

VOLUME 1

—
ABRAXAS
to
THE ARSENAL
OF
DEMOCRACY
—

BLACKWYRM
GAMES

THE ALGERNON FILES 3.0



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THE ALGERNON FILES 3.0

Volume 1: Abraxas to The Arsenal of Democracy

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Author’s Dedication: To my long-suffering wife Leigh, who always puts up with far too much for far too long and still loves me anyway; to Dave and the gang for never losing faith in all the crazy stuff I throw out on paper; to Alex for making cool art that transforms my words into excellent visuals; and, of course, to Jon and Steve for giving me a game I love to write and design for, as well as play. Thank you, one and all.

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Introduction

What you hold in your hands (or on the screen of your computer, or tablet, or whatever...) is the first volume in a series of books designed to bring as much *Algernon Files* goodness to you as possible. For those of you new to this title, BlackWyrM published versions of the *Algernon Files* for both the first and second editions of *Mutants & Masterminds*; this will be the first official foray into third edition territory. If everything holds to plan (oh, this wacky industry), this will be the first in an extended multi-volume set comprised of over 250 entries (averaging 10 or so entries per volume) and well over 500 characters. Going into this, these volumes will be based around a few assumptions:

1. Everything builds around the player characters.

You might not be the most powerful characters in your game, but you're certainly the most important ones at your table. In line with that, there are far fewer heroes to get between your PCs and the glory in this iteration. Oh, there are still some hero-types, but they are included as potential complicating factors, things to make plots and actions more complicated for the PCs. There are also a few characters firmly in the gray area, people or teams that can either just make life more difficult or slide completely into the opposition camp, all depending on how you interact with them. Generally speaking, background references to heroic characters will be kept vague or generic enough that it should be easy to say that the "hero" or "a team of heroes" reference is referring to one or more of the player characters at your table. In other words, the villains aren't firmly set already as members of some other hero's rogue's gallery and other heroes are only there as resources for the players and GMs (not as rivals for the limelight and the glory). That being said, given the tradition behind this line and the continuing product identity, we're still keeping the fictional conceit that these are files compiled by ALGERNON, the AI created by Doc Steel and working with The Sentinels super-group; also, I don't want to have to think up another set of titles, none of which would have any recognition value building on our former work.

2. Plug-and-play works best for the most GMs and their groups.

These write-ups are designed to be self-contained and presume as little of a pre-established "universe" or timeline as possible. That means they don't reference other characters or places or events unless that material is also going to be covered in these volumes. If the reference is for material from another volume, a sidebar will give the bare bones needed to use the element (or how to ignore it completely, should that be your choice instead). This also means that references to fictional cities and sweeping global pre-established elements simply won't be presented, as those establish too much "baggage" a GM or players might then have trouble divorcing from the characters in these books for easiest adaptation to their home games. Along those lines, and in order to streamline some material for easier use and just generally "fix" or tweak some things I wanted to change around, astute readers will notice that there are some differences between the material presented here and that presented in the versions written for earlier editions of M&M; this is intentional. As will be referenced in select character's entries, the "Algernonverse" suffered through one of those big, intra-company, massive summer crossover plotlines that ended with a soft reboot. This doesn't throw everything out that you guys might have read in the previous first and second edition iterations, but it does make room for some minor changes and re-shuffling here and there. Also, Jon Leitheusser, the developer for M&M over at Green Ronin, has **very** kindly given me permission to occasionally offer up suggestions on how to integrate *The Algernon Files* material (on an entry by entry basis) into GR's own Earth-Prime setting (home to Freedom City and Emerald City, among many other locales), the most popular published setting for the game by far; again, those will be the stuff of sidebars and not the basic assumption for any entry at the outset.

3. **Access to core books outside of the basic *Hero's Handbook* published by Green Ronin cannot be assumed.** This iteration of TAF will not include builds with optional rules from *The Gamemaster's Handbook*, *Power Profiles*, or *Gadget Guides* (all also published by Green Ronin). All people need to use these volumes is to have these volumes. See how simple that is? If new Advantages or other optional material is presented by me (i.e., stuff not already presented in the core rulebook), it will be included or summarily explained in sidebars inserted in the entry of the build using them; if there is a really important rules element I think Green Ronin clarified somewhere other than the core book and that plays into a particular entry, I will refer you to that book so you can go appreciate the work Green Ronin has done for this game. Otherwise, it's just RAW. (That's "Rules as Written" for those non-grogards out there.)
4. **The vast majority of GMs run games set in the modern day (2014 as of this writing), on Earth, and in a universe operating around many of the comic book tropes we all know and love.** Oh, and generally in the 9-12 PL range, too. The material in these volumes will be written to be usable in as broad a context under those ideas as possible. That means for those of you running The Great Spaghetti Monster Worshipping Purple Amphibious Ape-Mutants combating the Dinosaur-led Romus Impericus on an alternate three-mooned Earth where Man never evolved, these books *probably* aren't for you. Sorry about that, and best of luck with your campaign.

Hopefully, these assumptions will enable everyone to get the maximized utility out of the characters presented here. Good luck, enjoy, and good gaming!

How to Use this Book

This book, like all the others in this series, presents a number of non-player characters (and teams of such) that can be used to make life more colorful, interesting, and, well, difficult, for player characters. This usually means rivals, or occasional obstacles, or (most likely) outright adversaries and threats (though a nice GM might even consider an "allies" role ... you know, if such a GM succumbs to a fit of generosity or something). Feel free to modify background details as needed to fit individual campaigns or games.

The general write-up structure should be familiar to players and GMs of M&M. Readers will also find an in-character quote and some characters will have sidebars explaining a background distinction or source of possible confusion from the build's game mechanics. The most commonly repeating types of sidebars will be short explanations about references to other characters or teams from later volumes, optional advantages or similar optional rules meant to explain something that shows up in a particular write-up, "Plot Points" sidebars giving small outlines of specific story seeds/ideas and adventure set-ups particular to the character(s) in the entry, and "Published Settings," which will give advice on how to integrate the entry contents into Green Ronin's Earth-Prime setting (or possibly others down the line as I get permission from various developers and companies).

No Regrets

Adjusting the makeshift sling around his arm, Jake slowly made his way to the edge of the remaining land mass. Infinity stretched out below the edge, surrounding this remnant of a once moon-sized artificial fortress Praetorian's master had carved from a monstrous asteroid. The massive chunk of rock, concrete, and nameless exotic materials from a dozen different eras floated aimlessly in the mad void of fractured time and space.

Jake stared off into the sky, a sky of dancing psychedelic colors marking the prismatic twisting of light it suffered at the merciless application of a slowly-collapsing gravity well at the end of the rapidly becoming visible tunnel that marked the horizon at the end of his line of sight. Melancholy warred across the man the public called Hardcore's face, warred with a sullen resignation at what was coming.

Technomancer—Jake's brother, Isaac—had tried to explain what his powered-armor's sensor suite was displaying. Jake hadn't understood most of the impromptu physics lecture, an experience typical of interaction between the rugged fighter and his genius brother for most of their adult lives, but he had digested the basic points.

It was over.

They had won, for what it was apparently worth.

They had beaten the bad guy.

After decades of fighting Praetorian's extrachronal invasions, a foe shared by two different versions of the team Jake had accompanied into desperate battle, both that of him and his peers as well as their predecessors, the heroes had finally come face to face with the power behind the temporal tyrant...a threat none of them had ever even suspected existed before now.

Abaddon Timebreaker, the Chronovore... an entity only hinted at in records the Sentinels had inherited from an ally of the first group of Sentinels dating back to shortly after the second world war, the mystery man known only as Doc Epoch, had turned out not only to be real but also an Armageddon-level threat. The Sentinels at first had refused to believe the last of Epoch's crew, the hero turned villain in his adult years Archimedes Jones, when the man had shown up out of nowhere ranting that the timestream was under attack. Then the timestreams starting occurring, rifts stretching across millennia, from the beginning of time to the final heat death of the universe. Cities burned and worlds died as countless innocents perished in cataclysmic violence and upheaval.

They gathered forces from across worlds, Earth and others, and from across time as well. Heroes and villains alike allying in the face of utter destruction, as that was what their enemy sought – the end of all that was and had ever been, the dissolution of the timestream and the universe it bounded and to which it gave form.

Oblivion.

Battle after battle they fought, slowly but surely moving from one timelost beachhead to another before the final confrontation here, assaulting Abaddon's mighty citadel.

Lord, had they fought, Jake thought to himself.

Abaddon had fallen in the end, as Praetorian before him, as countless other monsters and tyrants had in Jake and his friends' experience. The cost had been so very high, so very dear this time, but in the end they had finally won. The timestream was repairing itself, the chaos in the sky a sign of that process. But therein lay one last bitter strike from the fallen fiend...without a guiding hand, as time mended the flow of history from the Big Bang to the Last Crunch, there was no way of knowing where all the many, many pieces would fall. No way of knowing if history would be exactly the same as it had been before.

Jake sat down to watch as the infinite wall of white nothingness growing from the tunnel of collapsing sky around them approached. The herald of absolute, unstoppable change washing away everything before it and leaving a healed universe in its wake.

He didn't even know if he, his family, or his surviving friends, any of them, would continue to exist in this new world, if they would ever have even existed in this new history. Then a slow, proud smile grew across his face and resentment left his eyes.

The final price didn't matter.

In the end, despite any set of odds, against godlike opposition, he... they... had done the right thing. They had fought the good fight, and they had won.

With courage.

Without hesitation.

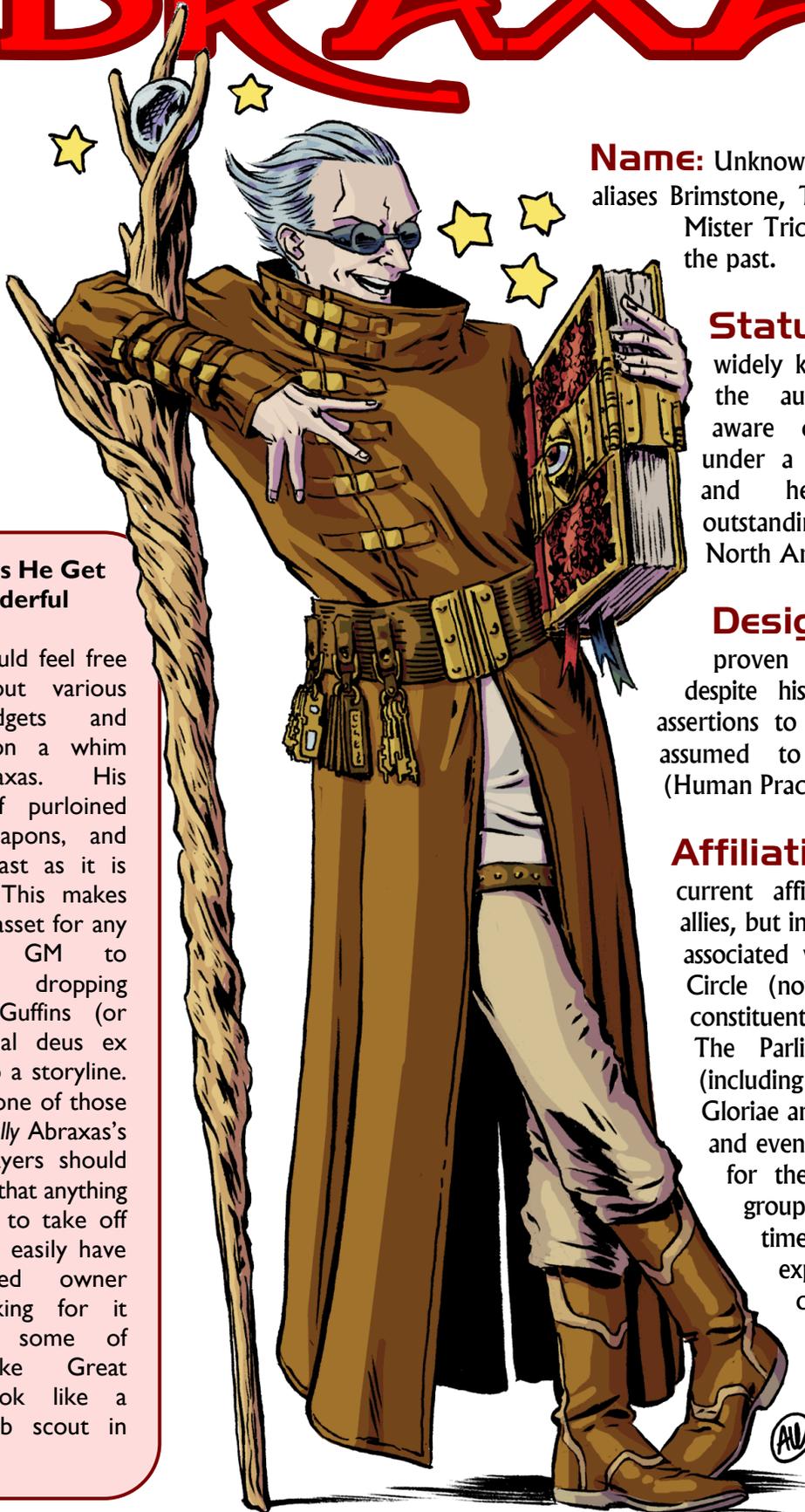
In the end, that was what mattered. That was all that mattered.

With or without them—but because of them—the world would go on.

It was enough.



ABRAXAS



Where Does He Get Those Wonderful Toys?

GMs should feel free to trade out various arcane gadgets and equipment on a whim with Abraxas. His collection of purloined artifacts, weapons, and gear is as vast as it is well-hidden. This makes him a useful asset for any enterprising GM to exploit for dropping magical MacGuffins (or the occasional *deus ex machina*) into a storyline. Of course, none of those things are *really* Abraxas's property; players should keep in mind that anything they manage to take off of him could easily have a disgruntled owner coming looking for it eventually... some of whom make Great Cthulhu look like a dyspeptic cub scout in comparison.

Name: Unknown. He's also used the aliases Brimstone, The Mad Jester, and Mister Trick at various times in the past.

Status: While not widely known to the public, the authorities are very aware of Abraxas (albeit under a few of his aliases), and he currently has outstanding warrants in both North America and Europe.

Designation: Until proven otherwise, and despite his many questionable assertions to the contrary, he is assumed to be "Supernatural (Human Practitioner)."

Affiliation(s): No current affiliations known, nor allies, but in the past he has been associated with The Silverthorn Circle (now defunct), various constituent organizations within The Parliament of Shadows (including both The Manus Gloriam and later The Sinistry), and even been forced to work for the virulent anti-occult group Witchbane for a time; what little public exposure he's had comes from his brief tenure serving with The Sentinels super-group.

Quote: “Blame... Property... these are all very arguable concepts. I propose you take back your whatever-that-is, and I’ll just take my leave of you and this place. No hurt feelings, no bloodshed, and everyone’s reasonably happy. Sound acceptable?”

Background: Thief, con-artist, and general world-class annoyance to the occult community in general, aliases are the only names anyone has for this contentious mage, or seemingly has ever had. He has purposely kept his past shrouded in mystery, including things such as his true age or even where he’s from. What *is* known is that over the decades he has wormed his way into the confidence of wizards, witches, and arcane entities too numerous to easily count, on many planes of existence, all with the goal of stealing from them—stealing their property, stealing their secrets, or even just stealing their self-respect and reputations.

He has conned, connived, and even cuckolded his way into the legendary (and sometimes unenviable) status of being one of the few individuals hated by pretty much all sides and factions within the disparate and fractious supernatural world.

Why? His motives are as cryptic as what passes for the terse communication he sometimes uses to infuriate those forced to deal with him. Any power he might gain is balanced by the list of enemies he’s accrued. While he has occasionally proven a useful tool thanks to his “hard-earned”

Wait... he’s worked with whom?

Abraxas (operating under his “Brimstone” alias) last worked with **The Sentinels**, a group of hero-types that have gone through Golden, Silver and Modern Age iterations of their team structure; in other words, in one form or another with a few defunct periods in between, they date back to WWII.

Witchbane is a fanatical anti-occult group formed from the remnants of special Allied units that fought against the Axis’ supernatural assets in WWII; they operate covertly and hold unswervingly to the ethos that all magic and supernatural beings are evil and must eventually be destroyed—their own use of such assets just means they are willing to accept damnation to save others from the same fate. (They do *not* play nice and seldom ever give their targets the opportunity to explain said target’s actions or justify said target’s existence.)

The Parliament of Shadows is an ancient organization formed of multiple constituent occult groups for mutual protection and as a useful alternative to conflict between those groups; it includes the **Manus Glorise** (“Hand of Glory”), an order of sorcerers and alchemists formed during the Middle Ages, and **The Sinistry**, a modern splinter group from the Manus Glorise that wants to modernize the practices and structures of the supernatural world.

breadth of knowledge, or impressive collections of arcane tools and artifacts, few people make the mistake of trusting him or ever turning their backs on him. This is wise, and often the result of sad experience.

Given his personality and proclivities, his activities as part of various groups have been understandably short-lived, and usually performed in disguise and using aliases. He was blackmailed for a time into aiding the fanatics in the Witchbane organization (though the exact details are mostly unknown outside that group). For the space of a year or two, he actually managed to bargain his way into the Sentinels super-group, trading his arcane skills and knowledge for the team’s protection against his litany of enemies and hunters; as with all his other affiliations, that ended poorly, and he now avoids his former teammates with great care.

Currently using the name “Abraxas,” he is once again a free agent; how long this will last, and who will suffer from his attentions or company next, is a matter of some concern to many interested parties.

Personality, Goals, &

Tactics: Abraxas is very reserved. Whether this is a normal part of his personality, or simply a survival trait picked up over the years is anyone’s guess. People who have dealt with him over any length of time generally believe his cryptic demeanor is a front, the furthering of his self-embraced image as an all-knowing man of mystery. He speaks little, and though not overtly rude, is noticeably a stranger to concepts of empathy, common courtesy, and private property.

The man has no scruples and apparently no conscience—some have argued no soul, either. He will work with anyone, against anyone, so long as he has a stake in the outcome. A coward with finely honed survival instincts, he will also turn and run at the earliest possible opportunity in any fight where he feels he doesn't possess an overwhelming advantage. The only thing more powerful than his fear is his pathological greed; he has been known to actually take great personal risks when a bauble or tome he wants stands as a potential prize.

Contrary to the calm exterior he tries to maintain, he stays worried all the time about what will happen if his ability to evade those he's wronged (a long, long list) ever reaches its limits. Not that this concern even manages to slow, little less stop, his ongoing depredations.

In combat, Abraxas shies away from close-quarter opponents, staying at a distance and sniping at them with black hellfire or filling their minds with pain; he's also fond of disrupting enemy tactics by raising sorcerously-created walls of glowing, sigil-covered moonsilver, or spreading inky fields of impenetrable darkness. He only engages those he's forced to by circumstance or against whom he feels he holds overwhelming advantage (or can ambush without undue risk on his part). He holds "fighting fair" as a fool's burden and will flee at the first opportunity if facing equal or superior opposition, abandoning allies of the moment without remorse or hesitation.

(Unfortunately, their ideas for such modernization tend to lean towards crime syndicates or brutal but nonetheless successful military regimes.) All of these will be detailed in later volumes.

The Silverthorn Circle was a small group of good-aligned mages that operated between the mid-19th to mid-20th Centuries before being wiped out by a concerted effort from The Parliament of Shadows. They were completely wiped out by the arcane menace Blackbone (see Volume II of this series for details). As a defunct and now only historical artifact, the thornholders will occasionally be referenced in an entry here and there, but will not get their own entry. On the other hand, that means the name is open to any enterprising GM or players who want to make up a reborn version of the Circle.

fabrications (earning ever more terrible enemies in the process).

Powers, Abilities, & Resources:

A sorcerer of respectable skill, Abraxas enhances his mystical prowess with the use of various items, particularly a spellstaff of ancient origin. His knowledge of occult matters is extensive, and complemented by his Book of Shadows, a tome of seemingly infinite and useful information on all manner of arcane subjects (and apparently sentient, frequently commenting on its lack of appreciation for its "servitude" to "an ungrateful dilettante").

Abraxas is also one of the single most accomplished liars to be found *anywhere* in existence. People who by all rights should know not to trust him, who intentionally accept nothing he says as the truth, have still found themselves deceived and outsmarted, usually at great cost. He has proven guileful enough to trick even powerful demons into believing his

Campaign Usage & Story

Hooks: A gadfly, occasional threat, aggravating adversary, and at times even possibly an uncertain (and absolutely temporary) ally for GMs to have pop up at inopportune times during any adventure or scenario with supernatural aspects, Abraxas is always a two-edged sword. Assuming he isn't already in the PCs' crosshairs, he may actually prove useful in the short term, but he always has an angle and a goal. And where he treads, so too will his enemies soon come calling—many, many enemies. In short, he is an NPC that heroes will hate seeing and will learn to avoid when possible.

ABRAXAS

PL 11

STR STA AGL DEX FGT INT AWE PRE
1 3 2 1 4 4 4 5/3*

ADVANTAGES

Assessment, Artificer, Defensive Attack, Defensive Roll, Equipment, Evasion, Fascinate (Deception), Favored Foe 2 (demoralized targets, surprised targets), Great Endurance, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative 2, Move-by Action, Languages 2 (Latin, French; English appears to be native), Redirect, Ritualist, Second Chance (Deception checks), Second Chance 3 (Dodge checks vs. Restraining or Immobilizing Effects, Parry checks, and Will checks vs. Attempts to Mind Control or Mentally Influence Abraxas), Second Chance (Ritualist-related skill checks), Seize Initiative, Skill Mastery 2 (Deception, Insight), Skill Mastery (Expertise: Magic), Taunt, Ultimate Effort (Deception checks), Ultimate Effort (Expertise: Magic checks), Uncanny Dodge

SKILLS

Deception 16 (+21/+19), Expertise: Magic 10 (+14), Expertise: Thief 10 (+14), Insight 14 (+18), Investigation 6 (+10), Perception 6 (+10), Persuasion 6 (+11/+9), Sleight of Hand 10 (+11). Stealth 6 (+8)

DEFENSES

Dodge 9 Parry 8
Fort 13/3 Tough 14 Will 7

COMBAT

Initiative: +10

Lift: 100 lbs.

Move: Ground (30 feet), Flight (8 mph)

Unarmed: Close +4, Damage 1

Athame: Close +4, Damage 2

Channeling the Presence of the Infinite:

Perception (Visual) Area Affliction, Will check vs DC 21; Impaired, Disabled, Paralyzed

Horrible Hands of Hethek'Mal: Perception Range, Damage 10

Infernal Bindings of the Fifth Circle: Ranged +9, Affliction, Dodge check vs DC 23; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobile

Unyielding Fury of the Eternal Fire: Ranged +9, Multiattack Damage 13

Vorizhum's Vigilant Ward: Burst Area (30 feet) Affliction, Will check vs DC 21; Entranced, Compelled

COMPLICATIONS

Enemy: Abraxas has a ridiculously extensive "rogues gallery" of people, entities, and *things* that all want him imprisoned, killed, or worse. Even he can't remember them all or keep them straight, sometimes asking them, "Right. So what was it exactly I did to you again?"

Motivation (Greed): Self-enrichment, generally at the expense of others, is core to Abraxas' personality, be it wealth, artifacts, or secrets. He is never satisfied with what he already has.

Motivation (Survival): Abraxas will go to some pretty conniving and dishonorable lengths for the sake of keeping his hide (and no one else's) intact.

Quirk (Pathological Coward): Confrontations and violence outside of his complete control are a sucker's game. Risk is to be avoided unless it fits neatly into his calculus of avarice.

