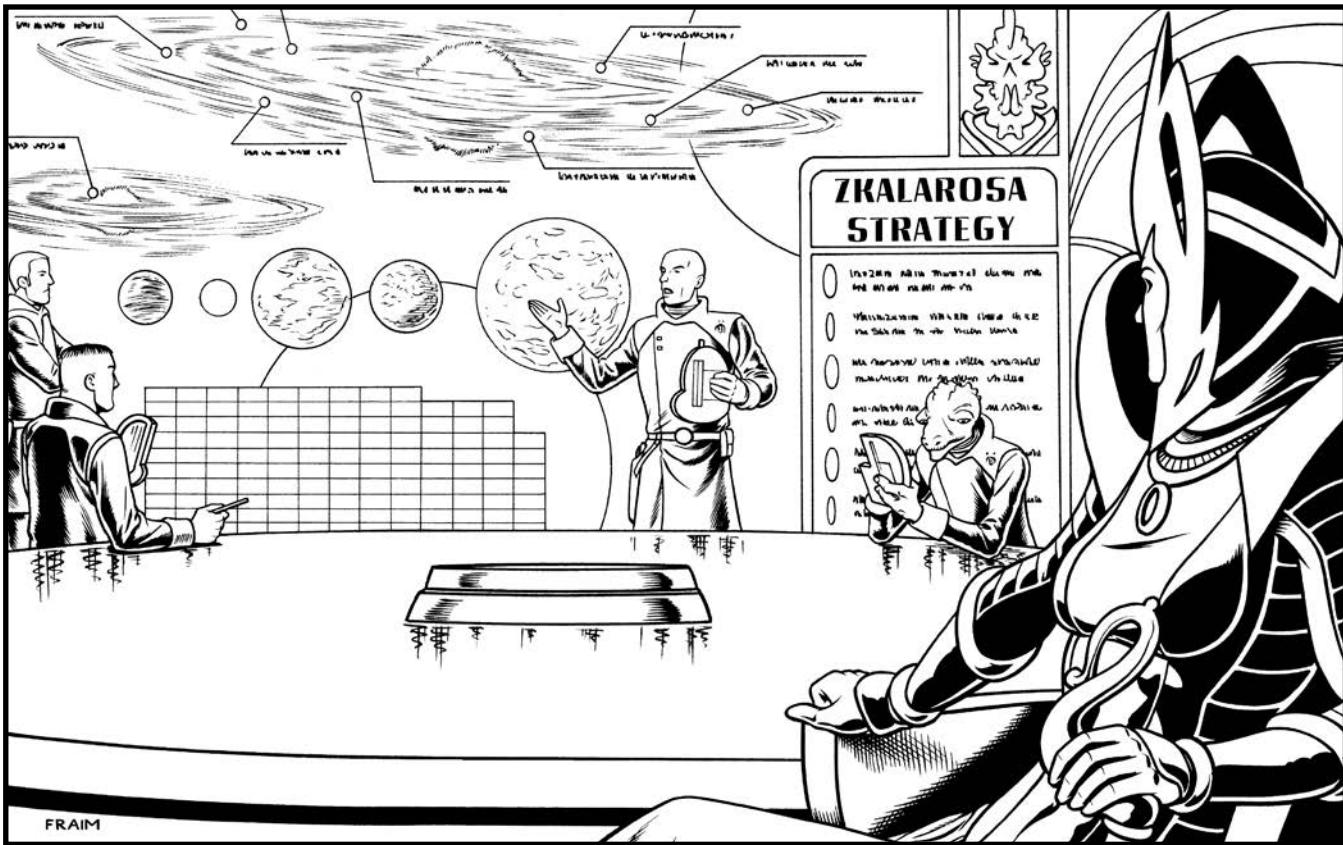
V'han can't simply take millions (if not billions) of D-Soldiers and their equipment away from their current assignments and task them with a new campaign that may tie them up for years; she has to make sure doing so doesn't leave her vulnerable in some way.

Second, she must consider how her struggles against Tyrannon and Skarn are currently progressing. To some extent the V'hanian Empire is always engaged in "trench warfare" against the Conqueror and the Shaper, with each side holding the line in "front" dimensions to prevent a wholesale attack by the others. None of them dare show any sort of weakness or leave any sort of gap in their "defensive lines," or someone will take advantage of it. It's not worth conquering one dimension if she loses two others due to enemy attack because she pulled so many D-Soldiers off defensive duty.

Third, she has to think about logistics: how will she get her troops to the target dimension, and how will she keep them supplied after they arrive (particularly after they expand their zone of control beyond the immediate location of the D-Portal(s))? "An army marches on its stomach," as the Human general Napoleon observed, and Istvatha V'han has certainly found this to be true. The surest way to victory, in her experience, is to make sure her troops in the field are well-fed, well-supplied, and well-reinforced when necessary. She plans to make that happen from the beginning, rather than counting on providence or the spoils of war to keep her Legions going.

Fourth, she must take political conditions within the Empire into account. Her word may be law, but she's not such a fool as to think there are no other influences over her subjects. There are political and bureaucratic currents through which she must swim, and she wants them to propel her in the direction she wishes to go rather than having to struggle against the tide. If the major movers and shakers in her government and among her people don't seem to favor the launching of another campaign, or have good reasons for preferring some other target than the one she's considering, she gives serious consideration to their opinions... and has more than once changed her own because of them.





5

STAGE BETA: RECONNAISSANCE

While Stage Alpha is underway, the Imperial Legions also commences Stage Beta: reconnaissance of the target dimension. The earliest reconnaissance of a dimension by the ISS usually takes place stealthfully to map out major landmarks and civilizations, and occurs on discovery of the dimension even if there's no military interest yet. Stage Beta reconnaissance is much more thorough and purposeful.

The first step sends scouts in cloaking field-equipped starships to fan out across the dimension. They carefully note the locations of major planets, the nature and strength of various military forces and assets, astronomical phenomena that advancing troops should be aware of, and a thousand other facts of use to general and footsoldier alike. Depending on the size of the dimension and how many scouts the High Command can assign to this duty, this step may take months or even years.

The second step brings the IIC into the picture. Once the major species have been identified and studied, IIC infiltrators worm their way into their civilizations to gather on-the-ground intelligence (so to speak). They're usually genetically altered so that it's almost impossible for science less advanced than the Empire's to determine they're not who they claim to be. Again, this step may take a very long time depending on how concerned the Legions is about possible opposition and interested in collecting data about it.

STAGE GAMMA: WEAKENING

Once the Empress is satisfied that her personnel have collected as much data as the Legions needs, the High Command orders the commencement of Stage Gamma: covert (and sometimes not so covert) operations to weaken the foe and make the Imperial Legions' job easier. In short, during Stage Gamma the target is "softened up." Depending on the nature of the dimension, the expected major elements of opposition, and other factors, Stage Gamma can include any or all of the following:

- subverting corruptible elements. This may include hiring (or otherwise recruiting) criminals or villains to wreak havoc throughout society. (Once an invasion succeeds, any such cat's-paws are executed as unreliable and treacherous.) However, it can also be as prosaic as blackmailing important figures into making decisions that will benefit the Empire's military campaign (for example, getting a corrupt politician to sway his people not to join an anti-V'hanian coalition).
- stirring up trouble. Two potential adversaries who hate one another might be tricked into going to war, so that by the time the Empire invades, they're exhausted from their own struggle and much less likely to join forces against the Legions. As an added layer of deception, sometimes the Empire secretly causes some sort of trouble or disaster, then swoops in to save the victims as a way of showing the benefits of becoming part of the Empire.

- secretly recruiting helpers. Given the Empire's wealth and power, it can influence easily-swayed elements within a dimension. Promises of monetary rewards, control of a desired star system, or many other things can tempt a person or an entire species into V'han's camp. For example, as discussed below and on page 262 of *Champions Beyond*, one part of Stage Gamma for the Empire's next attack on Earth has been to recruit the Gadroon with a combination carrot-and-stick approach to cause trouble, thus distracting and weakening Human superheroes.
- openly recruiting helpers. V'han has no particular love of violence; if she can accomplish her goal of conquest peacefully she's glad to do so. This usually involves one or both of two approaches. First, she can send in high-ranking legates from the Ministry of Diplomatic Affairs with a simple message: the V'hanian Empire is great and strong. Join us and you will have all the benefits of being an imperial subject (these are explained in great detail); refuse and you will be destroyed. More than a few species have seen the wisdom of surrendering and swearing fealty to Istvatha V'han. Second, she can make outright public appeals to entire species or interstellar entities: join me and I'll spare your lives and property, wipe out poverty and inequality, give you better technology, and increase the general standard of living. Even if the elites of a society don't want to accept this offer, it's often enormously appealing to the weak, down-trodden, poor, and oppressed. This tactic has already born some fruit on Champions Universe Earth (see below).

STAGE DELTA: INVASION

When the High Command feels a target dimension has been sufficiently "softened up," it requests the Empress's permission to proceed with the invasion. Typically a dimensional invasion begins in one of several ways, each with its own benefits and drawbacks.

NEARBY BEACHHEAD

The first is the "establish a nearby forward base" method. This approach involves opening a D-Portal or -Portals near one of the dimension's primary targets — within the same star system at least, and often at a planet within a few AUs of the target. V'han used this tactic during both of her invasions of Champions Universe Earth's dimension; in 1998 she opened her first portals near Mars, while in 2007 she used Saturn as the locus. The benefits to this method are twofold. First, for reasons not clearly understood, it seems to be "easier" to open a D-Portal near a major population center — it requires less power and the portal is more stable. Second, this shortens the supply lines, since the Imperial Legions are right on top of their first major target. The drawback is that it's more likely for defenders to detect her presence and the location of the D-Portal quickly, and it's easier

for a determined strike force (such as, say, a team of Human superheroes...) to reach and attack the D-Portal itself.

DISTANT BEACHHEAD

Her second method is the opposite of the first: open the first D-Portals far away from any inhabited system. This is a little harder to do, but well within the capabilities of V'hanian science. The Legions can usually then bring through all the troops and materiel they want before heading out to attack the nearest targets, since no species is close enough to detect the dimensional intrusion. However, this procedure results in lengthy supply lines right from the start, which leaves the V'hanian military vulnerable in some respects. (On the other hand, once it captures a major planet or two it's easy to set up more D-Portals.) V'han is strongly considering this tactic for her next invasion of Champions Universe Earth's dimension.

DIMENSIONAL ENVELOPMENT

Third, at a considerable cost in power, the Empress can surround a target by opening up multiple D-Portals all around it and sending entire armies through. This "shock and awe" tactic has proven highly effective in the past, though it's very risky in that it requires tight coordination of her forces and is relatively easy to disrupt.

LEADING THE TROOPS

In most cases the Empress leaves the command of her troops in the field in the capable hands of her generals and other officers. However, in situations where she thinks it would be a good idea to improve the D-Soldiers' morale or impress the enemy, she sometimes leads the Legions into battle herself! When she does this she's equipped with a cutting-edge force-field (Resistant Protection (40 PD/40 ED/30 Mental Defense/30 Power Defense/20 Sight Group Flash Defense)) and flanked by a squad of heavily-armed bodyguards resplendent in the best powered armor the Empire can manufacture. Her "escort" also includes at least two powerful mages and two powerful psionics, and often more. The very sight of their beloved Empress sharing the field of battle with them is usually enough to inspire her D-Soldiers to fight even harder.

STAGE EPSILON: CONQUEST

Once a foothold is established in a new dimension during Stage Delta, it's usually just a matter of time before V'han conquers that plane. From this initial base her D-Soldiers spread out across the dimension, attacking in multiple directions at once to minimize the possibility of concerted resistance and strike before other civilizations learn of what happened during the first attack.

Based on how the initial attacks go, the High Command either continues with its initial strategies and plans, or adjusts them for unforeseen contingencies. At this point the Empress considers herself thoroughly committed to the conquest.

THE DIVINE TRAGEDY

It sometimes occurs to a dimension's defenders (as it may to Human superheroes) to try to enlist their gods to fight off a V'hanian invasion. Sadly for them, this will almost certainly not happen.

As discussed on page 61 of *The Mystic World*, the gods of Earth owe their existence and power to Human belief; the gods of other species are similarly dependent on their worshippers. That means that a god's supernatural powers cannot directly affect anything or anyone from beyond the Inner Planes defined by that species. This means, for example, that Earth's gods are largely helpless against Tyrannion and Skarn...

5

...and against Istvatha V'han. While she's not strictly from an

Outer Plane, she's discovered time and time again that a reality's gods don't seem to have any power over her. Whether she's sufficiently "multiversal" to "count" as being from an Outer Plane or her multiversally unique nature makes her the equivalent of an Outer Plane being, or there's some other explanation, no one can say. But the fact remains that gods' mystic powers will not bite on the Empress of a Billion Dimensions.

Of course, there are gods and god-like beings in some dimensions whose powers don't depend on sentient belief. They can fight dimensional invaders and conquerors without any such restrictions.

If necessary she'll withdraw troops from other, less crucial duties in other dimensions to assist with the attack (though except in the most extreme circumstances she will never, ever weaken her forces in the "frontline" dimensions where she struggles against Skarn and Tyrannion).

In ideal circumstances Istvatha V'han prefers for a dimensional invasion to take no more than a single imperial year, but there are so many possible complications in an undertaking of this magnitude that her loyal soldiers can't always meet that timetable. In particular, the size of the dimension and the number of galactic and/or dimensionally aware civilizations are important factors. A dimension as large and heavily inhabited as Champions Universe Earth's could easily take a decade or more to conquer (especially in light of the strong resistance imperial forces are likely to meet on many fronts).

STAGE ZETA: INTEGRATION

Once Diplomatic Affairs and/or the Imperial Legions have brought a new dimension under control of the Empire (or even such a significant portion of a dimension that Istvatha V'han is confident of retaining control of it without difficulty), the imperial bureaucratic machinery goes to work to make the new territory firmly a part of the Empire. In imperial parlance this is referred to as "integrating" or "incorporating" the dimension.

Most of the responsibility for this work falls on the Vice-Ministry for Unification (page 155), which sends legions of highly-trained administrators, sociologists, species psychologists, anthropologists, and government officials to the new dimension to make the integration process as swift and smooth as possible. The Empress wants to impress her new subjects with the benefits of being part of the Empire, so the last thing she wants is to make them think that her government's mired in red tape, delays, and favoritism. The Vice-Ministries of Technological Resources and Technological Analysis start their work as well.

However, before Unification can get to work, the Empress has to be certain that a dimension is sufficiently safe for her civilian personnel to visit. Depending on how hard-fought the conquest was, and how likely the High Command thinks it is that there'll be rebellions, the Imperial Legions may remain in a dimension in force for decades after a conquest is technically complete. The Empress prefers not to have such "peacekeepers" present in a dimension for longer than a decade at most, and preferably less, but the decision's made on a case-by-case basis.

Similarly, while in theory all new imperial subjects are treated equally, in fact there tends to be disparity of treatment based on how a given planet or civilization reacted to the invasion. Civilizations that voluntarily surrendered and requested to join the Empire tend to be treated very leniently (though if they show that a stronger hand's needed to control them, the Empress will oblige).

Civilizations that only put up a token resistance before coming to their senses or being overwhelmed also receive fairly good treatment. On the other hand, civilizations that resist to the bitter end usually find themselves experiencing a brutal occupation, since D-Soldiers don't take kindly to those who killed their comrades. The Empress strives to prevent the worst abuses, but the message is clear to any future targets of invasion: resisting the V'hanian Empire has harsh consequences.

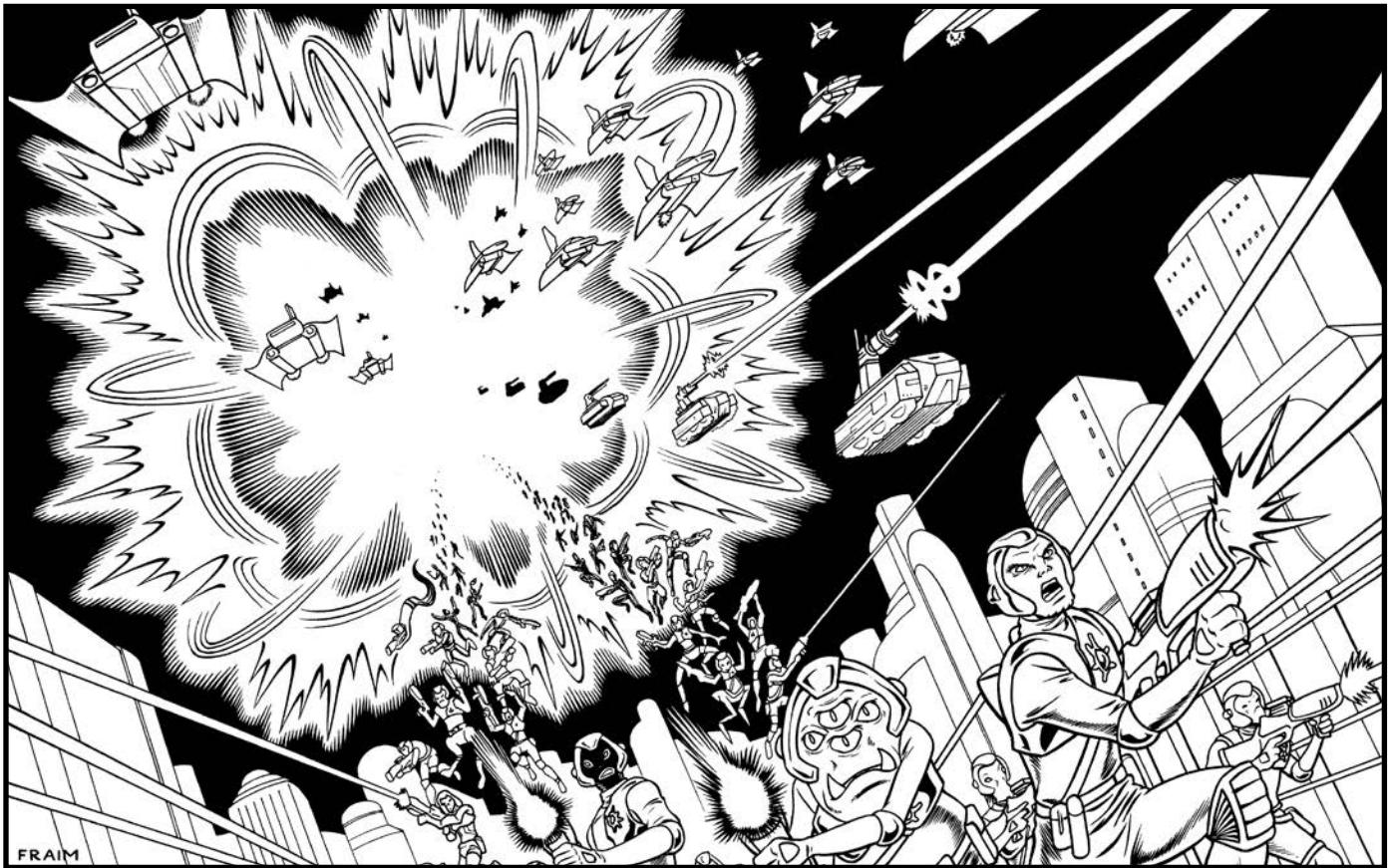
But generally the Empress prefers to win the hearts of her new subject with butter and computers rather than guns. She wants them to start experiencing the benefits of belonging to the Empire as quickly as possible, since that tends to quell dissent and cause rebellions to fizzle better than anything else. Technological Resources gets to work as soon as possible and usually raises a civilization's technology level by 1-2 (if not or more) within as little as a year (see page 158). Other improvements to the economy, food production and distribution, civil rights, and the like happen equally quickly whenever possible, though of course the situation in each dimension is unique and thus requires a unique approach.

INVADING EARTH

Naturally, what's of most concern to most Human superheroes in the Champions Universe Earth (and thus to Champions GMs) is Istvatha V'han's current plans for attempting yet another invasion of Earth's dimension. And they have good reason to be concerned.

The V'hanian Empire has so far twice tried and failed to conquer Earth-1346 (and a third planned invasion attempt was aborted due to the actions of Human superheroes; see Chapter One for more details on all of these attacks). It's rare for the Empire to fail to conquer a dimension; it's extremely rare for it to fail more than once. What's worse is that Earth-1346 is a highly valuable acquisition — it has copious natural resources, a relatively high level of magic for dimensions of its type, and a huge number of superhumans and like assets. Between her offended pride and the dimension's desireability, Istvatha V'han is *extremely* annoyed that she hasn't conquered Earth yet, and is *determined* to do so...

...but not at the cost of everything else she's achieved. Annoyed she may be, but she's no fool. If she really, really wanted to, she could sweep the political and administrative obstacles aside, reassign billions of D-Soldiers and war-robots, and simply overwhelm Earth's defenders and then proceed to conquer the rest of the dimension. Powerful and numerous Earth's superheroes may be, but when it comes right down to it there's absolutely no question she could defeat them with sheer numbers... then go on to do the same to the Star*Guard, the Progenitors, the Andromedan civilizations, and anyone else who tried to stop her. Given this she easily qualifies as the most dangerous "supervillain" known to Champions Universe Earth's heroes,



dwarfing even the threats posed by the likes of Dr. Destroyer, Mechanon, or Xarriel.

But if she did that she'd create so many problems for herself that it's not worth the sop to her wounded pride. First, the expense of such an undertaking would be so enormous that it would likely eat up the potential profits from controlling Earth-1346 for years to come. Second, it would take her just as long, if not longer, to unsnarl the administrative and political problems she'd cause for herself by wielding her power so bluntly.

Third and most importantly, moving so many military assets around would leave her Empire vulnerable. The most likely possibility is that she'd attack Earth-1346 by reassigning lots of regular-duty troops stationed throughout the Empire, and if she did that rebels and potential rebels would take it as an opportunity to revolt. What's right now a relatively placid, smooth-running Empire would be plunged into a maelstrom of internecine warfare. Once Earth-1346 was conquered she could probably crush nearly all of these rebellions easily, but given that dimension's size and complexity conquering it might take years. That would mean years of civil unrest that would inflict untold harm on quadrillions of her subjects, a thought she finds intolerable.

Alternately she could reduce the strength of her defensive troop placements on the "dimensional fronts" she maintains against Tyrannon and Skarn. Once they learned of this, the Conqueror and the Shaper, after pinching themselves to make sure they weren't dreaming (metaphorically speaking) and casting a few divination spells to make sure it wasn't all a trick, would immediately attack to exploit

this new weakness. Imperial forces, weakened by the reckless attack on Earth-1346, would likely be defeated and the Empire would face a major invasion on at least one front, and quite possibly two. Gains V'han has worked for centuries to acquire and consolidate could be taken away from her in the space of a few months or years, and she simply *will not* allow that to happen.

HER CURRENT PLANS

Therefore, as much as she might like to crush all resistance and conquer Earth-1346 in one rapid, all-powerful attack, she's proceeding to plan her next invasion of that dimension just like she would any other. As of 2011, her long-range plans call for the launching of another assault on Earth-1346 in 2016, or possibly 2017 if her underlings uncover reason to delay.

The invasion is currently in Stage Gamma (though Stage Beta also continues, since the more intelligence she has on her adversaries the better). After failing twice before, the Empress doesn't intend to fail a third time, and one way to guarantee success is to weaken and disrupt potential defenders. She's primarily focusing on the obstacle that's defeated both her previous invasions: the planet Earth and its superheroes. Some of the efforts underway include:

MANIPULATING OTHER SPECIES

As discussed on page 262 of *Champions Beyond*, V'han is using two alien species — the Gadroon and the Qularr — to distract Earth's superheroes and cause havoc on the planet. Briefly put, officials

from Diplomatic Affairs approached the Gadroon with a simple offer: join the Empire and we'll give you a new homeworld after the conquest. The unspoken second part of the offer was, of course, "refuse and we'll destroy you right now." The Gadroon accepted (though some aren't happy about it), and she then ordered them to attack the Qularr. Qularr high officials previously subverted by the IIC suggested that the Qularr could obtain the new weapons needed to fight this new foe by attacking Earth (where they could obtain lots of superhuman DNA for creating bioweapons). Furthermore, since the Gadroon were interested in Earth as well, it was incumbent upon the Qularr to take it so they couldn't have it.

This plan worked perfectly. The Gadroon and Qularr are now both on Earth, fighting Humanity and each other. Many Human superheroes and other authorities are involved in the battles, thus taking their attention away from the true threat: Istvatha V'han. If she's really lucky, her alien puppets may kill a few of them too. When she actually begins her invasion, both forces will assist her (the Gadroon according to her orders, the Qularr through indirect control).

Since the Gadroon and the Qularr aren't the only alien species interested in Earth, V'han has considered expanding this strategem. For example, she's aware of the Hzeel and their plans, and may approach them with the same "offer" she made the Gadroon. See *Champions Beyond* for more details on the Hzeel and other extraterrestrial threats she could exploit.

ENCOURAGING MAJOR SUPERHUMAN ADVERSARIES

"The enemy of my enemy is my friend," so the saying goes, and Istvatha V'han's certainly willing to follow that precept to the extent it benefits her. Earth's superhumans have plenty of enemies, and one of the best ways to weaken and distract them is to help those enemies fight them. (At the same time she has to be careful not to make any of them so powerful that they could themselves pose a threat to her when she invades.)

For example, genetically-disguised IIC agents have been assisting VIPER with various projects for some years now. They've infiltrated the organization primarily as renegade scientists, engineers, and mercenaries so they can make the snakes' weapons better, improve their anti-superhero tactics, and so forth. Among the projects they're currently working hard on are:

- tailoring a virus that targets the genes that give rise to mutant superpowers so that mutants become too sick to fight (V'han doesn't want to just kill them; she sees them as potential recruits for the Imperial Battalion);
- improving VIPER weapons that weaken super-strong, super-tough heroes; and
- Operation Snake-Eyes, designed to enhance VIPER's ability to spy on and gather information about superheroes (information that, of course, also gets channeled right to the Imperial Legions).

IIC agents are also secretly aiding (among others) the Warlord, Kinematik, the Devil's Advocates, Eurostar, and Sunburst.

ALLIES, SYMPATHIZERS, AND FIFTH COLUMNISTS

One of Istvatha V'han's most potent "weapons" in her plans to conquer Earth's dimension are certain Humans themselves. Both of her previous attacks on Earth have included her standard "pitch" to try to sway people to her side: join the Empire and life will be better for you. No one will be poor. No one will go hungry. Everyone will have a meaningful job. Everyone will be safe and secure. Social justice will prevail!

For many Humans — the poor, the disenfranchised, the oppressed, the residents of the Third World, and even those who are just plain bitter and angry about the current state of affairs — this is a potent message. To someone who has nothing and is essentially controlled by others (politicians, corporations, the wealthy...), the thought of still being controlled but actually *having* things and living a better life is very, very appealing. These opinions haven't changed or disappeared... and the IIC's agents do whatever they can to encourage and support them.

The most active voice raised in Istvatha V'han's favor is the *V'hanian Unification Movement*, a loose political coalition of organizations and voters who support surrendering to V'han and petitioning to join her Empire voluntarily. It was founded in the United States and is most vocal there and in Europe, but it enjoys substantial followings in Africa, Latin America, and Asia — the regions that would benefit the most from joining the Empire. VUM partisans have yet to achieve serious political power in any nation, but the organization's voice is getting louder and it's attracting more attention every day.

