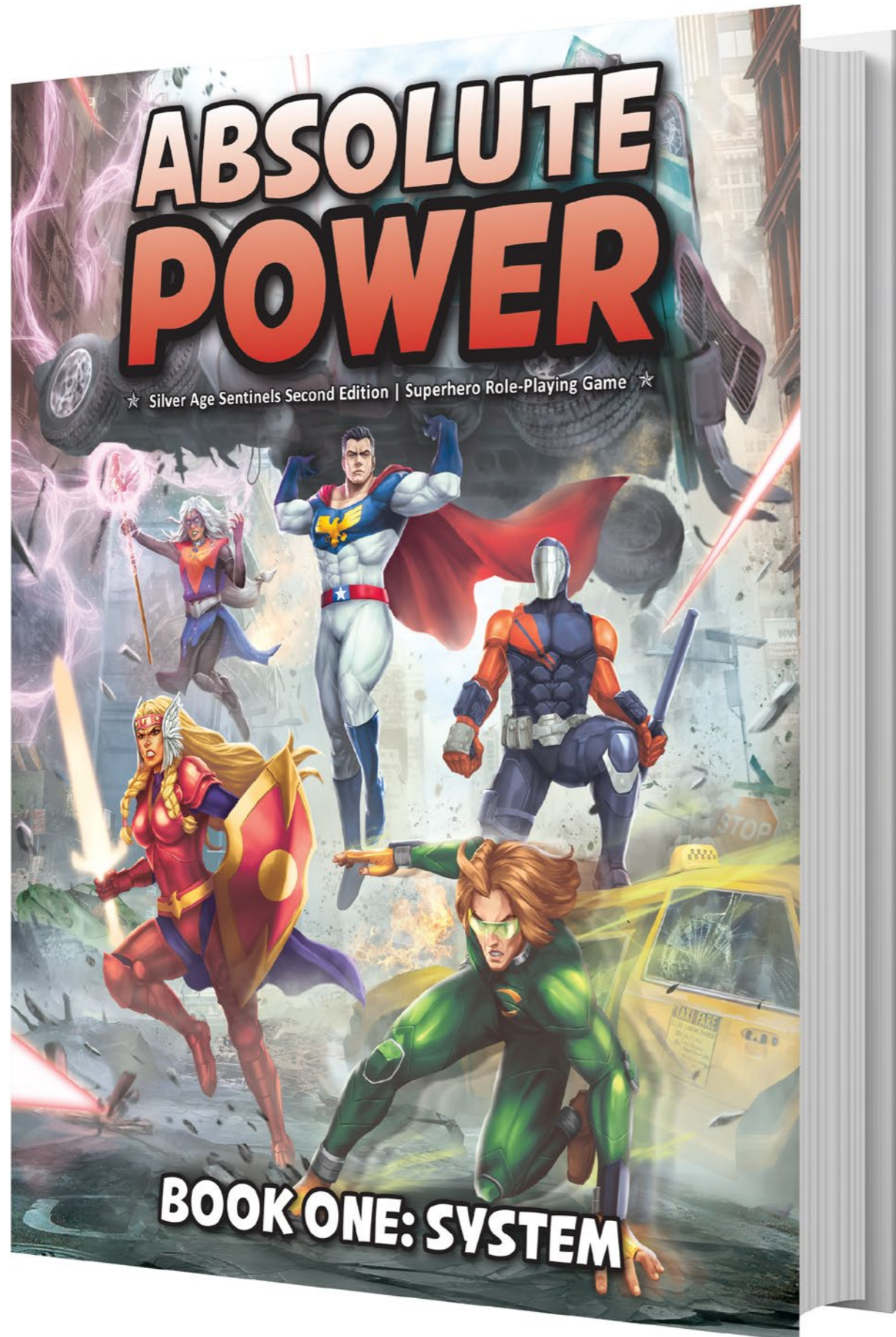


ABSOLUTE POWER ROLE-PLAYING GAME KICKSTARTER PREVIEW

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Absolute Power falls in between on this spectrum, leaning more towards emphasising the stories and characters as opposed to the game system. Although the underlying

Tri-Stat System game engine is streamlined and easy-to-use, it's quite a comprehensive and robust system designed to handle nearly anything you throw at it. The process of creating characters in Absolute Power can be quite an involved process given the volume of options available, but once the adventure begins, the game mechanics fade into the background and allow the role-playing to command the stage. Since Absolute Power and Dyskami Publishing's multi-genre anime RPG, BESM Fourth Edition, use the same game mechanic framework, the two games are fully compatible and easy to integrate if desired.