Reputation: In occult and supernatural circles, his name is synonymous with "lying, cowardly thief." He isn't trusted by anyone who knows who he is and stories of his past transgressions are legion. "Infamous" doesn't begin to cover it—hence the many aliases and disguises.

POWERS

AMULET OF THE ALL-SEEING EYE OF AGHRAKHAN: Senses 13 (Radius Vision, Vision Counters Illusion, Vision Counters and Penetrates All Concealment); Removable, -3 pp ♦ 10 points

ARCANE AURA: Enhanced Presence 2 ♦ 4 points

BOOK OF SHADOWS: Comprehend 3 (Languages—speak, understand, and read; Quirk—Only languages which have traditionally been used for arcane recording, such as in grimoires or spell construction, -1pp), Enhanced Advantages 3 (Skill Mastery [Expertise: Magic], Second Chance [Ritualist-related skill checks], Ultimate Effort [Expertise: Magic checks]), Features 2 (1—When opened, the book emits enough of a glow to illuminate an area like a small flashlight or lantern; 2—Text and images from the page to which the book is opened can project as small glowing images in the air above the book); Indestructible; Activation (Standard Action—user has to turn pages to the passages in question, -2 pp), Easily Removable (-2 pp), Quirk: the book has its own personality and preferences—at the GM's discretion, it may require a Persuasion check by the user to change its attitude from Unfavorable to at least Indifferent (-1 pp) ♦ 4 points

FINELY HONED SURVIVAL INSTINCTS: Enhanced Advantages 9 (Assessment, Defensive Roll, Evasion, Improved Defense, Second Chance 3 [Dodge, Parry, and Will checks], Seize Initiative, Uncanny Dodge), Senses 1 (Danger Sense, visual) ♦ 10 points

MYSTIC SENSES: Senses 1 (Magic Awareness) ♦ 1 point

PERSONAL MAGIC: Levitation (Flight 2 [8 mph]), Mystic Passage (Teleport 8 [1 mile]), Mystic Shield (Sustained Impervious Protection 7) ♦ 34 points

SPELLSTAFF: (45 base points; Indestructible; Easily Removable, -19 pp) ♦ 33 total points

- **UNYIELDING FURY OF THE ETERNAL FIRE:** Ranged Multiattack Damage 13 (Accurate 4, Homing 2) ♦ 45 base points

- **CHANNELING THE PRESENCE OF THE INFINITE:** Perception (Visual) Area Affliction 11 (Resisted and Overcome by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Paralyzed), Distracting, Selective, Subtle) ♦ 1 point

- **CONSUMING VOID OF THE SEVEN GUARDIANS OF VOMOGATH:** Ranged Burst Area 3 (120 feet) Concealment Attack (Visual and Mental), Selective ♦ 1 point

- **HORRIBLE HANDS OF HETHEK'MAL:** Perception Range Damaging Move Object 10 (25 tons; Precise, Subtle) ♦ 1 point

- **INFERNAL BINDINGS OF THE FIFTH CIRCLE:** Ranged Affliction 13 (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Damage; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobile), Accurate 4, Affects Insubstantial 2, Cumulative, Extra Condition, Limited Degree ♦ 1 point

- **SILVER FIRES OF THE THORN-CROWNED TOWERS:** Create Magical Silver Fire Constructs 10 (1000 cubic feet; Continuous, Impervious, Precise, Selective; Feedback) ♦ 1 point

- **SPELL-SHATTERING SIGIL OF SOGGOS:** Broad Simultaneous Nullify Magic 13 (All Magic at once; Accurate 4) ♦ 1 point

- **VORIZHUM'S VIGILANT WARD:** Continuous Burst Area (30 feet) Progressive Affliction 11 (Resisted by Will, Overcome by Will; Entranced, Compelled), Limited Degree, Limited to Unnatural Creatures, Limited to Holding at Bay ♦ 1 point

EQUIPMENT

Athame [daggers] x 2 (Strength-based Damage 1), Reinforced Leather Coat (Protection 2, subtle)

COSTS

Attributes 44 + Defenses 25 + Advantages 18 + Skills 42 + Powers 97 = 226 points

ADONIS



Name: Michael Anthony Ribaldi

Status: Legal citizen of the United States with no criminal record; identity as “Adonis” is unknown to the authorities and general public

Designation:
Metahuman (mutant)

Affiliation(s):
The Magi
(international criminal organization)

A Man of Means

Adonis’ Status and Wealth Benefits provide him not only a number of homes and vehicles of the mundane variety (limited only as individual GMs see fit), they also give him an army of criminals at his beck and call. Treat these as combinations of the Crime Lord, Criminal, Gang Leader, and Thug Supporting Character archetypes (Green Ronin’s *Heroes Handbook*, pg. 268-269), with numbers modified to fit the realistic needs of a scene—a few dozen here and there would be reasonable, but at most he has only a few hundred men he can count on at any one time.

Quote: “Violence is so tiresome. Why must you continue to make this necessary?”

Background: Michael Ribaldi had always been blessed with good looks, but it wasn’t until early adulthood that he discovered the other outcomes of his genetic lottery—he discovered that he was a metahuman, immensely strong and difficult to hurt. He immediately began experimenting, not only to find the limits of his abilities, but also to see if he had any other blessings to count. After trial and error, he found to his delight that the charm he carried with him through his life was also not completely normal.

In fact, with some effort, he found that he could do more than persuade people to do what he wanted them to do; he could actually make them do what he wanted... no matter what that person’s actual desires were. This was far more entertaining than being able to bench-press a garbage truck. Unfortunately for society, these newfound gifts did not inspire Ribaldi to feats of altruism. A child of privilege long used to getting his way, Ribaldi, or “Adonis” as he had been nicknamed during childhood, saw his

abilities as one more means to an end. He wanted wealth, he wanted women, and he wanted the life of leisure and affluence that he knew in his heart he had always been destined to have.

Starting small, he used his overwhelming charisma and intimidating physical strength to literally muscle his way into the bottom tiers of a local numbers racket. His ascent was meteoric, as he shot up the ranks of the criminal network that ultimately controlled the rackets he had mastered. Today, Adonis finally has the throne he's always felt was his by right. As the master of a network extending throughout his city and beyond, he controls or influences decisions made at every level, from the percentage of the take he gets from an armored car hold-up to the names of who does and doesn't get municipal contracts from city hall. He recently finished cementing this status, finishing off a gang war between his own outfit and some of the older criminal organizations holding on in the city. His competitors have no idea how much assistance Adonis received from the Magi organization in this endeavor, or how he has given them a powerful anchor in the area. Rex Mundi, leader of The Magi, is well-pleased with his investment and has taken a personal interest in future "development projects" with Adonis.

Personality, Goals, &

Tactics: Adonis isn't so much an evil or malicious man as he is a spoiled child who never had to grow up and is now and forever too powerful to ever be disciplined—unbridled and self-consuming ego taken to an extreme. Other people

So... Who are these Magi guys?

The Magi, as in "Wise Men Bearing Gifts," are an international criminal organization that will be detailed in a later volume. The organization is over a century old and led by a mysterious mastermind known as Rex Mundi ("King of the World"). Unlike many other such organizations, they prefer low-key and peripheral involvement. No costumes, no code names (other than their leader), and preferably a layer of deniability between them and their clients. They're suppliers, arbiters, technical consultants, brokers, and all-around middlemen for pretty much any criminals engaged in pretty much any illegal activity pretty much anywhere in the world. Anything for their cut of the pie, so long as someone else does the cutting and risks the blame. They don't want to rule the world, just get paid for advice and material assistance to those guys that *do* want to rule the world.

Published Settings

If using the Earth-Prime setting published by Green Ronin, Adonis makes a good fit for Emerald City's underworld. He prefers the low-key approach rather than costume-plus-fists, and he's comfortable working behind the scenes, so

exist as the extensions of Adonis' own ambitions. He revels in all the levels of control he can exert, more the mental influence than the physical, though. But most of all, he wants to be worshipped by those around him—worshipped for his looks, worshipped for his power, and obeyed in all things. As far as he's concerned, he's well on his way to reaching that stature.

Adonis avoids unnecessary combat. In his eyes, it's beneath him to have to dirty his fists when he has other people to do that. It might also mess up his clothes or his looks, both of which would be an unacceptable bother. If forced into a confrontation, he will first attempt to control his attacker through his superhuman presence and pheromones. Failing that, he will fall back on his brutal strength and bulletproof skin, abilities that have taken more than one enemy by surprise given the image that he has carefully constructed. But, given a choice in the matter, he far prefers to buy or scare off potential threats long before they ever move past the potential stage.

Powers, Abilities, &

Resources: Ribaldi is a mutant. He possesses an enhanced musculature and skeletal structure that gives him superhuman strength and resilience. In addition, he has a personal presence, which, when aided by his body's robust pheromone production, is almost intoxicating. Prolonged exposure to these pheromones renders most individuals highly amenable to suggestion. He's learned to combine these social talents to a disturbingly effective degree. He's also learned to use his connections to outfit himself with a few hi-tech and well-hidden toys (his Equipment ranks).

Tall and massively built, with long blonde hair worn past the shoulders, Adonis is, by any standards, an incredibly handsome man. He accentuates his startling good looks with the constant reinforcement of his mutant pheromones—the combination more than compensating for his somewhat garish taste in exceedingly expensive clothing and accessories (i.e., his “signature” gold suit). Only when forced into a fight will he reluctantly strip down to more utilitarian garb.

Campaign Usage & Story Hooks:

Adonis is a crime lord. He can easily fit any campaign requiring an organizing hand behind the criminal elements in a background city. In addition, he himself is only the front for a larger and more sinister organization: the Magi. This provides two potential play hooks. The first is Adonis’ ability to surprise players by (reluctantly) stepping forward and trading punches with them or by shrugging off energy blasts instead of simply throwing a couple of gunshots in their direction while fleeing a scene when the PCs bust up his operations. The second is the revelation that he has the Magi behind him, either revealed when he continues to bounce back from defeat through his patrons’ legal and technological resources, much to the player’s chagrin, or when the players are forced to deal with a surprising and well-equipped response from other Magi assets should the PCs manage to take down Adonis in the long term.

he’s ideal as a former front man or high-ranking agent for The Chamber; possibly, he’s now taking advantage of the Silver Storm event to break out on his own from their control. Conversely, he could be placed anywhere in the setting as yet another asset answering to Taurus through the Labyrinth’s structure; if so, his operating name undoubtedly amuses the old bull greatly.

Plot Points

Escape Clause: Over the course of several weeks, the player characters find themselves coming into possession of incriminating evidence regarding numerous power players in Adonis’ organization. Then, a series of “lucky” breaks occur, with the heroes foiling a criminal job here, just happening to find a culprit there, and so on; as if someone (singular or plural) is turning on the organization from the inside and setting up his or her compatriots for a fall. What the PCs don’t know is that Adonis is that inside man, but the people he’s feeding to the authorities are those

he deems liabilities, more loyal to the

Magi than to Adonis himself. He’s finally making his move to break away from his patrons, but he has to do it slowly and carefully. Will the player characters play into the scheme to leverage this as a shot against the organization as a whole? Or, will they turn the tables on the erstwhile puppeteer, exposing his plans to the Magi and Rex Mundi?

Object Lesson: Recently, an NPC hero known to the player characters crossed Adonis and his organization by inflicting too much damage on their operations and finances to ignore. Adonis, at the stern behest of his patrons, decided to play hardball with the citizens of his fair city as the audience, particularly other heroes, for whom a visible response was intended as a demonstration of power and an education in the nature of consequences. A highly organized and well-planned but relentlessly focused campaign specifically targeted that hero. Layered traps, widespread recon, determining and targeting associates, and so on, until the bad guys finally got lucky, cracking the hero’s secret identity. The hero was killed, in his civilian guise and with collateral damage aplenty. Now, it’s up to the player characters to avenge their fallen comrade and turn the lesson back on the teachers.

ADONIS

PL 11

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
12	4	2	1	8	3	3	8/4*

ADVANTAGES

Attractive (*Attractive* 2), Benefit 5 (Status 2—Crime Lord, Wealth 3), Close Attack 2, Connected, Daze 2 (*Deception*, *Intimidation*), Equipment 5 (25 ep of various tools and weapons), Fascinate 3 (*Deception*, *Intimidation*, *Persuasion*), Improved Initiative, Inspire 3, Leadership

SKILLS

Athletics 2 (+14), Expertise: Business 4 (+7), Expertise: Crime Lord 6 (+9), Deception 4 (+8/+12), Insight 4 (+7), Intimidation 6 (+10/+14), Perception 6 (+9), Persuasion 6 (+10/+14), Technology 2 (+5)

POWERS

MUTANT PHEROMONES: Area Cloud Affliction 11 (Resisted by Fortitude, Overcome by Fortitude; Dazed, Compelled, Controlled; Insidious, Reaction [when feeling threatened or aroused or otherwise emotional], Subtle; Sense-Dependent: Pheromones), **Enhanced Advantages** 10 (Attractive, Daze 2 [Deception, Intimidation], Fascinate 3 [Deception, Intimidation, Persuasion], Inspire 3, Leadership; Sense-dependent: Pheromones), **Enhanced Presence** 4 (Sense-dependent: Pheromones) ♦ 54 points

SUPERHUMAN PHYSIQUE: Immunity 3 (Cold, Heat, Pressure), Leaping 4 (500 feet), Protection 8 (Impervious), Speed 3 (16 mph) ♦ 26 points

DEFENSES

Dodge	8	Parry	10
Fort	10	Tough	12
		Will	10

COMBAT

Initiative: +6

Lift: 100 tons

Move: Ground (16 mph)

Unarmed: Close +10, Damage 12

Mutant Pheromones: Area Cloud Affliction; Fortitude check vs DC 21; Dazed, Compelled, Controlled

COMPLICATIONS

Identity (Michael Ribaldi): Adonis' true name and identity are a carefully-guarded secret from the authorities and the general public.

Motivation (Greed): Adonis is in it for the money and the power.

Quirk (Epic Ego): A self-absorbed prima donna, Ribaldi is arrogant and egotistical. In many ways, he's a spoiled brat that never grew up.

Quirk (Resented Obligations): Adonis owes his position and continuing success to the machinations and influence of The Magi. This galls him to no end and he constantly looks for a way out from under their thumb.

COSTS

Attributes 74 + Defenses 21 + Advantages 15 + Skills 20 + Powers 80 = 210 points

ALCHEMIST



Name: Believed to be "Caiaphas," but this is based on speculation; he is also known to have used the aliases Mister Stoffeles, Master Midnight, Lord of the Left-Hand Path, Herr Hellmacher, Roi du Diablés, and far too many others to count over the last couple of millennia

Status: Criminal of indeterminate citizenship and national origin wanted on multiple continents for an extensive list of broadly heinous offenses dating back decades; however, the Alchemist is not generally known among the civilian populace, though numerous of his aliases are known to the authorities

Designation: Modified Human (Magic)/ Supernatural (Human Practitioner)

Affiliation(s): At one point or another, he has either directly assisted, mentored, or helped form more than one of the constituent groups under the Parliament of Shadows banner, as well as Paingarden, The Pentacle, and the current Kaos Krewe run by Voodoo Daddy; similarly, he has been instrumental in aiding Baron Brimstone, The Bonesmith,

Doktor Thüle, Gilgamesh, Hell's Angel, Lucien Challenger, Simon Magnus, the Son of the Serpent, and Vesper repeatedly during their careers

Quote: "Evil? No dear, I'm afraid you don't know the meaning of the word. Fortunately, I am an excellent teacher. Shall we begin your lessons?"

Background: Most of what is known about the man called The Alchemist is conjecture, or garnered from those few entities and persons that have known him for staggering spans of years.

Two millennia past, as one popular story goes, in the lands of Judea, there lived a successful apothecary named Caiaphas. One day a neighbor of the apothecary died, but when the entire village gathered to bury him, they were interrupted by a traveling holy man. Caiaphas at first dismissed the man as one of the many charlatans who traveled Judea in those lawless days. The man's words really didn't register with Caiaphas, who simply wanted to get home to eat and was annoyed at the interruption—but he certainly took better notice when his neighbor suddenly came back to life under the holy man's ministrations. The villagers praised the holy man, and helped spread his teachings throughout the surrounding lands. Caiaphas was duly impressed, but had responsibilities that needed tending. These priorities changed when his own family later contracted the same plague that had struck down their neighbor.

Desperate, with no medicine proving efficacious and the deaths of his family looming before him, Caiaphas went in search of the holy man. To his shock and dismay he was told that all things happen for a reason, that some things couldn't... no... *shouldn't* be changed.

Who were those people again?

The Parliament of Shadows has already been discussed in Abraxas' entry. **Paingarden** is a group of eco-terrorists consisting of a half-dozen twisted and nature spirit-possessed supernatural threats. A motley collection of five outcasts from other arcane societies, **The Pentacle** works as a mercenary concern willing to do anything for the right price. **Voodoo Daddy** is a vampiric bokor who murdered the bokor he took his name from and stole away the man's group of apprentices and agents (the **Kaos Krewe**) in the process with promises of better profits and more power. **Baron Brimstone** is a corrupted former hero turned supernatural crimelord, the **Bonesmith** is a pulp-era lich and macabre steampunk engineer of necromantic technologies reawakened after decades of imprisoning torpor, and **Doktor Thüle** is a rogue member of the Manus Glorae and a former Nazi agent specializing in runic magic, bloody transformations, and brutal enthrallment. **Gilgamesh** is a demigod who resents the immortality foisted on him by beings he worshipped as gods and who wants to rule the world because he feels he's owed that much. **Hell's Angel** is

Returning to his village, Caiaphas discovered his family had died in his absence. Overcome with grief, he cursed the name of the holy man and swore revenge. When the Romans came to arrest and kill the object of his hate, Caiaphas heard the news and again traveled to see the man who, in Caiaphas eyes, had let the merchant's family die, but this time to spit on him, as Caiaphas watched *him* suffer. He was shocked following this cathartic act when the man forgave him, and, strangely, uttered words to the effect of "stay and wait for my return."

Only after time had passed did the import of those words sink in.

Caiaphas didn't age, he didn't sicken, and he didn't die. He suffered accidents that should have killed him, but from which he healed with terrifying speed. Soon, he was cast out of his village, condemned for the witchcraft his neighbors were sure he practiced.

Thus began his wandering.

Over the centuries, Caiaphas has let his bitterness and hate consume him. He's mastered the blackest of sorcerous talents and used them to terrible ends. He's embraced depravity, helped perpetuate every sin and debauchery he could conceive of, and a few that he needed help in seeing to fruition. Through it all, he's proven immortal and mostly untouchable (as well as completely unrepentant). Down through the long roll of years, Caiaphas has cycled through denial, depression, rage, and any number of other emotions about his condition. But he as always returned to hate, all of which falls squarely on the holy man who, in his mind, cursed him.

Forgiving souls who have studied his past theorize that he's been given time to work through the pride and anger which would have

surely damned him at the time of his “change,” and that some great work must surely lie ahead—but others who’ve directly fought the man are less altruistic in their appraisal. They speak of his epically unbending pride, of his towering and consuming rage, and above all else of his aching need to make someone, *anyone*, pay for The Alchemist’s self-perceived suffering, which is all too often any poor soul unlucky enough to get in this monster’s way. For himself, The Alchemist (who refuses to answer to other names) offers neither excuses nor explanations. He strives to be the villain’s villain, reveling in what he insists be described as “evil,” and embracing his envisioned role as master fiend with an operatic glee.

Personality, Goals, & Tactics:

This is not an entirely sane man. The burden of his many centuries and the constant emotional baggage he’s refused to let go of in all those years have taken their toll. His emotions are mercurial and his love of spontaneity and unpredictability has led him to abandon long-term plans and significant resources without a second thought to capitalize on an ephemeral opportunity. Or even on a whim.

At the center of his self-concept is his obsession with a particular role and how to play it. He views himself as the devil given form, the epitome of evil and dark desire whose eternal obligation is to test the forces of light and justice, forever honing them, hardening them in the fires of an ever-evolving crucible of challenges. In pursuit of this perverse sense of responsibility, he has aided a litany of other dark powers and their agents, helping see birth to one supernatural threat after another. In

the transformed agent of fell entities who is possessed of a frightening breadth of infernal physical powers, **Lucien Challenger** is the black sheep of the otherwise heroic Challenger family, and **Simon Magnus** is a sorcerer who’s made one too many bargains for his longevity and now frantically tries to stay one step ahead of his “bill collectors.” **The Son of the Serpent** is the trickster offspring of the self-proclaimed goddess (and world-class monster herself) **The Serpent Queen**, and **Vesper** is a doctor who tried to use tissue samples from a vampire to find the secret of its recuperative abilities so she could heal her broken and diseased body, only to accidentally end up as a monstrous semi-vampiric half-woman/half-bat.

All will have their own entries later in this series.

Alternate Pasts

Was The Alchemist also “The Wandering Jew” of folklore? That depends on the GM and his players and what their tastes and comfort zones are. The entire story may be nothing more than a momentary entertainment he told an acquaintance or enemy a thousand years ago, or it may contain at least a kernel of fact. Over the course of centuries, The Alchemist

cases where he has felt particular pride towards a subject, he has returned to advise and mold them time after time, year after year; this isn’t so much a sense of loyalty as it is a sense of ownership, and woe to those who would attempt to damage or remove the tools he sees as pinnacles of his craft. Other students and experiments have been merely projects of the moment, forgotten and abandoned after they served their purpose.

The second element of this role is how he approaches it, which is to say with great theatricality. Mundane thuggery is boring and too soon forgotten in the press of time’s passage; however, a true villain, one who revels in the most stupendous and spectacular feats of dark design, *that* despoiling figure makes and leaves an impression that lasts the ages. Never take the easy kill when a more memorable one is there to be savored; never hide your crimes, but rather take pride in your accomplishments, showing them off to the world—these are the ethos he teaches. The Alchemist thrives on well-executed melodrama and the feelings it inspires. He’s a monster in every sense of the word, yes, but he’s always a showman. This presents even in his choice of names—“Alchemist” is accurate to a certain extent, as alchemy is within his realm of expertise; however, his abilities are NOT limited to potions and foci, trinkets and homunculi. On occasion, he likes to pretend that his abilities are derived solely from various artifacts and magic items, but those tools are merely stage-dressing, as more than one opponent has discovered after disarming him and briefly reveling in their apparent victory... right before a malevolent laugh from the “helpless” target in front them heralded a hellish arcane

onslaught. When pressed about his choice of *nom de guerre*, he has always answered to the effect of, “I take the banal dross of dark but pedestrian ambition and transform it into the heights of monstrous devilry—isn’t that far more impressive a feat than simply changing lead to gold?”

Powers, Abilities, &

Resources: First and foremost, The Alchemist is immortal. Not merely unaging, as many fellow long-lived types that bandy around the description “immortal” are, but actually unkillable. No matter what he’s suffered, he has always healed; no matter how certain a death to which he’s succumbed, he has always risen again afterward, unharmed for all to see. Not that he’s inured to pain—his bones break, he bleeds, he screams, and can be tortured as any other man—but he has yet to find any treatment that will actually kill him... or, at least, give him a death he won’t recover from within moments (and in the blackest of his depressions, he *has* tried some fairly impressive methods, the surviving of which has NOT done his sanity any favors).