Of considerably more militant bent is the *V'hanian Liberation Army*, a terrorist organization that seems to be based somewhere in central Asia or northern Africa. Disaffected members of certain other terrorist groups latched on to Istvatha V'han's promises and decided that where Humanity had failed to provide justice and prosperity for all its people on its own, perhaps an alien overlord could do better. They support V'han's eventual third invasion by sabotaging the offices of governments that would oppose her, attacking military installations, and so forth. The IIC is considering whether to support them with super-tech weaponry, but so far is against the idea for fear it would expose the Empire's involvement in what's better seen as a native organization.

SUPERHUMAN SUPPORTERS

Some members of Earth's superhuman community have also indicated their support for (or at least interest in) Istvatha V'han's proposals. As discussed on page 44, for their own personal reasons some superhumans have left Earth to join V'han's cause directly, but others who aren't willing to go so far can still espouse her cause in some way.

The pro-mutant superhuman Kinematik has stated that if Istvatha V'han is willing to turn control of Earth and Humanity over to him (as her "viceroy" or "governor" of the planet) and his mutant followers, he would consider supporting her cause. "Given the successes she's achieved, she's most likely a mutant herself, and should aid the causes of mutants everywhere," according to one of his Internet postings.

Professor Paradigm believes that he (and Humanity in general) may have a lot to learn from Istvatha V'han, and would like to encourage further contact. He has no desire whatsoever to be ruled by her... but his interest in her (and her chief enemies) could be a lever with which the IIC manipulates him into unknowingly helping her.

The Futurists think that Istvatha V'han may be able to help them achieve their ultimate goal of saving Humanity from itself and creating a more enlightened society. However, their willingness to support her depends entirely on her willingness to set them in positions of power to "improve Humanity's lot" once she takes over. They don't want to be ruled, they want to do the ruling. (It's possible that quite a few other villains would support her in similar circumstances, though how long they'd tolerate taking orders from her once they were made rulers of Earth would remain to be seen.)

The supervillainess Lady Blue is on record as stating that "maybe Istvatha V'han is someone Humanity needs to set it on a better course." She's never taken any action to support V'han, and in fact fought against her troops during the 2007 invasion, but at least philosophically is intrigued by what she claims she wants to do.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT?: CONQUERING ALTERNATE EARTHS

The V'hanian Empire includes many alternate Earths similar, to greater or lesser degrees, to Champions Universe Earth (Earth-1346, in V'hanian records). The Imperial Legions has studied, and is continuing to study, its records of those conquests as a way of preparing for the third invasion of Earth... but the truth is there's only so much benefit they can obtain from doing this.

While alternate Earths are often very similar, they're never exactly alike. Some are larger or smaller than Earth-1346. Some have mildly or wildly different histories or timelines. Some have greater levels of magical energy, some less. Some have fewer superhumans, some more; in some of them the average superhuman is weaker or stronger than in Earth-1346. Major species or civilizations that are key aspects of Earth-1346 may not exist, or may exist differently, in an alternate Earth dimension; major historical figures may never have been born, or may have gone on to very different destinies.

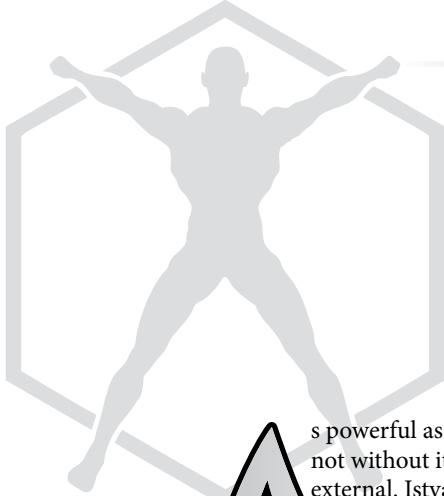
Thus, it's hard to predict how any particular invasion will go just by analyzing some other invasion. All that research can't hurt, but it doesn't necessarily help that much. For all the similarities between Earth 1346 and alternate Earths, there are just as many differences... and the Devil's in those details.

HOW THE EMPRESS DEALS WITH ALTERNATE EARTHS

When the V'hanian Empire conquers an alternate version of Champions Universe Earth, she tends to deal with certain beings or elements in specific ways. She will almost certainly do the same thing in Earth-1346, should she ever succeed in taking it over. Some of her actions include:

- she exterminates the Elder Worm.
- she eradicates DEMON and anyone and anything else associated with Qliphothic entities. Long experience has taught her that it's best to have *nothing* to do with the Qliphothic dimensions or their inhabitants.
- she destroys Takofanes. Handling the Undying Lord is one of the most difficult projects she faces during any conquest of an Earth. Similarly, she kills Archimago (if he exists) and any other mystic too powerful and/or evil to join the Imperial Battalion.
- she kills any master villain powerful enough to pose a serious threat to her (and thus most likely too powerful to be controlled); this includes Dr. Destroyer, Shadow Destroyer, Dr. Yin Wu, Mechanon, Xarriel, Valak the World-Ravager, Galaxia, and Menton. Even on those rare occasions where an alternate Earth version of one of these villains wants to ally himself with her, it's at best a short-term relationship — she makes use of him briefly (keeping a careful watch on him the entire time), then kills him when she thinks he's become too dangerous (or when he's no longer useful).
- she destroys the Malvans if she cannot conquer them. In most alternate Earths the Malvans are weaker than in Earth-1346, and thus conquerable. In other dimensions (including Malva-world; see page 135), they're so powerful they either can stop her invasion, or could if roused to the effort. Those sorts of Malvans ("greater Malvans," as imperial sociologists refer to them) possess technology far better than hers, which makes them a major threat (and potentially a very, very valuable resource). That means they have to be removed or contained somehow.
- she dismantles the Star*Guard and turns their devices over to Technology Analysis for study.
- she destroys the Progenitors. This, too, is extraordinarily difficult and requires an enormous amount of power and resources.
- to the extent that cosmic entities like the Galaxars pose a concern (and it remains unclear to her whether they're multiversally unique individuals or not), she negotiates with them or finds some other way to pacify or neutralize them. She fights and destroys them only as a last resort.
- she locates any cosmic artifacts she can (such as the Kdothri Mirror) and keeps them for study/use if they're reliable and controllable, or destroys (or hides) them if not. For example, several members of the Imperial Battalion are loyal D-Soldiers to whom she granted a Cosmic Gem. She watches them closely, since in the past subjects imbued with the power of a Gem have sometimes become uncontrollable and had to be destroyed.





ENEMIES OF EMPIRE

As powerful as it is, the V'hanian Empire is not without its enemies, both internal and external. Istvatha V'han remains as vigilant as possible, and takes all necessary precautions to protect her Empire and her subjects from all significant threats, but some enemies are too strong to simply eradicate.



TYRANNON AND SKARN

As discussed elsewhere in this book, the Empress's two main enemies are Tyrannon the Conqueror and Skarn the Shaper, fellow dimensional conquerors with whom she competes for territory and subjects. (See *Champions Villains*, Vol. 1, for detailed information on them.) Both of them rely almost entirely on magic, as opposed to her natural superpowers and technology, so their "empires" (which tend to involve "absorbing" conquered dimensions into their own rather than simply ruling them) focus as much or more on Yetziratic (and sometimes even Brialic) dimensions as on Asiatic ones. But ultimately all of them still want to rule the entire Multiverse (or as much of it as any non-cosmic entity can), which puts them on a collision course of competition.

Istvatha V'han considers both overlords' habit of "merging" other dimensions with their own (Thulkos or the Congeries, respectively) to be utterly abhorrent. She wants to rule other dimensions, not to destroy/remake them through powerful arcane rituals. To her, what they're doing is akin to bulldozing a national park to turn it into a shopping center or destroying art treasures just to get at the raw materials used to make them. It disgusts her, and she'd like nothing better than to put a stop to it. From a more practical perspective, she and her chief dimensional scientists are unsure what sort of "stress" Tyrannon's and Skarn's activities may place on the "structure" of the Multiverse. She's concerned that if too many dimensions are merged into one, the entire Multiverse might "unravel" or "shatter." That's all the more reason why the Conqueror and the Shaper must be stopped as soon as possible. (She won't hesitate to point this fact out to, say, Human superheroes who attack her, gladly painting herself as the lesser of three evils if that will direct their attentions elsewhere.)

Of the two, V'han considers Tyrannon the more dangerous opponent. He's personally more powerful, has existed longer, and has fought two major and several minor wars with her Empire. The "front line" dimensions where she maintains a watch on him (and he on her) are at best places of fragile tension, at worst examples of dimension-spanning trench warfare.

But in recent years, Skarn has been the more aggressive opponent. He has focused more intently on the sorts of dimensions Istvatha V'han wants, and unlike her doesn't have to completely "conquer" a dimension before he can begin the process of absorbing it into the Congeries (a process which, if successful, renders any further resistance to him largely moot). She's spent more time and effort reinforcing her "front line" dimensions against him than against Tyrannion, and would dearly love to find some way to distract him or redirect his efforts... or better yet, destroy him.

REBELS OF THE REALITIES

Although the vast majority of her subjects are content with her rule, or even patriotic, not everyone is so sanguine about Istvatha V'han's power over them. Here and there throughout her domain rebellions flare from time to time. Most are swiftly put down by the ISF and/or the Imperial Legions... but some survive and grow, becoming long-standing cankers. Besides the revolt in Coryphalon (see page 174), as of 2011 the Empress faces four major rebellions (and the Crusaders of the Infinite Realities; see below).

THE EXRANDAL'RIAN REVOLT

The oldest and largest of the rebellions against the Empress is the Exrandal'rian Revolt, which began nearly a decade ago in the Exrandar Galaxy in the dimension Koruba Thumasoor. The dominant aliens in that region of space were the Thrund, a porcinoid species of strong, tough humanoids led by the members of a fierce warrior culture. They fought against the V'hanian Empire tooth and nail, and after losing were subjected to a brutal military occupation designed to pacify them.

It didn't work. The Thrund patiently endured the situation for over a generation, biding their time until the Empire thought things had calmed down. Once the Empress reduced her military presence in Exrandar, the Thrund secretly laid their plans. Taking up their long-hoarded weapons they attacked en masse, slaughtering thousands of D-Soldiers in a bid for freedom. By the time the Empire learned what had happened, the Thrund had retaken control of Geratton VI (their homeworld), fortified it, then moved outward to reclaim their former empire from the V'hanians.

Unable to respond in full force due to her ongoing conflicts with Tyrannion and Skarn (not to mention other plans in the works), Istvatha V'han has settled for pouring as many troops as she can into Koruba Thumasoor. The first part of her strategy is to contain the revolt so that it doesn't spread dimension-wide. In this she's partially succeeded, though the rebellion's become large and successful enough to reclaim Exrandar and three other galaxies. The second step, which the High Command's now focused on, is to defeat the Thrund and crush the Revolt once and for all.

And the Empress won't make the same mistake again: after she defeats the Thrund this time, she'll exterminate them.

LEADERS OF THE REVOLT

One of the reasons the Exrandal'rian Revolt's succeeded to this point is the brilliance of several of its leaders. Had they wanted to they could have gone on to noteworthy careers in the Imperial Legions, but their pride, honor, and desire to live free have driven them to fight against the V'hanian enemy instead of joining it.

Besides the Revolt's high commander, General Korth Torgo (see accompanying character sheet), some of its other leaders include:

- Chroodslishru Shinwagutani, a member of the four-armed, two-headed Scruthandi species. A master of small unit tactics and unconventional warfare, Shinwagutani commands the Revolt's elite forces.
- Doreg Charld, a Thrund known for his skill as a starfleet admiral. Time and again he's found a way to win through to victory despite being outnumbered and outgunned by Legions fleets.
- Hisuda, a member of the quasi-feline Oroth Ch'tai species, who leads the Revolt's military intelligence division.
- Choopen Thurl, a Thrund who seems to excel at practically every military skill known, including strategic command.

GENERAL KORTH TORGO

Background/History: Korth Torgo was born into an aristocratic Thrund family with a history of military service going back centuries. He'd joined the Thrund Military Forces and worked his way up the chain of command to lieutenant when the V'hanian Empire invaded Koruba Thumasoor. Excited at the prospect of war but concerned about the enemy's strength, he fought the Empress's forces to the best of his ability.

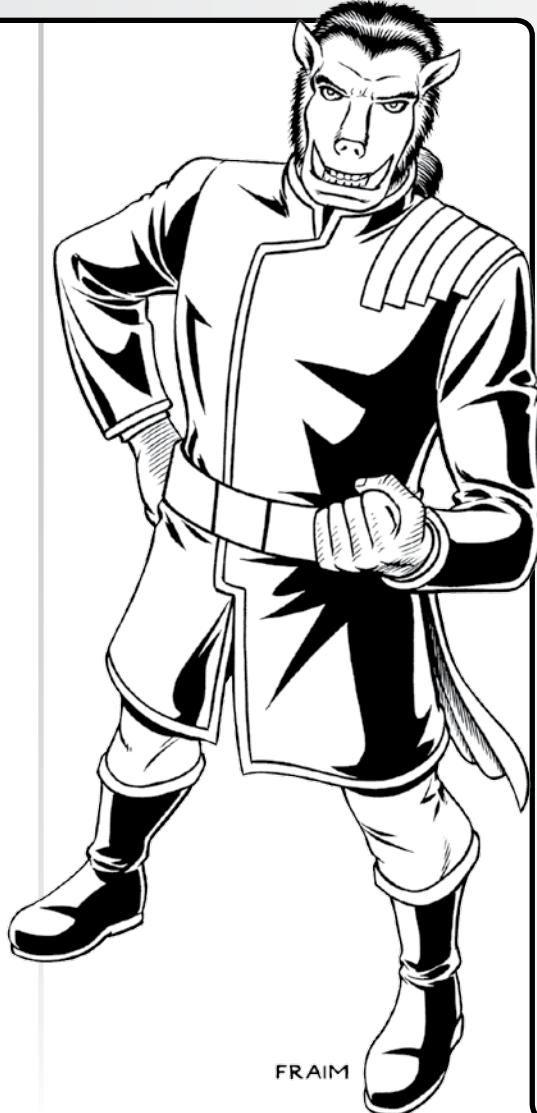
During the Battle of the Cindrian Reach, all of the higher-ranking officers aboard his starship were killed, leaving him in command. Without hesitation he swung into action, rallying his crewmen and then the rest of the fleet to strike back and defeat the V'hanians. Deeply impressed, the Thrund promoted him to General and formally approved his role as a commander.

Torgo survived the war, though the fact the Thrund were defeated nearly crushed his spirit. But rather than give in to despair, he became part of the underground planning an eventual revolt. He assisted in any way he could despite the watch put on him by the V'hanians. When the time was right he led the Thrund to throw off their chains and reclaim their freedom, and now commands their anti-V'hanian crusade as they seek allies throughout their home dimension.

GENERAL KORTH TORG

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	15	14-	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 HTH damage [2]
16	DEX	12	12-	
22	CON	12	13-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
15	EGO	5	12-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
8	OCV	25		
8	DCV	25		
3	OMCV	0		
5	DMCV	6		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
10	PD	8		Total: 10 PD (0 rPD)
8	ED	6		Total: 8 ED (0 rED)
9	REC	5		
45	END	5		
18	BODY	8		
50	STUN	15		Total Characteristics Cost: 182

Movement: Running: 12m



Cost Powers END

33	Thrundian Blaster: RKA 3d6 +1 Increased STUN Multiplier (+1/4), 32 Charges (+1/4); OAF (-1)	[32]
7	Thrundian Tusks: HKA 1/2d6 No STR Bonus (-1/2)	1
12	Combat Training: HA +3d6 Hand-To-Hand Attack (-1/4)	1
10	Combat Training: +15 STR Only For Grabs And Other STR-Based Combat Maneuvers (-1/2)	1
16	Armored Uniform: Resistant Protection (8 PD/8 ED) OIF (-1/2)	0

Perks

10	Fringe Benefit: Military Rank: supreme commander of the Exrandal'rian Revolt
6	Positive Reputation: military genius and tenacious fighter (among the Thrund and the members of the Revolt, 14-), +2/+2d6

Talents

6	Environmental Movement: Zero-G Training (no penalties in zero gravity)
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Skills

20	+2 with All Combat
7	Analyze Military 14-
2	Bureaucratics 10-
3	Combat Piloting 12-
3	Deduction 12-
1	Demolitions 8-
1	Gambling (Card Games) 8-
9	AK: Koruba Thumasoor 18-
2	Navigation (Space) 12-
3	Persuasion 13-
2	PS: Soldier 11-
2	PS: Military Commander 11-
3	Stealth 12-
11	Tactics 16-
4	WF: Common Thrundian Melee Weapons, Thrundian Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 173

Total Cost: 355

400 Matching Complications (75)

5	Distinctive Features: military uniform (Easily Concealed; Noticed And Recognizable)
25	Hunted: the V'hanian Empire (Frequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Kill)
25	Psychological Complication: Determined To Defeat The V'hanian Empire And Win The Thrund Their Freedom (Very Common, Total)
20	Social Complication: Subject To Orders (Very Frequently, Major)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 0

Personality/Motivation: Korth Torgo is the very embodiment of the four ancient Thrund qualities of honor, duty, strength, and wisdom. V'hanian propaganda depicts him as an unthinking brute who throws his forces into battle without regard for casualties, but nothing could be further from the truth. He plans his attacks (and defenses) as thoroughly as possible, resents every death inflicted by the enemy, and is immensely popular with his troops (and the people of Koruba Thumasoor generally). Although circumstances have forced him to become nothing but a fighter, he also appreciates the finer things (like art and philosophy) and looks forward to the day when he can relax and pursue his varied interests.

Quote: “Colonel, move your forces forward on my signal. Before the V'hanians know it they'll be trapped!”

Powers/Tactics: The most gifted military commander in his dimension, and one of the most gifted in the Multiverse, Korth Torgo is the perfect choice to lead the Exrandal'rian Revolt (though he still has to answer to the Thrundian Emperor). Although he prefers to lead from the front, he recognizes how dangerous that can be and usually remains toward the rear in his flagship, where he can “see” and analyze the battle and direct his forces to best effect.

General Torgo has a keen eye for militarily useful assets (such as Human superheroes visiting his dimension) and will be quick to try to strike reasonable bargains with them (or trick/force them into doing what he wants, if they seem weak enough — he comes, after all, from a warrior culture that exalts strength in all its forms). He'd happily ally himself with Earth (or planets outside his dimension) to strike at the V'hanian Empire in a more unified fashion, but he won't allow himself and his people to be used simply as a way to take the Empress's pressure off of someone else.

Appearance: General Korth Torgo is a member of the Thrund, a humanoid species descended from an animal similar to an Earth boar. His head is porcine, and his mouth features two large, sharp tusks jutting from his lower jaw. However, even by Human standards there's a certain handsomeness and nobility to his features; he doesn't look ugly or “swinish.” He wears a simple military uniform consisting of a blue jacket and pants, with a blaster sidearm in a holster on his right hip.

THE L'SANDRON ARMY

The Exrandal'rian Revolt is a large, militarily sophisticated rebellion against Istvatha V'han's rule. But not everyone has the Revolt's resources or opportunities; they have to find other ways to fight. The L'sandron Army is the largest, most successful example of this in V'hanian space.

The dimension L'sandr became part of the V'hanian Empire nearly fifty years ago. For the most part it capitulated in the face of the Empire's might and has more or less peacefully settled into the imperial fold. But some species and individuals strongly disagreed with the decision to surrender to Istvatha V'han. Rather than meekly give up their arms in exchange for imperial largesse, they went underground and created a guerrilla resistance movement — or a terrorist organization, depending on your perspective.

Over the decades the soldiers of the L'sandron Army have become masters at unconventional warfare, sneak attacks, sabotage, espionage, and other forms of warfare that allow them to strike back at the V'hanian Empire without fighting pitched battles. Through theft, prizes of war, and scavenging they've amassed a respectable space fleet, but they keep it dispersed and hidden so the Empire has no major target to strike at. Similarly, the Army doesn't have any one headquarters — it has five, each connected to the other by encrypted transmissions. As a result there's no way to destroy the Army in one fell swoop, much to the Imperial Legions' frustration.

The commanders of the five headquarters (all of which are carefully hidden on out-of-the-way planets) form a “ruling council” that guides the Army and plans its overall strategy. At this point none of them has any real hope of ever forcing the V'hanian Empire to leave L'sandr — most of the dimension's inhabitants have become happy, loyal subjects of Istvatha V'han thanks to her generous policies — but they're stubbornly determined to go on fighting to their last breath rather than submit to her tyranny. They're constantly in need of supplies, medicine, ships, weapons, and any other help they can get, and will eagerly welcome any assistance (such as, say, Human superheroes fighting Istvatha V'han) with open arms... once they get over their initial suspicions that any offers are IIC traps.

IMPERIAL PSIONICS RANKINGS

The V'hanian government considers its psionic personnel a powerful asset — but also a sometimes unpredictable and inscrutable one. To make it easier to analyze and study psionic powers, and to assign psionic personnel to the duties they're best-suited to, the Empire's devised the following scale. It's a relatively loose ranking system, since psionic powers often defy logic and it's not unknown for a psionic to be immensely powerful in one area (such as telepathy or psychokinesis) but weak in others.

Rank 1: Rank 1 psionics have the lowest recorded levels of mental powers. In *HERO System* terms, this means Talents or Powers worth a maximum of 12 Active Points. Typically speaking a Rank 1 psionic doesn't have more than 30 total Active Points' worth of mental powers.

Rank 2: Rank 2 psionics can be up to twice as powerful as 1s, with abilities that have up to 25 Active Points. Typically a Rank 2 psionic doesn't have more than 50 total Active Points' worth of mental powers.

Rank 3: Rank 3 represents the level at which a psionic almost certainly is required by law to become a full-time imperial employee (lesser ranks can work in private industry without direct government supervision, just periodic licensing checks and other review). They can have abilities with up to 40 Active Points. Typically a Rank 3 psionic doesn't have more than 75 total Active Points' worth of mental powers.

Rank 4: Rank 4 psionics can have abilities with up to 60 Active Points. Typically a Rank 4 psionic doesn't have more than 90 total Active Points' worth of mental powers.

Rank 5: Ranks 5 and above represent the highest levels of psionic power; relatively few psionics with this much ability exist compared to lesser psionics. A Rank 5 psionic can have abilities with up to 80 Active Points. Typically a Rank 4 psionic doesn't have more than 120 total Active Points' worth of mental powers.

Rank 6: A Rank 6 psionic can have abilities with up to 100 Active Points. Typically a Rank 6 psionic doesn't have more than 180 total Active Points' worth of mental powers.

Rank 7: A Rank 7 psionic can have abilities with up to 120 Active Points. Typically a Rank 7 psionic doesn't have more than 200 total Active Points' worth of mental powers.

Rank 8: A Rank 8 psionic has powers greater than those of a Rank 7. The most powerful psionic in the imperial records had some powers with as much as 160 Active Points, though there's some evidence that he died at a young age because his vast mental powers "burned out" his physical body.

THE PSUBVERSIVES

One of the most dangerous revolts against the V'hanian Empire is one the Empress doesn't even know about... yet.

Within the ranks of the Empire's bureaucrats and soldiers are more than a few with psionic powers. As so often seems to be the case with mentalists in any place or time, many of them tend to consider themselves superior to beings not so gifted. Some years ago a group of powerful psionics in the Imperial Legions decided that they could do a far better job running the Empire than Istvatha V'han herself could. The more they discussed the matter, the better it sounded to them, and the firmer their resolve became. Thus was the conspiracy its members jokingly refer to as "the Psubversives" born.

Proceeding with extreme caution, the first members began sounding out other psionics, looking for ones who shared their views or could be persuaded to. When possible they covertly used their powers to get at the unquestionable truth of a potential member's beliefs, but in many cases they had to rely on mundane speech. But they did well, never exposing their conspiracy to anyone who'd turn them in and recruiting many new members.

The Psubversives have since spread their tentacles throughout imperial society. The group's members include several highly-placed courtiers, two members of the Imperial Law Council, several admirals (including one Sector Admiral), numerous lower-ranking military personnel, and hundreds of bureaucrats and officials throughout the Empire. They've mainly restricted their recruiting to V'hanians and other species whose loyalty to the Empire is assured — they want to take over the Empire from within, not tear it apart by allying themselves with rebels and malcontents.

As of mid-2011, the Psubversives are not quite poised to strike, but they're nearly ready. They plan to roll out their takeover in stages. The first step is to take mental control of a huge number of key imperial personnel ranging from military officers, to Ministers and Vice-Ministers, to the socially influential. Once they've succeeded in establishing this "secret psionic army," they launch the second step, which is to disrupt imperial society enough to make Istvatha V'han look weak, incompetent, and foolish. After that idea's firmly taken hold in the public consciousness (perhaps with a little help from weak, broad-area mental control) they'll move to topple her and replace her with an oligarchy of Psubversive leaders. If their plan works, the upheaval it causes will probably allow numerous dimensions to break free from imperial rule, and may even prompt Tyrannon or Skarn to attack... but the Psubversives are confident they can solve all such problems quickly once absolute power is theirs.

THE TA!RA FREEDOM FIGHTERS

Like the Isandron Army, the Ta!ra Freedom Fighters is a guerrilla-style rebellion against Istvatha V'han's rule, one that hopes to succeed through secrecy, unconventional warfare, and the justice of its cause rather than sheer force of arms. However, it's significantly different in one crucial way: it's a rebellion of superheroes.

In the dimension Ta!ra, superhuman powers are approximately three to four times as common as in Champions Universe Earth, and on average just as powerful. The result is a large, widespread superhuman community. These superhumans, hero and villain alike, fought valiantly against the V'hanian Empire when it invaded, but ultimately could not prevail against the Empress's overwhelming might. But rather than give up entirely, many of them went into hiding so they could continue the good fight without exposing innocent people and places to imperial reprisals. In essence they form a loose, dimension-wide outlaw superteam.

The unacknowledged "first among equals" of the TFF is Galacto, an immensely strong, immensely tough hero with the ability to fly fast enough to cross a galaxy the size of the Milky Way in mere minutes. Much of the continued existence (and, perhaps, eventual success) of the TFF's efforts depends on him, since he can easily keep the various "cells" in contact with one another. (Members with far-reaching mental powers or spells of mystic communication are highly desirable for this same reason.) Other prominent Freedom Fighters include: Yanorj Hfee, who has powerful energy projection abilities; Mister Trickster, master of stealth, illusion, and deception; Sunwalker, who has fire powers; Truth, a mentalist; Gun-Saint, a weaponmaster; and Blockade, a powered armor wearer.

It's important to note that the TFF includes both heroes *and* villains — any Ta!ran superhuman who's willing to join forces to fight against the Empire. This often results in disputes within the group as "former" villains want to use considerably more force and attack much more ruthlessly than the superheroic members do. Galacto and the other leaders do their best to find ways to defuse this tension, but it's possible the TFF may someday splinter into two groups if their different approaches prove irreconcilable.

OTHER ENEMIES

Some other forces Istvatha V'han must periodically contend with include:

THE FRACTURE

Some superheroes in the Champions Universe Earth are aware of cosmic beings sometimes known as *space gods* — entities like the Galaxars, the Corelords, and Mortalus whose powers and "jurisdiction" dwarf those of even the mightiest superhumans. It remains unclear to Istvatha V'han and her scientists whether these beings are in essence multiversally unique (though they appear in different dimensions in different forms), or whether they have alternates like most ordinary people in the keystone dimensions do.

About at least one such being, though, the Empress has no such questions, for he seems to be more than just a space god. The Fracture, as he's known, could best be described as a "Multiverse god." According to the Empire's most scholarly mystics and scientists, this abstract entity is the being who enables all Reality to split into multiple dimensions. Were it not for the Fracture, they postulate, all dimensions would collapse into one — and he almost certainly has the power to "combine" dimensions at will if he so chooses (an ability that makes him of intense interest to Tyrannon and Skarn).