Since its inception, the Tri-Stat System was always presented with one simple unwritten rule in mind: when the game system conflicts with the story (and, by extension, the characters), the story always wins.

WHAT'S NEW IN ABSOLUTE POWER?

Absolute Power reflects an elegant evolution of the Tri-Stat System that began in 2020 with the resurrection of the BESM RPG in its Fourth Edition. We have made numerous game improvements since 2002's Silver Age Sentinels (SAS) - the Tri-Stat superhero RPG that is the first edition prequel to Absolute Power. Rebalancing the system's mechanics and refining the game's presentation were necessary to provide an ideal framework for both Tri-Stat System newcomers and seasoned players alike.

To accommodate the expanded material, Absolute Power has been split into two separate rule books - Core Book One: System and Core Book Two: Essentials - rather than presenting all game material in a single volume as was done for SAS. The list below outlines major improvements and differences between Absolute Power and Silver Age Sentinels.

- » Switching to a more-intuitive roll-high game system instead of the roll-low from SAS
 - » Rebalancing Points for all Stat, Attribute, and Defect costs
 - » Expanding Attribute and Defect options
 - » Renaming select Attributes and Defects to make them more inclusive and intuitive
 - » Removing the individual and separate Skill System in favour of the more dynamic and streamlined Skill Groups Attribute
 - » Including Power, Origins, and Size Templates to assist players during character creation
 - » Incorporating most Attribute customisation into a standard system of Enhancements and Limiters that elegantly changes an Attribute's effective Level, rather than tacking on the separate layer of Power Modifier Values (PMVs) from SAS
 - » Including Attribute Level descriptions when beneficial for clarity, instead of relying on Progression charts in SAS
 - » Adding a Social Fault Defect to address social disadvantages for characters, which were relegated in SAS to role-playing opportunities only
 - » Implementing fixed attack damage as the default choice, rather than SAS's random damage; additional damage options are presented in an expanded rules chapter
 - » Streamlining the flow of combat by focusing more on core actions, with a wide range of optional and expanded rules presented in a separate chapter
 - » Unifying dice roll difficulty modifiers into a new concept of "edges and obstacles", which instead adds extra dice to the standard two six-sided dice roll and requires the player to only use the two highest (edge) or lowest (obstacle) dice to determine the final roll value
 - » Eliminating the distinction between regular defences and block defences in favour of a single defence
 - » Expanding on NPC Companions and Minions by including a separate chapter with supporting game stats
 - » Presenting an expansive array of gear, vehicles, and Items to equip characters
 - » Delving into extensive detail for the canonical setting with expanded sections on hero and villain profiles, organisations, alternate dimensions, and universal cosmology
 - » Setting the Absolute Power campaign start date exactly two decades after the campaign events of Silver Age Sentinels: January 1st, 2021, rather than the same day in 2001.
 - » Dramatically increasing the page and word count: SAS was a single core rule book with 336 pages. Absolute Power is presented over two rule books with 336 pages in each volume.
- Enabling all of these dramatic changes means that Absolute Power is not directly compatible with Silver Age Sentinels. Your existing SAS characters and equipment will certainly convert to this Absolute Power with some effort, but they will need to be reworked and balanced to reflect the system refinements.

CHAMPION

A champion is the fighting ideal of a concept, whether divine, metaphysical, or ideological. Champions are close-quarters combatants empowered (literally or figuratively) by the ideals they represent. They also tend to be as skilled in defending innocents as defeating villains. One variant is the embodiment of a martial art, drawing on life force to become a superhuman fighting machine. Another is the semi-divine representative of a pantheon, hidden society, or sacred cause. The super-soldier transformed into a nation's ideal can also be a champion. On Sentinel-Earth, Red Phoenix is the archetypal champion, bearer of an ancient legacy and dedicated to protecting humanity.