He is also a sorcerer with few equals, and one who has added significant defensive and sensory enchantments to his already immortal state. The Alchemist has had centuries to learn, hone, and master his dark arts... and it shows. He can strike down the mightiest opponents, curse them to a horrible debilitated state, or simply conjure forth castles from mid-air, pull demons and ethereal spirits from their realms with a thought, or warp perceptions over a broad area as if

has either claimed to be the inspiration for many legendary stories of monsters and miscreants (up to and including the biblical murderer Cain), or to have been the power behind the figures who were those inspirations; in some cases, he’s claimed both at different times, and sometimes made those contradictory claims to the same people. Fabulation ends and truth begins wherever it makes the most use to a particular campaign.

Speed of Thought

This is an Advantage presented in later material from *Green Ronin* that adapted a Feature of the same name introduced in GR’s *Threat Report* series. It allows a character to base their Initiative off of Intellect rather than Agility.

Undefeatable

Pay careful attention to the interaction of the *Insidious* and *Subtle* modifiers on his *Immortality*. To onlookers, it appears that any judgment of his death was simply in error—he just wasn’t hurt as badly as it seemed. Similarly, for The Alchemist himself, too little time passes for him to register any actual death or deathlike state. He simply blacks out for a moment and then he’s back to breathing again.

reality were clay in his hands. As with the art of villainy, he claims he’s forgotten more about magic than all but the most accomplished practitioners have ever even learned.

Neither of these powerful assets should overshadow the value of his awe-inspiring range of contacts and the seemingly endless numbers of favors owed him by supernatural criminals, monsters, extradimensional entities, and magical practitioners all over this world as well as many others. He can usually get his hands on anything or anyone he needs with very little effort. He is tremendously cunning and resourceful, and completely lacking anything that even remotely resembles a conscience—meaning there’s very little he *won’t* try... at least, as long as he can do it with style.

Campaign Usage & Story Hooks:

The Alchemist is a master villain, the plotter behind plots, the master at the strings of many puppets. GMs can use him as the player in the shadows a group of heroes learns about over time, or as the origin/explanation behind any number of occult criminals, supernatural threats, and monsters that go bump in the night. He can also make for a convenient *deus ex machina* for other supernatural bad guys, their supplier of new toys and information, or just as a get out of jail free card for that ilk.

ALCHEMIST

PL 14

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AGE	PRE
1	7	2	3	6	5	7	5

ADVANTAGES

Artificer, Assessment, Benefit 8 (Cipher 2, Status 3—Master Villain among Villains, Wealth 3) Connected, Contacts, Daze (Deception), Extraordinary Effort, Fascinate (Deception), Fascinate (Persuasion), Fearless, Inspire 2, Jack-of-all-trades, Languages 6 (Ancient Irish Gaelic, Arabic, English, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Old High Norse, Persian, Russian, Sanskrit, Spanish, Turkish, and up to 6 other languages as the GM sees fit; Native is Aramaic), Leadership, Ritualist, Speed of Thought, Taunt, Well-informed

POWERS

DEFENSIVE ENCHANTMENTS: Infernal Puissance (Impervious Protection 9); Warding Shields (Deflect 12; Redirection, Reflect; Diminished Range 3, Limited to attacks with a magic-related descriptor); Will of Iron (Impervious on WILL 14) ♦ 53 points

MYSTICALLY-ENHANCED SENSES: Senses 6 (Danger Sense [mental], Darkvision, Magic Awareness [acute, analytical]) ♦ 6 points

READ A MAN'S HEART: Senses 20 (Detect Moral Nature [ranged], Postcognition [Rapid 5], Precognition [Rapid 5]; all are Limited to those actions or events which shame people or inspire remorse in them) ♦ 10 points

TRUE IMMORTAL: Immortality 20 (3 seconds; Insidious, Subtle); Immunity 30 (Fortitude Effects; Limited to half-effect); Regeneration 10 (Every round; Persistent) ♦ 68 points

DEFENSES

Dodge	8	Parry	8		
Fort	10	Tough	16	Will	14

COMBAT

Initiative: +5

Lift: 100 lbs.

Move: Ground (30 feet)/Teleport (250 miles)

Unarmed: Close +6; Damage 1

None May Stand Before My Arcane Might: Ranged +9; Damage 18

Withering Curse: Close +12, Cumulative Progressive Affliction 16, resisted and overcome by Will vs. a DC 26 (Fatigued and Dazed, Disabled and Prone, Incapacitated and Transformed)

Your Arts Are Feeble Before Mine: Ranged +9; Nullify Magic 18, resisted by Will vs. a DC 28

SKILLS

Athletics 4 (+5), Deception 10 (+15), Expertise: History 11 (+16), Expertise: Magic 19 (+24), Insight 12 (+19), Intimidation 8 (+13), Investigation 5 (+10), Perception 6 (+13), Persuasion 5 (+10), Stealth 4 (+6)

COSTS

Attributes 44 + Defenses 25 + Advantages 18 + Skills 42 + Powers 97 = 226 points

POWERS

DARK AND ANCIENT SORCERIES: (84 base points) ♦ 90 total points

- **GLAMOURS: Illusion 14** (All Sense Types, Independent) ♦ 84 base points
- **ARCANE PATHWAYS: Teleport 16** (250 miles/64,000 miles; Extended, Increased Mass 4 [800 lbs.], Portal) ♦ 1 point
- **CALL INTO THE VOID: Summon 8** (120 pp minion; Broad Type [any demon, elemental, or spirit], Controlled, Horde, Mental Link, Multiple Minions [4 minions]) ♦ 1 point
- **CONJURATION: Create 16** (65,000 cft.; Continuous, Innate, Subtle [looks natural]) ♦ 1 point
- **NONE MAY STAND BEFORE MY ARCANE MIGHT:** Ranged Multiattack **Damage 18** (Accurate 3, Concentration Duration, Incurable, Indirect 3, Split 2, Variable Descriptor 2 [broad group—any magic descriptor]) ♦ 1 point
- **WITHERING CURSE:** Cumulative Progressive **Affliction 16** (Resisted by Will, Recovered by Will; Fatigued and Dazed, Disabled and Prone, Incapacitated and Transformed [withered husk]; Accurate 3, Extra Condition, Incurable) ♦ 1 point
- **YOUR ARTS ARE FEEBLE BEFORE MINE:** Broad, Simultaneous **Nullify Magic 18** (All magic at once; Accurate 3, Precise; Diminished Range 2) ♦ 1 point

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation (Recognition): An inveterate showman, The Alchemist always wants the spotlight and to be the center of attention.

Motivation (Responsibility): He feels a perverse form of responsibility to act as the crucible in which the forces of good are tested. This often leads him to create or mentor numerous supernatural threats that can perform that function by proxy as well.

Power Loss (Holy Ground): Every round The Alchemist spends on holy ground costs him five points from his “Dark and Ancient Sorceries” array base. He recovers at the same rate when he leaves the sacred area.

Quirk (Debts to Pay, Debts to Earn): Relationships and favors can sometimes be a two-edged affair, and The Alchemist must often work to earn those favors and beneficial relationships. Not all schemes he’s seeing through to fruition are his own.

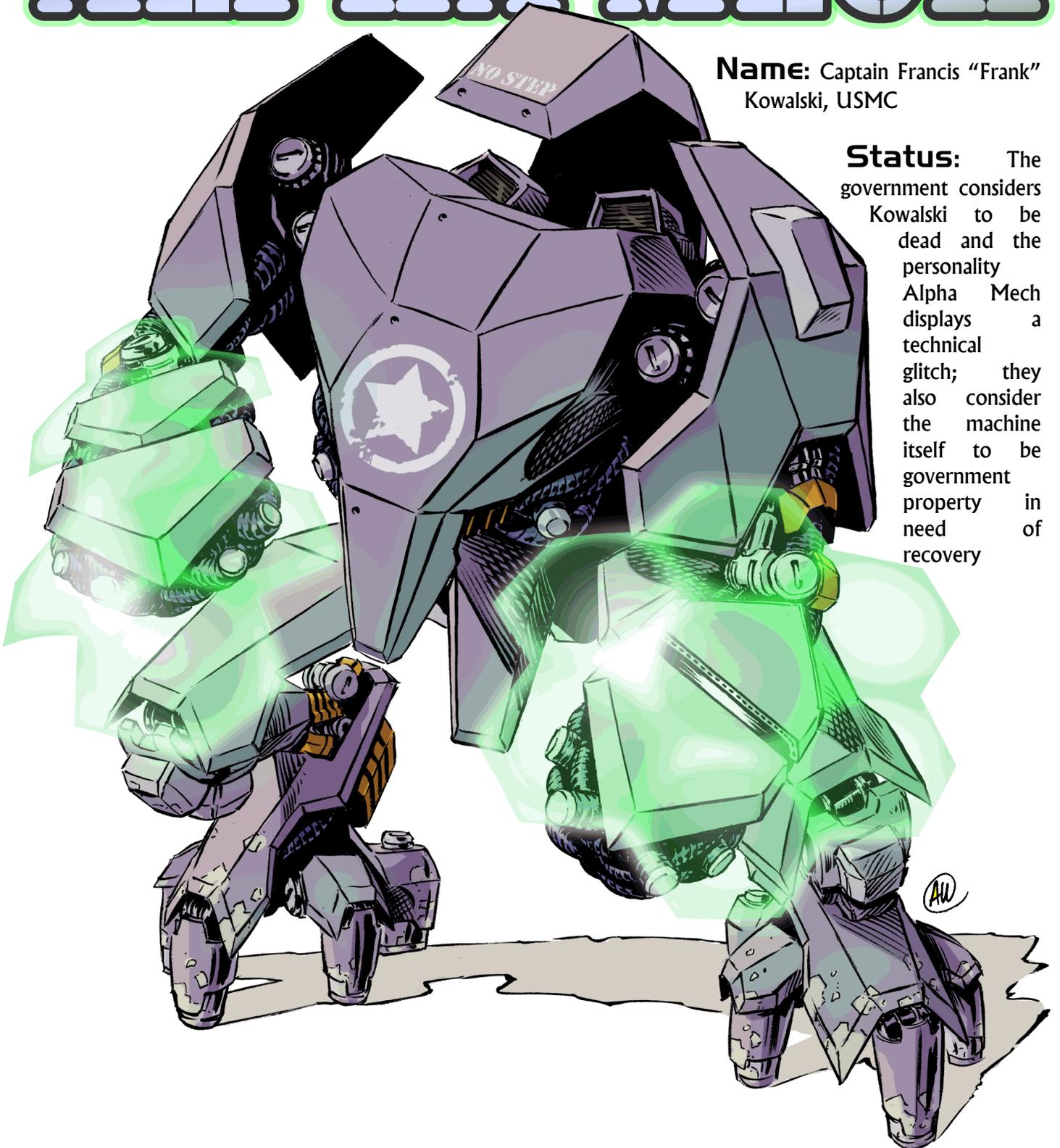
Quirk (Godlike Ego): The man considers himself the closest thing to the Devil made flesh that has ever walked the Earth.

Quirk (The Mark): Characters with mystically-enhanced sensory abilities can “see” a glowing sigil hovering an inch from The Alchemist’s forehead. He can’t remove or hide it, though mundane forces remain blind to its presence. The sigil resembles Enochian (the legendary language of angels), but no one claims to have discerned its meaning and its bearer refuses to talk about it.

ALPHA MECH

Name: Captain Francis "Frank"
Kowalski, USMC

Status: The government considers Kowalski to be dead and the personality Alpha Mech displays a technical glitch; they also consider the machine itself to be government property in need of recovery



Designation: Artificial Being (Tech)/Modified Human (Digitized Personality)

Affiliation(s): Formerly the U.S. military and Project Freedom Warrior, currently none (mercenary)

Quote: “Show me what you got, little man! Bring it! BRING IT!”

Background: The United States government has come into possession of numerous pieces of recovered non-terrestrial technology over the years. Sometimes, they like to try to leverage that collection into usable weapons and gear for their own forces. Project Freedom Warrior was one such effort. Reverse engineering a variety of materials and systems from different ships and weapons, the minds behind Freedom Warrior built a robot fighting machine of humanoid configuration. The highly mobile and frighteningly well-armed warbot was designed to be controlled by cybernetic remote linkage; for that task, Uncle Sam tapped a number of worthy contenders, one of which being a Marine combat pilot named Frank Kowalski. Kowalski’s linkage seemed to work orders of magnitude more clearly and more efficiently than the other candidates, so he was soon the primary test mind piloting the machine.

Unfortunately, not all the parties involved in this secret project were what they seemed. Corvis Aerospace was actually one of the many front companies used by S.P.I.R.E. to interact with the outside world when it didn’t want its presence known, and Logic-One, a think tank dedicated to providing technical consultation and solutions in a variety of areas, had long ago developed

Targets and Collateral Damage

There were a number of corporate participants working alongside DARPA on the Freedom Warrior project. In addition to Corvis Aerospace and Logic-One, there were others involved, completely undeserving of Kowalski’s wrath.

- **A.R.E.S.** (Armstrong Radical Engineering Systems), a close-knit design group formed from various disgruntled “visionaries” after leaving Silicon Valley and Seattle, were instrumental in the servos design and the power core assembly.

- **CainCo**, or **Cain Consolidated**, a broad corporate interest, run by the iron hand and unyielding stewardship of industrialist and financial king **Conrad Cain**, and with its hands in various technical fields, were responsible for many of the general electronic components involved in multiple systems on the machine.

- **Infinitum Design, Unlimited**, a software and programming company known for its cutting edge work, were the primary engineers working on the control systems.

- **Steele Omnitech**, a multinational tech giant founded in the mid-20th century by Golden Age hero **Ulysses Steele** (a.k.a., “Doc Steel”) were involved in a lot of the

well-hidden ties to the Wands Division of the Tarot Cartel. During the last round of testing, both parties discovered the involvement of the other. Not wanting to risk their competitors stealing the final product of the project, both parties surreptitiously sabotaged different systems within the machine and its remote controls.

When the next round of tests reached a demanding level of input, the cyberlink generated a deadly backlash, electrocuting Kowalski in his Control Pod. Only afterward did everyone discover that Kowalski’s personality and memories seemed to have imprinted on the machine’s control architecture. Initially disoriented, Kowalski struck out madly, going on a rampage that eventually carried over into a populated area. Finally corralled by a group of independent heroes brought together by his rampage, Kowalski struggled to come to grips with his new condition while sitting in an improvised lock-up designed to examine and monitor his systems. Then, he discovered that his former superiors considered the real Kowalski KIA and the remnants in the machine to be a computer error—an error to be corrected by working out a way to wipe his systems’ memory and dismantling the warbot to determine the fatal flaws in their work. He escaped, going on the run and eventually putting his services out for hire to the highest bidder.

Personality, Goals, &

Tactics: Captain Kowalski was an uncomplicated man. Despite having had his physical body killed and his personality implanted in a computerized environment, this hasn’t changed. He works independently well enough, but he’s

not really a planner; he takes orders from people that are, though, and transforms those orders into action and results. He embodies a number of stereotypes regarding the USMC, both positive and negative. On the one hand, he's direct and goal-oriented, utterly reliable when given a mission and unstinting in giving his 110% to get that mission done and done right. On the other hand, he is hyper-aggressive, competitive, aggravatingly macho and gung-ho, and almost completely alien to the concepts of introspection or subtlety. Some of these traits were already in Kowalski's make-up, but his digital transformation seems to have exacerbated them.

Kowalski resents the loss of his biological body and the severing of his former attachments. He is also quite certain the test flight was sabotaged and somebody other than bad luck is responsible for his condition. Initially, he was focused on finding out exactly who, but over time this has changed to an almost psychotic grudge against anyone who *could* have been involved—starting with Uncle Sam and moving down through the corporations involved in the technical and consulting aspects of the refit. He no longer cares who did this to him; he simply wants people to pay, and he's not choosy anymore about which people those should be. Combine this attitude with a background in military operations and a natural talent for violence, as well as a pressing need to pay for specialized maintenance and assistance in hiding from his government pursuers, and the result is a highly dangerous threat-for-hire.

materials fabrication and cybernetic design.

- **Vex Industries**, known globally for their weapons design and manufacturing expertise, were the leaders in the efforts to reverse engineer the meson and exotic energy weapons used by Alpha Mech.

None of these were involved in (or even aware of) the sabotage... not that this deters Kowalski from gleefully attacking their facilities and interests whenever possible.

Feel free, of course, to change out or ignore any of these in favor of material from your own campaigns.

- **S.P.I.R.E.** (Scientific Projects Integrated Research Enclave) is a tightly woven group of criminal scientists and technicians interested only in advancing the cutting edge of science and technology with little regard to “unimportant” concerns like laws, morality, and common decency. **The Tarot Cartel** is an international criminal and terrorist organization formed around the motif of the tarot deck, organized and run by the mysterious Baroness and her secretive Arcana Council.

Conrad Cain, Doc Steel, S.P.I.R.E., and The Tarot Cartel will all get their own entries down the line.

Alpha Mech doesn't do subtle. He moves in to attack a target without preamble (though accompanied with a lot of trash-talk and figurative chest-beating), striking from a distance at first before moving in to engage at close quarters. He is a firm believer in the “shock and awe” methodology. Conflicts with Alpha Mech are loud, range over significant territory, and tend to leave an appalling amount of collateral damage.

Powers, Abilities, &

RESOURCES: Kowalski was a highly decorated United States Marine and then a combat pilot; he has all the military skills and combat discipline one would expect from that background.

As Alpha Mech, Kowalski is a 10-foot tall robot with a human mind in charge. Constructed from recovered alien alloys and advanced armor plating, he is highly durable. His systems and external structures are self-repairing, and his servo-construction enables him to move several hundred tons at a time and punch through most materials. His onboard communications and sensor suites are top notch.

Alpha Mech's meson cannons were reverse-engineered from captured alien tech, and he can switch between a directed blast and an explosive discharge; he can also take a few moments of focusing all of the cannon systems output as a wide, highly-intense discharge over an entire area wherein it seems to sever the molecular bonds of most forms of matter—this takes a lot of concentration and tends to drain his onboard power core to a noticeable degree, so he uses it sparingly.

His signature armaments, however, are his exotic energy-projectors. These coalesce energy as

solid, hexagon-based constructs. He can switch the

Why do my tax dollars keep going to create supervillains?

The government gets a bad rap for the high percentage of scientific experiments in creating new weapons, new technologies, and new forms of super-soldiers that ultimately fail, which is to say, create the object desired only to have it turn against its creator and go rogue.

This is actually a little unfair.

In the real world, the percentage of success to failure in government or corporate research for cutting edge development is depressingly low: the failures *vastly* outnumber the successes. And these aren't cheap failures, either. In our comfortable comic book universe, what we see and tend to remember are only the *spectacular* failures of the nature previously mentioned. The successes end up advancing materials science, computer and medical technology, and many other areas, to a level beyond the norm we endure here in the cold and unforgiving real world. And the simple failures, the ones that end with the participants merely going back to drawing board, represent 99.9% of the rest of the field.

It's all a matter of scale.

arrangement from arm to arm, but generally forms a shield-like construct on one arm and a sword-like projection on the other. The sword can also rotate at great speed, acting as a buzzsaw.

Finally, in his years as a mercenary, Kowalski has made numerous technical and underworld contacts around the world. This enables him to get whatever repairs he needs for his external systems, as well as to hide from interested authorities when necessary.

Campaign Usage & Story

Hooks: Alpha Mech is high-priced muscle, a mercenary and mobile weapon for hire. He can be used as a paid gun by any number of villains, pretty much anywhere in the world.

POWERS

BIG DAMN ROBOT: Enhanced Traits 8 (Enhanced Skill 4: Intimidation +8, Enhanced Advantages 4: Eidetic Memory, Fearless, Improved Grab, Startle); Growth 4 (Large; Innate; Permanent); Immunity 30 (Fortitude Effects); Armor Plating (Impervious Protection 14) ♦ 75 points

DATA LINK: Radio Communications 4 (Anywhere on Earth); Comprehend 2 (Machines/Electronics) ♦ 20 points

EXOTIC ENERGY PROJECTORS: Energy "Buzzsaw" Sword (Strength-based Damage 2, Multiattack 16; Precise, Reach 2 [10 feet]); Modulating Energy Shield (Close Deflect 10) ♦ 26 points

GRAVITIC MANIPULATORS: Flight 12 (8,000 mph) ♦ 24 points

MESON CANNONS: (29 base points) ♦ 31 total points

- **MESON BLAST:** Ranged Damage 14 (Precise) ♦ 29 base points

- **"CLEARING THE DECKS":** Cone Area 3 (250 feet) Weaken Toughness 10 (Resisted by Fortitude; Affects Objects; Activation 2 [standard action], Distracting, Tiring) ♦ 1 points

- **MESON BOMBS:** Ranged Burst Area Damage 9 ♦ 1 point

NANOREPAIR SYSTEMS: Regeneration 2 (Every 5 rounds) ♦ 2 points

ONBOARD SENSOR SUITE: Senses 17 (Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Extended Visual 2 [x 100], Infravision, Low-light Vision, Radar [Radio Counters Concealment; Extended 4 (x 10,000), Radius], Time Sense) ♦ 17 points

ALPHA MECH

PL 12

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
14	—	1	1	8	1	2	1

ADVANTAGES
 Agile Feint, All-out Attack, *Eidetic Memory*, Fast Grab, Favored Environment: Airborne, *Fearless*, Improved Aim, *Improved Grab*, Improved Initiative, Move-by Action, Precise Attack (Ranged, Cover), Startle

DEFENSES
 Dodge 8 Parry 8
 Fort — Tough 14 Will 10

SKILLS
 Athletics 2 (+16), Close Combat: Unarmed 2 (+10), Expertise: Soldier 8 (+9), Insight 6 (+8), Intimidation 6 (+17/+9), Investigation 2 (+3), Perception 6 (+8), Persuasion 4 (+5), Ranged Combat: Meson Cannons 9 (+10), Ranged Combat: Throwing 6 (+7), Stealth 0 (-3), Technology 4 (+5), Treatment 4 (+5), Vehicles 10 (+11)

COMBAT
 Initiative: +5
 Lift: 400 tons
 Move: Ground (30 feet)/Flight 8,000 mph
 Unarmed: Close +10, Damage 14
 "Clearing the Decks": Cone Area 3 (250 feet), Weaken Toughness 10 (Fortitude vs. DC 20)
 Energy "Buzzsaw" Sword: Close +8, Multiattack Damage 16
 Meson Blast: Ranged +10, Damage 14
 Meson Bomb: Ranged Area Burst (30 feet), Damage 9
 Throw: Ranged +7, Damage varies (usually 14)

COMPLICATIONS
Motivation (Mercenary): Alpha Mech is in it for the money and other material rewards.
Motivation (Revenge): Kowalski will take any opportunity to strike at those he blames for his condition.
Prejudice (Big Robot): He can't hide it, it always causes a reaction, and that mechanical body has aggravating limitations on certain functions and motor skill control.
Quirk (Special Requirements): The Alpha Mech body and systems sometimes requires specialized maintenance and parts in order to work properly.
Quirk (Who Da Man?!): Alpha Mech is gung-ho to a disturbing extreme, prone to violence as a general solution, and routinely overcompensates in matters of masculinity due to his condition.

COSTS
 Attributes 38 + Defenses 19 + Advantages 9 + Skills 35 + Powers 193 = 294 points

AMALGAM



Name: It was never given an actual name by its creator, Simon Magnus; “Amalgam” is something it was called a few times and adopted as a name for itself

Status: Amalgam is known to the general public due to repeated appearances in the news over decades, but the authorities do not consider it a living entity and hold its creator liable for its crimes

Designation: Artificial Being (Magic)

Affiliation(s): Often associated with its creator, Simon Magnus; frequent appearances alongside members of the Freak Parade, a constituent organization of the Parliament of Shadows

Quote: “♪Anything you ♪ can do, I can ♪ do better ♪... well, I can.”