The Fracture's thoughts on sentient life and other matters remain largely unknown. Istvatha V'han has met him just once, and found him exceedingly difficult to communicate with; his frame of reference is so "vast" and "diffuse" that getting him to understand the petty concerns of more limited beings strains the intellect. To her he appeared as a gargantuan humanoid form whose body shifted views from one dimension to another like a viewscreen shifts scenes. The only constant features were his large, golden, glowing eyes.

THE TIME-BEAST

No one's quite sure where the Time-Beast comes from, or who named it. What is known is that it's a monstrous *thing* that can cross dimensional barriers and travel through time. It preys on other time travelers, wreaks havoc with the timestream, and otherwise makes life miserable for the likes of Istvatha V'han. She's offered an enormous reward, including ownership of an entire terrestrial planet, to whoever kills the Beast... but so far no one's come close to collecting.



5

THE CRUSADERS OF THE INFINITE REALITIES

The L'sandron Army and Ta!ra Freedom Fighters are both true guerrilla movements (or terrorist groups, according to the Empire). They're organized, they have long-range plans, they conduct themselves with something approaching (para)military professionalism. By contract, the Crusaders of the Infinite Realities is more akin Robin Hood.

Depending on which member you ask, the Crusaders was started years or centuries ago — it's hard to say when one's dealing with a cabal of time-traveling, dimension-hopping, intensely individualistic wizards. Its founders were a small group of super-mages who opposed Istvatha V'han's rule of their respective dimensions but couldn't muster the force to fight back in conventional ways. They explored ways to use magic to travel through time and turn her own powers against her. While that came to naught, they somehow discovered a strange species of "time dragons" — flying reptilian beings with the native power to cross dimensional barriers and soar through the timestreams like a bird sails through the air. They recruited/captured/coerced/bribed (again, stories differ) these time dragons into joining their cause, thus providing them with a quick, easy, and reliable way to do what Istvatha V'han can do naturally.

Riding their time dragons like steeds, the Crusaders began to strike fast and hard, using their magics to attack rich imperial targets, steal anything of value, and then escape before any force could be brought against them. Typically they give some of what they steal to people oppressed by

or fighting against, the Empress. But they keep a large chunk of it for themselves, using it to turn their secret lair (said to be based on an enormous asteroid that they can shift between dimensions if necessary) into an opulent home.

No two members of the Crusaders seem to come from the same species. The only qualifications for joining are (a) the ability to use magic on the "super-mage" level, and (b) a genuine, sincere desire to oppose Istvatha V'han (something they can ensure via their spells). They allow some lesser mages to assist them as researchers, apprentices, manufacturers of enchanted items, and the like, but never let them go into the field.

Every Crusader wields a potent weapon known as a *soulblade*. This is a sword, staff, axe, dagger, or some similar item forged from the souls of millions or billions of Istvatha V'han's victims — souls that voluntarily agree to be made into weapons for use against the one who destroyed them. A soulblade can not only cut through almost anything (HKA, Armor Piercing (x2), Penetrating), it enhances its wielder's magical powers in various ways. (These can include providing END from an Endurance Reserve, an Aid Magic, or even adding to a caster's Variable Power Pool for magic.)

The leader of the Crusaders is Hrunara Shemm, a golden-skinned elemental super-mage from one of the Lungorin dimensions. She's not the most powerful spellcaster in the group (though she's close), but what she lacks for in arcane power she more than makes up for in intelligence, tactical brilliance, and leadership skills. Despite the fact that her fellow Crusaders are headstrong, eccentric, and just plain strange individuals, she somehow finds a way to keep them united and working.

toward their common goals. (For Hrunara, use Morgaine the Mystic's character sheet from CV2 48, with the addition of appropriate Skills like Navigation (Dimensional) and Tactics.)

Besides Shemm, notable Crusaders include:

- Shimmering Scarlet, a quasi-energy being whose energy-manipulating and matter transmutation magics are particularly potent.
- Doctor Archon, a sometime superhero whose world fell to the Imperial Legions; he joined the Crusaders to help the oppressed and obtain a measure of revenge for his fallen species. His spells are extremely powerful, though his control over them isn't always as strong as he'd like it to be.
- Grenshol Argelan, an Ixendarian super-mage from an alternate Earth dimension. At first he was a relatively "ordinary" sorcerer... but then he began studying the magics of the Elder Worm of several planes. This has made him dangerously corrupted; it won't be long until he abandons the Crusaders for outright villainy, or turns on them in a destructive fit of suicidal passion.
- Abrabar, a mage of studious bent forced into a more active role when the V'hanian Empire invaded his home plane. He's become quite the combat wizard, but would happily return to his home and library (which he's hidden in a pocket dimension) if he could.
- Qqethru Helq, a master of fire magics whose powers become stronger the closer he gets to a star.

For character sheets for these Crusaders, please see pages 229-240.

THE TIME-BEAST

Background/History: See above.

Personality/Motivation: For reasons no one knows, the Time-Beast is compelled to hunt and eat time- and dimensional travelers, wreak havoc with timestreams throughout the Multiverse, destroy time machines, and so on. There seems to be no specific pattern to its predations; it goes wherever the "scent" of what it seeks tells it to go.

Some time-travelers believe the Time-Beast is a manifestation or pet of some sort of "Multiverse god" responsible for chrono and dimensional barriers. This would certainly explain why it hunts time-travelers and dimensioneers, but not why it likes to distort or change timestreams.

Quote: None; the Time-Beast cannot speak, it can only roar and growl.

Powers/Tactics: Despite its great power, the Time-Beast prefers to ambush its prey rather than engage in a frontal assault. Using its dimension- and time-traveling powers, Teleportation, and Desolidification, it can sneak up on nearly anyone. When it gets close enough it pounces, using its fearsome talons

and teeth to rend its target into bloody shreds. If necessary it can somehow absorb the essence of the magnitude of time, causing it to grow to an enormous size. If confronted with force it's not confident of overcoming, it flees to await a better opportunity.

Campaign Use: The Time-Beast is both a threat and a possible weapon for PC superheroes. On the one hand, going after Istvatha V'han may force them to travel through time and the dimensions themselves, and that may attract the unwanted attentions of the Beast. On the other hand, Istvatha V'han is the prey it most desires, so if they could catch it and unleash it on her, or somehow point it in her direction, it would at the very least provide a serious distraction they could no doubt make use of.

To make the Time-Beast a tougher, more frightening opponent, give it Invisibility (to the Sight Group and/or Danger Sense), mental powers, or time-manipulation powers (see *Champions Powers* for plenty of ideas for the latter). To weaken it, remove its Growth (and the other Unified Power abilities).

Appearance: In its natural form, the Time-Beast is about the size of a large lion. It has an octopodal (eight-legged) form; each leg has claws on the feet (and the feet are as manipulable as Human hands, if necessary). Its head is sort of wedge-shaped, with three eyes and a large mouth that's filled with fangs. Its skin has a sort of scaly/reptilian look. At will it can grow to become up to fifty feet tall at the shoulder.



THE TIME-BEAST

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 HTH damage [4]
24	DEX	28	14-	
30	CON	20	15-	
25	INT	15	14-	PER Roll 14-
25	EGO	15	14-	
30	PRE	20	15-	PRE Attack: 6d6
10	OCV	35		
10	DCV	35		
3	OMCV	0		
10	DMCV	21		
8	SPD	60		Phases: 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12
40	PD	38		Total: 40 PD (40 rPD)
40	ED	38		Total: 40 ED (40 rED)
30	REC	26		
100	END	16		
25	BODY	15		
80	STUN	30		Total Characteristics Cost: 442

Movement: Running: 12m (36m)
Teleportation: 20m-20,000 LY

Cost	Powers	END
152	Dimensional/Temporal Travel: Extra-Dimensional Movement (any location in any dimension, can travel through time) Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	6
60	As Large As Time: Growth (+30 STR, +10 CON, +10 PRE, +6 PD, +6 ED, +6 BODY, +12 STUN, +3m Reach, +24m Running, -12m KB, +4 to others' OCV to hit character, +4 to others' PER Rolls to perceive character, 8m tall, 4m wide, 6,400 kg) Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Unified Power (-½)	0
101	Time-Talons: HKA 3d6 (4d6+1 with STR) Penetrating (x2; +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	4
43	Time-Talons When Grown: HKA +2d6 Penetrating (x2; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Linked (to Growth; -½), Unified Power (-½)	
67	Time-Bite: HKA 2d6 (3d6+1 with STR) Armor Piercing (x2; +½), +2 Increased STUN Multiplier (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	3
43	Time-Bite When Grown: HKA +2d6 Armor Piercing (x2; +½), +2 Increased STUN Multiplier (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Linked (to Growth; -½), Unified Power (-½)	

20	Hard To Hurt: Hardened (+¼) for 40 PD/40 ED	0
50	Hard To Hurt: Resistant (+½) for 40 PD/40 ED Hardened (+¼)	0
30	Hard To Hurt: Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, 25%, Resistant	0
15	Hard To Hurt: Mental Defense (15 points)	0
20	Hard To Hurt: Power Defense (20 points)	0
125	Rapid Dimensional Transferral: Teleportation 20m MegaScale (1m = 1,000 light-years; +5), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	6
47	Sensing Its Prey: Detect Time And Dimensional Travelers 14- (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Dimensional (any dimension), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Range, Sense, Targeting	0
52	Time-Beast Perceptions: Spatial Awareness 14- (no Sense Group), Dimensional (any dimension), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees)	0
5	Time-Beast Perception: Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
5	Time-Beast Perception: Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)	0
40	Dimensional Desynchronization: Desolidification (affected by magic)	4
6	Eight Legs: Extra Limbs (4) Inherent (+½)	0

Talents

3 Absolute Time Sense

Skills

24 +3 HTH

3 Navigation (Dimensional, Space) 14-

3 Stealth 14-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 914

Total Cost: 1,356

400 Matching Complications (75)

5 **Hunted:** all responsible time-travelers (Infrequently, Less Pow, Report on its activities at the very least, Kill it if possible)

25 **Psychological Complication:** Must Hunt Time- And Dimensional Travelers (Very Common, Total)

Total Complications Points: 30

Experience Points: 1,001

CHAPTER SIX



**GAMEMASTERING
THE EMPRESS**

ISTVATHA V'HAN AND THE CHAMPIONS UNIVERSE

As noted on CV1 61, Istvatha V'han doesn't have formal relations with anyone on Earth. With the exception of a few superhumans who've joined her forces (see page 44), and organization like the V'harian Unification Movement which support her cause, she regards all of Humanity (and everyone else in dimension Earth-1346) as an enemy, a potential subject to be conquered in the near future, or both. Nevertheless, whether she knows it or not she does interact with some elements of the Champions Universe in some ways. Besides what's described on pages 183-85, these include:

CAPTAIN CHRONOS

Captain Chronos and Istvatha V'han know about one another, though they've never met. He's well aware of what happens during her future invasions (at least as Champions Universe Earth's history is *supposed* to play out), that she's still ruling the V'harian Empire a thousand years from now, and so on. However, he doesn't consider her a significant threat to the Earth-1346 timestream, since he knows how cautious she is about the consequences of her time travel powers. If she wanted to alter the Earth-1346 timestream, she would almost certainly have done so already. He remains wary but isn't deeply concerned. For her part, V'han would like to control or eliminate the Captain; as someone who can track her through time and meddle with her schemes he's a significant threat.

DOCTOR MACABRE AND THE JANUS KEY

As of 2011 there is no Dr. Macabre and the Janus Key is missing. If and when it's found, or another Dr. Macabre arises, Istvatha V'han's agents will study him closely. Anyone who can easily move between even a limited subset of dimensions, and/or who has power over dimensional energies and warps, is someone the Empress pays close attention to when planning an invasion. She has instructed her agents on Earth to remain on the lookout for the Janus Key; if it becomes possible to obtain it she'll do everything she can (and even risk exposing some of her agents) to acquire it.

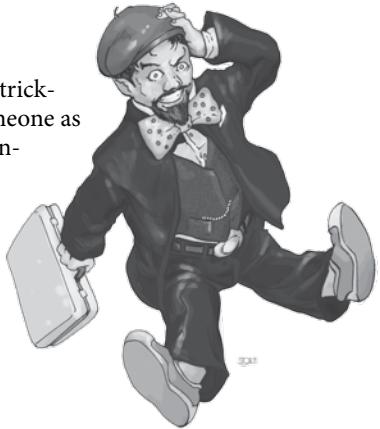
THE INCUBUS

Humans aren't the only subjects of this diminutive trickster's pranks and jokes; someone as proud, powerful, and dimensionally aware as Istvatha V'han is a target he just cannot, from time to time, resist. (As a result he knows a good bit about her and could perhaps be persuaded to share what he knows with Human superheroes... for the right "price.") The Empress regards him as an intolerable nuisance and would like to see him confined or killed. If a Human somehow does either of those things, she may very well send that person a generous reward of some sort.

PROFESSOR PARADIGM

Istvatha V'han deeply intrigues Professor Paradigm because of her ability to move between dimensions at will, and the fact that she's conquered so many of them. He's studied everything Humanity knows about her and is eager to learn more. Given his powers and knowledge, he might be one of Humanity's greatest resources for fighting off her next invasion attempt... assuming the world can persuade him to join the battle rather than study her (or even join her).

Conversely, V'han would definitely find the Professor and his Paradigm Pirates worth studying. She's always interested in other dimension-travelers and -manipulators. On the one hand she considers them prime candidates for recruitment to the Imperial Battalion; on the other she wants to make sure they pose no threat to her.



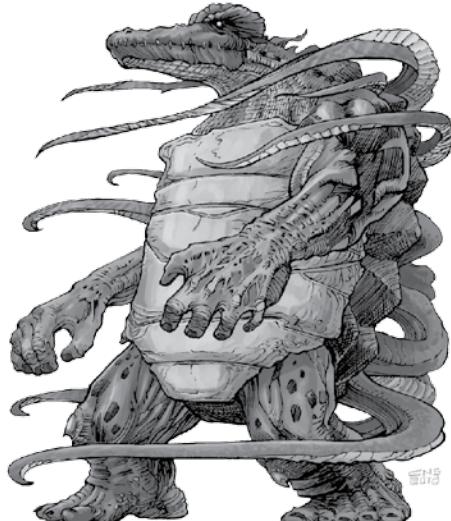
THE SHADOW QUEEN

As discussed on CV1 170, the Shadow Queen, as the ruler of a dimension (or to be more accurate, *part* of a dimension — the Shadow Realm in Champions Universe Earth's Faerie), has no desire whatsoever to see any part of Earth-1346, its Parterres, or associated dimensions taken over by Istvatha V'han (or anyone else). She's just one of many supervillains who'll offer their assistance to Humanity the next time V'han launches an invasion of Earth's dimension. Whether Humanity will take it remains to be seen, though — Brangomar isn't exactly trustworthy.



SKARN AND TYRANNON

As discussed on page 186 and elsewhere in this book, these other two dimensional conquerors are Istvatha V'han's greatest enemies. Aside from occasional diplomatic efforts that fool no one and accomplish nothing, and a few romantic trysts between V'han and Skarn in an effort to romantically manipulate one another, they interact by fighting, spying on one another, and trying to exploit each other's weaknesses.



UNTIL: PROJECT CITADEL

In light of the threat posed by Istvatha V'han, in 2004 UNTIL established one of its special programs for studying her and finding ways to cope with her invasions. Dubbed *Project Citadel*, it's headed by Major Alexander Shumeykin of Russia. Citadel's responsibilities and activities include:

- coordinating with similar agencies and superheroes around the globe to establish a worldwide alert network to detect and counteract dimensional intrusions of any sort. Various agencies and superteams have been assigned to specific zones and/or given specific tasks in the event of an invasion, and told who to contact to be integrated into the overall chain of command.
- coordinating with the Star*Guard and other known entities in the Milky Way Galaxy (and when possible, beyond) to detect and counteract V'hanian activity away from galactic population centers
- researching and developing weapons to counteract V'han's dimensional technology, both on a large scale (to, for example, disrupt a D-Portal) and on a tactical scale (to block D-Soldiers' ability to teleport, for instance). These efforts have been only partially successful so far given budgetary restrictions, but work continues.
- gathering and analyzing as much intelligence as possible on Istvatha V'han and her military capabilities. This hasn't been an easy task, given how difficult dimensional travel is, but Citadel's researchers have helped to expand Humanity's knowledge of the Empress. When possible they try to persuade superheroes with stealth and/or movement powers to go into her realm (usually with a friendly super-mage providing the dimensional transport) to "spy" on her.



USING ISTVATHA V'HAN

Given her vast resources, Istvatha V'han is the single most dangerous supervillain in the Champions Universe. Many others possess far more personal power, or more frequently threaten Humanity, but none have the potential to conquer Earth (and indeed, Earth's entire dimension) that she does.

That being the case, you have to handle her delicately when using her in your Champions games. A villain who simply steamrolls all opposition and cannot be stopped in any way isn't fun. Fortunately, as discussed on page 179 and elsewhere in this book, Istvatha V'han's actions aren't unrestricted. Unlike a less politically powerful villain (such as Dr. Destroyer or Mechanon), she can't simply decide what she wants to do and do it — or at least, not without causing significant disruption in her Empire and potentially creating a weakness for her enemies to exploit. Whatever "activities" she's involved with on Earth (or in Earth's dimension as a whole) have to fit within the scope of what she can do without creating administrative, logistical, or strategic problems for herself.

BEFORE THE INVASION PLOT SEEDS

Therefore the best way to incorporate Istvatha V'han into your campaign before you're ready to run a full-blown "dimensional invasion" story arc is to focus on what page 180 refers to as Stages Beta and Gamma — reconnaissance and weakening. The sorts of things V'han's personnel do to weaken a target (in this case Earth, and by extension Earth's dimension) could give rise to all sorts of scenarios. Here are a few examples:

ARMS RACE

One of the best ways to weaken Earth is to reduce the number of superhuman defenders it has. The best tool for getting rid of superheroes is supervillains, and vice-versa. To that end, agents of the Imperial Intelligence Command who are spying on Earth as undercover Humans have secretly been supplying super-criminals and criminal organizations with better weapons.

If you want to keep this as a small-scale plot, various weapon-using villains have simply awakened one morning to find that someone's left better weapons for them on their doorstep (so to speak).

The next time the heroes face them, those villains will be *much* tougher to defeat and hit *much* harder when they attack. If all goes well for V'han, a hero or two will die. Once the heroes defeat the villains and can study their weapons, tiny technological clues will point to the fact that these devices are not entirely of this Earth... or even this dimension. From there it shouldn't be a big logical jump to realizing Istvatha V'han is behind the weapons; it might even be possible to use some of them to ferret out a few of her IIC agents or find a way to strike back at her.

On the other hand, you might want to turn this into a multiple-game session, world-spanning threat. In that case IIC agents have infiltrated VIPER (and possibly ARGENT and any other such organizations in your campaign) and introduced technological innovations through their research and development branches. This provides a convenient means to upgrade all of VIPER's weapons, and by extension anyone they supply weapons to (assuming the snakes are willing to part with their new "inventions"). However, assuming you want any degree of "realism" in your campaign, keep in mind that giving VIPER better technology means it will probably always have that better tech — they can't easily lose all of it, much less the plans, specs, and research notes in their computer databases.

CORRUPTION OF THE WORLD'S-BLOOD

In Earth-1346 (and most other keystone dimensions), magic is a powerful force. It may be a subtle thing underlying reality, or it may be as well-known and manipulable as electricity, but in either case it's there. And those who can work magic — spellcasters, mages, wizards, sorcerers, whatever they're called locally — represent a significant roadblock to V'hanian invasion plans. Magic is an unpredictable and sometimes very powerful force, and is often one of the major weapons used against the Imperial Legions. Therefore it behooves Istvatha V'han to find ways to blunt or redirect that weapon.

To that end, mystics from the Imperial Battalion have secretly infiltrated Earth and begun casting special spells to "corrupt" Earth's magic temporarily. If their rituals succeed, for a year or more the spells cast by Humans (and other mages native to Earth-1346) won't work properly, and may fail altogether.

The first sign that something unusual is happening is when mystics who can ordinarily use magic more or less effortlessly (*i.e.*, super-mages

like Witchcraft, the Demonologist, Talisman, and even Takofanes) begin having to succeed with Skill Rolls to cast their spells. Casting a spell seems like pushing through a thick curtain or struggling through murky water; it's harder, more limiting. The longer the V'hanian mages are left alone, the more difficult spellcasting becomes (the Skill Rolls suffer penalties, spells acquire Limitations like *Extra Time* and *Concentration*, and so on).

Fortunately, no magic this powerful can be cast without leaving some sort of aetherial or arcane traces. Though the very spell they're trying to trace makes the tracing harder, PC and friendly NPC super-mages can eventually track the V'hanian mages to their lair or lairs. Enemy NPC mages — villains, in other words — may even offer to help, on the grounds that whatever's doing this affects them to. This could provide an excellent opportunity for some roleplaying, and perhaps give the heroes a chance to sway a villain who's not really that villainous over to the side of Good.

Once they find the V'hanian mages, the PCs have to defeat them or drive them away. At all costs the V'hanians will want to get away; Istvatha V'han will *not* be happy if one of them is captured and subjected to interrogation. They'll do whatever they have to (in some cases even commit suicide) to keep themselves from falling into Human hands.

CHARACTER ASSASSINS

V'hanian technology makes it a relatively simple task to impersonate a Human hero. A V'hanian can be altered to look just like him, and be given most superpowers through medical treatments (or simply equipped with devices that emulate powers). Similarly, the V'hanians can easily create fake video footage and the like.

With these resources available, the Empress can weaken Human superheroes by smearing them in the press. At first a hero's merely shown to be doing unpopular things, like shouting racial slurs or being drunk in public. But over time this escalates to the point where he commits serious crimes and has to be locked up. But of course the hero going to prison is the real hero, not the V'hanian copy who's been doing these awful deeds.

The targeted PCs will of course protest their innocence. At least at first you should arrange matters so they don't have airtight alibis; it should be possible and plausible that they committed these embarrassing acts. They have to start investigating, looking for clues that will clear their names before the imposters do something that will get the hapless heroes targeted by the law. One way of doing this is through criminalistics; if the V'hanians leave any biological evidence behind, analyzing it will quickly prove they're not Human regardless of what they look like.

PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE

In 2002, the Champions prevented V'han's planned invasion of Earth by taking the fight to her instead and stirring up so much trouble that the Empress had to deal with that rather than attack Earth-1346. If your heroes suspect she's planning another invasion (perhaps because of one of

the plot seeds above), they might want to try the same tactic. This could lead to an entire campaign story arc as the PCs rampage across the V'hanian Empire, sparking rebellions, destroying imperial outposts and resources, and generally making tremendous nuisances of themselves. If they're powerful and daring enough they might even try to assault V'ha itself... though that's probably biting off more than they can chew.

THE INVASION AND BEYOND PLOT SEEDS

Obviously Istvatha V'han's next invasion of Earth can provide multiple game sessions' worth of adventures for your campaign. Depending on how you want to orchestrate things, the story arc could begin with a massive war scenario where V'hanian forces portal into Earth's solar system and immediately attack. Or the PCs could detect her earliest intrusion into Earth's dimension several light-years away and attack her beachhead not to stop the invasion (which is almost certainly impossible once she's at that stage) but to slow it down and give Earth time to prepare its defenses.

Either way, the story arc will probably end up mixing high-action pitched battle scenarios where the PCs get to take on brigades of D-Soldiers and destroy V'hanian starships singlehandedly with lower-intensity conflict where the PCs essentially become "special forces soldiers" making surgical strikes on V'hanian military assets. In both situations they're likely to encounter members of the Imperial Battalion and may develop some intense "nemesis" relationships with specific Battalioneers.

An invasion story arc can go on as long as the GM wants it to — after all, even in real Earth history some wars have lasted for years or decades. If the Imperial Legions establishes a foothold in Earth-1346 that the PCs just can't shake loose, they may have to fight Istvatha V'han off and on for the rest of the campaign until they find a way to make her withdraw her forces.

Some possible sub-plots within an invasion story arc (or campaign!) include:

SINK THE INVICTOR IMPERIUS

One of the best sorts of war story is one where a determined band of heroes has to get past multiple obstacles to destroy some target of high military value — a bridge, a new type of airplane, a key orbital defense station, or what have you. In a V'hanian invasion story the most obvious target for this sort of tale is the *Invictor Imperius*, Istvatha V'han's massive flagship. The loss of the *Invictor* would not only deprive the Imperial Legions of a major military asset, it would strike a serious blow against imperial morale and show that the Empress is not untouchable. Indeed, just the fact of its being destroyed might spark rebellions across the Empire. And given her interest in conquering Earth, it's not at all outside the realm of possibility that she might come to Earth-1346 in the *Invictor*, thus putting it within easy range of an assault by the PCs.



VIVA LA RESISTANCE

Suppose the worst comes to pass: Istvatha V'han succeeds in conquering Earth. What do the PCs do now? Why, start the resistance movement, of course! The campaign shifts from one of PCs leading/working with the Human military forces in an all-out war effort to one where they're sneaking around, using covert operations, sabotage, and ambushes to whittle away at V'han's forces and resources in an effort to make it too costly for her to hold what she's taken.

This may also include an "embassy to Malva" situation (see above) where the PCs go to recruit help, or at least get someone to distract V'han's attention so they can prepare and execute a major strike against one of her vulnerable points.

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The key to running this scenario is giving the PCs more to do than "attack the starship and blow it up." First they have to penetrate enemy territory undetected. Then they have to disguise themselves and infiltrate the ship to learn its secrets and weaknesses — a mission where they have to rely more on personal skills and cleverness than on their vaunted superpowers, and one that entails all sorts of tension, suspense, and deadly risks. And then at long last they have to attack the ship and destroy it. And that's no easy task given its size, armaments, and defenders (both ordinary and superpowered, since the Empress will certainly have a few members of the Imperial Battalion along to supplement her personal guard).

EMBASSY TO MALVA

One of the best ways to increase the odds of defeating a V'hanian invasion is to recruit powerful allies. And in the Milky Way Galaxy, who's more powerful than the Malvans? They don't use their power anymore, but they still have it. So the PCs are tasked with the unenviable diplomatic assignment of journeying to Malva and persuading the Galaxy's most decadent species to go to war for the first time in two hundred thousand years. Along the way they encounter unreliable Malvans, V'hanian agents trying to distract them (or even turn the Malvans against them), unscrupulous gladiatorial fans who want to capture them and force them to fight in the super-arena, and a Phazor whose desire for glory might make him receptive to the PCs' message but who may not have the will or means to convince his people to take up the sword once more.

If Malva's not your cup of tea, you can substitute any other highly powerful Champions Universe entity or organization that wouldn't immediately be opposed to Istvatha V'han. For example, the PCs might have to seek out a Galaxar (or all the Galaxars) and convince them to get involved. Just finding such enigmatic cosmic entities would be an adventure in itself! For an even more difficult task, have them try to convince a villain (such as Xarriel or Mordace) or a sentient natural force (such as Astron) to help them. What sort of price would, say, Xarriel ask to get involved... and are the PCs willing to pay it?

DOUBLE AGENT

Page 44 lists a few Humans who've gone over to the other side and joined the Imperial Battalion. You could structure a scenario around the PCs having to get to one of these people and convince him to switch sides again. In essence he'd become a double agent, feeding Humanity information about V'han while giving her misleading advice. And of course, finding and persuading him aren't the only problems; meeting up with him on a regular basis to receive his reports will be even more difficult. Suddenly the PCs find themselves cast less as super-warriors and more as espionage agents/handlers with superpowers.