CHAMPION

First Degree 30 Character Points			Second Degree 50 Character Points			Third Degree 70 Character Points		
LEVEL	POINTS	STAT	LEVEL	POINTS	STAT	LEVEL	POINTS	STAT
3	6	Body Stat	4	8	Body Stat	5	10	Body Stat
LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE	LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE	LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE
2	2	Combat Technique (Judge Opponent, Portable Armoury)	3	3	Combat Technique (Deflection, Judge Opponent, Portable Armoury)	4	4	Combat Technique (Deflection, Judge Opponent, Portable Armoury, Reflection)
2	2	Defence Mastery (+2 Defence Combat Value)	3	3	Defence Mastery (+3 Defence Combat Value)	4	4	Defence Mastery (+4 Defence Combat Value)
1	1	Immovable (-10 metres knockback)	1	3	Flight (10 kph) or Superspeed (100 kph)	2	6	Flight (30 kph) or Superspeed (300 kph)
3	3	Item: Signature Weapon (6 Points)	2	2	Immovable (-20 metres knockback)	3	3	Immovable (-30 metres knockback)
2	2	Item: Signature Armour (Armour 2 – Armour Rating 10; 4 Points)	4	4	Item: Signature Weapon (8 Points)	5	5	Item: Signature Weapon (10 Points)
1	1	Jumping (x3 normal)	3	3	Item: Signature Armour (Armour 3 – Armour Rating 15; 6 Points)	4	4	Item: Signature Armour (Armour 4 – Armour Rating 20; 8 Points)
1	1	Heightened Awareness (+2 roll bonus to awareness)	2	2	Heightened Awareness (+4 roll bonus to awareness)	2	2	Heightened Awareness (+4 roll bonus to awareness)
2	2	Melee Attack (+4 Attack bonus – Signature Weapon)	3	3	Melee Attack (+6 Attack bonus – Signature Weapon)	4	4	Melee Attack (+8 Attack bonus – Signature Weapon)
1	8	Superstrength (500 kg; unarmed +10 damage)	2	16	Superstrength (2 tonnes; +20 unarmed damage)	3	24	Superstrength (10 tonnes; +30 unarmed damage)
2	2	Tough (+20 Health Points)	3	3	Tough (+30 Health Points)	4	4	Tough (+40 Health Points)
30 TOTAL POINTS			50 TOTAL POINTS			70 TOTAL POINTS		

DYNAMO

The dynamo channels and projects incredible energy to overcome foes at range, in apparent defiance of the conservation of energy. Some can protect themselves with fields of power, others can use the energy to fly, and a few can even shape their might like lethal clay. All are devastating ranged combatants, capable of dropping unwary foes before a fight truly begins. Dynamos lack the versatility of an elemancer or thaumaturge, but they make up for their limits with sheer firepower and clever application. One common combination is the psychic dynamo, uniting telepathic subtlety with telekinetic force. On Sentinel-Earth, Citizen Prometheus is the most famous dynamo.

DYNAMO

First Degree 30 Character Points			Second Degree 60 Character Points			Third Degree 90 Character Points		
LEVEL	POINTS	STAT	LEVEL	POINTS	STAT	LEVEL	POINTS	STAT
2	4	Soul Stat	3	6	Body Stat	5	10	Body Stat
LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE	LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE	LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE
2	8	Force Field (Armour Rating 20)	2	6	Flight (30 kph) or Superspeed (300 kph)	2	2	Combat Technique (Blind Shooting, Extended Range)
2	2	Ranged Attack (+4 Attack bonus – Blast Weapon)	4	16	Force Field (Armour Rating 40)	4	12	Flight (300 kph) or Superspeed (3,000 kph)
2	2	Ranged Defence (+4 Defence bonus – Personal)	1 (2)	4	Massive Damage (Focussed: Blast Weapon +1)	5	20	Force Field (Armour Rating 50)
2 (3)	8	Telekinesis (100 kg; Focussed: Select Type +1)	3	3	Ranged Attack (+6 Attack bonus – Blast Weapon)	2 (3)	8	Massive Damage (Focussed: Blast Weapon +1)
3	6	Weapon: Blast (Range: 10 metres -2; Backlash +2)	3	3	Ranged Defence (+6 Defence bonus – Personal)	4	4	Ranged Attack (+8 Attack bonus – Blast Weapon)
30 TOTAL POINTS			3 (4)	12	Telekinesis (1 tonne; Focussed: Select Type +1)	4	4	Ranged Defence (+8 Defence bonus – Personal)
			5	10	Weapon: Blast (Range: 10 metres -2; Backlash +2)	4 (5)	16	Telekinesis (10 tonnes; Focussed: Select Type +1)
			60 TOTAL POINTS			7	14	Weapon: Blast (Range: 10 metres -2; Backlash +2)
						90 TOTAL POINTS		