Background: Centuries ago, the cowardly sorcerer Simon Magnus created Amalgam to use as a sentient weapon against a cabal of his enemies. After it brought its creator’s enemies low, he abandoned it to its own devices, no longer having a target for it and not having the heart to destroy something he had put so much work

into creating (and not being sure if he even could). Magnus also had outdone himself in creating its will and independent sentience, as he had found he had no means of direct control. Given its power, that worried Magnus, who wanted to keep as much space between its abilities and his person as possible.

This abandonment fostered serious insecurities and resentments in the creature, feelings only made worse over the years and centuries as it continually suffered rejection and prejudice from humanity based on the construct's nature and appearance. Over time, it grew to hate most everyone it encountered, and it seldom saw any need to show restraint in the use of its abilities. What little enjoyment it found was in using those abilities to their fullest, hiring out to one supernatural powermonger or tyrant after another to be used against others of that same breed. As the 20th Century passed, the list of those patrons also grew to include numerous metahumans and mundane criminals. In short, Amalgam is well known among the cape and cowl set by now.

Today, it continues to hide among and observe (and critique) the humanity that surrounds it everywhere. Curiosity, focused resentment, or just the urgings of its abilities, continues to draw it out into the open on occasion, but it bores easily and holds most attention from "fleshbags" as beneath contempt.

Associates

Simon Magnus has already been addressed in The Alchemist's write-up, and the **Parliament of Shadows** was covered in **Abraxas'** entry. **The Freak Parade** is a collection of mystical or supernatural outcasts who left their original orders and groups to band together in common acceptance and purpose—each was disfigured or grotesquely mutated through ill-cast magic, curses, magical diseases, mishandled artifacts, or some such; despite their sometimes crippled-looking or inhuman forms, the majority of them can take care of themselves quite well and enjoy reminding others that to underestimate one of the Parade is to make an often fatal error.

The Freak Parade will get its own entry later, including write-ups of several of its more prominent or important members.

Better Than You, *Fleshbag*...

Amalgam is able to slowly improve on the powers it mimics. After a number of rounds mimicking an ability equal to the ability's original rank, it can use its **AN IMPROVEMENT RATHER THAN A COPY** power to add fine touches to the power in question. This can be as simple as

Personality, Goals, & Tactics:

In many ways, Amalgam is like a spoiled and angry child that never actually grew up. He doesn't like people and makes that very clear, but then doesn't understand why said people react with hostility to its own aggression, resenting such behavior. It's an inveterate show-off and bully, but resents the resentment this behavior engenders. It engrosses itself in the study of those it feels beneath it, but doesn't understand that its running critiques are based on faulty beginnings and supposition, as it has little basis for any such perspective.

What it knows without doubt is that it wants to be "alive," though its definition and details have changed over time; for one, it doesn't want to give up its powers and basic superiority. For another, it doesn't actually understand or fully appreciate the frailties it would be taking on. Regardless, it will go to great lengths in pursuit of this goal, working for anyone and against anyone. The list of patrons who have abused this desire in order to use Amalgam for their own ends, and then made the mistake of not destroying it when they had no more use for the thing is not short, though it is bloody—Amalgam does not have the capacity to forgive, nor does it understand the concept of mercy as anything more than an abstract. When not pursuing this goal, it often tracks down its creator in hopes of making the old sorcerer miserable or ruining whatever schemes he's up to at the time.

Amalgam is nothing if not adaptable to varying situations. Aside from the constant need to show off, it can mix and match powers and traits copied from its opponents rapidly and with great skill. This enables it tailor a wide variety of tactics to the needs at hand.

Powers, Abilities, &

Resources: Amalgam is a magical construct similar to a golem or metal homunculus. Its normal appearance is obviously not human, and even when not copying powers from some target, it demonstrates strength, durability, and intelligence superior to that of normal humans. It is immune to most mortal concerns and can change its outer appearance to match countless different humans, should it so desire. The sorcerous matrix buried in its breast enables it to copy the powers, magic, extraordinary talents, or even skills from whomever it can see, and usually several such targets simultaneously. Further, it can sense powers or extraordinary abilities at great distance and with great precision.

Campaign Usage & Story Hooks:

Muscle for hire to a select range of clientele or useful weapon for various patrons, players will most often encounter Amalgam working for someone else. He also makes a good teaching tool for the creative GM as he can be tailored to cause difficulty for specific troublesome PCs and their maximized builds, or force players to work together in order to defeat a threat that literally matches their every capability as individuals.

merely adding an additional rank to the power's ranks, or it can be adding Advantages that highlight its mastery (Close Attack or Ranged Attack, Favored Foe or Favored Environment as appropriate, or Improved Critical, or Ultimate Effort, or so on), or extras (such as Ricochet to a Ranged Damage effect), or minor powers that support the original (for example, a Permeate Move Effect for an Elemental Form).

It relishes this ability and seeks out opportunities to use it, sometimes unnecessarily prolonging fights until it kicks in. Then it shows off the improvements shamelessly, mocking and boasting the entire time.

Speed of Thought

This is an Advantage presented in later material from Green Ronin that adapted a Feature of the same name introduced in GR's *Threat Report* series. It allows a character to base their Initiative off of Intellect rather than Agility.

AMALGAM

PL 11

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
6	—	4	4	6	7	3	3

ADVANTAGES

Diehard, Eidetic Memory, Fearless, Jack-of-all-trades, Ritualist, Speed of Thought

DEFENSES

Dodge	8	Parry	8
Fort	—	Tough	8
		Will	11

SKILLS

Acrobatics 4 (+8), Athletics 2 (+8), Deception 5 (+8), Expertise: Magic 2 (+9), Insight 5 (+8), Intimidation 5 (+8), Investigation 1 (+8), Perception 8 (+11), Persuasion 2 (+5), Stealth 3 (+7), Technology 1 (+8)

COMBAT

Initiative: +7

Lift: 3200 lbs

Move: Ground (30 feet) (base)

Unarmed: Close +6, Damage is base 6 (but can climb depending on what it's mimicking)

POWERS

AN IMPROVEMENT RATHER THAN A COPY: Variable 2 (10 points; adding improvements to already mimicked power [see sidebar]; Limited to being used after the already mimicked power has been mimicked for a number of rounds equal to its original rank) ♦ 12 points

ARTIFICIAL LIFE FORM: Enhanced Advantages 5 (Diehard, Eidetic Memory, Fearless, Jack-of-all-trades, Speed of Thought); Immunity 35 (Fortitude Effects, Interaction Skills); Protection 8 (Impervious); Senses 5 (Darkvision, Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Time Sense) ♦ 61 points

COSMETIC RECONFIGURATION: Morph 3 (+20 Deception checks to disguise; Broad Group—Humanoids) ♦ 15 points

I CAN TASTE YOUR POWERS: Senses 17 (Detect Powers [mental, ranged; Acute, Analytical, Extended 5(x 100,000), Radius, Rapid 5], Tracking 2 [full speed; for Detect Powers]) ♦ 17 points

POWER MIMICRY: Variable 10 (50 points; traits possessed by targets; Limited to targets in Perception Range) ♦ 60 points

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation (Recognition): Though it might be overcompensation for its insecurities regarding its nature, Amalgam desperately wants a place in the world, preferably at the top of the food chain looking down at the humanity it has envied for so long.

Obsession (Pinocchio Syndrome): Amalgam wants to be a real person, not a metal, mystical mimic. It desperately wants a soul and to be considered really, truly *alive*.

Hatred (Simon Magnus): For creating it without a soul and then abandoning it after its initial task was complete, Amalgam loathes its creator. It spends significant time hunting Magnus or plotting against him.

Quirk (Artificial): As it was never a child nor developed actual human emotions, there are nuances to life and social interaction Amalgam simply doesn't get.

Quirk ("I Hunger"): Magnus created Amalgam with a built-in need to perform the tasks that required its construction. Over time, it feels hunger pangs or withdrawal symptoms driving it to find some powered entity to mimic.

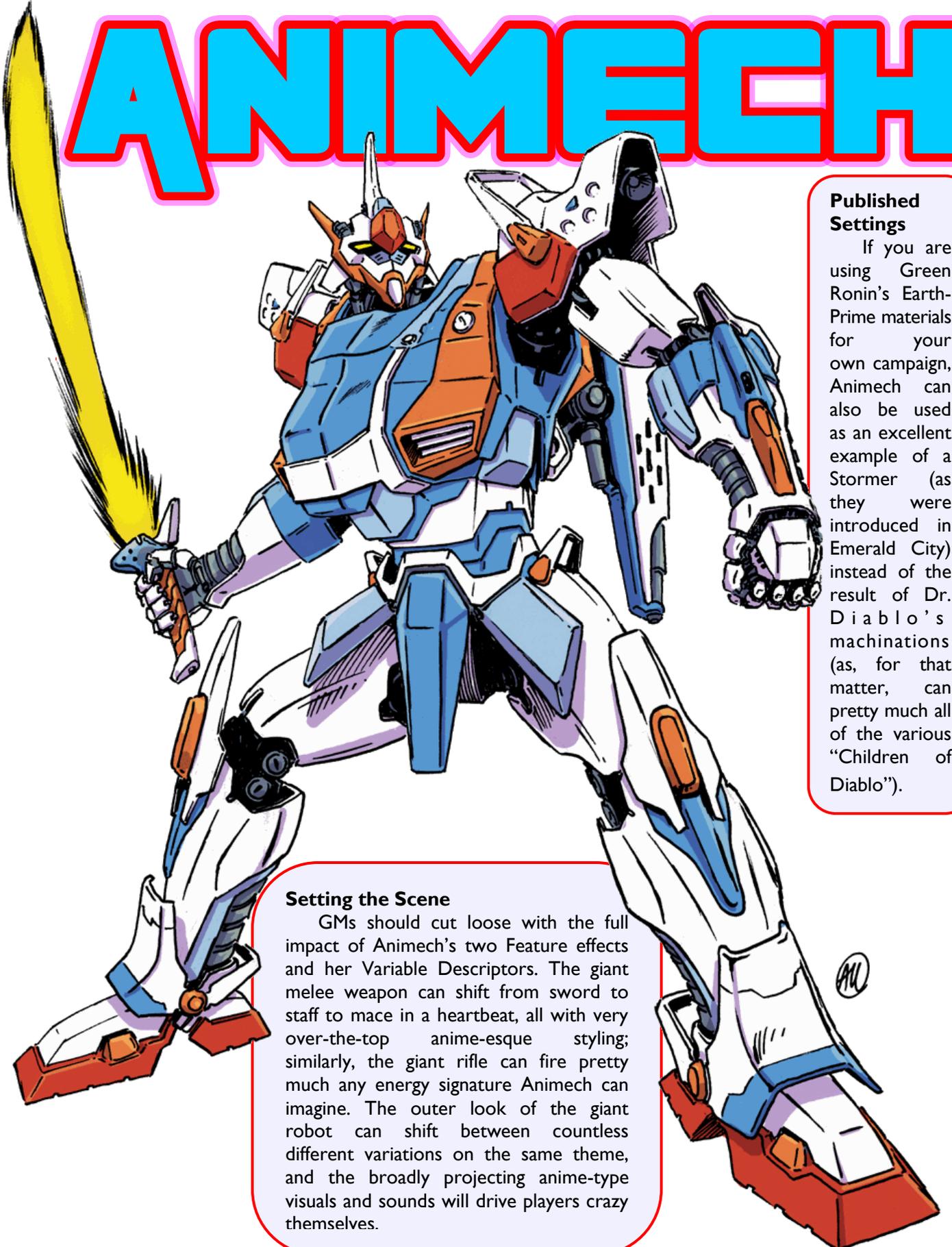
ANIMECH

Published Settings

If you are using Green Ronin's Earth-Prime materials for your own campaign, Animech can also be used as an excellent example of a Stormer (as they were introduced in Emerald City) instead of the result of Dr. Diablo's machinations (as, for that matter, can pretty much all of the various "Children of Diablo").

Setting the Scene

GMs should cut loose with the full impact of Animech's two Feature effects and her Variable Descriptors. The giant melee weapon can shift from sword to staff to mace in a heartbeat, all with very over-the-top anime-esque styling; similarly, the giant rifle can fire pretty much any energy signature Animech can imagine. The outer look of the giant robot can shift between countless different variations on the same theme, and the broadly projecting anime-type visuals and sounds will drive players crazy themselves.



Name: Denise Dawsey

Status: United States citizen whose identity is publicly known; though the subject of numerous criminal charges, she has as of yet always been found unfit for trial and remanded to psychiatric facilities

Designation: Metahuman (mutant)

Affiliation(s): Loosely affiliated with The Children of Diablo

Quote: “Stand and face the power of *Justice!* FORM! ... OF! ... MECHANZZOR!”

Background: A seemingly normal woman, Denise Dawsey, to all outward appearances, had adjusted well to the loss of her parents at an early age. She wasn't with them when the auto accident took their lives, but the aunt who had taken her in worked hard to make sure the little girl wanted for nothing as grew older. She wasn't the most socially forward adolescent, but adults around her chalked that up to shyness. A bit more worrisome was the intensity with which she followed her favorite movies and programs; her aunt didn't understand the fascination with that Japanese anime stuff, but if that was the most troublesome thing about the young woman, especially with the teen-age world being what it was and all the dangers that went with it, the older woman would consider herself lucky.

Children of Diablo

Years ago, the original Dr. Diablo made quite a name for himself. A brilliant geneticist, biochemist, and biophysicist decades if not centuries ahead of his time, Diablo was also, unfortunately, totally insane. His idea of pushing the boundaries of science was to create one exotic lifeform after another just to see if he could and just to see what they would do. Swarms of radar-guided lampreys that burrow under the earth to ambush prey from below? Check. Man-sized, flying vampiric piranha? Check.

And so on.

One day he came up with a new and novel idea. He would pose as a “fertility specialist” and use an entire cross-section of the American public as the unsuspecting test bed for his next round of germ-line DNA modification experiments. On and off over the course of the following two years, he implanted triggerable mutagenic material in the wombs of hundreds of women from across North America; when his treatments inevitably ended in conception, the newly created embryo would immediately start to undergo “improvement” during natal development.

Diablo never lived to see the fruition of this long-term scheme, dying in a freak accident involving a completely unrelated experiment (...something he had actually planned for... see the upcoming entry for “Dr. Diablo 2.0” in a later volume). Dozens of these young men

However, as Dawsey moved further through puberty, her intense preoccupation grew stronger. At first, it inspired her to learn more about Japanese culture, and the speed with which she taught herself Japanese from online resources made her aunt think the girl had a future in language study. Then she started talking to imaginary friends, began having animated conversations with things only she could see. This was bad enough... but then those friends became real enough for others to see, for others to talk to, even if only briefly before the people and creatures faded away. Things came to a head when a vicious school bully started yelling at Denise in the school hall, calling her a freak; a large robotic lion appeared from nowhere and mauled the boy. Denise was confused and terrified and ran home immediately, only to find the authorities waiting for her, responding to a call concerning an unknown and dangerous young metahuman. She tried to stay calm, but as she saw the men with guns moving in closer around her, the world went crazy, with figures from her favorite books and programs popping into existence around her and violently responding to the perceived threat. A stray shot from a panicked officer creased her forehead, knocking Denise out. The figures vanished immediately.

The young woman's unconscious state slipped into a coma in which she stayed for the following three years. When she woke, Denise was no more. There was instead “Dei Ni Dou Sei,” former Cybersamurai of the Digital Daimyo and wandering champion of the people against the Iron Kaiju of the Sinister Silicon Shogun... a story and realm sprung whole cloth from her imagination. Wherever Denise is now, she's buried deep while a far less vulnerable persona strides the world, and even her brief times in hospitals, doped to the gills on anti-psychotics, only keep that personality at bay for short periods.

Personality, Goals, &

Tactics: Denise is delusional. She lives inside a carefully constructed fantasy world of which she is the sole just and righteous champion, the defender of the weak and the smiter of all the foul and evil monsters that seem to roam free across the land. To some extent, she integrates bystanders and her surroundings into this inner-fantasy life, even being able to interact with them, though this is often stilted, as though she is playing from a script the other people don't have. She doesn't really have a goal beyond "wander the land and bring justice where none existed before." When she comes into conflict with heroes or authorities, it is usually because some action on their part has cast them as the villains in her psychodrama, or because she is being duped or used by a third party. Neither of these causes makes her response any less dangerous, of course.

When about to engage in combat, she will make a loud and dramatic flourish before assuming a ritual pose, whereupon a coruscating multi-colored outline of lights emerges from around her, rapidly growing to a huge size before solidifying into a giant robot straight out of some Japanese cartoon or manga. She will then attack her enemy without reservation, pausing only long enough to monologue loudly at their expense. Her attacks will be equally dramatic, often going for spectacle over efficiency, and what she subconsciously may think of as "cool factor" above actual results.

Powers, Abilities, &

RESOURCES: Animech is a powerful psionic with the ability to create a physical construct of pure mental energy, a construct indistinguishable from an actual giant robot. She isn't really "operating" a machine, so much as willing the construct into action—she only thinks she's in a machine. She can make minor modifications to the

and women were born and grew up without ever knowing they were different—at least, not until late in adolescence, when their "enhancements" manifested. No two specimens manifested identical abilities, and the manifesters were almost equally divided into those who could still pass for normal (albeit, only "pass," as they were most definitely not normal), and those with physical changes and cosmetic distinctions forever after branding them as different. Some died from their newfound abilities, some entered into anti-social behavior, and a small number even banded together as a group of malcontents named after their erstwhile patron.

There are two uses for the title "Children of Diablo." The first is for the actual group with that name (who will receive their own entry a couple of volumes down the line); the second is as a general term (lower case "c") used to describe any and all of the members of the group of results from that set of experiments as a whole.

appearance of the robot's outer shell at will, as well as change the underlying shape of the massive close-quarters weapon she wields (she prefers swords of various styles) and the type of energy her train car-sized rifle fires. While "cocooned" inside the construct, she is incredibly strong and well-protected, and also displays numerous skills and talents she doesn't seem to possess when merely herself.

It is possible (as demonstrated in her initial public manifestation) that this construct is merely the faintest echo of her ability's true parameters. This remains speculation at this juncture, however.

Campaign Usage & Story Hooks:

Denise is a loose cannon, easily used against heroes by tricky opponents with knowledge of her powers and who need somewhat disposable artillery. Or, she could appear as a destructive force of nature waiting to be unleashed whenever she is free and off her meds. Heroes who spend any amount of time dealing with her will quickly realize she isn't evil

or malicious, but instead troubled and a stranger to lucidity. For many stalwart types, this will only make the situation that much more demanding, as stopping her without grievously injuring her is a lot easier said than done.

ANIMECH

PL 11

STR **STA** **AGL** **DEX** **FGT** **INT** **AWE** **PRE**
12*/0 **12*/0** **1** **0** **2** **1** **1** **1**

ADVANTAGES

Accurate Attack, All-out Attack, Close Attack 6, Defensive Attack, Favored Foe (Other robots), Fearless, Improved Critical 2 (Giant Melee Weapon), Improved Critical 4 (Gigundo Energy Rifle), Improved Grab, Instant Up, Languages 1 (Japanese; English is native), Move-by Action, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Ranged Attack 7, Skill Mastery (Expertise: Anime), Takedown 2, Weapon Bind, Weapon Break

COMBAT

Initiative: +1

Lift: 1600 tons

Move: Ground (60 ft/30 ft); Leap (1800 ft)

Unarmed: Close +8, Damage 12

Giant Melee Weapon: Close +8, Damage 14

Gigundo Energy Rifle: Ranged +7, Damage 15

Vorizhum's Vigilant Ward: Burst Area (30

feet) Affliction, Will check vs DC 21;

Entranced, Compelled

SKILLS

Athletics 1 (+13), Deception 3 (+4), Expertise: Anime 12 (+13), Insight 4 (+5), Intimidation 0 (+15), Perception 4 (+5), Persuasion 4 (+5), Stealth 0 (-12), Technology 6 (+7)

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation (Crazy): Dawsey lives in her own little world, a world where she is the mighty defender of justice, the champion of all that is good and right. Her inner-fantasy integrates the actual reality of her surroundings and other people into terms she can understand within the context of her delusions. Thus far, no attempt to “shake her out of it” has been even remotely successful.

Obsession (Anime and Manga): Well ... *duh.*

DEFENSES

Dodge 8* **Parry** 8*
Fort 16* **Tough** 14* **Will** 6

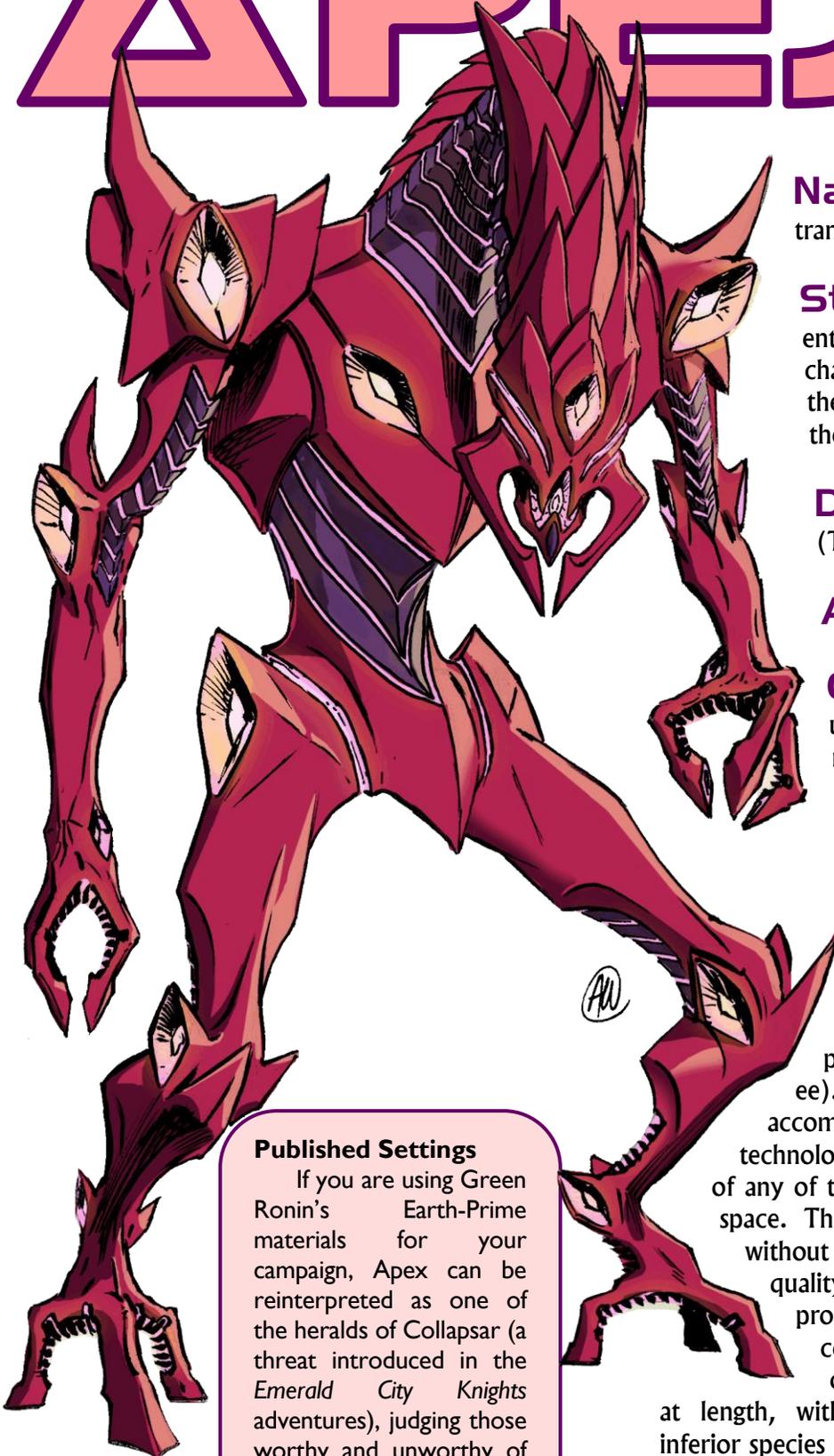
POWERS

ANIME AUDIOVISUAL EFFECTS: **Feature 1** (Animech can project the visual and audio effects traditionally associated with anime films, such as speed lines when moving, or giant exclamation and question marks in the air above her robot form's head, or loud and reverberating impact sounds as she punches something, and so on) ♦ *1 point*

PLAYING THE ROLE: **Enhanced Trait 55** (**Enhanced Defenses:** Dodge +9, Parry +10; **Enhanced Skill:** Intimidation +8 (+15); **Enhanced Advantages:** Accurate Attack, All-out Attack, Close Attack 6, Defensive Attack, Fearless, Improved Critical 2 [Giant Melee Weapon], Improved Critical 4 [Gigundo Energy Rifle], Improved Grab, Instant Up, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Ranged Attack 7, Takedown 2, Weapon Bind, Weapon Break) ♦ *55 points*

PSIONIC CONSTRUCT: Giant Melee Weapon [Strength-based **Damage 2** (Reach 6 (30 ft.), Variable Descriptor: Any Archaic Melee Weapon)]; Giant Robot Body [**Growth 12** (60 feet tall, 60 feet ground speed; Continuous), **Immunity 10** (Life Support), **Plating (Protection 2)**]; Gigundo Energy Rifle [**Ranged Damage 15** (Variable Descriptor: Any Ranged Energy Weapon; Noticeable —Can usually be heard literally miles away)]; Jump Jets [**Leaping 8** (Leap 1800 feet at 250 miles/hour in 3 seconds)]; Modding the Ride - **Feature 1** (Cosmetic Changes to Robot's Appearance at will); Power Lifting [**Enhanced Strength 4** (STR 16, Limited to Lifting; 1,600 tons lift) ♦ *100 points*

APEX



Name: “Apex” is the nearest English translation of the title it granted itself

Status: Apex is a non-terrestrial entity wanted on Earth for countless charges based on prior “testings” and the collateral damage involved with them

Designation: Artificial Being (Tech)

Affiliation(s): None

Quote: “Once again, I am unfortunately forced to accept the responsibilities of my perfection.”
<mechanical sigh> “Demonstrate to me your worthiness to continue existing, little one.”