CAMPAIN FRAMEWORKS

Besides the obvious "V'han invades Earth!" story arc/campaign framework, here are some other campaigns (or extended story arcs) you could structure around the Empress of a Billion Dimensions.

CRUSADERS OF THE INFINITE REALITIES

Rather than fighting Istvatha V'han as Human superheroes, the PCs could all be members of the Crusaders of the Infinite Realities (page 192). They travel across the dimensions and time, robbing from the V'hanian rich and giving to the V'hanian oppressed, supporting rebellions and resistance movements, and learning new mystic lore. Throw in some romance, a Crusader who's really a traitor, an ancient artifact or two that no one understands (yet...), and plenty of raids and battles and you've got the recipe for all sorts of fun.

THE SHOT HEARD 'ROUND THE MULTIVERSE

Similarly, the PCs could be members of a more conventional rebellions against V'han's rule — such as the ones listed in Chapter Five and elsewhere in this book, or a brand-new one they start themselves from the ground up. It helps any campaign for the PCs to have an ultimate goal, and this one has one of the most impressive goals of all: overthrow a dimension-spanning empire and win freedom for your people!

YOU'RE IN THE LEGIONS NOW

Since Istvatha V'han isn't exactly a "villain" in the conventional sense of the term, it might be possible to run a campaign where the PCs work for her rather than fight her. Either they could be members of the Imperial Battalion, or simply a special force of D-Soldiers assigned to all sorts of important but risky secret missions. Along the way they'd eventually have to reconcile their feelings about the good things V'han does (improve standards of living, distribute advanced technology, protect her subjects) with what they think about her less charitable activities (like attacking dimensions that have never bothered her, or committing genocide against bothersome populations).

COURT INTRIGUE

For gaming groups that prefer intrigue and manipulation to violence and action, consider running a campaign where the PCs are all highly-placed members of Istvatha V'han's court. Using the Social Combat rules from APG2, the PCs could engage in verbal sparring with rivals, get involved in torrid love affairs, and try to get their enemies assigned to jobs on backwater outposts of the Empire while avoiding the same fate themselves. The ultimate goal, of course, is to join the Empress's inner circle and be in a position to exert significant influence over policies that will affect trillions of lives.

DIMENSIONAL CAMPAIGNING

Chapters Four and Five provide a fully-described multiverse for you to use if you want — the Multiverse of the Champions Universe. However, some GMs may prefer to create their own multiverses. After all, if you want to run a campaign (or a story arc within an existing campaign) that involves a lot of dimensional travel and “plane hopping,” the first thing you’re going to need is dimensions for your PCs to visit!

This section of Chapter Six discusses the various sorts of dimensions and how to use them in a campaign. It includes suggestions on designing dimensions of your own, and even a series of Random Dimension Design tables if you just want to “roll one up” to see what sort of weirdness results.

DIMENSIONAL PURPOSE

Before you get down to the nuts and bolts of designing a dimension, you should consider a dimension’s importance to your campaign — or put differently, what’s its purpose in the story you and your players are creating? For example, how often will characters visit a dimension, or interact with its inhabitants? If it’s just once or twice, you probably don’t need to know a lot of details about the place. Designing dimensions can be a lot of work, so don’t do more than you need to.

BACKGROUND

A dimension might exist solely as part of a campaign’s background information. Gods and spirits come from other planes (as do rival dimensional conquerors), or wizards tap power from them, but the PCs never actually visit. Perhaps mortals cannot enter the dimension... or perhaps you simply don’t want to run transdimensional adventures (or at least not ones involving a particular plane).

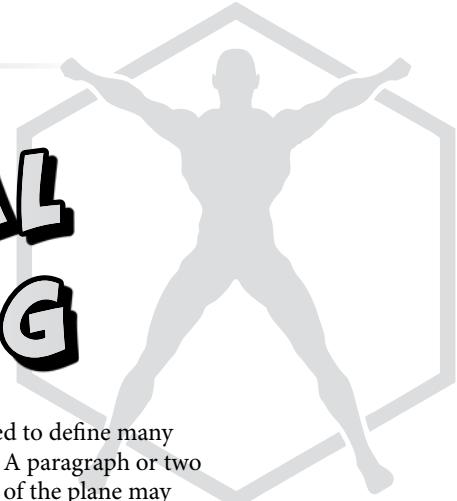
In this case, you don’t need to define many details about the dimension. A paragraph or two describing the main features of the plane may suffice. What beings live there (if any)? How does it connect to/relate to the primary dimension of the campaign, and have any details about it become well known there? For instance, you can sum up the popular image of Christian Hell in a few phrases: caves of fire and brimstone; people tormented by devils with red skin, horns, cloven hooves and barbed tails; the Devil himself has a palace, or at least a throne room.

OCCASIONAL VISITS

Characters might take brief excursions to a dimension (or maybe just visit there a single time). In this case, you merely have to decide what peril or obstacle, if any, the heroes face; what reward they gain for overcoming the peril; any specific characters the heroes will (or are likely to) meet; and a few details of the local scenery. The “obstacle” can be as simple as being lost, and the “reward” no more than figuring out how to get home. You probably need to develop only a few parts of settings in detail: even if the dimension in question is as big as the real Universe (and that’s very large indeed), the part the characters see might be just a few hundred feet wide. For example, imagine a superhero team on a raid into Hell to rescue someone kidnapped by devils and taken to the iron city of Dis, as described in Dante’s *Inferno*. The GM brushes up on Dante’s description of Dis, decides what sort of devils the PCs must fight (using character sheets from *The HERO System Bestiary* to save time and effort), and writes down the other details needed for the adventure. In case of surprises, though, he also reads Dante’s description of the circles of Hell near Dis, and jots down a few scenes the heroes might see — and ways to guide straying characters back to the plot.

MAJOR SETTING

On the other hand, characters might visit a specific dimension frequently, making it an important part of the campaign. In that case you need to design this dimension as carefully as the rest of your setting. In time, you may end up describing several locations in detail and writing up a large selection of denizens.



Continuing the example above, heroes might find many reasons to invade Hell and clash with demons and devils frequently. In this case, you should define many features of Hell. If you stick with Dante, you should flesh out descriptions of several areas the heroes might visit, and may even need a map or two of the dimension as a whole (if for no other reason than to make notes on when you refer to a location, or creates one on the fly in mid-game). Do the devils have some sort of government that assigns them tasks and organizes a response to the heroes' intrusions? Are there diabolic rivalries the PCs might exploit? How do the fundamental rules of Hell differ from Earth? For instance, what happens to the soul of a mortal who dies in Hell? Do the devils wield powers in Hell they lack on Earth? Can damned souls be rescued from Hell? As you answer these questions, the nature of Hell for your campaign becomes far more detailed than "fire and brimstone, screaming people, devils."

DIMENSIONAL FUNCTION

Besides a dimension's basic purpose within the overall campaign, you should also think about its function in the setting. How do other planes affect the human world? Do their inhabitants visit Earth? Why would characters ever visit these other worlds? Or why would you, the GM, want the characters to visit?



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COOL SETTING

Some dimensions make colorful settings for adventures. Visits to other planes give heroes a chance to encounter environments, situations, and people that could never exist in the campaign's principle setting. While an Earthlike world has its uses as a setting for Fantasy, it's also fun to imagine someplace spectacularly different. A vivid description of an extradimensional scene raises the players' sense of wonder.

Alien dimensions, like alien worlds, also give the GM a chance to play with bizarre cultures. An alien culture may be no more than another bit of local color ("Hey Witchcraft, why does everyone wear fruit on their head like Carmen Miranda?") or it may form the focus of the adventure. The dimension's inhabitants might turn hostile when the characters break some odd cultural taboo ("Whaddaya mean, I have to *marry* her because I tried on her fruit hat?"), or try to be helpful but in counterproductive ways. You can even try a little social satire by exaggerating some modern trend or fad of modern society, in the style of *Gulliver's Travels*.

Other dimensions can present interesting strategic challenges to the PCs. In an alien cosmos, the different environment can change the rules of combat. To give a few simple examples, the GM can invent dimensions where all combat uses EGO and MCV instead of DEX and CV; where some types of powers don't work (such as flame powers in a water-filled dimension); where space is so bent and twisted that Ranged attacks are as likely to hit the attacker as an enemy; or where space is filled with some continuous harmful effect, such as a continuous Darkness versus one Sense Group, Blast, Drain, or Transform. The special environment makes the dimension a place of danger (see below) as well as a place of strangeness and wonder.

DANGER

A dimension can pose a threat to the characters. The danger may come from the dimension's inhabitants, the environment, the nature of the dimension itself, or all of the above. For instance, a netherworld of the dead might slowly leech away a visitor's life and also provide his enemies with legions of undead servitors.

Heroes might enter a dangerous dimension for several reasons (assuming they even know it's dangerous before they go there). They might need something or someone from a hazardous plane. Some accident might hurl them into the dimension. An enemy might trick or force the heroes into another world — even if the dimension itself isn't dangerous, he might think the characters have no way to leave.

When you design a dangerous dimension, concentrate on the threats the heroes face, and how they can overcome those dangers and escape. If the characters have Extra-Dimensional Movement powers (as many super-mages do), you must invent some reason why the heroes can't just pop back to Earth.

A dangerous dimension can add excitement and a special strategic challenge to a fight. Reasons why the heroes and villains fight in the dimension range from sheer accident (“I told you not to use that spell in the temple”) to a formal challenge (“So, pathetic humans, meet me for combat in the Plane of Perilous Pyramids — if you dare!”) Perhaps the villain knows how the dimension affects combat and hopes this ensures the heroes’ defeat; perhaps the villain is just as surprised as the heroes!

A dimension may also serve as the source of a threat. See *Dimensional Invasions*, page 218, for a discussion of this option.

OPPORTUNITY FOR A GOOD DEED

For a variation on dimension-as-a-threat, the danger could be directed at the inhabitants of the dimension, and the natives want the PCs’ help to deal with it. (On a planetary scale, this is the story structure used by many episodes of *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who*.) Perhaps the locals can reward the heroes with something they need (making the dimension a resource, too); maybe they can only offer their thanks and a favor in return. The local problem may or may not bear any relation to the ongoing conflicts of the campaign. In either case, the most important aspect of the dimension is the problem the PCs must solve.

COMMON DIMENSIONAL STORIES

In the Superheroes genre, dimensional travel stories often revolve around certain basic plots. These include:

Save The Dimension: Something’s wrong with the other dimension and only Our Heroes can put a stop to it! This ranges from having to overthrow the Evil Dimensional Overlord, to preventing the dimension from self-destructing due to some environmental or mystical catastrophe.

See The Sights: This more light-hearted sort of scenario features a dimension the PCs are just there to experience for the sheer fun of it. Typically the dimensions in question are humorously goofy (Cartoon World, Sit-Com World) or historically intriguing (alternate Earths where Rome still rules, for example).

Survive The Trip: In this scenario, whatever’s wrong with the dimension (typically an Evil Dimensional Overlord) is so powerful that even a team of experienced superheroes has no hope of defeating him. Once the PCs find themselves in such a dimension, their goal is to survive and find a way home again, not to put a stop to the wrongness. (But of course, in more optimistic games, you may want to give the PCs a chance to figure out a way to right the wrong so they can come back and defeat it later in the campaign.)

EMBODY A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A set of dimensions can physically represent a system of concepts (usually, but not necessarily, mystical or philosophical ones). The environment and inhabitants of each dimension illustrate the dimension’s guiding concept. If the overall setting includes gods, they certainly dwell in conceptual dimensions.

Moral or philosophical concepts make a good basis for a set of dimensions. In the Abrahamic tradition, for instance, the opposing moral forces of Good and Evil each have their own dimension: Heaven, the realm of God, and Hell, the realm of Satan. A setting based on Taoist ideas might feature dimensions of Yin and Yang, the cosmic principles of stasis and energy.

The Champions Universe employs two sets of morally-aligned dimensions. The four cosmic principles of Order, Chaos, Art, and Nature each have their own remote and abstract dimension. Locally, Earth emanates four spirit-realms that represent these concepts projected into the more concrete form of Human activities and beliefs: the syncretic Heaven of Elysium for Order and the “ethical” religions; the Netherworld, a fusion of every Hell ever imagined, for Chaos; Faerie, the realm of wild magic and pagan mythology, for Nature; and Babylon, the City of Man, for the secular realm and Artifice. (See Chapter Four for more information on these dimensions.)

A set of dimensions can also embody the forces mystics call upon, or the system of concepts that underlies their magic (or, for that matter, some system of science). For instance, if you base a setting’s magic on the classic four elements of Fire, Air, Water, and Earth, you could design a realm around each element, with suitable gods, elemental spirits, and an environment based entirely on that element. A world of Taoist magic might have spirit-realms of Earth, Fire, Metal, Water, and Wood instead. The seven astrological planets, the ten sephiroth of kabbalism, the runes of Northern Europe, the cards of the tarot, or the eight trigrams of the I Ching are other mystical systems around which you could build sets of dimensions... and of course you can always create your own occult philosophical framework and use that as the basis for your Multiverse.

HABITAT

Other dimensions provide a home for creatures of magic and Fantasy, from goblins to gods. This becomes especially important for campaigns set on Earth, such as most Superhero, Urban Fantasy, and historical Fantasy games. Gods, demons, dragons, and other magical creatures conspicuously do not exist on Earth: as long as the campaign setting preserves the illusion that it could be the “real” world, the monsters and magical races need to live somewhere else. The “other dimension” can obviously be another world, or it might be a hidden aspect of Earth that most people never see and cannot reach. For example, Clive Barker’s novel *WeaveWorld* features a Fantasy-realm hidden inside a carpet.



Fantasy realms with no connection to Earth still may need other dimensions. Spirit-realms and Otherworlds appear in mythology around the world. Netherworlds of the dead are common; so are mystic realms of the gods. Any place beyond a culture's experience tends to become an Otherworld as well: traveler's tales like the *Odyssey*, Mandeville's *Travels*, the stories of Sinbad the Sailor, and the voyages of St. Brendan feature visits to supernatural realms of pure Fantasy, from the Earthly Paradise to the borders of Hell. Other places that normal people can't reach, like the Hollow Earth or the interior of a fairy mound, might be treated as other dimensions as well.

Magic can also be hidden in the past or future. For instance, a campaign might involve creatures and magic from ancient Atlantis intruding on the modern world. The Atlantean Age (a time and place of High Fantasy) becomes the other dimension from whence the threat comes. In the course of the campaign, the heroes might even travel back in time to visit Atlantis themselves.

RESOURCE

Some dimensions give characters something of value. Substances from a supernatural plane may have uses in magic. For instance, a wizard who wants to craft a powerful magic wand might visit a faerie realm in search of a unicorn's horn or dragon bones, while a demonologist could forge a deadly magic sword in the fires of Hell. Alternatively, heroes might need a legendary magic item owned by an inhabitant of a mystic realm. Imagine superheroes who need Thor's magic belt of strength to subdue an unstoppable villain, for example.

Dimensions may offer that most important of resources — information — in the form of knowledgeable spirits or records long lost to the mortal world. European grimoires describe several demons who specialize in arcane lore. In H. P. Lovecraft's *The Dream-Quest Of Unknown Kadath*, dreamer Randolph Carter consults scrolls written by sages "too wise to be born in the waking world." Of course, some gods traditionally know the future or all the lore hidden from mortals: if you can't get an answer from Apollo's oracle at Delphi, go to Mount Olympus and beg an answer from the god in person.

Gods and other powerful entities may become the patrons of characters. A patron deity may offer advice and the occasional helpful miracle. On the other hand, patron deities demand a lot of service in return. Of course, Servants of Higher Powers accept this sort of arrangement already.

Characters may even find ways to exploit the natural (or supernatural) features of a dimension. Sometimes, mystics already know the utility of a dimension. In occult tradition, for instance, visitors to the Astral Plane can travel in spirit-form around the world, or to various other mystic realms.

In these cases, the GM must decide what resource a dimension offers to characters, and what obstacles they must face to get it. Depending on the campaign, the resource might turn the dimension into an important part of the milieu, or it might be the setting for a one-shot treasure hunt. If the GM develops a dimension in much detail, though, odds are good that players will exploit the dimension in ways the GM never planned.

DESIGNING DIMENSIONS

Comic books, mythology, Fantasy, and Science Fiction offer many sorts of otherworlds, from the purely mystical to the purely scientific/rational. Some dimensions resemble Earth; others look completely alien. Once you decide on the purpose and function a dimension should have in your campaign, you can invent that plane's environments and the creatures that dwell within them. Once again, though, don't worry about details that won't actually appear in adventures. For most dimensions, you can get by with a few paragraphs about the nature of the dimension, what it looks like, and who lives there, with a few specific locations and creatures described in detail.

TYPES OF DIMENSIONS

Here are some types of dimensions that frequently appear in comic books, Science Fiction, mythology, and Fantasy stories. Select the types that suit your campaign. For instance, a Fantasy Hero campaign based on Greek myth would only need a divine realm (Olympus) and a realm of the dead, with "heaven" and "hell" subdivisions (the Elysian Fields and Tartarus). A Champions campaign, on the other hand, might include every sort of dimension.

ABSTRACT DIMENSIONS

Some dimensions are built around concepts such as numbers, fear, colors, or time. These dimensions exist as representations of the concept. For instance, you could build a dimension of time around some familiar metaphor or image, such as a river, a clock, or a calendar. A visitor to a "Plane of Time" might see a river with images of historical events flickering across its surface — upstream for the past, downstream for the future. Another possibility is a realm consisting entirely of timepieces, such as clocks, hourglasses and sundials. Cosmic entities often dwell in abstract dimensions.

An abstract dimension provides more than just surreal images. The inhabitants of such dimensions — talking numbers on a mathematical dimension, incarnate phobias and anxieties on a plane of fear, and so on — know a great deal about their particular concept. For instance, the dwellers on a Plane of Time can see the past and future, and the creatures on a Plane of Fear know what scares everyone, including the characters' arch-enemy. Encounters with these creatures emphasizes role-playing more than combat — the environment is so abstract there just isn't much for characters to affect. How do you get in a fight with "red," "5," or "July 13, 1964"?





AFTERLIFE REALMS

Just about every culture has some notion of an afterlife. The earliest distinct lands of the dead take the form of dismal subterranean realms such as the Egyptian Duat or Greek Hades, where the spirits of the dead mope around in a perpetual grey funk. When the Sumerian hero Gilgamesh summoned the ghost of his dead friend Enkidu, the slain hero said he'd rather be the poorest man among the living than king of the entire Underworld. Somewhat later, various cultures invented separate realms of the dead where the righteous dwelled in perpetual joy, and the wicked received perpetual torment. The Greeks, for instance, supplemented the dreary Underworld of the common dead with the bright and pleasant Elysian Fields for heroes and the virtuous, and the dungeon-realm of Tartarus for extraordinary sinners and enemies of the gods.

HEAVENS

Afterlife realms that reward the virtuous can generically be called Heavens. In addition to the shining cloud-land of pop Christianity, notable Heavens include Muslim Jannat, the ultimate pleasure-garden; the Field of Reeds from Egyptian myth, an idealized version of life along the Nile; the Norse Valhalla, where heroes fight and feast while they wait for Ragnarok; and the bejeweled Buddha-Land paradises from Buddhism.

Heavens emphasize the parts of life that people enjoy. Valhalla is simply a Norse hall with a party that never ends, only no one gets hurt (permanently) or suffers a hangover. The people of the arid Middle East saw Heaven as a well-watered garden.

Jews and Christians living in the urbanized Roman Empire added an idealized city of the blessed — a heavenly Jerusalem. Heavens also feature extravagant luxury: everything is made of gold and jewels, including the flowers and trees; perfume and music fill the air; fountains flow with milk, honey, or wine. No one has to do chores or go to the bathroom.

HELLS

Hells are afterlife dimensions where the wicked receive their punishment. While some theologians may speak of Hell metaphysically, as separation from deity or simple annihilation, many cultures imagine Hells of very concrete torture: the damned burn, freeze, boil; are crushed, pierced, sliced, and torn; endure stench from excrement, burning sulphur, or blood; receive their torment from demonic spirits or ferocious beasts. The two most creative and extensive visions of Hell are the *Inferno* of Dante Alighieri and the manifold Hells from Chinese popular religion.

The demons who populate a Hell often have perverse motives. On the one hand, they exist to punish sin. On the other hand, many traditions say they encourage those sins, or readily torment the virtuous if they can escape into the world of mortals. Hell dimensions not only receive evil, the infernal powers try to spread it. Hell-gods like the Sumerian Ereshkigal, Greek Hades, or Abrahamic Satan make excellent arch-villains for a mystical setting.

ALTERNATE EARTHS

One important class of dimensions consists of different versions of the Earth (or even other dimensions; see page 99). It's the same world... but some crucial factor is changed.

ALTERNATE HISTORIES

In the most common sort of alternate world, history took another path. Alternate histories are based on “What If” questions: What if the South won the Civil War? What if Christianity never caught on? This allows you to keep history the same until a crucial “breakpoint” is reached, then devise a version of Earth based on what happens when things don't turn out the same way they did in real-world history. The modern world could be very different, in both gross and subtle ways.

Alternate histories based on big changes usually come from Science Fiction. Some SF stories posit alternate histories resulting from meddling time travelers. One interpretation of quantum mechanics suggests that all possible histories could exist, and another set of SF stories explores the possibility of contact and travel between these worlds of What If.

Gamemasters may hesitate to include alternate histories in a Multiverse with mystical dimensions, gods, and cosmic entities. When Earth's history splits, do other dimensions split as well? For instance, do damned souls from alternate Earths go to separate, alternate Hells? In a mystical Multiverse, alternate histories provoke many such questions. Fortunately, only comic book worlds give characters the option of visiting both alternate histories and mystical dimensions, and comic book writers generally ignore the resulting complications.

Some stories send characters to more personal alternate histories. The most famous example is the movie *It's A Wonderful Life*, in which a man sees what his town would be like if he'd never lived. Alternate histories also occur because someone makes a wish to be President, or to make some other change to his personal circumstances. Such personal alternate worlds have long been a staple of Fantasy. However, these “dimensions” exist only in relation to one character: other people don't usually travel back and forth between the world where Joe Schlumpf is a janitor and the world where he made a wish to be a billionaire.

ALTERNATE GENRES

A world can be more drastically altered by showing it in terms of another genre. Typical examples include contemporary Earth turned into a Fantasy world, or a world where everyone is a humanoid, talking animal. It's hard to imagine how any change to history could result in such a world. Alternate-genre worlds sometimes exist to make a satiric point, but more often they're pure whimsy.

A few Science Fiction writers combine alternate genres with alternate history. Stories like Poul Anderson's *Operation Chaos* or Robert Heinlein's *Magic, Incorporated* portray alternate worlds where magic supplements and partly replaces technology.

These stories presume magic is an alternate “technology” the real world neglected. Though these stories tend to be whimsical in intent, they develop their magic with the rigorous internal logic of Science Fiction.

Most Fantasy worlds are Earth translated more completely into another genre. The Fantasy world has different continents, as well as sorcerers, dragons, elves, and whatnot — but Humans are still human. They ride horses through forests of Earthly trees, and raise Earthly crops and animals on their farms. But some write Humanity out of the picture altogether, such as an alternate Earth where the dinosaurs evolved to sentience and humanoid form and primates never had the chance to leave the forests.

OTHER PHYSICAL UNIVERSES

Another dimension might be a universe as large as Earth's, but with somewhat different natural laws. For instance, matter in Earth's universe collects in spheres. In another universe, gravity might pull matter into lines, doughnuts, or other shapes. This is a primarily a science-fictional sort of dimension, but such a universe could include magic, too — just not as the defining feature of reality.

ASTRAL PLANES

The Astral Plane is a new idea with ancient roots. Philosophers and mystics in Greece and India thought souls might dwell among the stars, and be made of the same celestial substance — so they spoke of spirits with astral bodies, dwelling in astral worlds. Occultists like Eliphas Levi and Madame Blavatsky updated the idea and imagined a spiritual extension of the universe called the Astral Plane.

Philosophy aside, mystics generally describe the Astral Plane as an aspect of reality that most people can't see or touch, but in which spiritual phenomena take place. Ghosts and spirits dwell on the Astral Plane; souls of the living may travel the Astral Plane as well, clothed in a body of spirit instead of flesh. Astral creatures can travel around the world instantly. The astral substance responds to and records human thoughts: thus, a mystic attuned to the Astral Plane can obtain visions of the past, and a magician can shape the astral substance by force of will, creating “thought-forms” to help or harm the spirits of other people.

Mystics generally agree the basic Astral Plane coexists with the Earth. A dream about a distant place may actually be a confused memory of an astral visit to that location. Some occultists say all dreams play themselves out on the Astral Plane, or at least *an* Astral Plane — some mystics believe several tenuous dimensions exist, of greater or lesser corporeality, with God dwelling in the most abstract and immaterial plane. Other mystics say the Astral Plane has layers representing various mystical concepts and stages of enlightenment.



For practical magicians and mystics, the Astral Plane matters most as a medium for spiritual travel. In their astral bodies, they can visit distant locations, hobnob with spirits, and spy on unsuspecting people. An Astral Plane may also grant access to various other dimensions. The basic Astral Plane has no environment of its own: it's just an aspect of Earth that most people can't visit. The GM can add features such as ghost buildings — the astral shadows of buildings destroyed in the material world, created by the thoughts of the people who lived and worked in them.

If the Multiverse includes an Astral Plane as a "between place" giving access to other dimensions, a GM can give this realm any appearance he wants — occultists haven't provided detailed or consistent descriptions. In comic books, this limbo between worlds often looks like a colorful chaos of blobs and streamers. Such a "between place" usually doesn't have inhabitants of its own, but dimensional travelers may encounter visitors from other planes.

DIVINE REALMS

In mythology, gods often dwell up in the sky, below the earth, in the deeps of the sea, or otherwise beyond the normal world. For the Norse, their gods lived in the realm of Asgard, literally over the rainbow. The Sumerian god Ea lived in Apsu, the primal sea underneath the world. Divine realms overlap with afterlife realms: some god typically rules the dead, such as the Greek Hades or the Hindu Yama. Many divine realms also serve as a Heaven for the virtuous dead.

Aside from the magnificent temple-palaces of the gods themselves, though, divine realms tend to look much like the natural world. The halls of Asgard are thatched in gold — but a giant built the town wall of ordinary stone. The Greek gods sleep in beds, not on clouds. In Chinese myth, the peaches of Heaven make people immortal, but they grow on a tree like normal fruit.

The most important inhabitants of a divine realm are, of course, the gods themselves. Supernatural animals may also appear, such as the horses that pull Apollo's sun-chariot, the giant rat steed of Ganesha, or Odin's ravens and wolves. A few mortals may find themselves in a god-realm as servants: Zeus brought at least two mortal lovers, Ganymede and Hebe, to serve as his cup-bearers in Olympus. If a divine realm is also an afterlife realm, the spirits of the dead also dwell there.

ELEMENTAL PLANES

Elemental dimensions emphasize a particular form of matter or energy. For instance, a Plane of Water might be an endless ocean, while a Plane of Air might feature cloud-islands with no ground beneath them. Other potential elements include Fire, Earth, Wood, Metal, Light, Darkness, Ice, or Electricity. Science and technology suggest more exotic possibilities such as a Plastic Plane or a Realm of Radioactivity. If a setting's magic or superpowers concentrates on elemental effects, that Multiverse probably includes elemental planes. Elemental spirits often come from such realms.