ELEMANCER

While some heroes can unleash raw power, others make the elements dance. Such elemancers can bend, shape, and transform their chosen force or substance to their whims. Only the most powerful can match the pure menace of a dynamo or powerhouse, but their versatility grants elemancers countless options as adventurers. Power over one facet of reality demands fewer drawbacks than that of the thaumaturge. Many such metahumans are vulnerable to polar opposites or the absence of an element to command. With his power over the four classical elements, Kreuzritter is Sentinel-Earth's most iconic elemancer, leaving dread and devastation in his wake.

ELEMANCER

First Degree 25 Character Points			Second Degree 50 Character Points			Third Degree 75 Character Points		
LEVEL	POINTS	STAT	LEVEL	POINTS	STAT	LEVEL	POINTS	STAT
1	2	Mind Stat	2	4	Mind Stat	3	6	Mind Stat
LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE	LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE	LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE
1 (3)	2	Armour (Optimised: Select attack element +2; Armour Rating 30 vs. element)	2 (4)	4	Armour (Optimised: Select attack element +2; Armour Rating 40 vs. element)	3 (5)	6	Armour (Optimised: Select attack element +2; Armour Rating 50 vs. element)
1	1	Attack Mastery (+1 Attack Combat Value)	2	2	Attack Mastery (+2 Attack Combat Value)	3	3	Attack Mastery (+3 Attack Combat Value)
2	20	Dynamic Powers (Select Element)	4	40	Dynamic Powers (Select Element)	6	60	Dynamic Powers (Select Element)
25 TOTAL POINTS			50 TOTAL POINTS			75 TOTAL POINTS		



CONVERSION

Attribute Cost: 3 Points/Level
Attribute Scope: Self only; Ongoing
Relevant Stat: Body

A character with this Attribute temporarily gains new abilities after suffering damage. Martial warriors who can only deploy their most powerful "finishing moves" after they have taken a beating sometimes possess this ability. It is also often applicable to primal mystical champions, super robots, and transdimensional

monsters that simply feed on the energies of beams, bullets, magic, or other attacks. Unless the right attack form is used against such opponents, they will simply keep getting stronger as they battle.

A character with this Attribute still loses Health Points from damaging attacks (such as guns, swords, punches, energy blasts, or falls), but suffering damage also grants additional Character Points that they can temporarily assign to Attributes. Points can be accumulated between attacks or combat rounds; they need not be allocated immediately after they are gained. The converted Points can only be assigned to Attributes the character already possesses and not new Attributes (GM discretion).

Damage cannot both be converted and absorbed (by the Absorption Attribute, page 66) at the same time. Conversion has no effect on attacks that inflict no actual damage, such as unarmed attacks with Weapon Level 0, Weapons at Level -1, and temporary Stun damage (page 135). Conversion is also not effective against other offensive Attribute, such as Metamorphosis (page 95) or Mind Control (page 96), nor the extra damage from Continuing Weapons (page 131). Damage blocked by the character's Armour and Force Field Attributes consequently cannot be converted because no damage was inflicted.

The extra Points gained through combat dissipate shortly after the current battle has finished or before the next dramatic scene (GM's discretion). The maximum number of extra Points gained during one scene - even after damage from multiple attacks has been converted - equals one half the character's normal Point total. Damage converted to Points after that threshold are lost.

At each Level, the character gains 1 temporary Character Point for every 10 damage received from each single attack (round down). Most often, characters use these Points to enhance the following Attributes: Armour, Extra Actions, Force Field, Massive Damage, Regeneration, Weapon, and Superstrength. Conversion cannot normally be used to increase Stats (even through the Augmented Attribute) or acquire the Tough Attribute (see Absorption to increase the character's Health Points).

With GM permission, Conversion may be designed to convert forms of energy into Points, rather than converting damage. Examples of energy include: sound, light, radiation, mass, heat, and others. The progression of the Attribute under these conditions must be discussed with the GM since such energy forms do not inflict traditional damage.