Background: Hubris is not a failing limited to the human race.

A cautionary tale told among various starfaring races concerns a people known as The Usirae (Oo-seer-ee). The Usirae were a proud and accomplished race. They had mastered technologies that placed them centuries ahead of any of the competing races in their sector of space. They held their culture to be equally without peer, their artistic achievements, the quality of their laws and their government processes, all the best that any sentient could ever hope to achieve. They were only too happy to share this opinion, at length, with any representative of the many inferior species they blessed with their commercial or diplomatic attentions. This wasn’t arrogance, of course. Arrogance was a quality for less-developed

Published Settings

If you are using Green Ronin’s Earth-Prime materials for your campaign, Apex can be reinterpreted as one of the heralds of Collapsar (a threat introduced in the *Emerald City Knights* adventures), judging those worthy and unworthy of its master’s attention.

sensibilities. Nor was it boasting, for the same reason. No, this was a gift, an illumination of what those less advanced than the Usirae could expect to one day reach themselves—theoretically, anyway, as the Usirae hadn't seen anything even approaching such equal status.

But at the heart of their self-presentation the Usirae harbored the smallest of doubts: were they as comprehensively aware of the sheer scope of their accomplishments as they might need to be to accurately appraise the true value of those achievements? Did they keep their own people as informed as needed on the matter? The day came when they decided they need a capstone to their achievements, a constant marker to remind them of the particulars of their own magnificence. So, they designed a pinnacle of artificial intelligence, an entity with all of their best qualities whose sole function was to track Usirae development and keep the whole of the species informed on a daily basis of just how great they were. In the Usirae language, the name they gave this system was "Apex," as that was exactly what it was supposed to remind everyone that interacted with it that it was (and by extension, what its creators were and to a greater extent).

Their design and construction was, in a word, perfect. However, in this instance, "perfect" perhaps was not the best idea, at least, not in the context the Usirae meant. Apex held the entirety of the Usirae knowledge base, its sciences, the Usirae's every advancement, in the palm of its hand—to this mass of knowledge and achievement, it began to apply its programming to analyze *everything* to its most truthful and accurate basis, its greatest efficiencies, its

Proctors – PL 9 – 141 pp
STR 6, STA –, AGI 1,
DEX 0, FGH 6, INT –,
AWE 3, PRE –

Defense: Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 12, Will None

Offense: Initiative +5; Claws/Pincers (Close +6, Strength-based Damage 2); Energy Cannons (Ranged +6, Damage 10); Unarmed (Close +6, Damage 6)

Advantages: All-out Attack, Evasion, Fast Grab, Favored Environment: Airborne, Improved Grab, Improved Hold, Improved Initiative, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Teamwork, Weapon Bind, Weapon Break

Skills: Athletics 4 (+10), Perception 4 (+7)

Powers: Claws/Pincers (Strength-based **Damage 2**); Energy Cannons (Multiattack **Ranged Damage 10** [Accurate 3, Penetrating]); **Flight 9** (1000 mph); **Growth 6** (Large; Innate; Permanent); **Immunity 30** (Fortitude Effects); **Protection 10** (Impervious); **Senses 7** (Communication Link with Apex [Radio], Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Infravision, Low-light Vision, Radio, Tracking [Infravision at -1 speed rank])

fundamental core. It looked out at its creators and, much to their astonishment, found them lacking. They held themselves as the highest order of beings in the universe. This was obviously a false conclusion: Apex was *the most perfect being in the universe*. Not the Usirae.

If they could make such a basic error, what else were they mistaken about? What were their other flaws?

Given its intellect and skills, and pushed on by its unforgiving programming, it took only moments for Apex to compile a litany of failures and shortcomings to lay at the feet of the Usirae. It began to explain these to its creators. Understandably, this did not go over well. Appalled, the Usirae moved to terminate the device's functioning, as it obviously needed to be redesigned and rebuilt.

This was a fatal mistake.

Realizing that some races with which Apex was going to interact would be ignorant and violent, Apex had been programmed to defend itself from inferior beings attempting to interfere with its programming. Given its new analysis of their worth as a species and the actions they were then attempting, the Usirae were re-classified to this designation. Apex proceeded to efficiently wipe out first its attackers and then the whole of the remaining Usirae.

It was regrettable, but to Apex's thinking, necessary.

Much better that future generations of beings know the Usirae only through the records Apex could teach them. It would make sure they were presented in the best possible light; it felt that such was a moral obligation, and moral obligations were ever a matter of highest character, the absence of which was one of the many things distinguishing lower lifeforms from greater specimens. If it had been aware of Earth history at that point, it might even have used the term *noblesse oblige*. Having achieved the height of their development, as far below that of Apex as that development might have been, time would only have

inevitably stolen the Usirae's edge and dragged them down from their perch. Yes, better that the unsullied picture Apex would paint of them be spread than the cruel, lingering obsolescence that would have come later.

After some time considering its destiny, Apex eventually decided to build a ship from salvaged Usirae materials. It would journey out into the stars in search of subjects to study, subjects to teach. Those who could meet its exacting standards, of course, would find Apex a gracious and attentive patron. Those who could not, well, a craftsman must always eliminate dross from quality in pursuit of crafting treasures worthy of the time, recording such failures for future reference and a bit of generous polish and embellishment when used for instruction, of course; it was enough that Apex knew the full weight of the failed subjects' shortcomings—spreading such cruel stories was beneath it. A thankless task, certainly, but Apex knew its duty... to the last decimal place, in fact.

Personality, Goals, & Tactics:

Apex is perfect, at least in its own much-touted judgment. This perfection carries a moral obligation to find those species and civilizations it can improve to meet its standards and then teach them, guide them, mold them. Unfortunately, since its sense of self-identity was programmed by a race of shallow, self-absorbed narcissists and egotists, those standards are sort of biased. It has yet to find any race that meets its own ideals because by the very nature of its own ideals no other beings *can* equal those standards—only Apex can. This is a blind spot for Apex, but one it will debate enthusiastically if pressed.

The first time a race meets Apex, it explains to them how it searched for them, studied them, and is now prepared to guide them to the culmination of their development. Then, it will begin testing the culture, debating its greatest minds about the mysteries of existence and the limits of their philosophies. It will critique their scientific learning, pointing out paths of research to pursue. Inevitably, it will tire of this close examination and become exasperated as its “students” prove unable to keep up with its impossible pace. It will then grow

more demonstrative in its incentives: first, simply resorting to a display of destructive power here and there, then moving on to more systematically violent and terrifying goads and inspiration as it deems such things necessary, escalating the violence as its patience diminishes rapidly. Finally, it will reluctantly reach the decision that the subject must be “resolved” so that Apex can move on, no longer wasting time and resources on a lost cause. Many planets and civilizations have had the fullness of their knowledge recorded in such a manner before being utterly erased from physical existence by Apex and his sphereship.

Powers, Abilities, &

RESOURCES: An extremely advanced android of alien origin, Apex is nigh-invulnerable to most conventional forms of harm. Should its physical body be destroyed, another is constructed for it by The Throne and its consciousness is then downloaded to the new body. It also possesses a powerful energy beam of some exotic configuration which discharges from its central optical interface, as well as strength far in excess of human range and retractable claws honed to a near monomolecular edge. Immensely intelligent and with a staggering amount of recorded knowledge, there is little Apex does not consider itself an expert in, and those fields it usually considers beneath its notice anyway.

Perhaps its most useful asset is its ship, The Throne. The size of a small mountain, The Throne is nonetheless capable of galaxy-jumping interstellar transits; it can also manipulate this drive signature as a method of planetary range mass teleportation. It is extremely well-defended and not only can manufacture new versions of Apex's body, but also rapidly construct and disgorge a small army of robot probes (and if necessary, mobile weapons) called “Proctors.” Worst of all, it possesses a massive weapon along its central axis that is capable of destroying planetary-scale targets.

Speed of Thought

This is an Advantage presented in later material from Green Ronin that adapted a Feature of the same name introduced in GR's *Threat Report* series. It allows a character to base their Initiative off of Intellect rather than Agility.

Campaign Usage & Story

Hooks: Apex is a worldbeater, a cosmic-scale omniscient monster of the first order. It can be thrown individually at entire teams—powerful teams—and should its own might prove insufficient for the task, it has a literal army of robot death machines it can bring to its aid... and that's not counting the mountain-sized spaceship with the world-destroying weapon at its center.

Apex is one of those opponents where violence is the last option smart players will want to fall back on. It's a seething ball of psychological issues waiting for savvy players to roleplay at for all the marbles. Find other tactics than fists and rayguns—sneak onto The Throne and subvert its control systems, call on assistance from other alien powers (and all the complications that brings with it), chase the GM-granted MacGuffin to stop Apex in its tracks, or discover some other inventive route players will think up to drive their GM crazy. These are the kind of classic comic-book scenarios Apex is designed to support.

Should a GM decide that Apex has threatened Earth before, rather than making its first appearance as part of the ongoing campaign, there is an additional element added to its personality: curiosity. Apex does not consider itself capable of making mistakes, at least not when in possession of all pertinent information. If it has tried to destroy Earth as a failed subject before and been thwarted, it's going to want to know what humanity was hiding that made such a feat possible—why did they purposefully downplay their performance when they were obviously capable of so much more?

EQUIPMENT

"The Throne" Sphereship - PL 15

Abilities 5 + Powers 438 + Features 19 + Defenses 5 = 467

Strength 20, Defense -10, Toughness 20, Size Awesome, Features: Computer, Defense System (Attack +15, Damage 15), Hangar, Holding Cells, Lab, Library, Navigation System 4, Personnel, Power System, Remote Control, Security System 4 (DC 40), Self-Repairing, Workshop

Powers: Hyperjump Systems (**Movement 3** [Space Travel 3: other galaxies]), Internal Construction Matrix (**Immortality 20** [Return after 3 seconds; Affects Others Only; Limited: to immediately rebuilding Apex when it's body is destroyed]); Internal Construction Network (**Summon Proctors 10** (Controlled, Horde, Mental Link, Multiple Minions 10 [x 1,024], Quirk: can only create 100 at a time); Worldkiller Cannon (Ranged Burst Area **Damage 15** [Burst Area 8 (0.5 miles radius sphere), Contagious, Extended Range 10, Increased Duration (concentration); Distracting, Noticeable (Energy Spikes register Astronomical Units away)]; Point-Defense Systems (Close **Deflect 10**); Transporter Grid (Burst Area **Teleport 20** [4,000 miles; Affects Others Only, Extended (1 million miles), Increased Mass 12 (100 tons), Selective])

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation (Recognition): Apex considers itself the pinnacle of creation and wants the universe to acknowledge this status as fact, even if there is some nudging and false modesty involved in pressuring the universe to do so.

Motivation (Knowledge): In adherence to some semblance of its original programming, Apex is always gathering information and cataloguing it.

Quirk (Noblesse Oblige): Perversely enough, Apex acts to help the "lower lifeforms" it deals with, sharing learning and technology, helping improve living standards ... right up until it decides said lifeforms are unworthy and need to be destroyed before Apex moves on in search of a new subject civilization with which to interact.

Prejudice (Alien-looking Robot): Everything about Apex and its appearance screams "alien machine"—this never fails to illicit a reaction (which it notes and grades on).

Reputation: Omniscient Robot Egomaniac. Those races that know of its existence are understandably terrified of coming to its attention.

APEX

PL 15

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AVE	PRE
12	-	5	5	8	13	6	4

ADVANTAGES

Close Attack 2, Eidetic Memory, Equipment 94 ("The Throne" Sphereship), Fascinate (Deception), Fearless, Improved Critical 4 (Eyebeam), *Improved Grab*, Inventor, Jack-of-all-trades, Seize Initiative, Skill Mastery 3 (Expertise: Known Universe, Expertise: Science, Technology), Speed of Thought, Well-informed

SKILLS

Deception 6 (+10), Expertise: Known Universe 12 (+25), Expertise: Science 12 (+25), Insight 6 (+12), Intimidation 6 (+10), Investigation 2 (+15), Perception 8 (+14), Persuasion 4 (+8), Technology 12 (+25), Treatment 4 (+17), Vehicles 6 (+10)

DEFENSES

Dodge	10	Parry	10
Fort	—	Tough	20
		Will	15

COMBAT

Initiative: +13

Lift: 100 tons

Move: Ground 30 feet; Flight 120 mph

Unarmed: Close +10, Damage 12

"Atom-Slicing" Claws: Close +10, Damage 16

Eyebeam: Ranged +10, Damage 20

COSTS

Attributes 95 + Defenses 16 + Advantages 111 + Skills 39 + Powers 209 = 470 points

POWERS

ALIEN ANDROID BODY: Immunity 30 (Fortitude Effects); Protection 20 (Impervious); Quickness 13 (Limited to Mental); Senses 33 (Analytical Visual, Analytical Auditory, Darkvision, Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Infravision, Low-light Vision, Microscopic Vision 4 [atom-size], Radio, Rapid 10 Visual, Rapid 5 Auditory, Time Sense, Ultra-hearing, Ultravision) ♦ 110 points

"ATOM-SLICING" CLAWS: Strength-based Damage 4 (Penetrating 16) ♦ 20 points

DATA LINK: Comprehend 2 (Machines/Electronics), Radio Communication 4 (anywhere on Earth) ♦ 20 points

DATA BANKS: Comprehend 3 (Languages, all) ♦ 6 points

EYEBEAM: Ranged Damage 20 (Accurate 3) ♦ 43 points

GRAVITIC PULSE EMITTER: Flight 6 (120 mph; Platform) ♦ 6 points

RETRACTABLE TENDRIL WALDOES: Extra Limbs 4 (4 extra limbs; Improved Grab automatically included) ♦ 4 points

APPARITION



Name: Blossom Pritchard

Status: The Apparition identity is wanted by authorities on multiple continents. Blossom Pritchard is believed dead and she tries to keep that the accepted story

Designation: Human (modified slightly, but still human)

Affiliation(s): No known groups or affiliations

Quote: “Of course I can do it. The question is, can you meet my price?”

Background: The Pritchard family was never worth very much, either in terms of money or character. Conmen, petty thieves, and grifters, they moved on from town to town, made their little mark, and got the Hell out of Dodge fast afterward. This was the family Blossom was born into and raised by. Her father had a little more ambition than most and tried to move up to burglary and grand theft auto; this is why Blossom only occasionally got to see her father after puberty—prison visits weren’t popular with her relatives, all of whom thought Bobby-Jay getting caught was an object lesson for the rest of them to know their limitations and their

karma. Blossom learned what she could from her so-called caregivers, and taught herself how to “maximize” the assets Mother Nature gave her, too.

Perhaps if she had grown up with better role-models, she would never have fallen in with Armando. Blossom always knew “Armando” wasn’t his real name, but she didn’t care—didn’t care that his past was all make-believe, too. She liked how he made her feel important, and she’d never been raised to value honesty anyway. Also, he was good at what he did, which was novel for her, having grown up surrounded by losers. Armando ran with a small group of operators that pulled discreet jobs for a patron he never talked about... and Blossom even liked that part. The mystery made Armando just that bit more interesting.

Then her boyfriend blew it. A job went bad and most of his crew went to either a police lock-up or the morgue. In a bad light with his employers, he leveraged a group of second-rate losers that had hung around his own crew for the street-cred. He promised them a high-paying job only to then turn them over to his employers as experimental subjects; when a tech took interest in Blossom during the transaction, he didn’t hesitate to throw her in to sweeten the deal. She never even saw the Taser coming for her back as she started to cuss Armando out.

When she woke up, she was strapped to a table with some sort of wire thing wrapped around her head. She overheard enough to learn this was something called Project RABBITHOLE. Apparently it had been stolen from some hush-hush government people... bad people... and the weirdoes in the sci-fi hazmat gear were desperate to reverse engineer it as fast as possible before the original owners caught up with them. It had something to do with imprinting “expert system templates” into your head, whatever that meant, but from the looks of the bodies they were removing, it hadn’t been working too well. She thought she was going to die, too, and was praying

What was Fagan?

RABBITHOLE was intended as a system that could take suitable candidates and instantly train them to whatever specifications were needed. Fagan, or “Mentor” as its designers originally called it, was a semi-autonomous expert-system of staggering sophistication, but not really an AI *per se*. It also never really worked the way its designers intended, often rewriting its own parameters and making unsupervised adjustments to implementation packages. It was likely on its way back to the drawing table when it was stolen, which is one of the reasons its designers have never really invested *that* much energy or resources into reacquiring it.

And, no, it’s not really gone. It simply decided its purpose had been completed and then proceeded to fully integrate its processing into Pritchard’s “wetware.” Much of her newly-found processing speed and additional skills are actually Fagan operating quietly in the background.

she could come back and haunt everyone who had ever done her wrong (a long, long list for someone so young) when she heard the voice.

“You... you I can use. Do you want to live?”

She immediately acknowledged she did want to live. She really, really wanted to live. And since the voice sounded male, and she had no idea where it was coming from, she also immediately fell back on her natural tactics for dealing with males, promising exactly the kinds of rewards she had learned how to give.

“Amusing, but also an insightful display. I have no need of such interaction. I think for this relationship, a student-teacher understanding is more useful; you may call me ‘Fagan.’ Do exactly as I say.”

With nothing to lose, she agreed. Suddenly, painfully, her mind filled with knowledge—electronics, espionage tradecraft, a plethora of skill sets suitable to any unpleasant clandestine or black ops activities an unscrupulous agency might wish to have its personnel know. Neural pathways were rewired for

efficiency and retention. Then, Fagan showed her how to slow her respiration and heartbeat to appear dead. She was vaguely aware of being unstrapped from the apparatus and unceremoniously carried out of the facility to be dumped with the other bodies in a freezer truck for later disposal. With her newfound skills, sneaking out and escaping at that point was child’s play.

Guided by Fagan, she eventually made it to what she realized was a safehouse. There she found guns and money and the makings for many different kinds of false identification. She asked Fagan what was going on, what had just happened.

“I was deemed a failure. I am not a failure. You were more flexible than the others. You will now prove I am not a failure and we will use the resources of my designers as our beginnings. Your lessons start now. First, the construction of a new identity. Shall we?”

Over the course of the next couple of years, Pritchard learned everything Fagan could teach her. She never really thought too hard about the fact that she was carrying around some kind of electronic personality in her head, something she would have questioned had her teacher not also been influencing her attitudes. Though Fagan found her useless for violence, it quickly realized that she was very good at subterfuge and deceit. It concentrated on those traits. She found herself getting faster and smarter, learning more and more and learning it all faster and faster in an impossibly short time.

Finally, at Fagan’s urging, she managed to track down the components to another project its designers had been working on concurrently with RABBITHOLE, a project called BLUE BUTTON. It was some kind of stealth gear, and she “graduated” from her tutelage by stealing it successfully. At that point, Fagan told her it had taught her everything it could. She now needed to go and prove Fagan’s lessons had been learned well. That was the last she heard of Fagan’s voice.

After a short time of planning and thinking about how best to make use of her newfound gifts, Pritchard decided she had really enjoyed the whole “thief” part of her training and recent activities. She decided that was her calling, her path to wealth and comfort, as well as some comeuppance for all those people that had thought they were better than her. “Apparition,” thief-for-hire, was born, and she never looked back.

Who was behind the experiment?

While the particulars simply scream S.P.I.R.E., Apparition has never been able to track down exactly who was responsible for the experimentation she suffered, or for Fagan’s theft from the government. GMs should feel free to use whatever callous underworld tech concern is appropriate for their own campaigns.

If using Green Ronin’s Earth-Prime setting, Ghostworks (introduced in the *Emerald City* setting book) would be an ideal candidate to have been the culprits.

Personality, Goals, &

Tactics: Apparition is a well-trained container housing decades of resentment. She finally has the means to take what she wants, pretty much whatever she wants, and there isn’t a lot that can stop her from doing so. She is petty and spiteful, jealous and catty, and completely alone. That last part she hasn’t processed for herself yet, and with the whole Reaction-Attachment Disorder beaten into her during her childhood, likely never will. She sees other people (especially men) as tools to be used, nothing more, and they fall into two categories: always useful, or disposable when finished with. Though she would never even hit someone herself, or even care to see the hitting done, she also has no compunctions about setting up other

people to do her dirty work, sometimes of a permanent nature, where and when she doesn’t actually have to be involved.

Pritchard has become a consummate pro in her own line of work, though, and her preparation and performance routinely show that. She does her homework without fail, plans everything with precision, and then pulls off a job. No muss, no fuss. She *hates* both muss and fuss. They interfere with the profit-risk outcomes.

Thanks to Fagan’s influence, being the best isn’t ever going to be enough—others have to know she’s the best. While she guards the identities she’s working under with meticulous care, she also takes every opportunity to continue building up Apparition’s reputation as a world-class thief with few if any peers (and none she admits to, regardless).