When designing an elemental plane, consider whether humans can visit the dimension, and how

easily they can survive. For instance, if the Plane of Earth is entirely solid, visiting becomes quite difficult, while a Plane of Fire might be deadly. That's fine if you intend such visits to be rare feats requiring super-technology or powerful magic. If you want characters to visit elemental planes more easily, adjust the environment to make it more hospitable. The Plane of Earth, for instance, might include vast cave networks; while a Plane of Fire might only be uncomfortably hot in some places, not completely filled with flame. Alternatively, adjust the visitors: the dimension might transform visitors into its own substance.

FAERIE REALMS

In myths and fairy tales, when people venture beyond the fields they know, they enter a fantastic world of elves, monsters, and enchantment. These faerie realms often take the form of islands, mountains, or other places set apart from the rest of the world. Faerie realms may superficially resemble Earth, but with extravagant additions: a castle is made of gold and spins like a top; an island can perch atop a mile-high pillar; a mountain is made of glass and is too sheer to climb. Normal-looking animals can talk, and share their realm with dragons, unicorns, manticores, and other creatures of fancy. Supernatural people and nature-spirits such as elves, trolls, dryads, or tengu live in faerie realms as well. Any humans are probably witches or wizards, princesses held captive in enchanted palaces, or humble woodcutters or peddlers who offer valuable advice or a magical item in return for some act of kindness.

Depending on the needs of the setting, a GM might create a dimension based on one mythology, several realms based on different mythologies, or throw multiple mythologies into one realm. In some stories, anyone can enter a faerie realm by sailing into unknown waters or walking into the forest. Other stories separate Earth from Faerie to a greater degree, with few portals between them. Perhaps people need magic to enter a faerie realm, or the favor (or curse) of a native. Faerie realms also range from the size of continents, where heroes cross seven kingdoms and seven seas to reach their goal, to enchanted elven palaces hidden beneath a single hill.

Country folk of long ago created fantastic versions of the everyday world around them, such as trees, springs, cottages, and the castle on the hill. But why should mythmaking stop with the Middle Ages? Gamemasters can bring Faerie up to date by placing a Fantasy twist on the modern world. Perhaps modern cities have their own Faerie analogs. Instead of forest, mountain, and sea, you enter the Otherworld down a disused subway tunnel or driving the wrong way down a certain one-way street. Instead of a hut on fowl's legs, the witch lives in a suburban bungalow built of human bones, with a two-dragon garage. You receive oracles at a drive-through window. The princess lives in a penthouse apartment instead of a golden tower, with a robotic steel manticore to hold her captive. A modern faerie realm could make a splendid addition to an Urban Fantasy campaign.



POCKET WORLDS

A “pocket world” is a space entirely tucked within some object — for instance, a painting you can step into and it becomes real. A djinn bottle (such as Darmondrat’s Palace, described beginning on page 86 of *Fantasy Hero Battlegrounds*) is another example: the interior of the bottle is a “dimension” whose defining attribute is that once once you enter, you cannot leave until someone outside uncorks the bottle. A pocket world can have any properties imaginable.

Characters can’t reach pocket worlds from just anywhere, no matter how complete their Extra-Dimensional Movement. Instead, a character must find the object that contains the pocket world. Extra-Dimensional Movement works at that point (even if the character can’t figure out how to activate or use the object). In most cases the object itself carries the magic to bring people to the pocket world (in game terms, it has an Extra-Dimensional Movement power built into it).

WEIRD PLACES

Some dimensions are simply strange places for characters to visit. The plane’s environment is not at all like Earth. The world might be made of different substances... or matter might not gather in a “world” at all... or the dimension might not be made of anything resembling Earthlike matter. The strange environment may well pose tactical challenges to visitors, if the dimension is intrinsically harmful or difficult for people to live in. Weird Places may change the rules of combat, too, or give everyone some new power. For instance, the laws of “physics” in a strange dimension might mean everyone has Teleportation 1m for every point of EGO they possess, but the Range modifier increases to -1 per 1m of distance.

Weird Places usually lack any connection to Human myths or magic. Such dimensions are especially common in comic book settings. Extradimensional tyrants who want to conquer Earth typically come from Weird Place dimensions (Skarn and Tyrannon certainly do; Istvatha V’han, on the other hand, does not). In some Fantasy stories, hells may have completely alien environments — the realms of the chaos-gods and demons in Michael Moorcock’s “Elric of Melniboné” stories are good examples.

For a quick-and-dirty Weird Place, open a dictionary at random and pick out the first concrete noun or adjective that catches your eye. Repeat several times. Build the dimension around as many of these words as possible. Choose more words if the first set leaves you stumped.

Example: “sickle,” “gable,” “anchor,” “strawberry,” “white,” “dinosaur.”

The heroes fail a Dimensional Navigation roll and find themselves in a weird dimension, and their Dimension Travel Device won’t let them try again for several hours. At first they have a hard time distinguishing any features of the environment, because everything is stark white (giving the GM more time to think). All Sight Perception rolls and Ranged attacks are at -2 because of the low contrast between objects.

As they learn to see the slight differences in light and shadow around them, the characters recognize that they’re in some sort of forest. They’re surrounded by giant strawberry plants lined up in rows — some sort of farm. As they push through the plants, they spot the gable of a house in the distance, and head in that direction. They find a dinosaur tethered outside the house. Around the corner walks a man, or at least a manlike figure; he has an anchor for a head. He screams and recoils when he sees the heroes (even stranger since he has no visible mouth), and whips out a pair of large sickles....

It’s not a great dimension, but it only took five minutes to design. The fight scene will give the GM time to think of ways to put the adventure back on track.

DESIGNING THE ENVIRONMENT

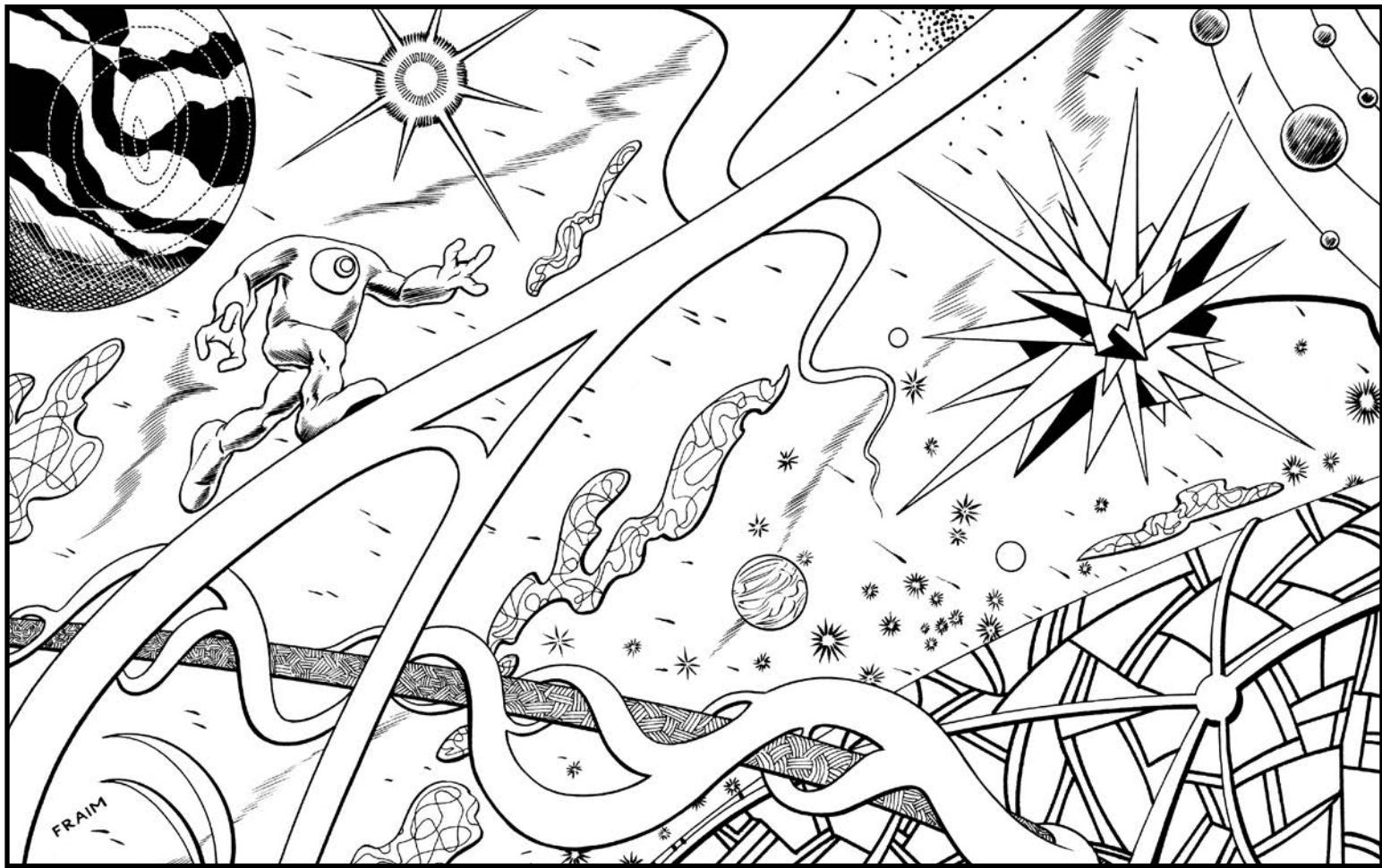
After you determine a dimension’s story function, you should select the dominant features of the environment. If you intend to use the dimension for more than a brief visit, you may also want to think about the overall shape of the plane.

Most of the work is already done if you crib a dimension from mythology. This discussion is mostly about dimensions you build from scratch — especially the Weird Places so common in comic books — but you might want to make a mythic realm more otherworldly than in the old legends.

SIZE AND COSMOLOGY

How big is the dimension? A dimension might be billions of light-years across, like the real Universe, or might be no larger than a city block, or anything in between. The Champions Universe Multiverse described in Chapter Four (and represented by the Random Dimension Generator tables below) assumes that Earth’s dimension is very large, and that most dimensions are smaller by some degree. Your own setting may or may not make the same assumption.

If the dimension’s big enough, does matter collect in stars and planets of some sort, or does this dimension create less familiar structures? The “world” could be flat, or doughnut-shaped, an endless cylinder, the *inside* of a sphere, or some other shape — or have no shape at all.



"DITKOSPACE"

Comic books often show chaotic dimensions of taffypull blobs, drifting platforms and streamers, tunnels and doors in space, and similar oddities. The most notable depicter of such dimensions was Steve Ditko in the early Doctor Strange stories, so these chaotic planes are called "Ditkospaces" in tribute to the master.

"PATHWAY" DIMENSIONS

Many minor dimensions are essentially linear. Characters have only one way to go in them, or at least only one way worth going. The lone path might be a road, a tunnel, a staircase, or a series of platforms hanging in the void. Sometimes the "pathway" works more subtly, by giving the characters strong reasons to go in one direction: for example, going in toward a lone planet instead of out into the fiery rings bounding the dimension, or following special paths that increase the characters' movement rate.

THEME ENVIRONMENTS

Ditkospace is just about the outer limit of dimensional strangeness. Dimension designers can also obtain interesting effects by taking one bit of reality and patterning an entire world around it.

LANDFORMS

A dimension might be all mountains, all river valley, all ocean, all desert, all plains, all swamp, all caverns, all badlands (*Roadrunner* cartoon style), all glacier or icecap, all volcanic, all canyon, and so on.

For instance, imagine a world that's all canyons. The PCs arrive in a little canyon. At its mouth, they see this is a gully in the walls of a bigger canyon. If they try to get out of the big canyon, they find it's just a channel of a vastly greater canyon, hundreds of miles wide with furrowed walls a dozen miles high. Beyond those walls lies another vast channel, and another....

ORGANIC FORMS

One life-form might dominate a dimension, or a dimension could take its shape from some living thing (or part of a living thing). Possibilities include trees, flowers, vines, insects, fish, animals, birds, humans, or body parts such as hands, heads, eyes, or bones. Imagine a Ditkospace with giant heads floating among the blobs, their dreams visible through their eyes, or a dimension consisting of mile-wide endless vines floating in the void, with people building cities in the flowers. Dimensions based on organic forms can be especially eerie or poetic.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Time doesn't necessarily pass at the same rate in another dimension as it does on Earth. If time passes more slowly, characters might spend a few hours in another dimension and find that a much longer time passed on Earth. Conversely, if time passes more quickly, a week in another dimension might be a day or less on Earth — perhaps only a few seconds. The latter is far more common in fiction, since it allows protagonists to go away, have adventures, and return without messing up his life or causing people to wonder where he's been.

The Time Chart provides an easy standard for time passage that differs from Earth. One dimension might

operate on a 1 day = 1 Earth-week ratio, another on a 1 day = 5 Earth-hours ratio, and so on.

Time differentials, especially cases where time passes very slowly compared to Earth, can really screw up a character's life. A GM shouldn't have the PCs spend a day in another dimension and return to find a year has passed on Earth and everyone thinks they're dead or skipped out unless he plans to craft a whole adventure or two around this problem — and you know the players won't be upset at the gratuitous disruption of their characters' lives.

ARTIFICIAL FORMS

Man-made objects such as buildings and machines provide more themes for dimensions. At least, these things are man-made on Earth; other dimensions, they might occur naturally, or seem to. A dimension might be all one huge building: all castle, or all factory, bureaucratic office building, or whatever, with no "outside."

A factory dimension would overlap with dimensions based on machinery. Imagine a dimension filled with clockwork, giant computer circuits, or the pipes, boilers, and cooling towers of an infinite oil refinery.

Other manufactured items can suggest striking dimensions as well. A fight in a dimension of mirrors could get interesting. A world that's all graveyard or ruins works well for a moody, downbeat adventure.

The Dutch graphic artist M. C. Escher produced marvelous pictures of warped architectural spaces where up, down, and sideways intersect in mind-twisting ways. Dimensions in this style, where one person's floor becomes another person's wall or ceiling, can be called "Escherspaces."

GEOMETRIC FORMS

Pure geometric forms provide another option. Dimensions based solely on geometric forms tend to be very simple, suitable only for one-shot use, but geometric forms combine well with other sorts of themes. M. C. Escher, for instance, did a picture of a strange planetoid shaped like a tetrahedron (a 4-sided pyramid) entirely covered with city: a combination of geometry with an artificial form.

UNUSUAL SUBSTANCES

Another way to make dimensions more exotic is to change what objects are made of. On Earth, for instance, trees are made of wood, animals are made of meat and bone, and the ground is rock or soil. On another dimension, perhaps everything is mineral: the trees are rock and the animals are metal and crystal. Or perhaps the trees are made of meat and bone, while the animals are made of wood or other vegetable substances. A dimension where everything, including the ground, is animal, alive, and mobile could be very strange and dangerous. Other substances to consider include ice, gelatin, plastic, various liquids, clouds, and luminous force.

COLOR SCHEME

What colors are most common in the dimension? Earthly skies are blue, except when grey or white clouds cover them, or at sunset. What color is another dimension's sky, assuming it has one? What color are the inhabitants, if any? Some dimensions might have a more limited range of colors than Earth. A dimension might even lack colors entirely: everything is in shades of grey.

NATURAL LAWS

Does the dimension have an intrinsic bias toward some forces and away from others? Worlds where magic works and technology doesn't occur often in Fantasy fiction; worlds where Science and Sorcery work together equally well crop up sometimes in the comics, and there could certainly be worlds that feature both, but with one working better than the other.

If a dimension embodies some source of mystical power, that particular energy or force dominates the plane's environment. Elemental planes, of course, are dominated by their particular elements, such as Fire, Air, or Metal. A plane that embodies the Taoist concept of Yin would be dark, quiet, and discourage motion (perhaps through a perpetual Suppress on Movement Powers). A plane of Yang, on the other hand, would blaze with light, energy, and movement. Of course, magic or science that calls upon the dimension's favored element, force, or principle becomes more powerful in that dimension... perhaps dangerously so, if a character cannot control the results. Magic based on contrary principles becomes weaker, or might not work at all.

Utopian worlds of goodness and hellish dimensions of evil are common in fiction too. Some Fantasy writers posit worlds dominated by Order or Chaos, or caught in conflict between those forces; Chapter Four adds Art and Nature as conceptual forces that could dominate a world. Any combination is possible: one dimension might be oriented to Order, Nature, and evil, with technology dominant; another is neutral on the Order/Chaos axis, and tends toward Art, Good, and Magic.

Dimensions dominated by Order display tightly-knit societies with restrictive laws and well-defined social classes. They're the safest dimensions for visitors who follow the rules... but the deadliest for visitors who don't. In some Orderly dimensions, simply being a visitor may be against the rules!

Chaotic dimensions, on the other hand, emphasize personal freedom, with many options open to individuals. The cost of such freedom, however, is the loss of security that a strong collective can offer. Even if most of the inhabitants are kindly, rogue elements might attack visitors. On the other hand, if the people tend toward evil and hostility, it's easier to hide in a Chaos-realm and the heroes might find an "underground" willing to help.

Art-dominated planes could have any sort of society; Art shows itself in people's relationship to their environment. Their inhabitants either shape Art planes to their will; or in the dimension, apparently natural processes produce objects that on Earth must be made by people.

Theoretically, a Nature plane could have any sort of society, but tribal societies seem more "natural" to many people in the developed world. Nature-dominated dimensions may be wildernesses of some sort, or at least dominated by Life. A garden could be considered the intersection of Nature with Order.

In extreme cases, worlds dominated by one force might act as consecrated ground. A Nature spirit might suffer damage on an Art plane, just like a devil would on holy ground.

INHABITANTS

What about the people and other creatures? Anything is possible in another universe, but remember that the players need something they can interact with. Presenting a truly alien being is a formidable challenge: it's great if you can do it, but difficult. You can achieve a feeling of strangeness by shortcuts such as combining familiar elements in unfamiliar ways. For example, people who talk are familiar, and mountains are familiar. Talking mountains are strange. Humans are ordinary, and things made of silver are ordinary; Humans made of silver are exotic.

CLASSIC TYPES

Comic books, Fantasy fiction, and folklore establish certain traditions for the people of other dimensions. You might even call them clichés, but they work.

PRETTY MUCH HUMAN

No matter how bizarre and unearthly the dimension looks, the people resemble Humans in most important ways. They may have blue skin, funny hair, horns, bumps on their heads, wings, or antennae, but they still look awfully Human.

The inhabitants of mythological Otherworlds tend to follow this pattern. European faerie-folk usually look quite Human, albeit sometimes much larger or smaller than normal people. (Insect wings and antennae, and even the pointed ears, are modern additions.) Many cultures think their gods look Human, though sometimes with modifications: Hinduism gives its gods extra arms, legs, and heads; the Egyptian gods often had Human bodies with animal heads.

LONE DIMENSION LORD

In the comics, many dimensions have only one inhabitant, a powerful spirit who's invariably hostile and usually psychotic. (Well, what do you expect? He's been in solitary for centuries.) These funny-looking humanoids possess enough magic powers to give a group of PCs a decent fight, but most of them are just petty obstacles. Similarly, some dimensions are populated, but utterly dominated by a dimension lord who's so powerful his existence and presence influence everything that goes on in that plane (see below).

HUMANOID ANIMALS

People in other dimensions sometimes look like humanoid versions of familiar Earthly animals. Cat-men, lizard-men, and bird-men seem especially popular in comic books, though not in mythological otherworlds. In Fantasy, Humans sometimes share the world with races of animal-men.

Gods sometimes have animal attributes. Totemic gods, such as the Native American Coyote or African Anansi, take either human or animal form. The Egyptian gods took animal forms as well, and were portrayed with animal heads to show this duality.

Spirits and other supernatural creatures may combine the Human form with animal parts that symbolize the creature's moral qualities or power. The common image of an angel is simply a Human with white, feathered wings: angels fly up and down from Heaven, so they're part bird. Devils fly too, but they have bat wings to show they belong in darkness and the caverns of the underworld.

MYTHOLOGICAL CREATURES

The GM can show that another dimension is a place of fantasy by populating it with creatures from familiar Earthly mythology. For some reason, dragons seem especially popular, but mythology offers plenty of other wondrous and hideous creatures.

SPIRITS

Some of the classic dimension types have spirits as their chief inhabitants. Spirits of the dead, of course, dwell in afterlife realms (this may include the Astral Plane), while elementals live on elemental planes. Spirit realms often include gods, too. Less standardized dimensions may host types of spirits you invent yourself.

CULTURE

The societies in mystic dimensions are often as stereotyped as the inhabitants themselves. Nothing keeps you from inventing complex and original cultures, but sometimes an adventure is best served by a cliché (or at least, that's what the myths describe).

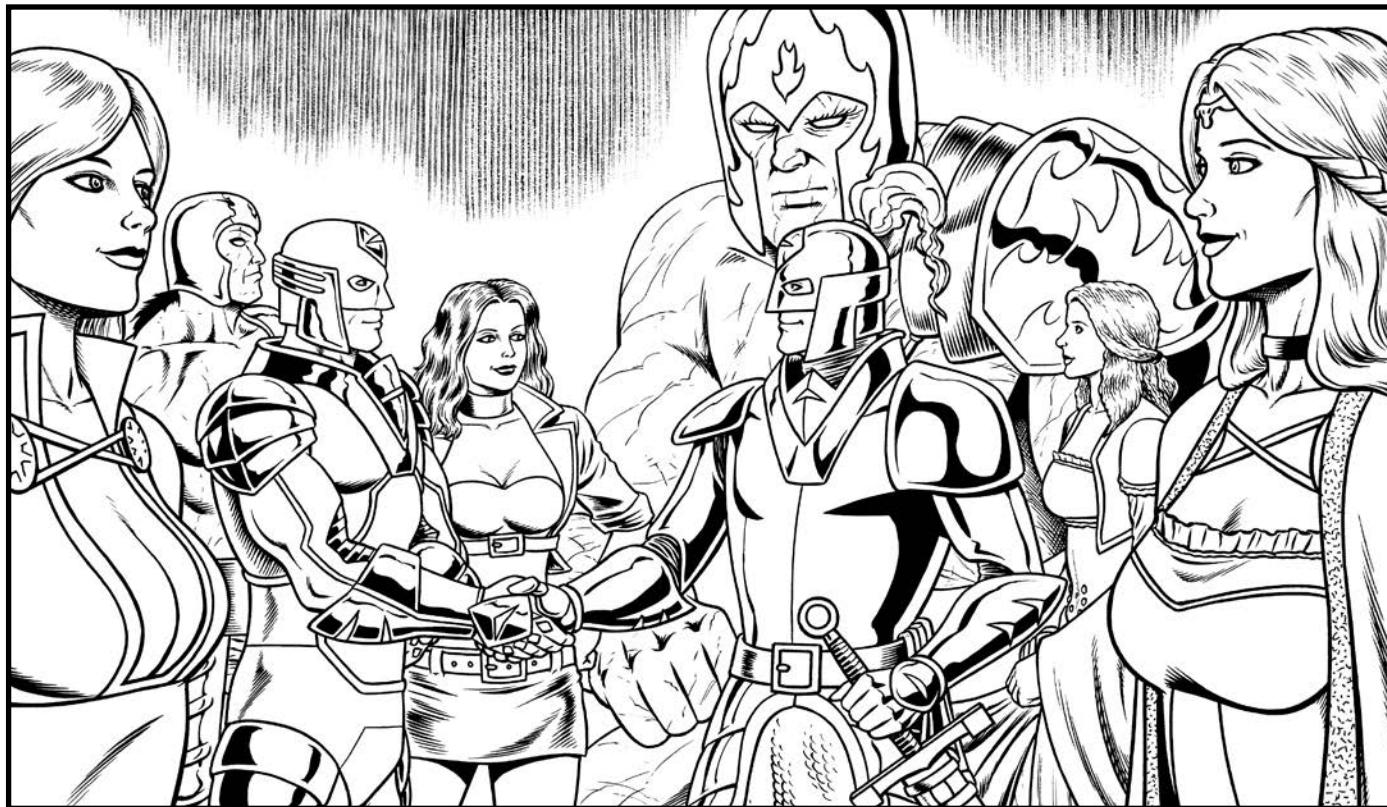
JUST LIKE THE MORTAL WORLD

People tend to imagine the gods and spirits living just like the people themselves. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, Christians imagined both angels and devils forming imperial bureaucracies or feudal hierarchies, complete with noble titles and civil service appointments. The totemic gods and eerie spirits of the Australian Aborigines live by hunting and gathering. The Egyptians believed the blessed dead received an eternal life along a sunlit Nile-land of peace and plenty, with the god Osiris as their pharaoh.

ROMANTIC FEUDALISM

Many Fantasy novels send heroes from Earth to sword and sorcery worlds with kings, knights, and an evil wizard causing problems. This is so familiar it needs no further explanation. Faerie-folk and demons sometimes live in quasi-medieval societies as well, mimicking the cultures that invented them. European elves have knights, attendants, kings, and queens. Some Indian demons live in otherworldly cities ruled by kings and priestly Brahmins, while the occasional demon becomes a mystical ascetic.





AFTER THE DARK LORD?

In some campaigns, the heroes might heroically overthrow the tyrannical dimension lord/conqueror. In that case, the GM has some juicy story possibilities as the dimension's society turns upside down. With the old despotic government gone, things get very unstable. (Just look at what happened in the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia.) Some factions will certainly try to recruit the PCs to help them; others may try to kill the PCs, if only to prevent them from allying with the opposition. The PCs may wish they'd left well enough alone! Rebuilding a dimension's society could be a truly epic adventure, though.

6

DIMENSION LORD DESPOTISM

Comic books favor planes ruled by a “dimension lord.” Most dimension lords are not nice people. They command far more power than anyone else in the dimension, and power corrupts them. The government consists of the dimension lord (and perhaps a few minions), who holds the rest of the populace in terrified subjection. The only law is the dimension lord’s whim. Since the heroes’ usual reason for visiting these dimensions is to fight the dimension lord as quickly as possible, characters might not get much opportunity to see the details of how people live under tyranny; they just know it’s not good. If the dimension lord tries to conquer other worlds he is, of course, a “dimensional conqueror.”

EXOTIC HUMAN CULTURES

Societies on Earth are a rich source of material for cultures of other planes. Humans have tried a dizzying variety of social arrangements, ranging from despotic empires to Utopian communes. Some societies plan everyone’s life from cradle to grave; others allow virtual anarchy. Leaders? Humans have followed god-kings, commissioners, presidents, family elders, warlords, merchant princes, emperors, and dozens of other sorts of leader. A GM doesn’t need a degree in history or anthropology, either: a stack of *National Geographic* magazines can provide exotic cultures by the dozen. Or, just read the world news section of the local newspaper.

SATIRIC EXAGGERATION

Other dimensions present opportunities for social satire. To do this, create a society based on some aspect of your own, exaggerated to comedy or horror. Science Fiction writers have done this sort of thing for decades. Why should they have all the fun? Just be sure your players agree with you — or make the adventure enough fun that they don’t care about your politics. The best satire, however, pokes fun at human foibles without reference to current events and conflicts.

Social satire is sharpest if set on an “alternate Earth.” On the other hand, setting the story on a fully invented world lets the satire sneak up on the audience — like in Aesop’s fables, where the animals stand in for Humans.

STRUCTURING THE MULTIVERSE

Once you decide what planes you want, you may want to figure out how they fit together. This isn’t always crucial, but if you plan to have the PCs do a lot of dimension-hopping in your campaign it can add a lot of flavor if you establish that your multiverse is “arranged” in ways that give rise to specific rules and methods of travel, relationships between various dimensions, and so forth. (See Chapter Four for an example.)

When structuring your multiverse, it helps to imagine different planes as finite locations with a particular spacial arrangement. Even if each dimension is really infinite, or they fit together in topologically impossible ways, a spatial metaphor helps you visualize how the various dimensions relate to each other, and how and where people can move between them. Many arrangements are possible, but they fall into a few broad categories.