RED PHOENIX

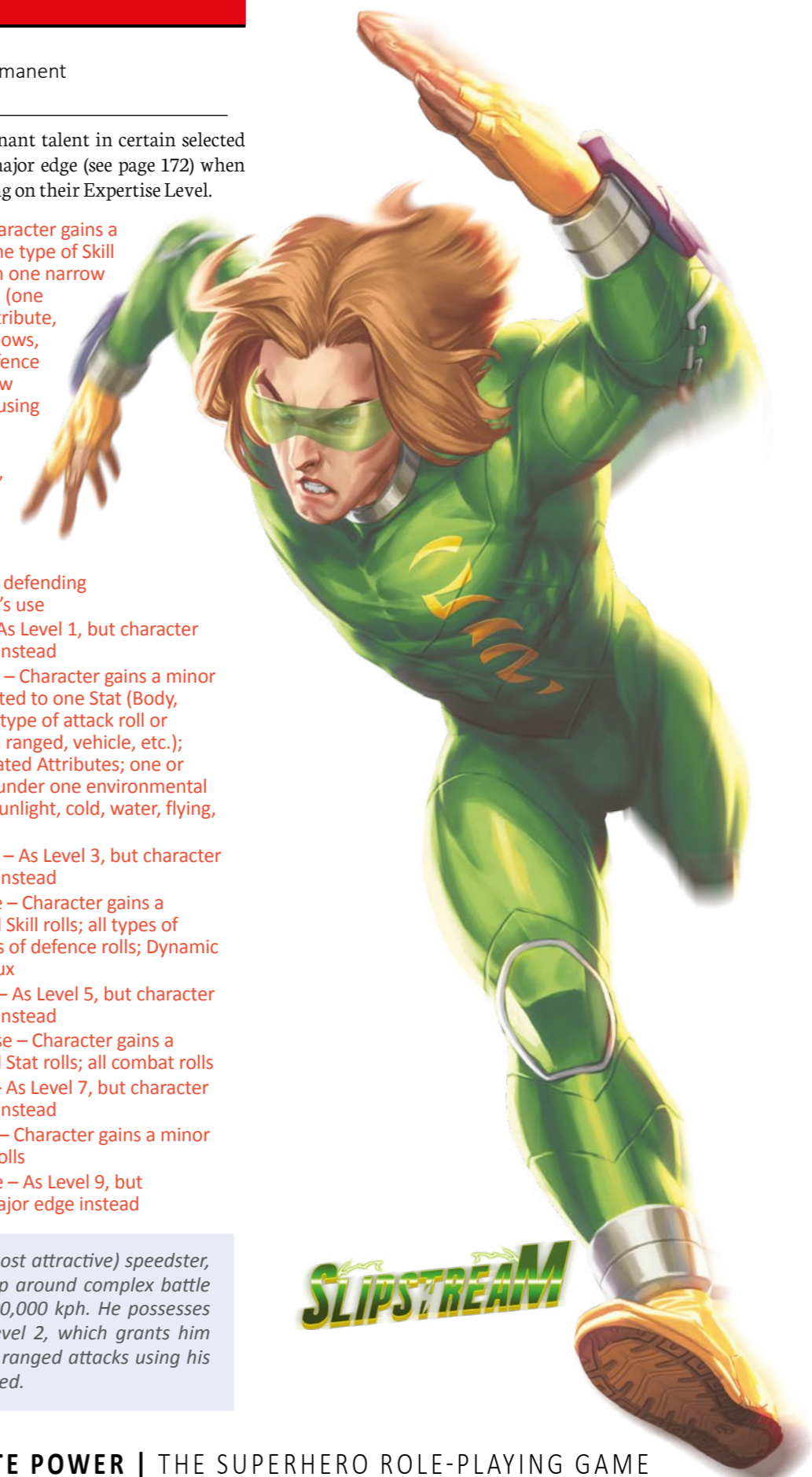
EXPERTISE

Attribute Cost: 1 Point/Level
Attribute Scope: Self only; Permanent
Relevant Stat: —