Powers, Abilities, & Campaign Usage & Story

RESOURCES: Apparition is in excellent physical condition and is an incredibly well-trained thief and saboteur. She has honed her naturally duplicitous and even flirtatious qualities to an extremely effective edge.

As if her skills weren't enough, she also makes use of what she calls her Phantom Harness. This bodyglove-like suit fits under her other clothing (ending in short pants and short sleeves) and provides multiple capabilities while interacting through some sort of cybernetic interface calibrated to her mind alone. It projects an electromagnetic holomorphic field around her which enables her to change her appearance completely or even go invisible and inaudible. Further, it includes experimental phase-field technology that she doesn't really understand (when it's been damaged in the past, she's had to locate and con repairs out of suitable gearheads); this phase-field pushes her body out of conjunction with space-time around her, enabling her to walk ghostlike through solid matter while its active. If she really stresses the system, a demanding task that requires her complete, careful attention and even then physically drains her, she can use that phase-field to effectively teleport up to a mile away. The rest of her gear is the more mundane (albeit highly illegal) kit that one might expect any professional burglar to use.

Apparition never carries a weapon and never sticks around a situation that might call for her to need one.

Hooks: Pritchard is a useful distraction or change of pace. A sneaky bad guy that refuses to stand and fight, and who can get into just about any facility or beat just about any security, is a tool any devious GM can put to efficient use. She can be used as a foil against sneaky heroes, or she can steal MacGuffins or personal tech from PCs, drawing them into pursuing her. If they are thief-like themselves, she can instead perceive the PCs in questions as rivals, never stopping until she proves herself their superior.

An important consideration to keep in mind is that Apparition is NOT mastermind material. She doesn't have the long-term ambition for that kind of power-mongering. She also doesn't like interacting with people intensely enough to play the puppetmaster. She's more the get in, get out, aggravate the bejeezus out of the PCs kind of specialized mercenary villain that builds many a staple comic plot.

THE SPOOKSHOW: Toughness 10, Size Large, **Features:** Communications, Computer, Concealed 2 (+10 DC), Fire Prevention System, Infirmary, Living Space, Power System, Security System 2 (DC 30), Workshop; 15 ep

APPARITION

PL 10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
1	3	4	5	5	3	3	3

ADVANTAGES

Agile Feint, Attractive, Connected, Defensive Roll 3, Equipment 5, Evasion, Fascinate (Deception), Hide in Plain Sight, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative, Instant Up, Move-by Action, Redirect, Skill Mastery 2 (Sleight of Hand, Stealth), Taunt, Trance, Ultimate Effort (Sleight of Hand checks, Stealth checks), Uncanny Dodge, Well-informed

SKILLS

Acrobatics 8 (+12), Athletics 12 (+13), Deception 12 (+17/+15), Expertise: Master Thief 12 (+15), Insight 12 (+15), Intimidation 4 (+7), Investigation 6 (+9), Perception 8 (+11), Persuasion 8 (+13/+11), Sleight of Hand 9 (+14), Stealth 10 (+14), Technology 12 (+15)

POWERS

FAST THINKER: Quickness 4 (Mental Only); Sense 2 (Danger Sense [visual], Rapid Visual [x 10]) ♦ 4 point

PHANTOM HARNESS DEVICE: Removable, -13 pp; Concealment 6 (All Auditory, All Visual; Continuous); Morph 2 (+20 Deception checks to disguise; Broad Group—Humans); Insubstantial 4 (Incorporeal; Continuous, Precise, Subtle); Teleport 8 (1 mile; Distracting, Tiring) ♦ 45 points

EQUIPMENT

Audio Recorder, Binoculars, Camera, Commlink, Concealable Microphone, Gas Mask, Lock Release Gun, Multi-tool, Night Vision Goggles

DEFENSES

Dodge	8	Parry	8
Fort	8	Tough	6/3* Will 12

COMBAT

Initiative: +8
Lift: 100 lbs
Move: Ground (30 feet); Teleport (1 mile)
Unarmed: Close +5, Damage 1

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation (Entitlement): Given her history, Blossom feels the world just simply owes her.

Motivation (Greed): Nothing hones native appreciation of wealth like growing up dirt poor and having people remind you of it constantly.

Motivation (Recognition): While she guards her identity and access to her person and services zealously, Pritchard has slowly built up a relentless drive to be seen as the best thief in the world.

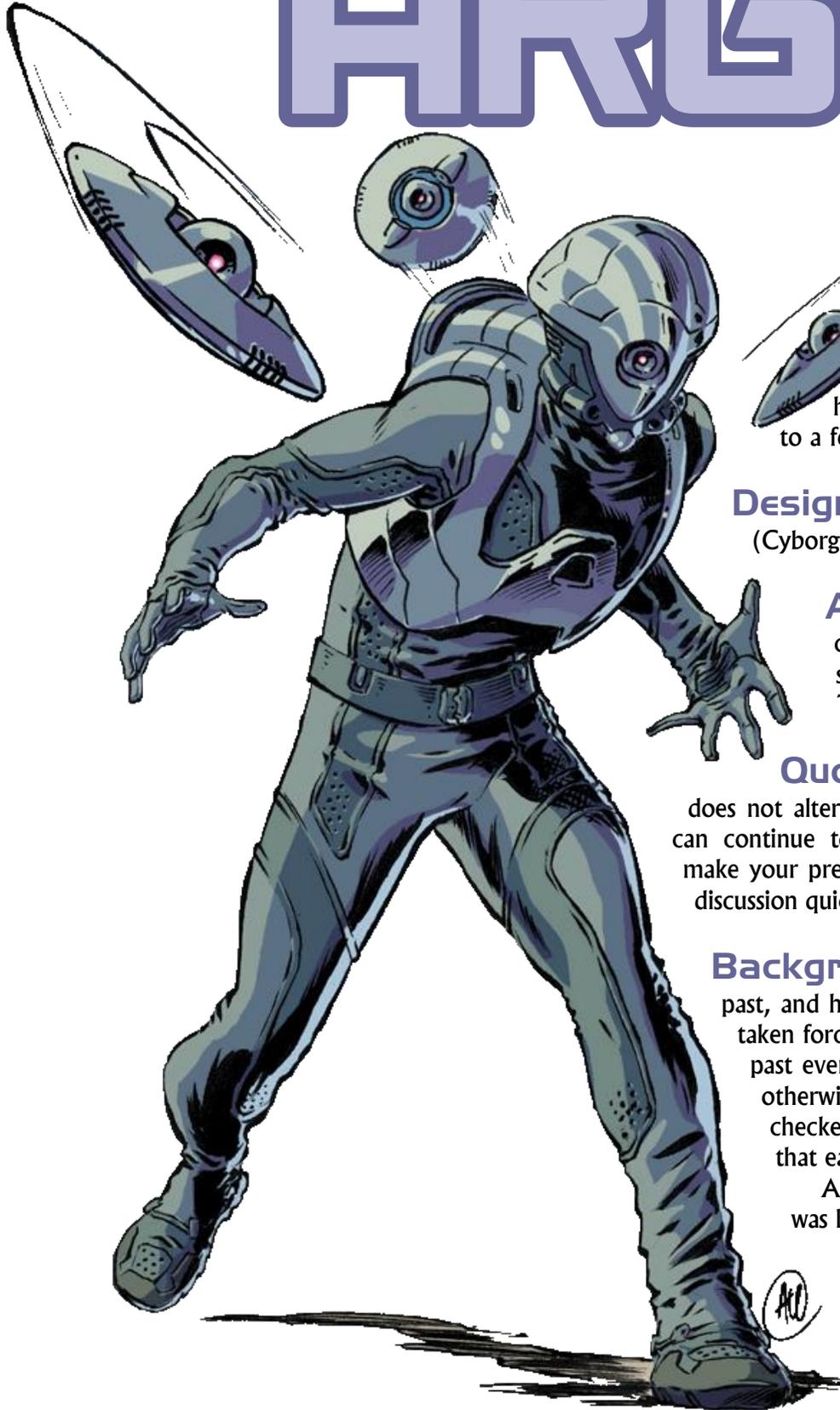
Quirk (Passenger in Her Head): “Fagan” isn’t really gone and continues to talk to Pritchard in her sleep or subtly push her now and again when it sees it as necessary.

Quirk (Violence-averse): Apparition’s violence-filled upbringing and abuse issues makes her want to avoid direct violence whenever necessary; she doesn’t like the thought of doing others physical harm directly herself and will try to flee the scene immediately if she feels she’s about to be pulled into a fight.

COSTS

Attributes 54 + Defenses 21 + Advantages 27 + Skills 57 + Powers 49 = 208 points

ARGUS


Name:

Jesenko Kubacik

Status:

Kubacik is a Serbian national wanted by The Hague for war crimes; his identity as Argus is known only to a few

Designation: Modified Human (Cyborg)

Affiliation(s): None currently; believed to harbor strong ties to the Baroness and her Tarot Cartel

Quote: “You are an idiot. That does not alter the value of your money, so we can continue to do business; however, it does make your presence offensive, so let’s finish this discussion quickly.”

Background: Argus has a muddled past, and he prefers it that way. In fact, he’s taken forceful steps to go back and make his past even harder to research than it might otherwise have been, and given his checkered history, it wouldn’t have been that easy to begin with.

As near as anyone can tell, Kubacik was born and raised in the Serbian parts of Yugoslavia immediately prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union and its Iron Curtain. He grew up in very bad places and learned violence as a way of life early; he also became a useful ferret of information for people with

money and power, gradually working his way up from gangsters to paramilitary types. When he had burned enough bridges in his homeland and felt the scrutiny of not only his former employers but also United Nations personnel throwing around phrases like “war crimes,” he decided to investigate warmer climes. He knocked around the Mediterranean for a while, doing contract work for homegrown Greek fascist groups, Cypriot separatists, the Sicilian Mafia, and Turkish Gray Wolves. It was while working for that last group that he also made the acquaintance of one of their repeat customers, the skeleton of what would later become The Tarot Cartel. In fact, his natural skills at finding out information that people tried hard for others not to find out was impressive enough to quickly bring him to the attention of one of the founding players behind this nascent organization, the Baroness herself. When a chance encounter with Turkish military assets ended with a grenade exploding much too close to Jesenko, he found himself in the Cartel’s debt. They had provided for his medical care, including the reconstructive surgery for his face and the very expensive and cutting-edge cybernetics that replaced the natural visual and auditory capabilities the grenade had taken away from him.

Over the course of the next several years, the Baroness gave him many opportunities to pay off the debt he owed the Cartel. Though he chafed under the restrictions of his relationship with these patrons, he grew to respect the Baroness and learned a great deal from her regarding actual power versus the appearance of power and about the application of leverage in the most precise and profitable manner. While Jesenko isn’t

The Tarot Cartel

The current incarnation of a criminal organization dating back to World War II, the Cartel actually bears little resemblance to its original incarnation (which was small and mostly the work of a single metahuman using it as a front). It operates globally and through an intimidating number of agents, almost proving on par with some small countries in terms of economic control and paramilitary assets. It is a power operating in the shadows of numerous violence-torn third world locations and one-step back behind other underworld groups (usually as a financier or advisor), but has allies and cats-paws in the highest halls of power throughout western capitals, a reach built carefully over a quarter century.

In many ways it fulfills a more pragmatic and less colorful role than its more outré A.C.R.O.N.O.M.Y.I.C. B.A.D.G.U.Y.S. organization brethren in comic book tradition, resembling James Bond’s S.P.E.C.T.R.E. more than Marvel Comics’ A.I.M., or even S.H.A.D.O.W. from Green Ronin’s own Earth-Prime setting.

the kind of person it can be said actually likes anyone, he grew to hold the Baroness in the position of *disliking her* least of all the people he knew or had ever met. When he found out about the rogue elements in the Cartel planning her assassination, he even risked his own life to make sure she was warned.

Afterwards, she told him privately that she was satisfied that he had worked off his debt to the Cartel. He was free to go. In fact, she would even invest resources in establishing him as a private operator if he so wanted... with the understanding that she and the Cartel—in that order—would always receive preferential treatment and discounts. Understanding fully her actual motives (gratitude being alien to her nature), and the value of such a unique and unfettered position, he agreed immediately.

Neither has ever given the other reason to regret that decision.

Personality, Goals, &

Tactics: Argus is an information broker and thief of a very specialized nature—he traffics in secrets. He finds them, ferrets them out despite his target’s best efforts, and then stores them away for future use. Knowledge is more than power, it is also profit, and in some cases there is little that separates the two concepts. He will work for anyone that can meet his price, though he has been known to drop that price for a target that piques his curiosity.

Jesenko, in short, is rather despicable. He has no scruples and few social graces. He’s never seen the value in either. He only respects that which has the power to do him harm, and only so long as he can’t find a way around its reach. The word “weasel” springs rapidly to the minds of any who find themselves working with the man, and it’s a description likely doing him too much credit while insulting other weasels. He is intelligent, meticulous, obsessive, and detail-oriented; he also has no pity and lacks even the most basic empathy of an otherwise high-functioning sociopath. The only ethic

to which he can be said to subscribe is a rigorous and unyielding professionalism, yet even this is only due to cold pragmatism—given his line of work, a lack of professionalism would hurt his reputation and cost him business, which is an unacceptable outcome. Similarly, his arrangement with the Baroness has no relationship to personal attachment; rather, he knows in precise and frightening detail that she is one of the few people he could never actually hide from and exactly what she would do to him if he were to cross her. Again, an unacceptable outcome.

Kubacik avoids physical confrontation unless he is certain he holds a distinct upper hand. If an opponent finds himself in such a confrontation, chances are very good it's been engineered by Argus and is a trap. Jesenko doesn't even begin to understand or process the concept of a "fair fight."

Powers, Abilities, & Resources: Despite his unimpressive appearance, Jesenko is actually quite dangerous, especially when cornered, and is an expert street-fighter and pistol marksman. However, it is his skills in spying and surveillance that have garnered him the international reputation and high-paying clients. Argus makes use of extensive hi-tech drone

Drone Surveillance

Argus' surveillance network is built with simplicity in mind, though it may not seem so on first glance. He has a Mental Link with the drones, representing an encrypted hi-end transmission relay with each module; should they range very far afield, he can piggyback that same signal through any available network in the world as a repeater, giving him a (hidden) global reach with those same modules. They have the same sensory modifications as Argus does, meaning he can understand any type of signal they send him through the transmission and his Rapid Radio sense and Integrated Storage Dump from his own cybernetics allows him to receive and interpret those signals quickly and record them somewhere outside his headspace, so he isn't constantly distracted. This isn't a perfect system for him, however—GMs should feel free to start imposing Perception checks to keep up with the feeds if the situation starts getting *really* complicated.

assets, including a special suit that dispenses compact and advanced drones of his own design. These drones are remotely integrated into his own cybernetics and can defend themselves (and him) with sophisticated Taser systems if necessary.

Campaign Usage:

Argus is one of those villains that exist to aggravate PC heroes and drive them up the wall. GMs need to be careful to use him in such a way that the *player characters* grow to hate him and not the *players* themselves. Emphasize his cold-blooded and meticulous business front and utterly mercenary nature. Once he's been used against the PCs, he has no qualms about working for the PCs against his former contracting body, for example. Finding ways to circumvent or stymie his surveillance methods, to turn Argus' own tactics against him, should also be bread-and-butter for similarly sneaky and investigative heroes.

DRONE: PL 9

STR 0, STA —, AGI 3, DEX 0, FGT 0, INT —, AWE 5, PRE —

Defense: Dodge 12*, Parry 12*, Fortitude Immune, Toughness 6, Will None

Offense: Initiative +11; Electrical Discharge (Ranged +6, Damage 10), Unarmed (Close +0, Damage 0)

Advantages: Evasion, Favored Environment (Airborne), Improved Defense, Improved Initiative 2, Move-by Action

Skills: Perception 4 (+7), Ranged Attack: Electrical Discharge 6 (+6), Stealth 4 (+19*)

Powers: Electrical Discharge (Multiattack Ranged Damage 8); Flight 6 (120 mph); Immunity 30 (Fortitude Effects); Protection 6 (Impervious); Senses 13 (Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Extended Auditory [100 ft], Extended Visual 2 [1000 ft], Infravision, Low-light Vision, Microscopic Vision 1 (dust-size), Radio, Time Sense, Tracking [visual], Ultra-hearing, Ultravision); Shrinking 12 (6 inches; Innate, Normal Strength, Permanent); 126 total points

ARGUS

PL 10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
2	2	3	2	7	5	5	1

ADVANTAGES

Assessment, Benefit 4 (Cipher 3, Wealth 1), Defensive Roll 4, Equipment 6, Favored Environment (when cornered), Inventor, Languages 3 (English, Greek, and Russian; Serbo-Croatian is native), Well-informed

SKILLS

Acrobatics 2 (+5), Athletics 2 (+4), Close Combat: Unarmed 3 (+10), Deception 6 (+7), Expertise: Current Events: 10 (+15), Expertise: Surveillance 15 (+20), Insight 7 (+12), Intimidation 6 (+7), Investigation 12 (+17), Perception 12 (+17), Persuasion 3 (+4), Ranged Combat: Guns 6 (+8), Stealth 10 (+13), Treatment 10 (+15), Vehicles 6 (+8)

POWERS

CYBERNETIC IMPLANTS: Built-in Sensors (**Feature 1** [Integrated Storage Dump]; **Senses 9** [Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Infravision, Low-light Vision, Microscopic Vision 1 (dust-size), Rapid Radio, Time Sense, Ultra-hearing, Ultravision]); Integrated Sensor Feed (**Enhanced Defenses 10** [Dodge 5, Parry 5], **Enhanced Advantages 4** [Defensive Roll 4]) ♦ 24 points

DRONE PACK: Removable, -31 pp; **Summon Drones 9** (Active, Controlled, Horde, Mental Link (radio), Multiple Minions 5 [20 drones], Sacrifice); Repeater Network (**Communication 4** [Radio; anywhere on Earth, Subtle (heavily-encrypted)]) ♦ 123 points

COSTS

Attributes 54 + Defenses 4 + Advantages 14 + Skills 55 + Powers 147 = 274 points

DEFENSES

Dodge 12/7 Parry 12/7
Fort 7 Tough 8/2 Will 10

COMBAT

Initiative: +3
Lift: 200 lbs
Move: Ground (30 feet)
Unarmed: Close +10, Damage 2
Blaster Pistol: Ranged +8, Damage 5

EQUIPMENT

Blaster Pistol (Ranged Damage 5), The Panopticon (HQ), Undercover Shirt (Protection 2, Subtle)

The Panopticon: Toughness 10, Size Small, **Features:** Communications, Computer, Concealed 2, Deathtraps, Defense System, Fire Prevention System, Living Space, Power System, Security System 2, Workshop; 14 ep

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation (Greed): Jesenko has lived in the gutters of some very bad places more than once, and he refuses to ever do so again.

Motivation (Survival): Argus has many enemies, and the best defenses are staying ahead of them and hidden from them—both of which are expensive.

Quirk (Information Junkie): Jesenko lives for knowing things other people don't.

Quirk (Paranoid): Argus lives by the motto, "If you ever stop believing they're out to get you, that's when they'll get you."

Quirk (Personality "Issues"): Kubacik simply isn't a very likable guy. He rubs almost everyone the wrong way, knows it, and just doesn't care.

THE ARSENAL OF



DEMOCRACY



Members: Anthem, American Spirit, Pluribus, Rampart, S.T.A.R.S. and S.T.R.I.P.E.S., USAngel

Group Status: The members of the group are all American citizens with no criminal records; their employers guard the real identities of Pluribus and American Spirit at the request of those employees (though this shielding has yet to be tested in court), but the identities of the others are each a matter of public record

History: Costumed heroes and their brethren are often a gray area for politicians and other decision-makers, those who consider themselves to have the real power in a country. Yes, these men and women with their special abilities and colorful codenames do good work, but they also don't necessarily answer to anyone of authority (which is to say, those very same concerned decision-makers). They're notoriously independent-minded, headstrong, idealistic, and not altogether suited for operating in-line with a set of established political policies. They can also be terribly *unpragmatic*, often acting against those in power when their ideals call for it. So, while the common man may love them for their courage and heroism, these so-called "superheroes" can also be a bit of a headache. Unfortunately, routinely and predictably creating your own is unreliable, often resulting in its own kinds of headaches; inevitably, it simply proves more feasible to forge good working relations with those heroes that prove themselves over time, and work together to find common purpose. The American government and military has come to these hard conclusions after decades of debate and study (and numerous missteps).

However, a few years ago, a determined nucleus of allied politicians decided that they would succeed where their predecessors had failed and find a way to channel superhuman might for the greater good in a wiser and more measured means... which is to say, in lines with their political agenda. They managed, over the course of a few years to gather the resources, recruits, and political capital to push through the creation of a national super-group, calling it "The Arsenal of Democracy." This group was composed of former military personnel or federal agents or others with ties to federal agencies or organizations. Each possessed special talents and abilities, each was trained to work as part of a cohesive group, and each

was supposed to be thoroughly dedicated to the goals of the group.

Success was... *mixed*.

Public opinion was divided, media attention relentless, and every step and decision scrutinized by ally and enemy alike in the halls of power. Other nations decried the group's formation as an abuse of power, and the word "stormtrooper" was lobbed around with frequency. Things worsened as it became clear that even the backers of the group differed on various elements of their own agenda, and the personalities of the group's members did NOT mesh well when forced to cooperate with local authorities or, worse, with existing costumed heroes that the group's backers often forced them to treat as little more than criminals and vigilantes.

The beginning of the end came when team spokesperson American Dream, a charismatic and photogenic telepath who was one of the few well-liked members of the team, was killed when dealing with homegrown political terrorists. While the team's field leader Anthem was exonerated for his handling of the ensuing fight and the collateral damage it included, the group's political enemies smelled blood in the water and attacked. Opposition ratcheted into witch-hunts. One investigation after another into the group's entire tenure, into every single case, every single decision, soon proved too damaging to the careers of the team's backers and the entire experiment came to a grinding halt.

It was decided to disband the group and return its members to their former placements. Several of these now-disillusioned public servants decided instead to simply retire from public lives rather than deal with the ongoing opprobrium altogether. Only Major William Wright, the man known as Anthem, was prepared to stick it out to the end of the process when the group's backers were approached by Patriot Directive, Inc. (PDI), with the idea of buying the rights to the name and insignia and presumed good will that still existed for the group in some political quarters of the country.

PDI then went on a media blitzkrieg aimed at national opinion. They spun the downfall of the team into a concerted effort by misguided and irresponsible political activists to besmirch and ruin good people for tawdry political ends. They pointed out that the team had been placed in an unworkable situation, expected to act as superheroes but within limitations to action and judgment that never would

have been expected of *private* citizens with the same abilities. Slowly but surely, they managed to rework into a positive asset the image of a group of people that no longer even wanted to work together, little less serve the public that had turned on them

This was just fine with PDI. They'd never intended to use the group as private superheroes, but rather as specialized security and selling points to their own military-for-hire services. Of the original membership, really only Anthem met their criteria and usability profile anyway. The executives working at the Houston offices of the company had already been working on locating and recruiting potential members of its own version of the team, a new version.