COTERMINOUS

In this arrangement, each point in one dimension corresponds to one and only one point in another plane. This is easiest if the two dimensions have the same geography; for instance, alternate histories of the same world. One dimension may be a “hidden” aspect of the other, such as a spirit realm that remains invisible and intangible to most people.

The tight correspondence between coterminous dimensions implies some deep connection between the planes. If some dimensions are coterminous and others are not, the coterminous dimensions are probably “near” each other, compared to other planes. More travel takes place between them, and the inhabitants may show strong similarities. For instance, the people of a “Terra Mythica” might look just like the people who live in the corresponding part of the real world as of a thousand years ago or so, but they live beside the spirits, gods, and monsters of each region’s culture.

EMBEDDED

Worlds may exist within pockets of a larger cosmos, like raisins in a muffin. Each dimension might be quite large from inside. In the super-cosmos that contains them all, though, the various dimensions seem enclosed within quite small areas. It may simply be that a natural portal to each dimension is quite small; but characters might have no alternative than to use these portals.

C. S. Lewis’s *The Magician’s Nephew* features an example of embedded dimensions. Portals to Earth, the Fantasy world of Narnia, and an indefinite number of other worlds take the form of pools in a forest, the Wood Between the Worlds. People leave their world by wearing one sort of ring, and can enter another world by putting on another sort of ring and jumping in that dimension’s pool. A campaign world might be similarly embedded in some greater “between place” through which all dimensional travelers must pass.

Alternately, the campaign world itself might be the greater world, with all other dimensions as pocket worlds within it. Dante’s *Divine Comedy* hints at such an arrangement, since the nine layers of Hell exist inside the Earth, descending toward Satan at the center. In a Fantasy world, each god or pantheon might rule its own pocket realm, with access to particular parts of the material world but not to each other.

In an Embedded Multiverse, all travel between dimensions might require use of the “Between Place.” From the embedded planes, Extra-Dimensional Movement leads only to this greater realm; from there, Extra-Dimensional Movement can lead to any world — but perhaps you must locate the appropriate access point. In the latter case, characters only need Extra-Dimensional Movement to one dimension, the Between Place, since that dimension itself provides access to all other worlds. On the other hand, some types of Extra-Dimensional Movement might allow the character to bypass the Between Place and move directly from one dimension to another.

EQUIDISTANT

In another simple arrangement, all dimensions are equally accessible from each other. None are “nearer” or “further away” than any other. The number of dimensions may be large or small.

Equidistance implies that no dimension is easier to reach than any other, and the connections between them are equally strong. In the TV show *Sliders*, the many alternate Earths all seem to be equally accessible, since the characters travel between them at random.

If all the dimensions in a Multiverse are equidistant, the GM may want to remove the option for Extra-Dimensional Movement that accesses a limited group of dimensions. No dimension has a stronger connection or similarity to one plane than another, so what ground exists for defining one group of dimensions as accessible and the others as beyond the Power’s reach?

GEOMETRIC FORM

In this arrangement, you can imagine the dimensions arranged in a simple geometric shape such as a square or a ring. Even if the various worlds aren’t literally arranged in some greater space, the way they interact with each other suggests the geometric form. For instance, a set of Elemental Planes might be connected so you cannot travel directly from one element to its opposite; to pass from the Plane of Fire to the Plane of Water, you must go by way of the Plane of Air or the Plane of Earth. The connections between the four planes suggest a square, even though each plane really is a universe all its own. If you couldn’t travel from one Elemental Plane to any others, but had to go by way of the material world, the four planes might be better imagined as a cross, with each plane as an arm extending from the material world.

Geometric arrangements of planes are most appropriate for settings with a limited number of dimensions, and where all the dimensions follow some common plan. Other sample patterns for a geometrical arrangement of dimensions are the *pakua* wheel of the eight I Ching trigrams, or the “Tree of Life” arrangement of divine emanations from kabbalism.

A geometrical Multiverse might be just a convenient metaphor mystics use to visualize the various dimensions, or it might reflect actual connections or disjunctions between planes. In the latter case, characters might not be able to jump from any dimension to any other. Extra-Dimensional Movement might be restricted to a limited group of planes: characters can only travel to “adjacent” worlds in the pattern.

LAYERS

Many mythologies describe spirit worlds in a specific geometrical arrangement — a vertical stack. Most often, spirits of the dead go to a literal Underworld under the corporeal world, while gods dwell in a heaven above the sky. Some mythologies propose multiple Heavens and Underworlds.



Dante's *Divine Comedy* adapted the layer scheme for Christian cosmology, with nine circles of Hell, seven terraces on the mountain of Purgatory, and seven Heavens. The Aztecs had a thirteen-level heaven and a nine-level underworld.

Layered cosmologies work best when your multiverse includes a finite number of dimensions that all fit within some predefined scheme. Occult theories provide many vertical arrangements of concepts besides the basic Overworld-Mortal World-Underworld pattern. You could create planes linked to the concentric planetary spheres of Ptolemaic astronomy (as Dante did with his Heavens), or the ten emanations from God in kabbalism. Some modern occultists say the astral world is divided into 33 "Aethyrs" through which a spirit-voyager must pass in turn.

In a layered multiverse, Extra-Dimensional Movement might be restricted to a limited group of planes: characters can only travel to the worlds immediately above or below them in the stack.

NETWORK

Large numbers of dimensions may exist, but some are "closer" than others. The dimensions may form definable groups within which travel is relatively easy. Alternatively, each dimension might permit travel to a limited number of other planes: in some cases, you can reach a certain dimension only by traveling through a number of intermediate worlds. The number of dimensions is large enough that the multiverse doesn't form a simple, easily comprehended structure. Instead, it's like a complex network, with each intersection representing a dimension. Extra-Dimensional Movement can take you to any plane connected by a line to the world where you begin.

For a variation, people might be limited to traveling a limited number of steps from their world of origin. Tom Dietz portrays a multiverse with this restriction in the Fantasy series that begins with *Windmaster's Bane*. As in this series, one world (such as Earth) can become a battleground between forces who cannot invade each other.

In such a restrictive Network Multiverse, characters cannot have Extra-Dimensional Movement to reach every dimension. At most, they can travel to a group of dimensions — the cluster immediately accessible from whatever plane they're on.

In a less restrictive Network, characters can possess unlimited Extra-Dimensional Movement, but distinct clusters of interrelated worlds may still exist. For instance, a multiverse might consist of a set of "Inner Planes" with a strong connection to the principal campaign world, and an indefinite number of "Outer Planes" with a weaker connection. Whatever conflicts may erupt between supernatural factions of the Inner Planes, they might pull together to resist an invasion from the forces of an Outer Plane. The main comic book multiverses follow this plan: the realms of the Greek, Norse, Egyptian, and other pantheons cluster around Earth, but the world often faces conquest by the godlike masters of wholly alien dimensions.

COMBINATION

A large and complex multiverse might include more than one of these structures. For instance, the multiverse as a whole might consist of a network. Some of the dimensions in that network might cluster in a set of layers, or some simple geometric form. Other planes might contain embedded sub-worlds. Dimensions within some clusters might be coterminous, though most planes are not. Or, the Multiverse might consist of clusters of dimensions in layers or geometric forms, but each cluster is equidistant from the others. For a third arrangement, whole classes of dimensions might be segregated in layers or a geometrical form, such as Worlds of Law, Chaos, and Neutrality, but the worlds within each layer are equidistant from each other. A combination Multiverse can be as large and complicated as you want, or as small and simple: whatever suits the needs of your campaign.

DIMENSIONAL CONTACT AND TRAVEL

Once you decide what dimensions exist in your multiverse, ask yourself: how do they affect each other? Obviously, other planes don't matter much if people on one dimension can't affect anything on other worlds. For maximum dramatic benefit, there has to be at least some possibility of travel between planes, and/or the capacity for one dimension to influence another somehow.

Would-be plane travelers face a number of questions. So do GMs, as they define the ways characters can move between dimensions, and how plane travelers find their way between the worlds.

FINDING YOUR WAY

When characters move between dimensions, they probably want some way to know where they're going. The *Navigation (Dimensional)* Skill enables characters to find their way. What activity does Dimensional Navigation represent? And what are the consequences for a mistake? (See HSS 240 for a discussion of the *HERO System* rules implications of dimensional navigation.)

Every form of Navigation assumes the character follows certain cues and procedures to reach where he wants to go, whether that involves recognizing landmarks, programming trajectories through hyperspace, following a blazed trail, or something else. The structure of the Multiverse and the possible methods for moving between planes influence the special effects for Navigation (Dimensional). These examples illustrate some of the simpler methods.

NO DIMENSIONAL NAVIGATION

In some settings, Dimensional Navigation might be less important... or completely irrelevant. For an extreme case, travel between dimensions might follow fixed paths, or depend on nexus points the characters cannot control. In short, the characters have no choice where they go. For a less extreme



case, consider a multiverse of coterminous dimensions where characters can only go to corresponding locations. An error in Dimensional Navigation takes characters to the wrong dimension, but they still know where they are. If there aren't many dimensions, the GM might not bother using *Navigation (Dimensional)* Skill at all, because characters have so little chance of making a mistake.

CALCULATE THE FORMULA

Whatever method characters use, from a magic spell to a hyperspatial tube, they cannot steer along the way. They define their destination using some sort of formula, such as a magic circle with the proper words written around the rim, or a quantum resonance pattern programmed into a computer. The formula is very complex, though, and the slightest error can send them to the wrong place in a dimension... or the wrong dimension entirely.

In this system, Navigation (Dimensional) is an Intellect Skill. Once characters work out a formula, however, they can always reach that destination... assuming the dimensions don't move relative to each other, in which case they must re-calculate the formula each time. If formulae don't change, cautious mystics might prefer to use ones worked out by other mystics: they can't go anywhere they want, but they know they can reach certain locations without difficulty.

FOLLOW THE SIGNS

In some settings, interplanar travel involves passage through a "between place," such as hyperspace or an Astral Plane (see *Embedded*, above). Characters steer themselves through this "between place" by sensing certain cues: floating disks that offer views into other dimensions, complex musical chords that indicate what world lies beyond the dimensional barrier, an actual road network with offramps to different times and places (as in Roger Zelazny's *Roadmarks*), or whatever. If they don't spot the right cues, or misinterpret them, they end up in the wrong place in a dimension, the wrong time, or the wrong dimension.

In this system, Navigation (Dimensional) is an Intellect Skill. Perception Rolls might be Complementary. Characters might compile actual maps of the Between Place, showing the routes to reach particular destinations and giving a bonus to attempts to reach those places.

PURE WILL

A dimensional traveler must visualize where he wants to go and let no other thought enter his mind. Any distraction could send him to the wrong location. In this system, Navigation (Dimensional) might be based on EGO instead of INT, or at least EGO Rolls could Complement the Skill. The most important modifier, however, would be familiarity. Dimensional travelers would receive a bonus to reach destinations they know well, and suffer penalties if they know a dimension only through hearsay. The more severely a character fails his Navigation (Dimensional) roll, the further he is from his desired location; failing by 4 or more certainly means the character is in the wrong dimension entirely.

TRAVEL METHODS

Here are the usual methods characters use to move between dimensions. Just about every method described in fiction and folklore fits within one of these methods. Each technique for dimensional travel offers its own benefits, limitations, conditions of use, and consequences for failure. You can select one possible means of interplanar travel for your multiverse, or more, or all of them.

NO TRAVEL

Perhaps character cannot visit other dimensions. They can view them using Senses with the *Dimensional* Sense Modifier, or affect them using powers with the *Transdimensional* Advantage, but they can never leave their own continuum... not while they live, anyway.

This system renders most multiversal questions moot: you don't need to worry how characters move between dimensions, or what Navigation (Dimensional) represents. Other dimensions may provide information, and can even pose a threat if the inhabitants have powers that cross dimensions, but it's harder to make them an important feature of the setting.

One option is to forbid Humans from entering other dimensions, but allow the dwellers on other planes to visit other worlds. This is most plausible in a setting where all other dimensions are spirit-realms, such as afterlife dimensions. Angels, devils, and ghosts might enter the world, but mortals cannot follow them back. The multiverse becomes especially interesting if spirits from the various planes can visit Earth, but not each other's realms. That means the material world becomes the sole venue and prize for their battles and intrigues.

ASTRAL FORM

Some characters can separate their souls from their bodies to act as spirits (or, similarly, can separate their minds from their bodies). In some versions, a character's astral form automatically exists in another dimension — an Astral Plane. In any case, an astral character may have the option of using the Astral Plane as a "between place" to reach other spiritual dimensions. You can structure your multiverse so astral characters can enter other dimensions simply by knowing the right path, and perhaps succeeding at a Navigation (Astral) roll. Alternatively, GMs may decide that an astral character still needs an Extra-Dimensional Movement power to reach other planes.

A further question: is the astral form visible and solid to the inhabitants of other dimensions? If the GM decides astral forms are genuine spirits, it makes sense for them to be visible and solid to other spirits, especially in their special realms. On the other hand, perhaps astral bodies cannot leave the Astral Plane. An astral character can watch events on other planes, invisible and intangible, but can affect that world only if he has powers with suitable Advantages (*Transdimensional* or *Affects Physical World*, as appropriate).



These options aren't exclusive. In a multiverse that includes a variety of planes, astral characters might materialize on spiritual dimensions, but remain invisible and intangible on material dimensions.

Some portrayals of astral travel say it's instantaneous and infallible: imagine a place and you appear there. Other versions of astral travel take time. Characters might fly through the Astral Plane, finding their way by watching the landscape of the material world. Travel to other dimensions may require recognizing other cues, or visualizing a special sigil as a portal. Depending on what system the GM ordains, Navigation (Astral) might involve Calculating a Formula, Following the Signs, or Using Pure Will. The mildest consequence of failure is that the character appears someplace he didn't want to go; he returns to his body and tries again. A more exciting Astral Plane, however, may offer hazards such as astral predators and nightmare zones that trap lost characters. Perhaps returning to your body is not so easy... and a lost character must find his way back before his body dies. You need to define the penalties for failing an Astral Navigation roll in your campaign, as well as a definition of what the Skill Roll represents.



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INNATE POWER

Spirits may possess an innate ability to move between dimensions. In a Superhero setting, the occasional mutant or victim of a lab accident may gain this power as well. In some cases, you might consider restricting what dimensions different sorts of characters can access. A character with shrinking powers can access "microverses," for instance, but can't find microscopic portals to Hell, Fairyland, or the Elemental Plane of Earth. On the other hand, why would a character who's merged with an earth elemental have the power to enter microverses, or slip into hyperspace to hitch rides on alien spaceships? Still, the comic books (not to mention some Fantasy stories) often blend everything together. Players and GMs should draw the line where it feels right, not according to some rigid system.

MUNDANE TRAVEL

In some settings, people can reach the realms of gods and the dead through ordinary travel. In Greek myth, for instance, Odysseus sailed west to the land of the dead, across what we now call the Atlantic. Certain caves led to the realm of the dead as well. Celtic myth includes many tales of heroes sailing to otherworldly islands; St. Brendan is the most famous example. Other mythologies describe mystic otherworlds reached by climbing certain mountains. The cloud-kingdom of the giant in "Jack and the Beanstalk" could be another example, though climbing a magical beanstalk stretches the definition of "mundane" travel. You can decide for yourself whether such realms count as other dimensions or as parts of the world where the supernatural shows itself more strongly.

NEXUS POINTS

Sometimes small portals connect two dimensions, letting creatures travel both ways. For instance, the eponymous item of furniture in C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe* was a portal to the Fantasy world of Narnia. These nexus points might stay open continuously, but be hidden so few people discover them. Alternatively, a nexus point might open only at certain times. For instance, anyone who visits a particular stone monolith at midnight under the full moon might find himself transported to Faerie.

Nexus points can overlap with Spells and Mundane Travel. A mystic might create a nexus point using a spell for Triggered or Constant Extra-Dimensional Movement. Unlike many Gate spells, though, anyone can use a nexus point. On the other hand, nexus points are more localized than the dimensions one can reach through mundane travel, and are more obviously different worlds rather than supernatural parts of one world. Transient nexus points also make returning home more difficult.

For a variation, mystic nexus points might require some sort of magic to open them. Mystics would still need a spell for Extra-Dimensional Movement, but the spell would carry the Limitation that it only works at certain rare and predefined locations. On the other hand, nexus points created by super-scientific means could only be accessed via super-scientific devices.

For another variation, short-lived nexus points might spontaneously appear and disappear. These portals might be limited to dimensions that resemble the starting location. For example, nexus points to elemental planes might open in large concentrations of that element: portals to the Fire Plane in forest fires and erupting volcanoes, portals to the Water Plane on the sea floor, and so on.

Depending on the dimension it leads to, a stable, controllable nexus point could be a precious asset for a character... or a terrible danger that someone must guard. For instance, if no one can reach the magical lands of the djinn except through six nexus points, any mystic who can regulate travel though a nexus can charge other mystics for access to the djinn. On the other hand, if Istvatha V'han's troops can enter the world only through six specific locations, characters have a great incentive to keep those sites under guard. Nexus points become even more valuable if they're the only way people can enter other dimensions. Characters might develop spells or devices to detect spontaneous, short-lived portals, and seek out locations where nexus points are likely to open.

SPELLS

In much genre fiction, mystics often travel between dimensions using spells. Sometimes the spell merely transports the mystic and his companions — poof, they disappear from one world and reappear in another. Other spells create mystical Gates that may last quite a while (or perhaps even become permanent Nexus Points).

Spells for dimensional travel don't force you to make many assumptions about the nature of the Multiverse and the relationships between planes: you're here, then you're there, and you don't have to worry what's in between. If spells provide a setting's chief means of travel between planes, you only have to decide what dimensions a mystic can reach, and how easily mystics can learn and cast dimensional travel spells.

SPIRITS

Perhaps mortals cannot travel between dimensions, but spirits can. A character who wants to visit another dimension must summon a spirit and persuade it to carry him. Transport by spirits is most appropriate in settings where all magic comes from spirits, directly or indirectly. Still, this method could appear in any setting where mystics can summon spirits.

In some settings, spirit travel may simply provide a more complicated special effect for Extra-Dimensional Movement spells. In other cases, spiritual transport may require a contest of wills between magician and spirit, or careful negotiations to buy the spirit's service (in game terms, this usually involves the *Summon* Power).

If mortals cannot enter other dimensions, period, then contact between dimensions is largely one-way. A character who wants to obtain materials from another dimension, or otherwise work his will on another plane, might need a spirit to do the job for him. But you may not want to create a setting that encourages characters to act by proxy instead of having adventures themselves.

SUMMONING AND BANISHMENT

Some mystical traditions say that when sorcerers call spirits from the vasty deep, or suchlike, they merely put out a call; the creature they want chooses to respond... or not. In fiction and folklore, however, many traditions portray the magician *making* creatures come from the Great Beyond. Summoning creatures thus often involves forcing them to travel from another dimension. Banishing a creature involves forcing it to make the return journey.

As long as summoned and banished creatures are limited to spirits, Nameless Horrors From Beyond, and other NPCs, GMs and characters don't have to worry about this transportation aspect. But what if characters themselves can be summoned? For example, in the *Myth Adventures* series by Robert Asprin, wizards on different planes regularly summon each other as "demons" when they need help or want to impress the yokels. In this case, the *Summon* Power may provide the surest way to travel between dimensions: you can't get lost, because someone on the other end is reeling you in. On the other hand, you need someone on the other plane to do the Summoning.

Additionally, travel-by-Summon means the character runs the risk of being forced home prematurely through a sufficiently powerful *Dispel*, or whatever other conditions you decree. For example, you might decide that in your campaign, Summoned creatures automatically return from whence they came if they lose consciousness, or are commanded in the name of that dimension's gods. If the GM wants to make Summoning a common means of interdimensional travel, but less reliable, he might compensate by waiving the *Specific Being* Advantage.

TECHNOLOGY

Last but not least, advanced technology (which Clarke's Law tells us may be indistinguishable from magic) may permit travel between dimensions. The time machine is perhaps the most familiar example of dimensional travel via technology. In Pulp, Superhero, and Science Fiction settings, though, other sorts of extradimensional travel may occur. In some SF settings, spaceships travel between stars by entering another dimension — a hyperspace — where distances are much shorter. By the end of E. E. "Doc" Smith's *Lensman* series, the heroes and villains moved entire planets between dimensions. Pulp scientists sometimes built portals to weird dimensions; in "From Beyond," by H. P. Lovecraft, a mad inventor's device enables Humans to see other dimensions... and be seen by their deadly inhabitants. In a Superhero setting, of course, anything's possible. A scientist could try to open a portal to hyperspace and reach Asgard instead.

High technology may send characters across dimensions in some Fantasy settings, too. It all depends on the arrangement of the dimensions and what "advanced technology" is possible. For instance, in a Fantasy world where the gods live above the sky, characters might reach heaven using a rogue artisan's hot-air balloon.



EASE AND PREVALENCE

So you've decided which methods characters use to move between dimensions. How easily can they perform this feat? This question really comes in two parts: how easily can characters obtain the means to cross dimensions; and how safe and easy is the travel itself?

In some settings, access to other dimensions may be difficult to obtain. Perhaps only a few people — just mystics, or just certain super-scientists, or maybe only a few wizards who've studied a particular type of magic — can travel between worlds. Perhaps this is because some force (mystical or otherwise) prevents most people from leaving their own world. For instance, dimensional travel might be limited to people descended from gods or demons. If the lucky few can carry other people with them on dimensional jaunts, they become extremely important. Perhaps the method is so difficult that only the most learned and powerful characters can master it. Alternatively, dimensional travel might be rare because the necessary materials are hard to obtain. For example, the spell for dimensional travel might require a large yellow diamond, so few mystics could get the chance to cast it; or a time machine might require several pounds of plutonium fuel. For a variation, planar travel might be possible only at special times or places.

Dimensional travel also may be intrinsically difficult or dangerous. What if reaching other worlds is easy, but it's very difficult to steer yourself to a specific location? Dimensional travel might be such a gamble that few characters want to try it. Alternatively, crossing between worlds might require a supreme effort of will, or dimensional barriers might wound travelers who lack special protections. Being in other dimensions might be unavoidably dangerous, too. For example, visitors to other worlds might slowly transform into native creatures and forget their original identity.

In many settings, of course, no such restrictions apply. In comic books, for instance, the means to travel between dimensions seem readily available to various super-mages and super-scientists. Some dimensions are dangerous to visit, but the methods of travel themselves seem fairly safe and reliable.

DIMENSIONAL INVASIONS

Under most circumstances, the entities who move between dimensions don't want to disturb the world(s) they visit, at least not in a systematic way. A demon may kidnap someone to Hell, and a wizard may lead a rescue and revenge mission, but neither one tries to exterminate all Humans or all demons. Gods set up cults and smite the unfaithful now and then, but leave most people alone. Faerie-folk, ghosts, and other interdimensional creatures cause small disturbances, but on the whole they don't change the status quo.

Sometimes, however, creatures from other planes attempt more. They try to conquer a world, or destroy it. In fact, this is what Istvatha V'han (and to some extent her arch-rivals Tyrannon and Skarn) is all about. Interdimensional invasions can be some of the most epic adventures a character ever faces!

Dimensional invasions occur in several genres. In comic books, the most common invasion scenario involves a vastly powerful sorcerous tyrant who tries to conquer Earth and add it to his dimension — a patchwork plane built from all the other dimensions he's conquered. (Tyrannon and Skarn certainly fit this trope.) Another common story has Human cultists acting as fifth columnists, striving to deliver the world to Satan or some other dark power. This plot often appears in Pulp adventure, modern supernatural thrillers, and Fantasy. Now and then stranger invasions occur, as in Andre Norton's "Witch World" novels in which the high-tech Kolder invade a Fantasy world.

For a stranger menace, the dimension itself may invade. In some Fantasy stories, one reality tries to supplant another. A number of Science Fiction stories deal with time-traveling agents from alternate histories, each trying to make their history the real one. The Jorge Luis Borges short story, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" describes a fictional reality, invented by a cabal of scholars, that infiltrates the real world. Stopping an invasion like that could be quite a challenge.

To run a dimensional invasion adventure, you need an invader, a means of invasion and conquest, and a reason for invasion. An invader may be a single powerful entity, such as the aforementioned sorcerous tyrant, an evil god, or a Nameless Horror From Beyond Reality Itself. An invasion may also involve an army of less powerful creatures, like the Kolder. In between, a powerful entity may command a cadre of lieutenants and army of soldiers, cultists, or other minions. The invaders may be able to cross dimensions themselves, or they may rely on cultists, evil mystics, or other native agents. The invasion may involve physical occupation of the target world, or simply forcing people to live the way the invader wants (as in the usual Satanic plot to make the world more evil). Means of "conquest" range from eating the world to secretly installing a cultist as President. Invaders may come in search of food, slaves, natural resources, an escape from their dying world, conversion of the infidel, or just to be nasty and make everyone miserable.

How long do you want the invasion storyline to last? If you want a long series of adventures, the invader probably needs frequent or easy access, or starts the story arc by sending a lot of invaders at once. The characters can't have a simple way to stop the invasion, either because the invader can easily try again or because the invaders aren't easy to find. For an extreme case, subversion and invasion can form the basis of an entire campaign: every adventure the heroes uncover a little more of the world-wide plot to enslave and corrupt the world.

At the other extreme, an invader might rely on a rare and fragile circumstance. For instance, a Nameless Horror might be able to enter the world only during a rare celestial alignment when its priest conducts a special ritual using a unique artifact. The invader has limited access and few resources, and the heroes have many ways to stop the plot: steal the artifact, kill the priest, or delay the ritual, and they've saved the world in one adventure.

RANDOM DIMENSION GENERATION

To help GMs who need to create a lot of dimensions quickly, or who just want to supplement their own ideas, the following tables provide a way to rapidly “roll up” a dimension from scratch. These tables only provide basic information about a dimension; as always, you’ll need to flesh out the details to suit your own campaign.

Since the reason for using these tables is to create a dimension you can include in your campaign, the tables are “biased” toward creating alternate Earths and the like. If you want more “unique” dimensions, alter Table 1.1 (Basic Nature Of Dimension) to get a different “spread” of results.

In Champions Universe Multiverse terms, these tables assume the dimension being created is an Asiatic one. Yetziratic, Brialic, and Atziluthic dimensions tend to be much more limited/defined, or are otherwise not as conducive to random generation.

PART 1: DIMENSIONAL BASICS

TABLE 1.1: NATURE OF DIMENSION

This table provides you with the most basic description of the dimension: is it an alternate Earth; an alternate version of some other “keystone” dimension; or unique in the multiverse?

TABLE 1.1: NATURE OF DIMENSION

Roll (2d6) Nature Of Dimension

3-5	Alternate keystone dimension (do not roll on Table 1.3: Size Of Dimension; this dimension is the same size as the dimension it's an alternate of)
6-8	Alternate Earth (do not roll on Table 1.3: Size Of Dimension; this dimension is the same size as Earth's dimension)
9-12	Unique dimension; roll on Table 1.3 for size of dimension

TABLE 1.2: NATURAL LAWS

Once you determine what sort of dimension you've got, the next thing to find out is what natural laws apply. The basic dichotomy here is between Science and Magic. Dimensions where Science dominates tend to have little (if any) magic, follow the same sorts of physical laws as the real world does, and so forth. On the other hand, dimensions

that skew toward Magic can be fantastical places where technology doesn't work and wonders abound. Or it's possible to mix the two in varying degrees.