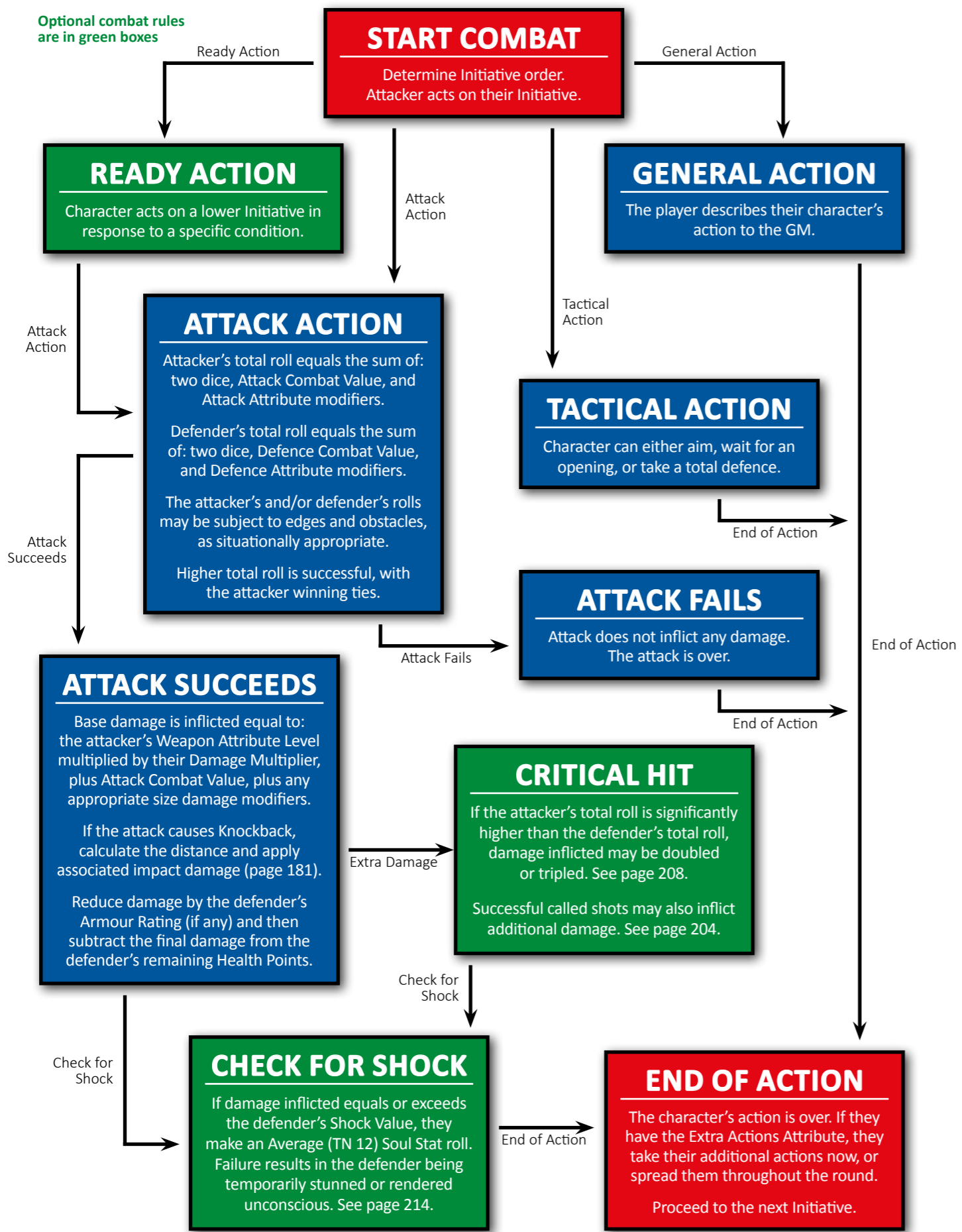
The character displays a dominant talent in certain selected situations and gains a minor or major edge (see page 172) when making related dice rolls, depending on their Expertise Level.

- Level 1 Base Expertise – Character gains a minor edge with: one type of Skill roll; attack rolls with one narrow category of weapon (one specific Weapon Attribute, unarmed, swords, bows, handguns, etc.); defence rolls with one narrow guarding category (using a shield, unarmed, driving/piloting a vehicle, while flying, using superspeed, swimming, swords, etc.); a specific identified Attribute; opposed rolls when defending against an Attribute's use
- Level 2 Precise Expertise – As Level 1, but character gains a major edge instead
- Level 3 Moderate Expertise – Character gains a minor edge with: rolls related to one Stat (Body, Mind, or Soul); one type of attack roll or defence roll (melee, ranged, vehicle, etc.); a small group of related Attributes; one or more types of rolls under one environmental condition (such as sunlight, cold, water, flying, moonlight, etc.)
- Level 4 Upgraded Expertise – As Level 3, but character gains a major edge instead
- Rank 5 Significant Expertise – Character gains a minor edge with: all Skill rolls; all types of attack rolls; all types of defence rolls; Dynamic Powers or Power Flux
- Level 6 Dramatic Expertise – As Level 5, but character gains a major edge instead
- Level 7 Exceptional Expertise – Character gains a minor edge with: all Stat rolls; all combat rolls
- Level 8 Extreme Expertise – As Level 7, but character gains a major edge instead
- Level 9 Excessive Expertise – Character gains a minor edge with: all dice rolls
- Level 10 Legendary Expertise – As Level 9, but character gains a major edge instead