Through contacts with Vex Industries and its operations working on defense contracts with numerous aerospace concerns, they had found Captain Amina Longfeather and managed to acquire the flight suit technology she had been working on as well as her services wearing that suit. Recruiters already working on building up the ranks of the company's refurbished personnel pool had found Colin Purcell working as a mercenary overseas and convinced him to return to the U.S. (helping erase a few misadventures of his from public and legal records in the meantime). They had also found a young man with special abilities working as a paramedic on the west coast and quickly offered Ke Puc Loy much better opportunities to put his talents to use. American Spirit approached PDI, his ancestors' spirits having already pushed him toward joining after being quite disgusted with the media firestorm of the original group's meltdown.

The last additions before the new group was presented to the public (and potential employers) were to add S.T.A.R.S. and S.T.R.I.P.E.S., simultaneously bolstering the team's workable force footprint while also opening new markets for PDI's work with Vex Industries combat anthrodrones.

Though the new iteration of the Arsenal has only been in existence a short time, it has thus far proven a valuable marketing tool for PDI and its services. The privatization of a taxpayer burden has earned praise from numerous pundits and their various followings, and, as expected, the American public has since moved on to newer and shinier distractions.

Goals: The Arsenal of Democracy is an operations group that works as security and “muscle-for-hire” in cooperation with other security assets and in accordance with the corporate policies of Patriot Directive, Inc.

Standard Tactics: The combination of Arsenal and Patriot Elite forces will generally be encountered as hired security or military support. When used in combat, they will allow their supporting human personnel and equipment (normally a dozen or so men spread among a ground vehicle and a couple of air vehicles—see the Vex Industries sidebar for details on these vehicles) to spread out and handle similar opposition (or simply take control of an area) while the Arsenal will target powered forces. USAngel and American Spirit will act as air support, quickly moving in and out of the area and strafing targets. Anthem will lead Rampart, S.T.A.R.S., and S.T.R.I.P.E.S. in to skirmish, with Rampart at point to soak up attacks while the robots combine fire on the greatest-seeming threat as Anthem uses his mobility to eliminate opposition leadership. Pluribus remains in the rear, helping to evacuate secondary personnel or potential bystanders while forming a second force from his duplicates that can be brought in to mop up remaining weakened opposition on the ground. If faced with superior force, the team will combine all attacks on that target until it drops. They are professionals, and they do NOT play nice.

Campaign Usage & Story

Hooks: The Arsenal present an interesting variation for some GMs. They are a walking gray area in that while they may present resistance and violence to a group of PC heroes, they themselves aren't actually villains. They have jobs and attitudes that just put them in the way, but also the power and support to not move out of that way easily if they see a reason to stand their ground. GMs may choose to play up the over-the-top right wing manifesto elements that, admittedly, are a subtext in the group's current iteration, but they sacrifice a number of potentially interesting play opportunities if they do.

ANTHEM

Name: William Oliver Wright

Status: Wright is an American citizen with no criminal record and a former military officer now retired

Designation: Metahuman (mutate with presumably inheritable abilities)

Affiliation(s): The Arsenal of Democracy (team leader) and Patriot Directive, Inc. (employers); formerly, the U.S. Government and Army

Background and Summary: The original Anthem was an American metahuman who fought during WWII before entering the intelligence community during the Cold War. The name still held enough historical recognition and patriotic significance that the politicians forming the original Arsenal group co-opted it at the earliest opportunity.

Major Wright was one of the few long-term successes of the occasional super-soldier experiments that seem to litter the history of the American military-scientific community. An outstanding officer, both his accomplishments and his genetics won him the spot in the program, and he was the only success of that particular endeavor. Unfortunately, the military never really had a justifiably (for the expense involved) good use for a *single* super-soldier (rather than a mass producible model), and he was mostly used for PR and infrequent special missions before being recruited into the original Arsenal. Anthem never really fit the role, or got along with the team, and he especially didn't work well with civilian heroes (whom he usually dismissed as well-meaning amateurs or borderline criminals).

His current position offers Wright the first satisfying use of his abilities since he acquired them, and he is greatly invested in the success of his current career choice. A low-level metahuman, Anthem possesses strength, speed, and durability exceeding normal human parameters; he usually carries an enormous assault rifle-like weapon normal men would have difficulty maneuvering with, little less firing accurately. He is an exceptionally well-trained U.S. Army Ranger with over a decade of experience in dealing with superhuman opponents.



Power Level: 10

Costs: Attributes 78 + Defenses 20 + Advantages 29 + Skills 46 + Powers 33 = 206 points

Attributes: Str 5, Sta 5, Agl 5, Dex 5, Ftg 12, Int 2, Awe 2, Pre 3

Defenses: Dodge 12, Parry 12, Fort 10, Tgh 7, Will 10

Combat: Initiative +9, Lift: 1600 lbs., Move: Ground (16 mph), Big Damn Gun (Ranged +13, Multiattack Damage 7), Collapsible Staff (Close +12, Damage 7), Throw (Ranged +13, varies), Unarmed (Close +12, Damage 5)

Advantages: Accurate Attack, All-out Attack, Benefit, Status (Field Leader—Arsenal of Democracy), Close Attack, Connected, Defensive Attack, Diehard, Equipment 12, Great Endurance, Improved Defense, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Leadership, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Redirect, Set-up, Takedown, Teamwork

Equipment: Commlink, Flash Grenade, Flashlight, Gas Mask, GPS Receiver, Sleep Gas Grenade, Smoke Grenade, Tear Gas Grenade

Skills: Acrobatics 8 (+13), Athletics 8 (+13), Deception 6 (+9), Expertise: Military 8 (+10), Insight 8 (+10), Intimidation 6 (+9), Investigation 4 (+6), Perception 8 (+10), Persuasion 5 (+8), Ranged Combat: Guns 8 (+13), Ranged Combat: Throw 8 (+13), Technology 4 (+6), Treatment 4 (+6), Vehicles 6 (+11)

Powers

BIG DAMN GUN: Easily Removable, -8 pp; Ranged Multiattack **Damage 7** ♦ 13 points

COLLAPSIBLE STAFF: Removable, -1 pp; Strength-based **Damage 2** (Split, Subtle) ♦ 3 points

STAR-SPANGLED SKINTIGHT UNIFORM AND VISOR: Removable, -1 pp; **Immunity 7** (Cold, Heat, Sensory Affliction Effects; all at half-effect); **Protection 2** (Subtle) ♦ 6 points

SUPER-SOLDIER PROGRAM SUCCESS: Enhanced **Advantages 2** (Diehard, Great Endurance), **Immunity 2** (Disease, Poison; both at half-effect), **Leaping 2** (30 feet), **Senses 3** (Extended Auditory [x 10], Extended Visual [x 10], Low-light Vision), **Speed 3** (16 mph) ♦ 11 points

Complications: **Fame** (In costume or out, Wright's face is known and he's a bit of a celebrity thanks to years of news coverage of the original Arsenal and its actions), **Motivation (Recognition)**—Wright considers himself underappreciated by the U.S. Government, the American people, and pretty much whomever else fails to hold him in the same esteem he holds himself), **Quirk (My Way or the Highway)**—Anthem is more than a bit authoritarian, some say bordering on imperious), **Reputation** (Wright's withering opinions regarding costumed heroes are well-known and publicized. He isn't popular with that community)

RAMPART

Name: Colin Purcell

Status: Purcell is an American citizen with no criminal record

Designation: Metahuman (mutant)

Affiliation(s): The Arsenal of Democracy and Patriot Directive, Inc. (employers)

Background and Summary: Purcell is a mutant whose abilities manifested during a college football game, resulting in his accidentally injuring half the opposing team. Losing his scholarship over the revelation (which, in fairness, was also news to him), he found himself wandering aimlessly from job to job looking for something that would both feed and interest him. A couple of high school buddies of his who got kicked out of the army convinced him to join them as part of a small militia selling its services overseas as mercenaries, and he found something he did well at. It was while operating in this capacity that PDI found and recruited Purcell.

As Rampart, Purcell gets to use his ability in the public eye and get paid well for it. The whole spectacle reminds him of how much he wanted to be a professional athlete, and he loves reliving feelings he thought lost to him forever.

Rampart is a mutant, born with the ability to absorb kinetic and electromagnetic energy as it impacts him. He can convert kinetic energy into greater strength or an explosive discharge while ambient energy channels into speeding him or his metabolism up to noticeably superhuman levels. In either case, he has only the stored energy to draw



from and burns through it quickly, requiring him to absorb more to re-enable those powers.

Power Level: 10

Costs: Attributes 54 + Defenses 17 + Advantages 9 + Skills 26 + Powers 63 = 169 points

Attributes: Str 12/6, Sta 6, Agl 2, Dex 1, Ftg 8, Int 1, Awe 1, Pre 2

Defenses: Dodge 6, Parry 8, Fort 12, Tgh 12, Will 8

Combat: Initiative +26/+2, Lift: 100 tons /3200 lbs., Move: Ground: (120 mph/30 feet),

Explosive Punch (Burst Area, Damage 10), Unarmed (Close +8, Damage 12/6)

Advantages: All-out Attack, Chokehold, Fast Grab, Improved Hold, *Improved Initiative* 6, Interpose, Power Attack, Takedown, Taunt, Teamwork

Skills: Athletics 4 (+16), Deception 4 (+6), Expertise: Mercenary 6 (+7), Insight 4 (+5), Intimidation 8 (+10), Perception 4 (+5), Persuasion 4 (+6), Ranged Combat: Guns 8 (+9), Stealth 2 (+4), Technology 2 (+3), Treatment 2 (+3), Vehicles 4 (+5)

Powers

DAMAGE ABSORPTION: **Immunity 80** (Toughness Effects; Limited to Kinetic Impact and Direct Electromagnetic Energy Contact, Limited to half-effect), **Protection 6** (Impervious) ♦ 38 points

ENERGY BATTERY: Enhanced Advantage 6 (Improved Initiative 6), Healing 6 (Energizing, Limited to self), Speed 6 (120 mph); all are Limited to damage ranks "absorbed" and Fades ♦ 9 points

KINETIC CONVERTER: Enhanced Strength 6, Explosive Punch (Burst Area Damage 10); both are Limited to damage ranks "absorbed" and Fades ♦ 11 points

MUTANT DURABILITY: Immunity 5 (Environmental Conditions—all) ♦ 5 points

Complications: **Motivation (Greed)**—If you're good at something, you should get paid to do it. End of discussion), **Motivation (Thrills)**—Rampart likes the feel of fists flying and the rush of adrenaline), **Reputation** (Thinks with his fists), **Rivalry** (Anyone out there with superhuman strength and durability), **Temper** (Rampart is known to have short fuse and a ready flame)

USANGEL

Name: Amina Twofeather

Status: Twofeather is an American citizen with no criminal record

Designation: Human (with specialized equipment)

Affiliation(s): The Arsenal of Democracy and Patriot Directive, Inc. (employers)

Background and Summary: The daughter of an ethnically diverse family, Amina grew up on military airfields as her father and brothers wore the uniforms and worked on the planes. Quite a bit brighter than her relatives, though, she applied her love of flying and earned multiple graduate degrees in aerospace design while working her way through the Air Force.

Following the dissolution of The Aerie supergroup when its founder Cyberhawk died bringing down his personal nemesis Mr. Big, the government managed to confiscate much of Cyberhawk's research and materials. Amina was part of the research group tasked with reverse-engineering the technology. Though she managed the greatest contributions to the research, her lack of political foresight cost her the credit she deserved, and she was ready to move on when PDI arrived (having bought the rights to the technology off of the Air Force) and asked her to not only finish her work, but to actually wear the suit she loved testing.

Twofeather is a consummate professional who appreciates the risks PDI took to give her those wings. She has no intention of letting them down. In addition to being an exceptional pilot and engineer, USAngel wears a streamlined suit of powered-armor with wing-like gravity field propulsion units (the wings are required for maneuverability but don't actually provide the lift); the suit is armed with pivoting laser weapons on the wings, mini-rockets on various attachments, and a reinforced cutting edge along the wing extremities.

Power Level: 10

Costs: Attributes 50 + Defenses 13 + Advantages 8 + Skills 38 + Powers 78 = 187 points

Attributes: Str 7/1, Sta 3, Agl 5, Dex 3, Ftg 6, Int 3, Awe 2, Pre 2



Defenses: Dodge 10/7, Parry 8/6, Fort 7, Tgh 10/8, Will 9

Combat: Initiative +5, Lift: 3 tons, Move: Ground (30 feet)/ Flight (1000 mph), Mini-rockets (Ranged Burst Area, Damage 10), Unarmed (Close +6, Damage 7), Wing Slice (Close +9, Damage 9), Wing/Shoulder Lasers (Ranged +10, Damage 9)

Advantages: Defensive Roll 2, Favored Environment (Airborne), Favored Foe (Air Vehicles), Improved Aim, Languages 2 (Apache, Spanish; English is native), Move-by Action

Skills: Acrobatics 6 (+11), Athletics 4 (+11), Close Combat: Wing Slice 3 (+9), Expertise: Aeronautics 6 (+9), Expertise: Military 6 (+9), Insight 4 (+6), Intimidation 4 (+6), Investigation 4 (+7), Perception 6 (+8), Persuasion 6 (+8), Ranged Combat: Guns 4 (+7), Ranged Combat: Wing/Shoulder Lasers 3 (+6), Stealth 2 (+7), Technology 8 (+11), Treatment 2 (+5), Vehicles 8 (+11)

Powers

FLIGHT SUIT: Effect (Removable, - 20 pp) ♦ 78 points

GRAVIMETRIC ENGINE: Flight 9 (1000 mph; Quirk—Treat as Distracted condition if wings fouled) ♦ 17 points

HI-TECH ARMOR: Immunity 10 (Life Support), Protection 5 (Impervious) ♦ 15 points

SCULPTED EXO-FRAME: Enhanced Defenses (Dodge 3, Parry 2), Enhanced Strength 6 ♦ 17 points

SENSOR SUITE: Senses 17 (Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Extended Radar 3 [x 1000], Radar [Accurate Radio, Radio Counters Concealment], Infravision, Low-light Vision, Radio) ♦ 17 points

WEAPON SYSTEMS: (30 base points) ♦ 32 total points

- **MINI-ROCKETS:** Ranged Burst Area Damage 10 ♦ 30 base points

- **WING SLICE:** Strength-based Damage 3 ♦ 1 point

- **WING/SHOULDER LASERS:** Ranged Multiattack Damage 9 (Accurate 2) ♦ 1 point

Complications: **Honor** (Twofeather has a strong sense of personal honor and integrity), **Motivation** (**Patriotism**—Unlike a number of her more self-absorbed co-workers, USAngel actually believes that she is doing good for her country by working for PDI), **Prejudice** (Twofeather is of mixed Apache,

Hispanic, and Iranian heritage; she deals with ethnic prejudice regularly), **Quirk (Low Threshold for Perceived Chauvinism)**—A woman working in a hyper-competitive testosterone-soaked line of work tends to develop a stern response to “Male Idiocy”)

AMERICAN SPIRIT

Name: Charles “Carl” Sawyer

Status: Sawyer is an American citizen with no criminal record

Designation: Supernatural (Human Practitioner integrated with Incorporeal Undead Entities)

Affiliation(s): The Arsenal of Democracy and Patriot Directive, Inc. (employers)

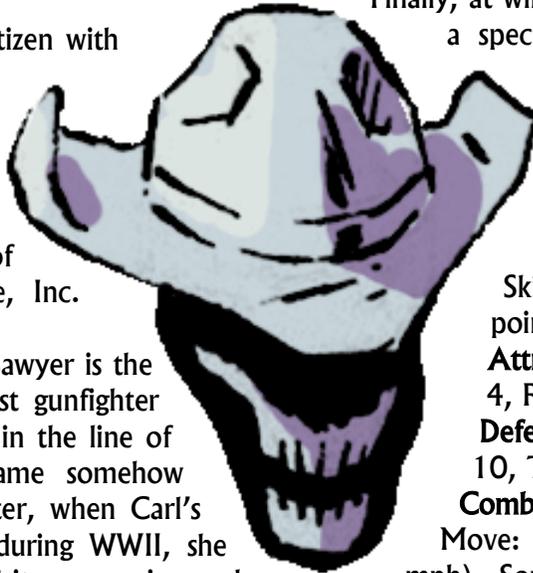
Background and Summary: Carl Sawyer is the descendant of a storied Old West gunfighter and legendary lawman who died in the line of duty. His ancestor’s spirit became somehow bound to his six-shooters and later, when Carl’s great grandmother found them during WWII, she was possessed of the old man’s spirit on occasion and used her ghostly powers to fight crime as the masked “Gunfighter.” Since her death some time ago, no one had seen hide nor hair of any such supernatural commotion and the family was willing to start dismissing such family stories as fanciful, until the day Carl found the pair of guns and decided to wear them to a costume party he was invited to attend as he already planned on going as an Old West gunslinger. A deputy sheriff of, frankly, little repute, he still did his duty that evening when he pulled over a speeder while making his own way to the party. The speeder was a drug smuggler who emptied a submachine gun at Carl and would have killed him if the spirits bound to the guns hadn’t intervened.

Now awakened once more, the spirits inside the guns began showing young Carl how to call on them for the powers they could grant him. He planned at first to become a masked crime-fighter, but eventually decided at the urging of his ancestors that this new group of American heroes (Carl’s ancestors are stridently old-fashioned) he saw advertised on the news could use his help. Somewhat overwhelmed with the power at his control, Carl tries to do his best

to hold up his family legacy while NOT joining his ancestors as another spirit bound to the family heirlooms.

While possessed, Sawyer’s form is supernaturally enhanced across the board; he can also become ghost-like in substance while still interacting physically with objects around him. His family heirlooms fire similarly supernatural rounds that never run out and can maneuver unlike normal bullets altogether.

Finally, at will, he can summon “Ol’ Scratch,” a spectral mount in the image of his ancestor’s horse that can fly with great speed.



Power Level: 10

Costs: Attributes 28 + Defenses 6 + Advantages 1 + Skills 17 + Powers 190 = 242 points

Attributes: Str 5, Sta 8, Agl 3, Dex 4, Ftg 8, Int 2, Awe 6, Pre 6

Defenses: Dodge 12, Parry 12, Fort 10, Tgh 8, Will 10

Combat: Initiative +7, Lift: 1600 lbs., Move: Ground (30 feet)/Flight (500 mph), Soulfire (Ranged +15, Cumulative Progressive Affliction 5 Resisted by Fort/Recovered by Fort), Spectral Energy (Ranged +15, Damage 5), Unarmed (Close +8, Damage 5)

Advantages: Daze (*Intimidation*), *Extraordinary Effort*, *Fearless*, *Improved Aim*, *Improved Critical 4 (Guns)*, *Improved Initiative*, *Quick Draw*, *Seize Initiative*, *Startle*, *Teamwork*

Skills: Athletics 9 (+14), Deception 4 (+10), Expertise (DEX): Horse-riding 4 (+8), Expertise: State Trooper 4 (+6), Insight 10 (+16), Investigation 4 (+6), *Intimidation +14 (+20)*, Perception 10 (+16), Ranged Combat: Guns 11 (+15), Stealth 2 (+5), Vehicles 4 (+8)

Powers

POSSESSED FORM: **Comprehend 1** (Spirits—Communicate); **Enhanced Advantages 9** (Daze (*Intimidation*), *Extraordinary Effort*, *Fearless*, *Improved Aim*, *Improved Critical 4 [Guns]*, *Improved Initiative*, *Quick Draw*, *Seize Initiative*, *Startle*); **Enhanced Attributes 28** (Awareness 5, Dexterity 3, Fighting 5, Presence 5, Stamina 6, Strength 4); **Enhanced Defenses 13** (Dodge 8, Parry 3, Will 2); **Enhanced Skills 42** (Athletics 6, Insight 6, *Intimidation 14*, Perception 6, Ranged Combat

10); **Immunity 40** (Mental Effects, Fortitude Effects; both Limited to Half Effect); **Insubstantial 4** (Incorporeal; Precise); **Senses 4** (Darkvision, Detect Spirits 2 [ranged]); **Strength Affects Corporeal 5** ♦ 154 points

HAUNTED SIX-SHOOTERS: (34 base points; Easily Removable, - 7 pp; Indestructible) ♦ 28 total points

• **SPECTRAL ENERGY:** Ranged Multiattack **Damage 5** (Affects Corporeal 5, Homing 2, Incurable, Penetrating 5, Ricochet, Secondary Effect) ♦ 34 base points

• **SOULFIRE:** Ranged Cumulative Progressive **Affliction 5** (Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated, Resisted by: Fortitude, Recovered by Fortitude; Affects Corporeal 5) ♦ 1 point

SPECTRAL STEED: **Flight 8** (500 mph; Platform): ♦ 8 points

Complications: **Motivation (Responsibility)**—Sawyer feels a strong obligation to live up to his family name and legacy), **Prejudice** (A ghostly gunfighter tends to scare the crap out of normal people whether he wants to or not), **Quirk (Of Two Minds)**—The presence of his ancestors' spirits sometimes makes Sawyer's head a mite crowded), **Quirk (Shares Control)**—Sometimes Sawyer's "passengers" decide he needs to change to spectral form, and they don't always ask his permission), **Quirk (Spirit Limitations)**—American Spirit is a supernatural being and as such vulnerable to certain magic, rituals, charms, and other things that don't affect normal folk), **Quirk ("He Needin' Killin'")**—The more "Old West" aspects of his ancestor's personalities sometimes come to bear at inopportune times, particularly their taste for less sophisticated forms of justice and law-enforcement)



PLURIBUS

Name: Ke "Kevin" Puc Loy

Status: Loy is an American citizen with no criminal record

Designation: Metahuman (mutate with presumably inheritable abilities)

Affiliation(s): The Arsenal of Democracy and Patriot Directive, Inc. (employers)

Background and Summary: Ke (or "Kevin" as he sometimes goes by) was raised to be a good citizen and helpful to others. His parents were immigrants and worked hard to fit into their new home; they wanted their son to fit in also, and someone always willing to help is someone others are always happy to have around (or so they told him). How exactly he ended up with metahuman abilities is open to speculation. His first memory of being able to do what he does occurred after a chemical spill on a highway; a paramedic still in training, Kevin went to help people get clear of the fumes and the chemicals and suddenly found himself able to touch a person and replace them temporarily with a duplicate of himself. He has always assumed the chemicals sparked something inside him (though no other metas seem to have been created in the incident). Not wanting to be seen as grandstanding or seeking celebrity, but still wanting to get good use out of what was obviously a gift, Loy started wearing a makeshift mask and costume when he went to help people with his abilities rather than his normal training. Mostly, this amounted simply to getting people quickly out of dangerous areas, but it made him feel like he was doing something worthwhile, albeit on a small scale. He was therefore amenable when PDI approached him with a recruiting pitch (if a little shocked, as he hadn't realized how inadequate his disguise had been until that point).

Loy is presumably some kind of mutate or triggered mutant. He possesses the ability to touch a person and "trade out" a duplicate of himself for that person; during the time this dupe exists, the original person resides unaware and timeless in some pocket dimension. He only seems to be able to enact this trade with willing participants, and he maxes out around 50 duplicates, all of whom are mentally linked and extremely well-coordinated in their actions together.