TABLE 1.2: NATURAL LAWS

Roll (2d6) Natural Laws

2	Science totally dominates; Magic doesn't work at all
3-5	Science mostly dominates; Magic exists but is weak
6-8	Science dominates; Magic exists and can be quite powerful, but isn't commonplace (example: Champions Universe Earth)
9	Science and Magic are equally powerful and equally effective
10	Magic dominates; Science exists and can be quite powerful, but isn't commonplace
11	Magic mostly dominates; Science exists but is weak
12	Magic totally dominates; Science and technology don't work at all

TABLE 1.3: SIZE OF DIMENSION

The sizes of alternate Earths (and alternate versions of keystone dimensions) are predetermined: they're the same as the “true” version of that plane. For unique dimensions, use this table to determine their size. (Of course the GM can change the size of an “alternate” dimension by rolling on this table if he wants to, but in that case it starts to veer away from being a true alternate.)

TABLE 1.3: SIZE OF DIMENSION

Roll (2d6) Size Of Dimension

2	Minute: no larger than Earth's solar system
3	Tiny: no larger than a few solar systems
4-5	Small: no larger than the Milky Way Galaxy
6-8	Average: no larger than several dozen galaxies
9-11	Large: hundreds or thousands of galaxies (example: Champions Universe Earth)
12	Very Large: two or more times the size of a Large dimension



TABLE 1.4: SENTIENT SPECIES

This table tells you how many sentient species a dimension has relative to Earth's dimension in the Champions Universe. As discussed in *Champions Beyond*, in the Champions Universe the Milky Way Galaxy is home to dozens, if not hundreds, of sentient species. Assuming that's an average number, and that current scientific estimates that there are approximately 170 billion galaxies in Earth's universe are accurate, that could mean trillions of sentient species in a Large or Very Large dimension. Assuming each species is, on average, as large as Humanity (approximately 7 billion as of mid-2011), that would mean that an Earth-sized dimension has a population of around one hundred sextillion (10^{23}) people.

If you want to determine what any given species is like (in terms of size, appearance, and so forth), use the Random D-Soldier Generator table on page 63.

TABLE 1.4: SENTIENT SPECIES**Roll (2d6) Sentient Species**

2	Very, Very Few: at most 10% the number of sentient species per galaxy as Earth's dimension
3	Very Few: at most 25% the number of sentient species per galaxy as Earth's dimension
4-5	Few: at most 50% the number of sentient species per galaxy as Earth's dimension
6-9	Average: roughly the same number of sentient species per galaxy as Earth's dimension
10	Many: up to twice as many sentient species per galaxy as Earth's dimension
11	Very Many: up to four times as many sentient species per galaxy as Earth's dimension
12	Very, Very Many: five or more times as many sentient species per galaxy as Earth's dimension

TABLE 1.4.1: SPECIES SOPHISTICATION

If you need to quickly determine how sophisticated a given sentient species is, you can use Table 1.4.1. It tells you two things. The first is the species's technology level (in Earth history terms). (If the species is from a dimension where magic predominates, you can simply "translate" this into mystical terms, with spells taking the place of devices and so on.) Second, it tells you whether the species is galactically and/or dimensionally aware. "Galactically aware" means the species knows about other sentient species and/or is part of the "galactic community." "Dimensionally aware" means the species knows about the existence of other dimensions and/or is part of the "multiversal community." A species can't be dimensionally aware without first being galactically aware (absent special circumstances created by the GM).

Alternately, you can roll on some of the Alternate Earth tables to obtain more information; by definition, any species that isn't advanced enough to have at least nineteenth century technology can't be either galactically or dimensionally aware.

TABLE 1.4.1: SPECIES SOPHISTICATION**Roll (1d6 x 2) Species Technology Level**

1-3, 1	Stone Age
1-3, 2	Bronze or Iron Age
1-3, 3	Medieval
1-3, 4	Renaissance
1-3, 5	Age of Enlightenment (17 th -18 th centuries)
1-3, 6	Nineteenth century*
4-6, 1	Early twentieth century*
4-6, 2-3	Late twentieth/early twenty-first century*
4-6, 4	Near future (mid-late 21 st century)*
4-6, 5	Far future (22 nd - 23 rd centuries)*
4-6, 6	Very far future (24 th or later centuries)*

Roll (1d6) Technological Variance

1-4	No variation
5-6	Super-technology (as appropriate for the time period) or the like is available to a select elite or similar group

If any asterisked result or a "super-technology" result is rolled, you should also roll on the Species Awareness table:

Roll (1d6) Species Awareness

1-3	Species isn't galactically aware
4	Species is galactically aware, but not dimensionally aware
5-6	Species is galactically and dimensionally aware



TABLE 1.5: DIMENSIONAL GOVERNMENT

This table tells you whether the dimension is governed as a whole (whether by Istvatha V'han or someone else) or is in some fashion independent of the greater multiversal political entities. Note that dimensions “being taken over” by Skarn or Tyrannon aren’t yet fully conquered — they’re still distinct dimensions because they haven’t yet been “merged” into the Congerries or Thulkos.

TABLE 1.5: DIMENSIONAL GOVERNMENT**Roll (3d6) Dimensional Government**

3-8	No dimensional government; dimension is “independent”
9	Dimension is being taken over by Skarn
10	Dimension is being taken over by Tyrannon
11	Dimension is part of the V'hanian Empire
12	Dimension is ruled by its own dimension-wide government, its own dimensional overlord, an as-yet unknown dimensional conqueror, or the like
13-18	No dimensional government; dimension is “independent”

TABLE 1.6: DOMINANT SPECIES

If desired, you can roll on this table to determine whether one or more species is dominant in a dimension. This doesn’t necessarily mean politically dominant, though it could; by definition any dimension ruled by Istvatha V'han is dominated by the V'hanian Empire politically. (Similarly, Skarn and Tyrannon dominate the dimensions they rule, though they do so in part by “merging” them with their own home planes.) “Dominant” could mean politically, but could instead mean socially, economically, technologically, mystically, or in some other way. It’s up to you to decide the specifics

TABLE 1.6: DOMINANT SPECIES**Roll (2d6) Dominant Species**

2-7	No species is significantly dominant
8-9	One species is dominant
10-11	2-4 species are dominant
12	5 or more species are dominant

ALTERNATE EARTHS

If you generate an “alternate Earth” result on Table 1.1, or have decided to go ahead and create one from scratch, you can use this series of tables to determine what it’s like.

TABLE 2.1: HISTORICAL PERIOD

The timestream doesn’t always flow the same in an alternate Earth as in Champions Universe Earth — some alternates are less advanced historically, while some have already left the twenty-first century behind. Use this table to tell you how far advanced an alternate Earth is.

TABLE 2.1: HISTORICAL PERIOD**Roll (1d6 x 2) Historical Period**

1-2, 1	Stone Age
1-2, 2	Bronze Age
1-2, 3	Iron Age (but no major empires)
1-2, 4	Iron Age (with empires — Roman, Persian, or the like)
1-2, 5	“Dark Ages”/Early Medieval (5 th -9 th centuries)
1-2, 6	Medieval (10 th -14 th centuries)
3-4, 1	Renaissance (15 th -16 th centuries)
3-4, 2	Age of Enlightenment (17 th -18 th centuries)
3-4, 3	Early nineteenth century (1800-1860)
3-4, 4	Late nineteenth century (1861-1899)
3-4, 5	Early twentieth century (1900-1940)
3-4, 6	Mid-twentieth century (1941-1975)
5-6, 1-2	Late twentieth/early twenty-first century (1976-2020)
5-6, 3	Near future (2023-4099)
5-6, 4	Far future (2100-2299)
5-6, 5	Very far future (2300-2499)
5-6, 6	Extremely far future (2500 or later)

TABLE 2.2: TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

Similarly, the level of technology available in a given time period may be the same or more advanced than on Champions Universe Earth. Typically it’s exactly the same, so that the Romans are using the same technology they do in real-world history. On rare occasions it’s more advanced. Depending on how you want to interpret things, “more advanced” technology can mean one of two things.

First, it means there’s “super-technology” — technology that for the period is highly advanced (and perhaps not even possible according to real-world physics) but is only available to a select elite (such as superhumans or a cabal of scientists). The key consideration here is “for the period.” What a citizen of the Roman Empire considers “super-technology” might seem like primitive medieval technology to a modern-day American. On the other hand, a starfaring Human from the 27th century might consider modern super-technology (*i.e.*, the kind found in most Champions campaigns, including the Champions Universe) ridiculously crude.



Second, “more advanced” could mean that the dominant political and social institutions of the Historical Period haven’t changed, but technology has advanced to a later level. In this case, you can decide to move the timestream forward to the proper point, without making any other changes. This is how you end up with such odd alternate Earths as one where the Roman Empire still exists in the twentieth century — that’s a result of 1-2, 4 (Iron Age with empires) on the Historical Period table, plus a result of 6 on the Technology Level table, with the “special effect” of “modern-day Roman Empire.”

TABLE 2.2: TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

Roll (1d6) Technology Level

1-4	Same as for historical period on real-world Earth
5	More advanced than historical period
6	Significantly more advanced than historical period

TABLE 2.3: DOMINANT CULTURE

If you want to create an alternate Earth where one or more historical cultures have become (or remain) dominant, you can roll on this table. This is another way to get things like dimensions where the Roman Empire still exists in the twenty-first century: you roll 5-6, 1-2 on the Historical Period table, then 1-2, 3 on the Dominant Culture table.

TABLE 2.3: DOMINANT CULTURE

Roll (1d6 x 2) Dominant Culture

1-2, 1	Sumerian, Assyro-Babylonian, or Hittite
1-2, 2	Classical Egyptian
1-2, 3	Classical Greek, Roman, or Persian
1-2, 4	Chinese or Japanese
1-2, 5	India/Hindu or Tibetan
1-2, 6	Aztec or Mayan
3-4, 1	American Indian, Inuit, or other tribal not listed elsewhere
3-4, 2	Incan or South American tribal
3-4, 3	Pacific Islander or Aborigine
3-4, 4	Arabian or North African
3-4, 5	Sub-Saharan African tribal
3-4, 6	American or British
5-6, 1	Northern European (Viking, Scandinavian)
5-6, 2	Western European (French, German)
5-6, 3	Mediterranean European (Spain, Italy)
5-6, 4	Eastern European (Hungarian, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian)
5-6, 5	Russian (imperial or Soviet)
5-6, 6	Fictional or a combination of two or more of the above

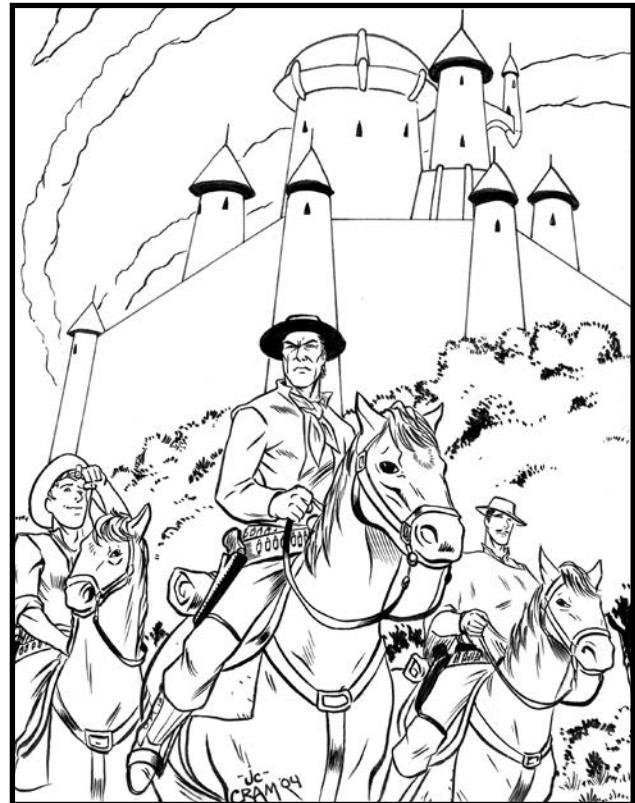
TABLE 2.4: HISTORICAL DIVERGENCE

Lastly, if you don’t have a specific historical “breakpoint” in mind, or the results of previous tables don’t imply or suggest one to you, you can use the Historical Divergence table to determine when things changed relative to Champions Universe Earth.

TABLE 2.4: HISTORICAL DIVERGENCE

Roll (1d6) Historical Divergence

1	None; dimension’s history is the same as Champions Universe Earth’s in all important respects
2	No historical divergence but some fundamental difference in evolution or the like (e.g., history and technology are the same, but Humanity is a reptilian species)
3	Historical divergence occurs before the year 1 AD
4	Historical divergence occurs somewhere from 1-1000 AD
5	Historical divergence occurs somewhere from 1001-1900 AD
6	Historical divergence occurs sometime during the twentieth century



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CRUSADERS OF THE INFINITE REALITIES

As Hero Games's way of saying *Thanks!* for supporting our *Book Of The Empress* Kickstarter, here are character sheets for the members of the Crusaders of the Infinite Realities described on pages 192-93 of the book.

HRUNARA SHEMM

Background/History: In most of the Lungorin dimensions there's a world called Nalana-Sral. The Sralese, a species of golden-skinned humanoids, have a civilization tens of thousands of years old in which magic plays a prominent part. Powerful wizards are revered and often serve as political or religious leaders (or both).

When Istvatha V'han invades a Lungorin dimension, Nalana-Sral is always one of her initial targets. For one thing, it was usually a source of intense resistance. But more importantly, the Ministry of Mystic Affairs has found a way to "siphon" Sralese mystic power for use by imperial mages, making the planet a valuable resource.

In Lungorin-2312, the imperial invasion went as planned... until an unusually powerful super-mage named Hrunara Shemm stepped forward to rally her people. Inspired by Shemm's fiery invective, the usually-fractious cabals of Sralese spellcasters banded together and fought as one, repulsing the Imperial Legions. The Empire regrouped and re-invaded, and again was defeated by Shemm's forces.

Infuriated by the humiliating defeats her soldiers had suffered, the Empress ordered the use of a Nova Bomb to destroy the Sralese system altogether. Warned in advance by some of her spirit familiars, Shemm saved as many people as she could... but in the end the Sralese species was rendered virtually extinct. After transporting the survivors to a planet in another dimension where they felt they could rebuild their lives, Shemm went seeking revenge... and found the Crusaders.

Personality/Motivation: Since joining the Crusaders, Hrunara Shemm has become one of the group's most active and enthusiastic members — in fact, at this point she's basically "team leader." She's the only one who commands enough respect from the various iconoclasts and factions that comprise the membership to keep the organization moving

forward. And even then, she often finds herself having to persuade, bargain, compromise, or dicker her comrades into doing what she needs them to do.

All the effort and frustration are worth it to her, though, because the Crusaders represent her best hope of dealing a telling blow to the V'hanian Empire. Shemm's hatred of the Empress and her tyrannical government knows almost no bounds; even the lowliest imperial employee isn't safe from her wrath. While she's usually the one who has to keep the other Crusaders and their wild ideas under control, at times they have to restrain her vengeful impulses so she doesn't endanger the group.

Shemm and Gendrol Argelan (see below) were once romantically involved. But in recent months he's pulled away from her altogether, his mind captivated by the new lore he's uncovered that's advanced him in both wisdom and power (as he sees it). She still cares for him deeply and watches him with great concern, but respects his wishes and doesn't meddle in his personal business... a decision she may soon regret.

Quote: "Don't be a fool! All these so called "benefits" the Empire's offering you are just a trick to lure you into putting the yoke on your own neck. Fight them!"

Powers/Tactics: Hrunara Shemm is a powerful Sralese mystic whose spells focus on elemental magics. She can create earthquakes or deadly gusts of wind, set people on fire, erect walls of water, and trap her foes in hands of stone. She can also cast a variety of other magics.

In combat Shemm is tactically brilliant. She's intimately aware of what the other Crusaders are capable of and seems to instinctively pick just the right way to use each of them in a battle. She spends hours in the "simulation room" of the Crusaders' base figuring out ways to attack imperial targets and get away safely.

Appearance: Hrunara Shemm is a tall, golden-skinned, humanoid woman of the Sralese species. She typically wears elaborate mage's robes in colors that complement her skintone, such as red and blue. Her soulblade looks like an ancient Sralese weapon that vaguely resembles a cross between a sword and a scythe.



HRUNARA SHEMM

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
18	DEX	16	13-	
20	CON	10	13-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
20	EGO	10	13-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6

7	OCV	20
7	DCV	20
3	OMCV	0
7	DMCV	12
5	SPD	30

Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12

10	PD	8	Total: 30 PD (20 rPD)
10	ED	8	Total: 30 ED (20 rED)

8	REC	4
35	END	3
10	BODY	0
50	STUN	15

Total Characteristics Cost: 181

Movement:	Running:	12m
	Flight:	40m
	Tunneling:	20m

Cost	Powers	END
66	Mystic Power: Endurance Reserve (200 END, 24 REC)	0
100	Elemental Arcana: Multipower, 100-point reserve	
12v	1) Ice Blast: Blast 12d6	6
12v	2) Gale Blast: Blast 8d6 Double Knockback (+½)	6
8v	3) Earthquake: Blast 8d6 Area Of Effect (18m Radius Explosion; +½), Personal Immunity (+¼); No Range (-½), Only Affects Targets On The Ground (-¼), Only Does Knockdown, Not Knockback (-0)	7
8v	4) Dehydrate: Blast 6d6 NND (defense is Power Defense or a body that lacks liquids; +1); Victims At Least 50% Immersed In Water Get A Free Recovery Of This Damage Each Phase (-½)	6
9v	5) Magefire Blast: RKA 2d6 Armor Piercing (+¼), +1 Increased STUN Multiplier (+¼)	4
10v	6) Fireball: RKA 2d6 Area Of Effect (16m Radius; +¾)	5
10v	7) Hands Of Stone: Entangle 6d6, 6 PD/6 ED Only Works On Targets Within 6m Of The Ground (-¼)	6
9v	8) Wind Manipulation: Telekinesis (30 STR)	4
10v	9) Magefire Shield: Resistant Protection (20 PD/20 ED) Costs Half Endurance (-¼)	3
9v	10) Wall Of Water: Barrier 10 PD/8 ED, 10 BODY (up to 10m long, 4m tall, and ½m thick), Non-Anchored, Dismissible Costs Endurance (to maintain; -½)	7
8v	11) Wings Of Wind: Flight 40m	4
10v	12) Earth Passage: Tunneling 20m through 10 PD materials; Fill In	5

37	Hrunara Shemm's Soulblade: HKA 2d6 (2d6+1 with STR) Armor Piercing (x2; +½), Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1)	0
30	Hrunara Shemm's Soulblade: Aid Magic 6d6 Expanded Effect + Variable Effect (any two Magic powers or spells simultaneously; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), Only Aid Self (-1)	0
56	Lesser Magics: Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 40 Pool + 40 Control Cost Only For Magic (-¼)	var
10	Mystic Defenses: Mental Defense (10 points)	0
10	Mystic Defenses: Power Defense (10 points)	0
15	Magesense: Detect Magic 13- (Sight Group), Discriminatory, Analyze	0

Talents

3	Lightning Reflexes: +3 DEX to act first with All Actions
3	Striking Appearance +1/+1d6

Skills

24	+3 with Ranged Combat
3	Charm 13-
2	Cryptography 13-; Translation Only (-½)
3	Deduction 13-
3	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 13-
3	KS: Elemental Magic 13-
3	KS: The Multiverse 13-
2	KS: The Mystic World 11-
3	Navigation (Dimensional, Space) 13-
3	Oratory 13-
3	Persuasion 13-
13	Power: Magic 18-
3	Riding 13-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Tactics 13-
3	Teamwork 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 532

Total Cost: 713

400 Matching Complications (75)

30	Hunted: V'hanian Empire (Frequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
15	Hunted: the Time-Beast (Infrequently, Mo Pow, Kill)
20	Psychological Complication: Hatred Of Istvatha V'han And All She Stands For (Common, Total)
10	Psychological Complication: In Love With Grenshol Argelan (Common, Moderate)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 313

ABREBARAS

Background/History: Abrebaras is a Roman scholar from Earth-2116, an alternate Earth dimension where the Roman Empire never fell and magic is so commonplace that it's prevented science from progressing beyond what a Champions Universe human would call late Roman era technology. He was a gifted scholar, renowned for his wisdom and ability to craft spells of ritual magic... and then the V'hanian Empire invaded.

Despite their magic, the Humans of Earth-2116 weren't able to put up much resistance against the Empress's armies. Realizing all hope was lost, Abrebaras packed his home, his library, and all his other valuables into a pocket dimension of his own crafting and fled that plane for others where the imperial threat wasn't so dire. He spent some years wandering the dimensions and studying other styles of magic.

Then one day he was present when the Crusaders of the Infinite Realities passed through the dimension he was living in. Sensing his power and talent, the Crusaders asked him to join. Intrigued, and feeling within himself a burning desire for revenge that he'd been suppressing for years, Abrebaras became one of them and has been fighting the Empress ever since.

Personality/Motivation: Abrebaras was once a dedicated pacifist. He meant no man harm and expected none to mean him any, for he took pains to treat everyone with equal courtesy and respect. All that changed after Istvatha V'han ruined his life. He would still prefer not to hurt anyone, but realizing the worth of his cause he can talk himself into it when necessary... or when one of his friends is harmed.

Abrebaras's true love is magical study. He never married or had children, and until he met the Crusaders didn't really have many friends either. He spent all his time studying arcane tomes and practicing rituals, reveling in the powers he could command. He still studies as much as his other duties allow. If confronted with something that's magically unusually, or that otherwise triggers his intense curiosity about such things, he could easily give into temptation and endanger an entire mission.

Quote: "Hmmm, interesting... the declension of the fifth pentacle indicates that the transverse of the spell was used, rather than the ordinary version. Give me a moment and I can devise a way to counter it."

Powers/Tactics: Abrebaras is a scholar, not a fighter. When he first joined the Crusaders he could cast very few spells that were useful in combat. But he knew that had to change, so he turned his intense intellect and gifts for magical practice to the study of what Champions Universe Earth super-mages call Superheroic Thaumaturgy. He still isn't a dedicated "combat mage" by any means, but he can hold his own in battle now. However, he has to watch his END usage carefully; some of his spells (particularly Mantle Of Mastery) use up his END

at a fearsome rate. He's working on developing enhanced sources of arcane energy (an Endurance Reserve) to overcome this problem; in the meantime his soulblade helps.

Although he's been forced into a violent role, Abrebaras isn't really a violent person. He prefers to rely on the Bindings of Bromion, the Cerulean Spells, and the non-injurious Lights of Luathon rather than his more destructive Blasts and RKAs.

Coming as he does from a society where the lateen sail and *lorica segmentata* armor are regarded as high technology, Abrebaras is often baffled by the highly advanced devices he occasionally encounters. When confronted with such technology in a crisis situation, he has to succeed with an INT Roll at -2 to understand what it does... which doesn't guarantee that he can operate it properly (that may require another INT Roll).

Appearance: Abrebaras looks like a white Human male in his early sixties; he has a handsome face with a long white beard and a thick head of white hair held back by a golden fillet. He typically wears a Roman toga. His soulblade looks like a Roman *gladius*.

ABREBARAS

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
14	DEX	8	12-	
14	CON	4	12-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
20	EGO	10	13-	
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
6	OCV	15		
5	DCV	10		
7	OMCV	12		
7	DMCV	12		
4	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
6	PD	4		Total: 16 PD (10 rPD)
8	ED	6		Total: 18 ED (10 rED)
12	REC	8		
60	END	8		
12	BODY	2		
36	STUN	8		Total Characteristics Cost: 148

Movement: Running: 12m
Flight: 30m

Cost	Powers	END
67	The Bindings Of Bromion: Multipower, 67-point reserve	
6f	1) First Binding: Mind Control 12d6	6
6f	2) Second Binding: Mind Control 10d6 Telepathic (+¼)	6
4f	3) Third Binding: Entangle 3d6, 3 PD/3 ED ACV (uses OMCV against DMCV; +¼), Takes No Damage From Physical Attacks (see 6E1 217; +¾), Work Against EGO, Not STR (+¼); Mental Defense Adds To EGO (-½)	6
6f	4) Fourth Binding: Telekinesis (30 STR) ACV (uses OMCV against DCV; +0), Line Of Sight (+½)	7

62	The Cerulean Spells: Multipower, 62-point reserve		
6f	1) Cerulean Spear: Mental Blast 5d6 Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	2	
6f	2) Cerulean Spray: Mental Blast 5d6 Area Of Effect (1m Radius Nonselective; +¼)	6	
63	The Lights Of Luathon: Multipower, 63-point reserve		
5f	1) The First Light Of Luathon: Sight Group Flash 8d6 Area Of Effect (1m Radius; +¼)	5	
6f	2) The Second Light Of Luathon: Blast 10d6 Area Of Effect (1m Radius; +¼)	6	
6f	3) The Third Light Of Luathon: Blast 6d6 AVAD (Sight Group Flash Defense; +1)	6	
6f	4) The Fourth Light Of Luathon: RKA 2½d6 Penetrating (+½)	6	
6f	5) The Fifth Light Of Luathon: Dispel Invisibility 21d6	6	
6f	6) The Sixth Light Of Luathon: Dispel Magic Powers 14d6 Variable Effect (any one Magic power or spell at a time; +½)	6	
6f	7) The Seventh Light Of Luathon: Sight Group Images, -6 to PER Rolls Area Of Effect (8m Radius; +½), Invisible to Mystic Sense Group (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	6	
4f	8) The Eighth Light Of Luathon: Telepathy 8d6	4	
3f	9) The Ninth Light Of Luathon: Invisibility to Sight and Mystic Groups (but not including the Tenth Light) Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	1	
3f	10) The Tenth Light Of Luathon: Detect Invisibility (INT Roll) (Mystic Sense Group), Ranged, Sense, Targeting	0	
1f	11) The Eleventh Light Of Luathon: +30 PRE Only For Making Presence Attacks (-1)	0	
18	Abrebaras's Soulblade: HKA 1d6 (1d6+1 with STR) Armor Piercing (x2; +½), Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1)	0	
20	Abrebaras's Soulblade: Aid Magic and END 4d6 Expanded Effect + Variable Effect (any one Magic power or spell and his END simultaneously; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), Only Aid Self (-1)	0	
65	Ritual Magics: Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 50 Pool + 120 Control Cost Concentration (all spells must have at least -½ worth of this Limitation; -½), Extra Time (all spells must have at least -1½ worth of this Limitation; -1½), Focus (all spells must have an OAF of some sort; -1)	var	
37	Mantle Of Mastery: Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED/10 Mental Defense/10 Power Defense) Allocatable (+¼); Costs Endurance (-½), Side Effects (coloration of Mantle reveals Abrebaras's generally Good nature, always occurs; -½)	7	
45	Wings Of The Zephirim: Flight 30m Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0	
70	The Vapors Of The Vata: Extra-Dimensional Movement (any physical location in any dimension), Increased Weight (3,200 kg)	7	

GRENSHOL ARGELAN

Background/History: Grenshol Argelan is an Ixendar from the 3,263rd alternate Earth. His people no more believe in magic than do Humanity — but like Humans some of them learn the truth of Reality and discover they have the gift to wield great arcane power. Argelan was one such Ixendar. After a career in professional sports was cut short when a rival framed him for a major ethics violation, he turned his brilliant mind to the study of philosophy. That in turn led to metaphysics... and one day he began to “see” things at the intersection of Philosophy and Science that even his professors could not. Soon he was contacted by a cabal of white wizards, who took him in and trained him in the mystic arts.

Unfortunately neither the cabal nor the other superpowered individuals in Earth-3263 were powerful enough to stop the Imperial Legions. It took two years, but the Empire conquered the entire dimension. Argelan was one of the few superhumans left alive at that point, and rather than continue a futile fight he invoked the Vapors of Vata and fled to other realms of existence.