As the world's fastest (and most attractive) speedster, Slipstream can effortlessly zip around complex battle scenes at speeds close to 100,000 kph. He possesses the Expertise Attribute at Level 2, which grants him a major edge when dodging ranged attacks using his Parousian-powered superspeed.



SLIPSTREAM



COMBAT

Conflict is an essential component of nearly all role-playing games. Physical conflict, or combat, is an important element of Absolute Power - but important need not be the same as frequent. Combat should be a vital element of a scene and not just a distraction that the GM uses to pass the time. The combat rules created for the Tri-Stat System were designed to mimic the dynamic and fast-paced battles of superpowered adventures. Whenever a character enters into physical conflict with another character or NPC, combat begins.

At the beginning of any new combat scene, the characters all make Initiative rolls (see below). This determines the order they can act in during the combat: the Initiative order. This remains constant for the duration of the combat and under normal circumstances does not change round to round.

After the Initiative order has been determined, combat proceeds through a series of one or more rounds. Each round of combat covers from 3-4 seconds of time from the characters' perspectives, depending on the characters' actions and the circumstances (the exact time scale is not particularly relevant, with anything from 1-10 seconds appropriate for a round). GMs can have rounds represent more time if it would be dramatically appropriate - for example, a long-ranged space battle. A round is simply the period of time in which an ordinary character can perform one significant action.

Characters are normally permitted to take one action per round, though characters with the Extra Actions Attribute (page 82) can act multiple times in a single round. An action is a major activity, such as attacking an opponent (an attack action) or doing something else significant like performing a magical ritual, using a special ability, or running away with no thought of doing anything else (a general action). An action can typically also incorporate limited movement while carrying out the activity. Defending against someone else's attack is not an action, but rather is an automatic reaction in response to an action (see the section on Defence, page 182)

Each round of combat is subdivided into two parts: Initiative and character action. The GM resolves Initiative first, then all the participants in a combat get to perform a character action. After they have done so, the round ends, and if combat is still ongoing, a new combat round begins.

DETERMINING INITIATIVE

Initiative regulates the order in which characters act. It is rolled only once, at the beginning of the combat scene, and remains constant for the entire fight.

Each participant in the battle makes an Initiative roll using the sum of two dice plus their base Attack Combat Value (after modification by specific Attributes and Defects). In addition, the Lightning Reflexes Combat Technique (page 72) gives the character a minor or major edge on their roll. The GM does the same for any NPCs engaged in the conflict.

Total Roll = Dice Roll + Attack Combat Value + bonuses

The GM should make a note of the Initiative total rolls of each character and NPC and rank them from highest to lowest (ties remain as ties). This is the Initiative order. The character with the highest total roll has "gained Initiative" and acts first at the beginning of each combat round (using all actions, if they have the Extra Actions Attribute), followed by others in descending order. Optionally, characters can decide to hold their Initiative until some time later in the round (see Readyng, page 204).

Should two or more characters or NPCs have the same Initiative, the character with the highest Attack Combat Value acts before the others. In the event of another tie, the tied characters act simultaneously. Should additional characters enter the scene mid-way through the combat, roll Initiative for them and assign them a place in the Initiative order based on their rolls.

CHARACTER ACTION

Characters act in the sequence determined by the Initiative order. When it is time for a character to act, they may take their single action. If the character has the Extra Actions Attribute (page 82), they may take additional subsequent actions at this time.

TYPES OF ACTIONS

There are three categories of action: tactical actions, general actions, and attack actions. A character who can perform multiple actions may perform the same or different types of action. For example, a character with one Extra Action could choose to take two attack actions, a general action and a tactical action, two general actions, etc. Furthermore, decisions concerning the specifics of the subsequent actions can be made after the results of the previous action are known.