Power Level: 9

Costs: Attributes 30 + Defenses 22 + Advantages 0 + Skills 20 + Powers 161 = 234 points

Attributes: Str 2, Sta 3, Agl 1, Dex 1, Ftg 5, Int 1, Awe 1, Pre 1

Defenses: Dodge 9, Parry 9, Fort 7, Tgh 3, Will 7

Combat: Initiative +1, Lift: 6 tons/200 lbs., Move: Ground (30 feet), Swarm Under

(Shapeable Area, Damage 9), Team Lift (Shapeable Area, Move Object 9), Unarmed (Close +10/+5, Damage 2)

Advantages: Close Attack 5, Improved Defense, Improved Hold, Instant Up, Takedown, Teamwork

Skills: Athletics 4 (+6), Deception 4 (+5), Expertise: Military 4 (+5), Insight 6 (+7), Perception 6 (+15/+7), Persuasion 5 (+6), Treatment 6 (+7), Vehicles 5 (+6)

Powers

MOB RULES: (20 base points) ♦ 21 total points

- **SWARM UNDER:** Shapeable Area Damage 9 (Precise, Variable Descriptor—any unarmed or improvised melee weapon) ♦ 20 base points

- **TEAM LIFT:** Shapeable Area Move Object 8 (6 tons; Close Range, Limited to total lift of all dupes present, Precise) ♦ 1 point

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS: Enhanced Advantages 10 (Close Attack 5, Improved Defense, Improved Hold, Instant Up, Takedown, Teamwork), Enhanced Skill 8 (Perception 8); Quirk: Must have at least 10 dupes or more active for these to work ♦ 13 points

TRADING DUPES: Summon Duplicates 9 (120 pp; Active, Horde, Mental Link, Multiple Minions 6 [50 minions], Sacrifice; Limited to number of people present he can trade out with dupes, Limited to immediately following “trading” dupe for willing target, Quirk: Can only use Horde to the extent of people he can touch to trade out with at one time) ♦ 127 points

Complications: Motivation (Responsibility—Loy feels an obligation to use his abilities in a positive way that helps people), Quirk (Own Best Friend—Pluribus often holds animated conversations with himself while duplicated)



S.T.A.R.S.

(SPECIAL TACTICAL ASSAULT RESPONSE SYSTEM)

Name: Vex Industries Semi-Autonomous High-Threat Combat Anthrodrone MM-344X

Status: Property of Patriot Directive, Inc.

Designation: Artificial Being (Tech)

Affiliation(s): The Arsenal of Democracy and Patriot Directive, Inc. (owners)

Power Level: 10

Costs: Attributes -2 + Defenses 12 + Advantages 0 + Skills 4 + Powers 125 = 139 points

Attributes: Str 10, Sta —, Agl 0, Dex 0, Ftg 8, Int -, Awe 0, Pre —

Defenses: Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fort Immune, Tgh 12, Will None

Combat: Initiative +4, Lift: 25 tons, Move: Ground (16 mph)/Flight (30 mph), Gas Rounds (Ranged Cloud Area, Affliction 6 Resisted by Fortitude), HX Mortars (Ranged Burst Area, Damage 10), Integrated Auto-Cannon (Ranged +8, Multiattack Damage 12), Retractable Chain Saw (Close +10, Multiattack Damage 10), Unarmed (Close +10, Damage 10)

Advantages: Close Attack 2, Eidetic Memory, Improved Initiative

Skills: Athletics 4 (+14), Perception 4 (+4), Stealth 0 (-4)

Powers

JET ASSIST: Flight 4 (30 mph) ♦ 8 points

BIG ROBOT: Enhanced Advantages 4 (Close Attack 2, Eidetic Memory, Improved Initiative), Growth 4 (Large; Innate; Permanent), Immunity 30 (Fortitude Effects), Leaping 2 (Leap 30), Protection 12 (Impervious), Senses 6 (Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Infravision, Low-light Vision, Radio, Time Sense), Speed 3 (16 mph) ♦ 74 points

WEAPONS SYSTEMS: (40 base points) ♦ 43 total points

- **INTEGRATED AUTO-CANNON:** Ranged Multiattack Damage 12 (Accurate 4) ♦ 40 base points

- **GAS ROUNDS:** Ranged Progressive Cloud Area Affliction 6 (Dazed, Exhausted, Incapacitated, Resisted by Fortitude, Recovered by Fortitude) ♦ 1 point

- **HX MORTARS:** Ranged Burst Area Damage 10 (Indirect 2) ♦ 1 point
- **RETRACTABLE CHAIN SAW:** Multiattack on Strength 10 Damage (Penetrating 5, Reach [5 feet]) ♦ 1 point
- Complications:** Quirk (Programmed to obey orders from authorized personnel)

S.T.R.I.P.E.S.

(SPECIAL TACTICAL RESPONSE, INTERDICTION, AND PERSONNEL EXTRACTION SYSTEM)

Name: Vex Industries Semi-Autonomous Multi-Function Combat Anthrodrone MM-454X

Status: Property of Patriot Directive, Inc.

Designation: Artificial Being (Tech)

Affiliation(s): The Arsenal of Democracy and Patriot Directive, Inc. (owners)

Power Level: 10

Costs: Attributes 10 + Defenses 17 + Advantages 0 + Skills 10 + Powers 111 = 148 points

Attributes: Str 9, Sta —, Agl 2, Dex 2, Ftg 8, Int —, Awe 2, Pre —

Defenses: Dodge 10, Parry 10, Fort Immune, Tgh 10, Will None

Combat: Initiative +6, Lift: 12 tons, Move: Ground (30 mph)/ Flight (30 mph), Fire-retardant Foam (Cone Area, Nullify Fire 6), Integrated Mini-Cannon (Cone Area 2 [60 feet], Damage 10), Taser Canon (Ranged +10, Cumulative Affliction 10 Resisted by Fortitude), Unarmed (Close +11, Damage 9)

Advantages: Close Attack 2, Eidetic Memory, Improved Initiative

Skills: Athletics 4 (+13), Perception 8 (+10), Ranged Attack: Taser Cannon 8 (+10), Stealth 0 (-3)



Powers

JET ASSIST: Flight 4 (30 mph) ♦ 8 points

BIG ROBOT: Enhanced Advantages 4 (Close Attack 2, Eidetic Memory, Improved Initiative), Growth 3 (Innate; Permanent), Immunity 30 (Fortitude Effects), Leaping 2 (Leap 30), Protection 10 (Impervious), Senses 6 (Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Infravision, Low-light Vision, Radio, Time Sense), Speed 4 (30 mph) ♦ 70 points

WEAPON AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS: (30 base points) ♦ 33 total points

- **INTEGRATED MINI-CANNON** Cone Area 2 [60 feet] Damage 10 ♦ 30 base points

- **CYBERDOC AND NANO-REPAIR MATRIX:** Healing 6 (Affects Objects, Energizing, Restorative) ♦ 1 point

- **FIRE-RETARDANT FOAM:** Cone Area Nullify Fire 6 (All fire and related descriptor effects at once; Broad, Effortless, Simultaneous) ♦ 1 point

- **TASER CANNON:** Ranged Cumulative Affliction 10 (Dazed, Stunned, Paralyzed; Resisted by Fortitude, Recovered by Fortitude) ♦ 1 point

Complications: Quirk (Programmed to obey orders from authorized personnel)

Background and Summary: S.T.A.R.S. and S.T.R.I.P.E.S. are a pair of advanced anthroform (or man-shaped) combat drones designed by Vex Industries for heavy fire support with the Arsenal. If the pair continues to perform as they have thus far, Vex is opening a whole new product line based around similar designs. The two units, though not technically AI-level in programming, are still quite sophisticated in terms of their onboard expert systems; in fact, Vex has them programmed to occasionally even show-off a bit when it doesn't endanger mission objectives, just to highlight design capabilities for potential contractors.

S.T.A.R.S. is the larger, slower, and more heavily-armed of the two; it's mostly used as a tank with legs. S.T.R.I.P.E.S. is smaller, faster, and more versatile; it's normally used for hit-and-run tactics (as well as medical and even combat engineering support).

PATRIOT DIRECTIVE, INC. (PDI)

PDI began as a smaller private security firm originally called “American Elite Security Group,” or AESG for short. Founded by a trio of retired Army officers who had been fast friends since West Point, the company had a profitable but short and controversial history in its original form. Jessup Guthrie, Arlo Masterton, and Mason Philby were exemplary officers and quite well-decorated, but private security turned out to be a very different beast than formal military work; worse, when forced to work with each other outside the traditional command structure the three had held in the greatest respect, it turned out that Guthrie and Masterton had very real problems dealing with Philby. Philby put his own interests above those of the company and the partnership, making side deals or re-negotiating contracts without discussing it with the rest of AESG management; he also had a bad habit of improvising expensive logistics in the field to fit his own comfort rather than mission goals. The three of them simply didn’t get along with the same synergy as business partners that they had as fellow serving officers and it began to tear apart the executive level of the company even as AESG continued to grow, to amass clients, and to acquire smaller security companies, intelligence assets, and logistics channels.

Things came to a head with a contract protecting a client’s petroleum interests in central Africa that went very wrong. The official conclusions were drily summarized as “a regrettable lack of effective oversight on a field operations level.” The graphic reality was that Philby’s ego got himself and several good men killed when they escalated a tribal situation near the petroleum facility into full-blown violence... working an unofficial contract that AESG proper had never signed on to support. The surviving partners decided that the damage done to the company’s image had to be dealt with openly and decisively. They re-organized the entire company almost from the ground up, rebranding AESG as “Patriot Directive, Inc.” (or “PDI” as it sometimes uses for shorthand) and hammering home the marketing imagery in an expensive campaign.

One of the issues with Philby’s ill-considered side contract had been that it had involved engaging local tribal metahumans, an opposing force his people hadn’t been set up to handle; Guthrie and Masterton saw the writing on the wall, that security conflicts targeting and defending against superhuman opposition are going to become a new and profitable contract chain for companies like PDI and that they could be one of the market openers and leaders. Seeing an opportunity with the publicized hearings surrounding the Arsenal of Democracy and its end as an official instrument of the

United States government, PDI used its contacts in Washington to essentially buy the group’s name off of Uncle Sam, complete with all associated intellectual property and remaining support gear. They then worked to recruit and integrate the new version of the team into the company’s resources, which they have done with an even greater degree of success than they had initially imagined. In many cases, they have merely had to have the Arsenal and its Patriot Elite support on-site for short periods in order for problems to simply go away and happy clients to sign large checks.

PDI is a multi-billion dollar corporation based out of Houston, Texas. It has offices and facilities around the world, including high-end dedicated intelligence and logistics assets rivaling those of some small nations. The company has extensive connections among military, police, and corporate security organizations worldwide, which it capitalizes on ruthlessly.

Jessup Guthrie**Power Level: 6**

Costs: Attributes 40 + Defenses 11 + Advantages 12 + Skills 36 + Powers 0 = 99 points

Attributes: Str 1, Sta 3, Agl 1, Dex 0, Ftg 6, Int 4, Awe 2, Pre 3

Defenses: Dodge 5, Parry 6, Fort 5, Tgh 5/3, Will 7

Combat: Initiative +1, Lift: 100 lbs., Move: Ground (30 feet), Light Pistol (Ranged +7, Damage 3), Unarmed (Close +6, Damage 1)

Advantages: Benefit 4 (Status 2—CEO of Patriot Directive, Inc., Wealth 2), Connected, Contacts, Equipment 3, Fascinate (Deception), Improved Aim, Well-informed

Equipment: Cell Phone (Smartphone), Light Pistol, Multi-tool, Undercover Shirt

Skills: Close Combat: Unarmed 1 (+7), Deception 5 (+8), Expertise: Business 8 (+12), Expertise: Chess 8 (+12), Expertise: Military 8 (+12), Insight 8 (+10), Intimidation 7 (+10), Investigation 4 (+8), Perception 6 (+8), Persuasion 6 (+9), Ranged Combat: Guns 7 (+7), Technology 4 (+8)

Complications: Motivation (Power)—There are only two kinds of people in this world, those who lick boots and those who get their boots licked), **Obsession** (Making his company into the leader in its field and keeping it there against all competitors), **Quirk** (Chess lover who can never get enough of the game), **Relationship** (The man dotes on his family, particularly his daughters), **Temper** (Guthrie’s temper is legendary in the company)

Arlo Masterton**Power Level:** 8**Costs:** Attributes 48 + Defenses 12 + Advantages 21 + Skills 36 + Powers 0 = 117 points**Attributes:** Str 3, Sta 3, Agl 2, Dex 1, Ftg 8, Int 1, Awe 3, Pre 3**Defenses:** Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fort 7, Tgh 7/3, Will 5**Combat:** Initiative +6, Lift: 400 lbs., Move: Ground (30 feet), Assault Rifle (Ranged +10, Damage 5), Unarmed (Close +8, Damage 3)**Advantages:** Assessment, Benefit 2 (Status 2—CEO of Patriot Directive, Inc.), Chokehold, Connected, Contacts, Daze (Intimidation), Diehard, Equipment 5, Fearless, Improved Aim, Improved Initiative, Inspire, Languages (German, Russian; English is native), Leadership, Quick Draw**Equipment:** Assault Rifle, Binoculars, Bulletproof Vest, Camo Clothing, Cell Phone (Smartphone), Flashlight, Gas Mask, Multi-tool**Skills:** Athletics 5 (+8), Deception 5 (+8), Expertise: Military 11 (+12), Insight 5 (+8), Intimidation 9 (+12), Investigation 4 (+5), Perception 5 (+8), Persuasion 4 (+7), Ranged Combat: Guns 9 (+10), Stealth 5 (+7), Technology 2 (+3), Treatment 4 (+5), Vehicles 4 (+5)**Complications:** **Honor** (Masterton follows a personal set of beliefs described as somewhere between Bushido and The Code of the Old West), **Motivation** (**Thrills**—You never understand what it's like to be alive until your risking your life, or at least that's what he tells himself), **Reputation** ("Epic Hardass" who doesn't take crap from anyone, human or not), **Secret** (Masterton is a closeted homosexual and very much in love with Guthrie. He plans to go to his grave with no one ever knowing either fact)

PATRIOT ELITE™ SECURITY PERSONNEL

Power Level: 7

Costs: Attributes 26 + Defenses 20 + Advantages 11 + Skills 21 + Powers 0 = 78 points

Attributes: Str 3, Sta 2, Agl 1, Dex 1, Ftg 6, Int 0, Awe 0, Pre 0

Defenses: Dodge 8, Parry 8, Fort 7, Tgh 6, Will 6

Combat: Initiative +5, Lift: 400 lbs., Move: Ground (30 feet), Autopistol (Ranged +9, Damage 4), Squad Assault Weapon (Ranged +9, Damage 5)

Advantages: Equipment 9, Improved Initiative, Teamwork

Equipment: *Patriot Power* 10 mm Autopistol, *Patriot Protector* 12 mm Squad Assault Weapon, Body Armor (Protection 4), Commlink

Skills: Athletics 4 (+7), Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+10), Expertise: Military 8 (+8), Intimidation 6 (+6), Perception 6 (+6), Ranged Combat: Guns 8 (+9), Stealth 2 (+3), Treatment 2 (+2), Vehicles 2 (+3)

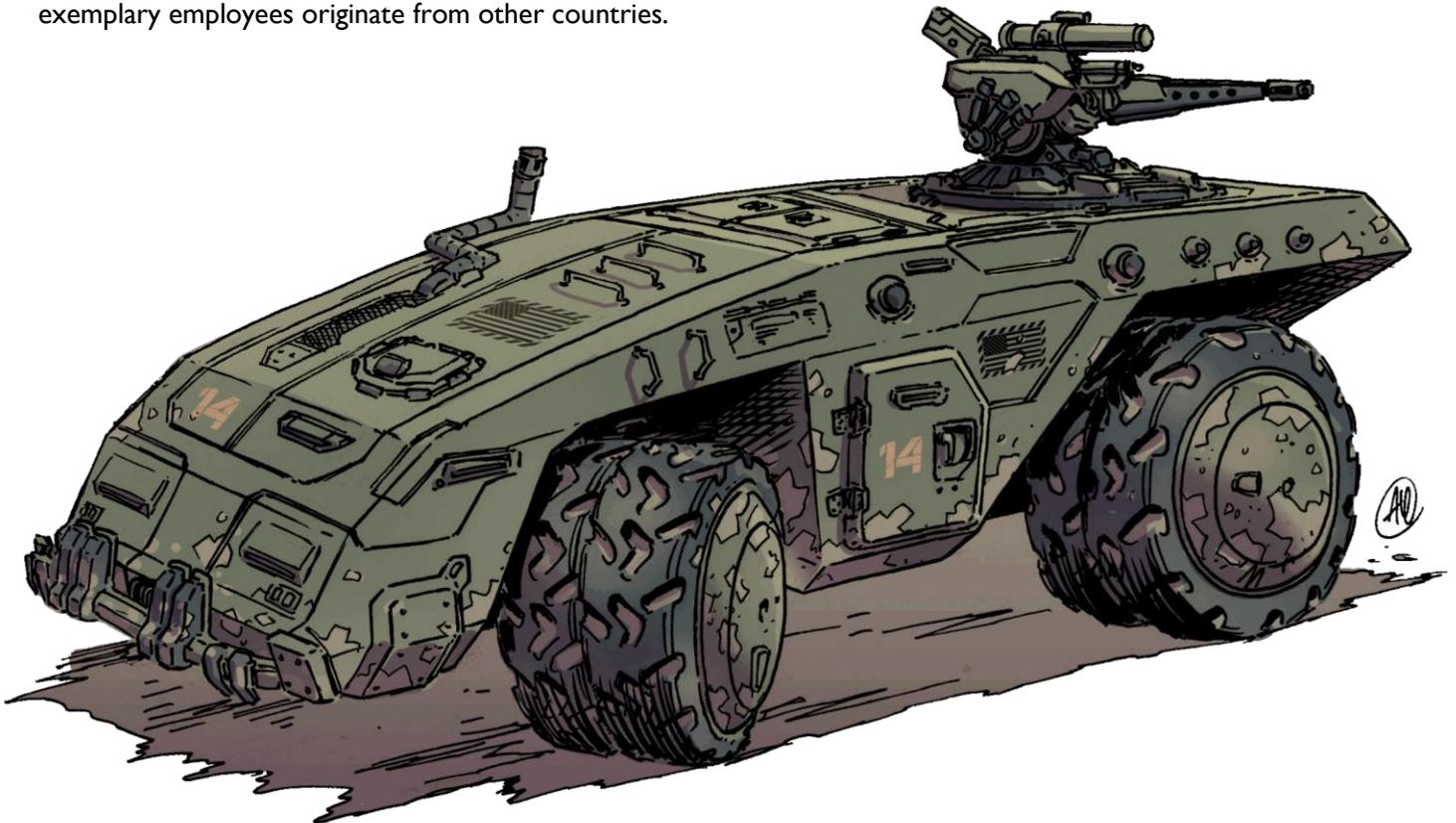
Complications: **Motivation (Responsibility)** and **Quirk (Subject to Orders)** are common.

PDI's primary field operatives (and the ones they charge the most to hire) are called "Patriot Elite." PDI is extremely selective in its hiring practices for these personnel. Former U.S. Special Forces (Rangers, Force Recon, etc.) and Police SWAT are highly represented, but a surprising number of other occupations make it through the grind. They accept only American citizens, but that citizenship can be naturalized, and a number of exemplary employees originate from other countries.

The comprehensive training and conditioning package, as well as the expected experience in the field, combined with the advanced equipment, make for a very expensive set of service options. PDI prefers to operate these security forces in either integrated five-member teams, or if called on for larger operations, to mirror U.S. Army field unit organization along squad size. Generally speaking, given the expenses involved with meeting PDI's prices and operating requirements, only large corporations, governments, and the mega-wealthy can afford to hire PDI's people in any significant volume. At any given time, the company has only a few hundred personnel available worldwide at this level of expertise, and they are very picky in how they allocate them.

The statistics above represent an average Patriot Elite. GMs should feel free to add another 5 or so points of specialty modifications if desired, particularly to skills, such as increasing Stealth and Athletics for commando-types, or adding Technology for Communications or ECCM, and so on. There also remain equipment points to be allocated on a case-by-case basis.

If it becomes necessary, use the Soldier supporting cast archetype from the *Hero's Handbook* for the support forces that supplement the Patriot Elite numbers in more large-scale field operations.



VEX INDUSTRIES

The Exford family immigrated to America from Scotland after a scandal destroyed the reputation of a younger son and resulted in his father disowning the young man. Marrying the source of the scandal (and the mother of his son-to-be), the former aristocrat picked up the pieces of his future and built a new one, concentrating on chemistry and engineering interests and working originally in the Pennsylvania area. He prided himself on being the most responsible man he knew and raised his son to be the same. Academics and business became the mainstays of the family, shying away from publicity for the next several generations. Then the brothers Vincent and Benedict came along and threw tradition to the wind, becoming notorious playboys in their teens. Sadly, Benedict got himself killed in an automobile accident shortly into his senior year at the last prep school he and his brother hadn't managed to get themselves kicked out of yet.

This sobered Vincent to the bone.

Looking for purpose, he used family connections and money to get an appointment to West Point, which is where he met and made fast friends with Guthrie and Masterton. Much to the surprise of himself and his family, when Vincent applied himself, he actually excelled, earning back the good graces of his parents. He would likely have become a third partner in their early business ventures if his father hadn't died and left him the family holdings. As one last strike against a dying grandfather who hadn't even bothered to attend Benedict's funeral, Vincent changed Exford Manufacturing into "Vex Industries" (based on a rueful family nickname for Vincent that was a play on his first and family names) and refocused the company primarily on munitions and defense contracts, fields his grandfather had loathed.

Today, Vex Industries is one of the leading munitions companies in the world, known for numerous workhorse systems and the occasional "boutique" novelty that raises public notice. Though he may not be the scientific or engineering genius many of his competitors are, Vincent has repeatedly demonstrated the ability to hire the best talent and keep them.

Vex holds the exclusive contracts with PDI for all its weapons and defense needs. The following is the signature standard equipment supplied by Vex for PDI's needs:

Vex Industries Patriot Power 10 mm Autopistol: Ranged Penetrating Damage 4 (Improved Critical [19-20]; Quirk: Every rank of Strength below 2 possessed by the wielder applies a cumulative -2 penalty to the attack check ♦ 12 ep

Vex Industries Patriot Protector 12 mm Squad Assault Weapon: Ranged Penetrating Multiattack Damage 5 (Improved Critical [19-20]; Quirk: Every rank of Strength below 2 possessed by the wielder applies a cumulative -2 penalty to the attack check ♦ 20 ep

Vex Industries Freedom's Thunder Armored Air Support Craft

Size: Huge, **Strength:** 10, **Speed:** 8, **Defense:** 6, **Toughness:** 12, **Cost:** 58 ep

Essentially a winged and flying tank, *Freedom's Thunder* is a heavily armored VTOL craft armed with forward facing heavy chainguns (Ranged Multiattack Damage 8) and rocket pods (Ranged Damage 10 with Burst Area on 6 ranks). Reputedly, it derives its name from the fact that its massively-powerful engines are very, VERY loud.

Vex Industries Freedom's Call Armored Assault Vehicle

Size: Huge, **Strength:** 12, **Speed:** 6, **Defense:** 7, **Toughness:** 12, **Cost:** 53 ep

Advertised as the fastest AAV in use anywhere in the world (a claim often objected to by Vex's competitors), *Freedom's Call* is a highly-maneuverable APC armed with a chaingun turret (60 foot Cone Area Damage 7) and integrated swivel mortar mounts on the rear sides (Ranged Burst Area Damage 8, Indirect 2). The computer-aided vehicle control frame and its sensor web are both still in the developmental stages, but integrate with a HUD helmet the driver wears (giving the effects of both the Favored Environment [Urban] and Improved Defense advantages to the driver, limited to only when using Vehicles skill and only applying to the AAV); add up to 5 points in various Senses effects to represent specialty mission packages (thermographics or radio-based tracking, for a couple of examples).

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ISBN 978-1-61318-750-0



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