He spent several years wandering the Multiverse, but soon tired of such a meaningless life. A chance encounter with Shimmering Scarlet introduced him to the Crusaders of the Infinite Realities. His imagination fired by their seemingly hopeless quest, he joined the group and in time was one of its most important members. He and Hrunara Shemm, the Crusaders’ *de facto* leader, became romantically involved.

One day while reviewing reports pilfered from the Ministry of Mystic Affairs Argelan noticed that during most (if not all) invasions of alternate Earth dimensions, Istvatha V’han’s forces took pains to exterminate a distasteful minor species called the Elder Worm. The reports implied that this was because the Worm possessed strange sorceries even the Empress feared. Intrigued, Argelan began gathering and studying everything he could find about the Elder Worm.

Years passed. Slowly but surely, Argelan learned about the Elder Worm... and everything he learned made him want to learn more. He obtained his first Elder Worm grimoire and his studies advanced at an even greater rate. The acquisition of more tomes and other items followed. In time Argelan became so wrapped up in his studies that he cared for nothing else... not even Hrunara. The rest of the Crusaders mostly leave him alone now, thinking he’s merely one of the more eccentric members in a group where nearly everyone’s pretty unusual.

But it’s worse than that. Argelan has been corrupted by his studies of Elder Worm Qliphothic lore, and has now gone so far down that dark path that saving him (or even his soul) would be extraordinarily difficult. It’s only a matter of time before he betrays the Crusaders, or tries to destroy them all in a magical conflagration that may resonate throughout the Multiverse.

Personality/Motivation: Grenshol Argelan was once a noble, heroic individual, but those days are long gone. Now his mind and soul have been transformed by the evil of the Elder Worm, making him a danger not just to himself and his friends but potentially to all of Reality. It’s just a question of whether he’ll self-destruct before he causes serious harm.

Argelan remains obsessed with the Elder Worm and their artifacts. He particularly desires a Worm-Gem, though fortunately for the Crusaders (if not the Multiverse) he’s yet to come close to finding one.

Argelan and Hrunara Shemm were once a devoted couple. But as his studies carried him further down the path of madness he eventually spurned her to devote his time to contemplating the strange, terrible wisdom thundering through his brain. He rarely even thinks of her anymore unless she’s speaking to him directly.

Quote: None. Argelan rarely talks anymore, and when he does what he says is so mysterious and bizarre few people can figure out what he means.

Powers/Tactics: Argelan is an accomplished super-mage who can cast a wide variety of spells (use the Superheroic Thaumaturgy spells from *The HERO System Grimoire*). But if he has to fight, he’ll mostly ignore “ordinary” spells in favor of the Elder Worm magics he’s mastered. He particularly enjoys corrupting someone’s soul and then using Warring Soul, which causes the corrupted parts of the soul to fight the uncorrupted parts and the body itself. If allowed to continue this process kills the victim.

For a less lethal attack, the Yiinashc Bindings trap a target in an oddly-warped “tunnel” of space. In game terms, this is an Entangle that a character must use INT to break out of instead of STR. It can only be harmed by the target’s “INT damage”; attacks by other people, or any other sort of attack by the victim, are useless. (See APG 57 for more information.)

Argelan devotes a lot of time and effort to hiding his true nature from the rest of the Crusaders. He maintains elaborate ritual spells that keep them from seeing his Distinctive Features. He won’t use his Mantle Of Mastery spell anymore (since its appearance reveals his secret); he creates a fake version of it using his VPP if necessary. Similarly, his soulblade is now tarnished by his evil, so he won’t show it to anyone.

Appearance: Grenshol Argelan is an Ixendar — a member of a humanoid mammalian species that’s outwardly very similar to Humanity aside from their ochre tone of skin. He’s 6’0” tall with short black hair (now very unkempt because he rarely bothers to comb it) and a muscular build. If viewed by someone who can perceive his Distinctive Feature, his form appears to be filled with a sort of twisted, corrosive shadow. His soulblade looks something like a long, heavy rapier, but its once-bright blade is now nearly black with mystical “tarnish” and has even begun to twist and warp slightly.

GRENSHOL ARGELAN

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 HTH damage [2]
18	DEX	16	13-	
17	CON	7	12-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
23	EGO	13	14-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
7	OCV	20		
7	DCV	20		
9	OMCV	18		
11	DMCV	24		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	PD	6		Total: 18 PD (10 rPD)
8	ED	6		Total: 18 ED (10 rED)
10	REC	6		
40	END	4		
15	BODY	5		
44	STUN	12		Total Characteristics Cost: 217

Movement: Running: 12m
Flight: 30m

Cost	Powers	END
71	Corrupted Mystic Power: Endurance Reserve (220 END, 24 REC)	0
80	Elder Worm Magics/Qliphothic Corruption: Multipower, 80-point reserve	
8f	1) Glimpse Of The Worm: Mental Blast 8d6	8
6f	2) Yiinashc Binding: Entangle 4d6, 4 PD/4 ED Takes No Damage From Attacks (see text; +3%), Works Against INT, Not STR (+1/4); Vulnerable (dimensional attacks; -1/4)	8
1f	3) Horror Of The Worm: +30 PRE Costs Endurance (-1/2), Only For Fear-/Intimidation-Based Presence Attacks (-1)	3
2f	4) Warring Soul: Drain BODY and STUN 2d6 Expanded Effect (two Characteristics simultaneously; +1/2), Constant (+1/2), Reduced Endurance (1/2 END; +1/4); Only Works On Victims Affected By Soul-Corrupting Touch (-1)	2
30	Soul-Corrupting Touch: Major Transform 3d6 (sentient humanoid into sentient humanoid with Qliphothic-tainted soul [see text]; heals back normally) Constant (+1/2), Works Against PRE, Not BODY (+1/4), Reduced Endurance (1/2 END; +1/4); Limited Target (sentient humanoids; -1/2), No Range (-1/2)	2
64	Other Magics: Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 40 Pool + 40 Control Cost Powers Can Be Changed As A Half Phase Action (+1/2); Only For Magic (-1/4)	var

37	Grenshol Argelan's Soulblade: HKA 2d6 (2d6+1 with STR) Armor Piercing (x2; +1/2), Penetrating (+1/2), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2); OAF (-1)	0
37	Grenshol Argelan's Soulblade: Variable Power Pool +30 Pool + +30 Control Cost OAF (-1)	var
37	Mantle Of Mastery: Resistant Protection (10 PD/ 10 ED/10 Mental Defense/10 Power Defense) Allocatable (+1/4); Costs Endurance (-1/2), Side Effects (coloration of Mantle reveals Argelan's corrupted nature, always occurs; -1/2)	7
15	Corrupted Mind: Mental Defense (15 points)	0
15	Corrupted Soul: Power Defense (15 points)	0
45	Wings Of The Zephyrim: Flight 30m Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1/2)	0

Skills

16	+2 with Ranged Combat
2	Cryptography 13- Translation Only (-1/2)
3	Deduction 13-
3	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 13-
2	KS: The Elder Worm 11-
3	KS: Elder Worm Magic 13-
3	KS: The Multiverse 13-
3	KS: The Mystic World 13-
3	Navigation (Dimensional, Space) 13-
3	Paramedics 13-
3	Riding 13-
3	Stealth 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 495

Total Cost: 712

400 Matching Complications (75)

5	Accidental Change: when under great stress he may do something, or manifest some physical change, that reveals his Qliphothic-corrupted nature 8- (Uncommon)
20	Distinctive Features: Qliphothic-corrupted mind and soul (Concealable With Effort; Causes Extreme Reaction [fear, loathing])
30	Hunted: V'hanian Empire (Frequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
15	Hunted: the Time-Beast (Infrequently, Mo Pow, Kill)
15	Psychological Complication: Evilly Insane; Has Succumbed To Qliphothic Corruption (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Complication: Hatred Of Istvatha V'han/ Desire To Protect The Elder Worm And Their Resources (Common, Strong)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 312

DOCTOR ARCHON

Background/History: In most of the Sirmilor dimensions there's a world called Tarrh ("tar-heh"). Like most Earths it has its traditions of both superheroing and mysticism. Some mystics end up becoming "super-mages," using their vast arcane powers in the cause of Justice.

Ustel Taxros was a normal, if intellectually gifted, Tarrhem until the day when a strange, shadowy plot at his university brought him to the attention of the Council of Wyverns, a group of mystics. Recognizing his potential arcane power, they recruited him as an apprentice. At first amazed by the secret world they revealed to him, Taxros soon settled down and became a diligent student. Thanks to his natural proclivities for spellcasting, his studies progressed at a rapid pace.

His budding sorcerous career took an unexpected detour when gangsters began threatening his brother, and then the rest of his family. Deciding he had to do something, Taxros left the monastery behind and used the spells he knew to save his loved ones. That gave him a real feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction — so much so that he decided to keep doing it rather than return to the Council's isolated retreat. Adopting the name *Dr. Archon*, he became a superhero.

After that his story is much like that of many other Crusaders: the V'hanian Empire invaded his home dimension. The Tarrhem chose to resist the Empress and were virtually destroyed as a result. Eager for a way to strike back, Dr. Archon eventually joined the Crusaders of the Infinite Realites and has put his powers to use against the Empire ever since.

Personality/Motivation: Despite a long and storied career as both superhero and Crusader, Dr. Archon still has some of the traits of the exuberant, enthusiastic kid he was in his youth. He tends to charge headlong into situations he's not entirely prepared or equipped to handle. This overconfidence has gotten him and the Crusaders into serious trouble more than once, but somehow he always comes out ahead... so far.

Although he rarely talks about it, Dr. Archon is very much aware of the fact that he's one of the last, if not *the* last, bearer of the Tarrhem mystic and occult traditions. Much of the lore he knows may now be known to him alone in all the Multiverse. He regards himself as its "custodian" and is concerned that it may all be lost if he falls in battle. In his spare time he feverishly writes down everything he can, filling entire volumes with Tarrhem occult lore.

Quote: "They couldn't possibly have the power to withstand us. Let's go!"

Powers/Tactics: Doctor Archon is a skilled practitioner of the mystic arts... sort of. Although he often refers to his "masterful powers of magic," the fact is that he doesn't have nearly as much mastery of his magic as he should. Because he left training early to become a superhero, he didn't develop his *Magic* Skill to the point where he should to maintain control of his natural gift for magic. As long as he uses no more than 60 Active Points' worth of magic per spell in his VPP, he has a 14- chance to succeed with his Magic roll, which is pretty good odds. But if he wants to use full power his roll plummets to 10-, making success considerably less likely. He's aware of this limitation and plans accordingly; he's also begun working with some of the other Crusaders to try to improve his abilities.

Should his spells fail him, Dr. Archon falls back on his martial arts training and soulblade. His masters in the Council of Wyverns held a philosophy of "a sound mind in a sound body," and he shares that perspective. Unless circumstances forbid he spends an hour per day practicing his fighting techniques.

Appearance: Doctor Archon is one of the last surviving members of the Tarrhem, a mammalian humanoid species that to Humans look rather badger-like. The short fur covering his body was once primarily grey and black, but has now shaded to grey-white in places, signifying his advanced age. He still wears his old superheroing costume: a red tunic, high-colored, gold-lined red cape with mystic sigils on the back, red footwear, and gold gloves.

DOCTOR ARCHON

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 HTH damage [1]
18	DEX	16	13-	
20	CON	10	13-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
23	EGO	13	14-	
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6

7	OCV	20		
7	DCV	20		
8	OMCV	15		
8	DMCV	15		
5	SPD	30	Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12	
8	PD	6	Total: 18 PD (10 rPD)	
10	ED	8	Total: 20 ED (10 rED)	
12	REC	8		
60	END	8		
12	BODY	2		
44	STUN	12		Total Characteristics Cost: 216

Movement: Running: 12m
Flight: 30m

Cost Powers

Cost	Powers	END
140	Masterful Powers Of Magic: Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 80 Pool + 100 Control Cost Powers Can Be Changed As A Half Phase Action (+½); Only For Magic (-¼)	var
33	Dr. Archon's Soulblade: HKA 2d6 (2½d6 with STR) ACV (uses OMCV versus DMCV; +¼), Double Knockback (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1)	0
16	Dr. Archon's Soulblade: Aid OMCV and DMCV 4d6 Expanded Effect (two Characteristics simultaneously; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), Only Aid Self (-1)	0

Martial Arts: Tarrhemian "Karate"

	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, 25 STR
4	Dodge	+0	+5	Dodge all attacks, Abort
4	Escape	+0	+0	30 STR vs. Grabs
3	Joint Lock/Grab	-1	-1	Grab, 25 STR
5	Kick	-2	+1	7d6 Strike
3	Legsweep	+2	-1	4d6 Strike, Target Falls
4	Punch	+0	+2	5d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	3d6 +v/10, Target Falls
4	Tigla Strike	-1	+1	2d6 NND (1)
1	Use Art with Blades			

18	Mantle Of Mastery: Resistant Protection (10 PD/10 ED) 7 Allocatable (+¼); Costs Endurance (-½), Side Effects (coloration of Mantle reveals Dr. Archon's Good nature, always occurs; -½)	7
10	Arcane Defenses: Mental Defense (10 points)	0
10	Arcane Defenses: Power Defense (10 points)	0
45	Wings Of The Zephirim: Flight 30m Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½)	0

Skills

8	+1 with Ranged Combat	
3	Deduction 14-	
2	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 11-	
2	KS: The Multiverse 11-	
2	KS: The Mystic World 11-	
3	KS: Tarrhemian Mysticism 14-	
2	Navigation (Dimensional) 14-	
3	Paramedics 14-	
15	Power: Magic 20-	
3	Riding 13-	
3	Stealth 13-	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 357

Total Cost: 573

400 Matching Complications (75)

30	Hunted: V'hanian Empire (Frequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)	
15	Hunted: the Time-Beast (Infrequently, Mo Pow, Kill)	
15	Psychological Complication: Wants To Destroy The V'hanian Empire (Common, Strong)	
15	Psychological Complication: Overconfidence (Very Common, Moderate)	

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 173

QQETHRU HELQ

Background/History: In the dimension Jrevdig exists a star called Lereq'sa. Eons ago a species evolved to live in the Lereq'sa system — not on one of its planets, but in the system itself. According to their beliefs, this people, the eQ'sashi, coalesced from stellar dust much like the stars themselves. Their bodies aren't fully "solid" and don't react well to the pull of gravity; they live in an asteroid belt relatively near Lereq'sa, or in space itself.

Like many other sentient species, the eQ'sashi have their own special mystical traditions and lore. Among other things, they believe that every three generations a special eQ'sashi is born: the *uth'aji*, he who can wield the power of *req'asa*, the Mystic Flame. The *uth'aji* not only can learn all the spells known to eQ'sashi arcane lore, he can tap the occult energies of Lereq'sa to wield potent mystic fire powers.

Qqethru Helq is but the latest in a line of *uth'aju* dating back millennia... and of all of them, he is the most disappointing. Instead of bearing the responsibility conferred by his powers with nobility and grace, and thus becoming a hero and protector of his people, he chose to use his magic selfishly. Even worse, when the V'hanian Empire attacked the eQ'sashi as part of its campaign to conquer Jrevdig, Helq simply fled the dimension rather than fight back. The Empress, considering him a threat, ordered the Imperial Legions to pursue and destroy him. Several times he barely escaped them with his life, and finally realized that despite his dislike of other people, he needed allies. That soon led him to the Crusaders of the Infinite Realities.

Personality/Motivation: Unlike many of his fellow Crusaders, Helq isn't a member of the group to get revenge on Istvatha V'han, or because he's a Robin Hood type. He's there because it's the best way to get to do the things he loves — make trouble, destroy things, steal stuff, and kill people who annoy him — without suffering any legal consequences. The odds are it's only a matter of time before another Crusader gets on his bad side enough to prompt him to violent action, after which he'll have to flee the group and survive on his own again. The leaders of the Crusaders are aware of the danger he poses and keep an eye on him as they can; they don't simply get rid of him because his firepower (no pun intended) is a major asset for the group.

As a member of the eQ'sashi, Helq has a lot of scorn for the "planetbound" — for fully solid beings who have to live inside a gravity well. To him that's a sign of weakness and dependence, whereas *his* species is free and strong. Given the difficulties he has in gravity (see below), he avoids entering gravity wells whenever he can.

Quote: "The fires of your star may have given your world life — but through me they will give you death!"

Powers/Tactics: Qqethru Helq would be accounted a powerful mystic even if all he could do were cast typical spells. But his ability to call on the power of the Mystic Flame of his people makes him even more powerful. He can project blasts of flame, protect himself with a mantle of fire, and so on.

What's worse for his foes is that he becomes even more powerful when he's near a star. He can "tap" the mystic power inherent in any star to augment the Mystic Flame. In game terms, this qualifies as an Aid, but how much Aid he can use depends on how close he is to a star. If he's within 10,000 km of a star's corona, he can use his full 20d6. For each 1 million km beyond that, subtract an additional 1d6, down to a minimum of 1d6 provided he's within 2 AU of a star.

As an eQ'sashi, Helq possesses only a partly solid body. This makes it hard to hurt him and allows him to survive unaided in outer space. However, his "tissue" does not react well to strong gravitic pulls, like what one experiences on or near a planet. For every 1.0 G (or fraction thereof) he experiences, he suffers a -1 to all physical Skill Rolls (such as Riding and Stealth). (He doesn't experience this in the Crusaders' extradimensional base, where the gravity is created through mystic means.)

Appearance: As a member of the eQ'sashi, Qqethru Helq has a humanoid body that seems simply formed and largely featureless to "solid" sentient species; it also feels oddly soft to the touch. His skin is an orange-ish shade and he wears no garments (he has no external genitalia as far as anyone can see, so this doesn't cause problems). His soulblade looks like a sword made of living flame.

Qqethru Helq

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 HTH damage [1]
20	DEX	20	13-	
13	CON	3	12-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
18	EGO	8	13-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
7	OCV	20		
7	DCV	20		
6	OMCV	15		
6	DMCV	15		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	PD	6		Total: 8 PD (3 rPD)
20	ED	18		Total: 20 ED (7 rED)
15	REC	11		
60	END	8		
8	BODY	-2		
48	STUN	14		Total Characteristics Cost: 206

Movement: Running: 12m
Flight: 20m

Cost Powers

		END
67	The Mystic Flame: Multipower, 67-point reserve	
6f	1) Invocation Of The Flame: Blast 10d6 Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	2
6f	2) Essence Of The Flame: RKA 3d6 Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	2
6f	3) The Flowering Of The Flame: Blast 8d6 Area Of Effect (18m Radius Explosion; +½)	6
6f	4) The Flame Commanded: RKA 2d6 Indirect (Source Point is always Helq, but Path can alter to can strike target from any angle; +½), +1 Increased STUN Multiplier (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½)	2
37	Mantle Of The Flame: RKA 2d6 Constant (+½), Area Of Effect (personal Surface — Damage Shield; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Always On (-½), No Range (-½)	0
60	Wall Of The Flame: RKA 2d6 Area Of Effect (25m long, 4m high Line; +¾), Constant (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +½); No Knockback (-½)	3
100	The Heart Of The Flame: Aid Fire Magics 20d6 Expanded Effect + Variable Effect (any two Fire Magic powers or spells at once; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Requires Proximity To A Star (see text; -2)	0
60	Other Magics: Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 40 Pool + 50 Control Cost Only For Magic (-½)	var

37 **Qqethru Helq's Soulblade:** HKA 2d6 (2d6+1 with STR) 0
Armor Piercing (x2; +½), +2 Increased STUN
Multiplier (x2; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1)

25 **Qqethru Helq's Soulblade:** Variable Power Pool +20 Pool + +20 Control Cost var
OAF (-1)

5 **EQ'ashi Form:** Resistant (+½) for 3 PD/7 ED 0

50 **EQ'ashi Form:** Damage Negation (-4 DCs Physical, -6 DCs Energy) 0

10 **Shield Of The Uth'aji:** Mental Defense (10 points) 0

10 **Shield Of The Uth'aji:** Power Defense (10 points) 0

19 **EQ'ashi Form:** Life Support (Diminished Eating: only needs to eat once per week provided he has access to stellar light/energy; Safe Environments: Intense Cold, Intense Heat, Low Pressure/Vacuum, Radiation; Self-Contained Breathing) 0

Skills

15	+3 with The Mystic Flame Multipower
3	Deduction 13-
3	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 13-
6	KS: Fire Magics 16-
3	KS: The Multiverse 13-
3	KS: The Mystic World 13-
3	Navigation (Dimensional, Space) 13-
3	Paramedics 13-
25	Power: Magic 24-
3	Riding 13-
2	SS: Astronomy 11-
3	Stealth 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 586

Total Cost: 792

400 Matching Complications (75)

30 **Hunted:** V'hanian Empire (Frequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)

15 **Hunted:** the Time-Beast (Infrequently, Mo Pow, Kill)

15 **Physical Complication:** hampered by gravity (see text) (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)

15 **Psychological Complication:** Self-Centered, Greedy, And Amoral (Common, Strong)

Total Complications Points: 75

Experience Points: 392

SHIMMERING SCARLET

Background/History: The Peravol are one of the strangest species in the Multiverse. Their bodies seem to be composed half of flesh and half of energy in a way that defies conventional science. Some scholars suspect that the Peravol's condition derives from some sort of mystic origin, and the fact that some of them can become powerful super-mages offers some support for this theory.

Shimmering Scarlet (the closest possible translation of his name, since the Peravol communication through unusual energy transmissions) is one of the most skilled mystics among his people. Unfortunately for them he was absent from their home dimension on a multi-year, multi-dimensional "enlightenment quest" when the V'hanian Empire invaded. Recognizing the many potential uses for such an unusual species, Empress Istvatha had them all enslaved. Millions of Peravol are now scattered throughout imperial territory, doing all sorts of strange (and often dangerous) tasks for their overlords... and Shimmering Scarlet has made it his life's work to find and free them all.

Personality/Motivation: Shimmering Scarlet is wracked with guilt over his "failure" to save his people from the V'hanian invasion. Logically he's aware that he'd probably just have been killed in battle by the Imperial Legions, but emotionally he's convinced he could have made a difference. To atone for this failure he's dedicated his life to freeing every single one of his people. Anytime he learns where one of them is forced to work he tries to convince the Crusaders to help him mount a raid. He transports any Peravol he frees to a new home in a dimension the Empire isn't yet aware of (as far as he knows).

Quote: "Whatever it takes... however long it takes... I will save the Peravol."

Powers/Tactics: Shimmering Scarlet is one of the most powerful Peravol mystics alive (and certainly *the* most powerful one not held captive by the Empire). He specializes in spells involving energy manipulation (which come easily to his people given their nature) and transmutation. (If you want to expand his transmutation powers further, see the "Matter Manipulation Powers" section of *Champions Powers*.) But he commands a wide variety of other magics through his Variable Power Pool as well (see the "Superheroic Thaumaturgy" section of *The HERO System Grimoire* for example spells he could cast with his VPP).

His Peravol form gives Shimmering Scarlet a number of other "powers." He can fly by emitting energy from his feet. He's much more difficult to harm than a being made entirely of flesh, and can survive the most hostile environments without difficulty. He can naturally receive and transmit along the entire communications spectrum, and can also generate light pulses (and even "holograms") with his body to "talk" to other Peravol (or just to entertain friends from other species).

Shimmering Scarlet has no soulblade; the Peravol have no tradition of making or using melee weapons.

Appearance: Shimmering Scarlet is a member of the Peravol, a species that looks, to Human eyes, like a sort of wingless gargoyle made partly of flesh and partly of energy. As his name implies, his energies are in rich shades of red. His only garment is a gold-colored short cape.

SHIMMERING SCARLET

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
5	STR	-5	10-	Lift 50 kg; xd6 HTH damage [x]
21	DEX	22	13-	
18	CON	8	13-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
20	EGO	10	13-	
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
6	OCV	15		
8	DCV	25		
7	OMCV	12		
7	DMCV	12		
5	SPD	30		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
8	PD	6		Total: 20 PD (12 rPD)
15	ED	13		Total: 27 ED (12 rED)
10	REC	6		
50	END	6		
10	BODY	0		
40	STUN	10		Total Characteristics Cost: 190

Movement: Running: 12m
Flight: 15m

Cost	Powers	END
80	Energy Manipulation Magics: Multipower, 80-point powers	
6f	1) Arcane Beam Bolt I: Blast 12d6	6
8f	2) Arcane Beam II: Blast 8d6 Variable Advantage (+½ Advantages; +1)	8
6f	3) Arcane Explosion: Blast 8d6 Area Of Effect (20m Radius Explosion; +½)	6
5f	4) Arcane Flare: Sight Group Flash 12d6	6
6f	5) Energy Constructs: Telekinesis (40 STR)	6
4f	6) Energy Control: Telekinesis (40 "STR") Only Works On Energy (see APG 122; -½)	6
103	Transmutation Magics: Severe Transform 6d6 (anything into anything; heals back through another application of this or a similar power)	9
	Improved Results Group (anything; +1), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Concentration (½ DCV; -¼), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½)	
84	Peravol Mystic Power: Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 60 Pool + 60 Control Cost Only For Magic (-¼)	var
54	Peravol Mystic Shield: Resistant Protection (12 PD/12 ED/6 Mental Defense/6 Power Defense)	0
40	Quasi-Energy Body: Damage Negation (-4 DCs Physical and Energy)	0
15	Peravol Energy Flying: Flight 15m	1
7	Light Emissions Communications: Sight Group Images1 No Range (-½)	
12	Radio Communications: HRRP (Radio Group)	0
35	Quasi-Energy Body: Life Support: Total	0

Skills

16	+2 with Ranged Combat
3	Analyze Magic 13-
3	Deduction 13-
3	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 13-
3	KS: The Multiverse 13-
3	KS: The Mystic World 13-
2	KS: Peravol Culture And History 11-
2	Navigation (Dimensional) 13-
21	Power: Magic 22-
2	SS: Physics 11-
3	Riding 13-
3	Stealth 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 719

Total Cost: 909

400 Matching Complications (75)

30	Hunted: V'hanian Empire (Frequently, Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
15	Hunted: the Time-Beast (Infrequently, Mo Pow, Kill)
15	Psychological Complication: Wants To Free His People From The V'hanian Empire (Common, Strong)

Total Complications Points: 60

Experience Points: 509

THE POWER OF THE EMPRESS

The Champions Universe features many deadly supervillains, but perhaps the most dangerous of them all is Istvatha V'han, Empress of a Billion Dimensions. Ruler of an empire that encompasses much of the Multiverse, she now has her sights set on the greatest prize of all: Champions Universe Earth!

The Book Of The Empress is your guide to everything about Istvatha V'han. It features:

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 - ❖ a history of the Empress, from her earliest days conquering single planets up to her recent attempts to invade Earth's dimension
 - ❖ an in-depth look at the Empress herself — her powers, motivations, and resources
 - ❖ a review of the Imperial Legions — the mighty V'harian military — including its regular soldiers, superhuman soldiers, weapons, and vehicles
 - ❖ a description of the Multiverse of the Champions Universe, including its nature, its structure, and numerous example dimensions
 - ❖ a description of the V'harian Empire itself, including V'han's regents and viceroys, the imperial bureaucracy, the Imperial Security Force, how she plans and executes the conquest of a dimension, and her current plans for Earth
 - ❖ suggestions on how to use Istvatha V'han in your campaign, including plot seeds
 - ❖ a discussion of dimensional campaigning, including a Random Dimension Generator the GM can use to quickly create new dimensions

So tell your heroes to get ready — it's time for them to confront the dimension-conquering power of Istvatha V'han!

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