The Game Master should encourage players to give broad in-character descriptions of what their characters do, and simply use these rules as guidelines for adjudicating game effects.

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Rather than attacking outright, a character can optionally perform a tactical action that will assist in future attacks (aim or wait for an opening) or help them avoid future damage (total defence). Page 176.

GENERAL ACTIONS

This includes all other types of actions, such as using an Attribute, picking up a dropped object, performing a ritual, bursting through a door, performing first aid on a friend, running full tilt, or doing nothing except screaming for help. The effects of general actions are normally adjudicated by the GM. General actions may include movement, unless it would be incompatible with the action. For example, one can run forward while drawing a weapon, but not usually while performing first aid. Page 176.

ATTACK ACTIONS

An offensive attack action can combine an attack with limited movement, such as charging toward a foe or a description of a colourful combat manoeuvre. For example: "I grab the flag pole and swing down from the building to kick my opponent." Page 176.

CRIME BOSS

It takes a savvy, tough, and ruthless leader to rise through criminal ranks - especially in a world of implacable superheroes and insane demigods. These criminal masterminds seemingly own their respective neighbourhoods, cities, and states. Skilled in finance, delegation, and intimidation, they have not forgotten their days on the street and often remain capable of thrashing foes with fists, knives, or bullets. Nevertheless, this crime leader still answers to a higher authority in the syndicate, who is usually someone capable of facing superheroes on equal terms.

CRIME BOSS

Size Rank 0: Medium

LEVEL POINTS STAT

6	12	Body Stat
7	14	Mind Stat
6	12	Soul Stat

VALUE DERIVED VALUE

8	Attack Combat Value
8	Defence Combat Value
80 / 65	Health Points / Energy Points
5	Damage Multiplier

LEVEL POINTS ATTRIBUTE

2	2	Attack Mastery
6	6	Connected (Select a crime syndicate)
2	2	Defence Mastery
1	1	Features (Foreign Language: Select One)
3	3	Gear (Various; Up to 10 pieces)
2	4	Skill Group (Business)
1	3	Skill Group (Detective)
3	6	Skill Group (Street)
2	2	Tough
4	12	Wealth (\$10M)

RANKS POINTS DEFECT

1	-1	Marked (Scars)
1	-1	Shortcoming (Empathy; -2 to rolls)
1	-2	Wanted (Local law enforcement and criminal rivals)

75 TOTAL CHARACTER POINTS**CULTIST**

Easily led towards the dark side of life, cultists are mindless drones who are more likely to talk your ear off to get you to join their cause than actually attack. They take the word of their leader as literal gospel. Cultists vary wildly in physical traits since they can come from any social standing at any age. While most are harmless, some can wield terrifying mystical powers. Unfortunately, it's difficult to tell the difference between the harmless and not-so-harmless until it's too late to do anything about it. Sentinel-Earth cultists include Temple of Mars Acolytes (who typically lack other skills) and most servants of Malignance.

CULTIST

Size Rank 0: Medium

LEVEL POINTS STAT

4	8	Body Stat
4	8	Mind Stat
5	10	Soul Stat

VALUE DERIVED VALUE

4	Attack Combat Value
4	Defence Combat Value
45 / 45	Health Points / Energy Points
5	Damage Multiplier

LEVEL POINTS ATTRIBUTE

2	2	Gear (Various; Up to 5 pieces)
1	2	Skill Group (Social)

30 TOTAL CHARACTER POINTS**ECPD DETECTIVE**

In a city filled with metahuman crime, detective work becomes more challenging - and dangerous - than ever. With broad educations, knacks for piecing clues together, and competence in firefights, the top police detectives in a superhero world's cities are among the best friends superheroes can have. They also make implacable foes, hunting framed heroes with the same relentless determination. Empire City's most formidable investigators fit this mould, able to track dangerous criminals and bring the system's wrath down on them.

ECPD DETECTIVE

Size Rank 0: Medium

LEVEL POINTS STAT

5	10	Body Stat
7	14	Mind Stat
6	12	Soul Stat

VALUE DERIVED VALUE

6	Attack Combat Value (Handgun 10)
6	Defence Combat Value (Ranged 8)
55 / 65	Health Points / Energy Points
5	Damage Multiplier

LEVEL POINTS ATTRIBUTE

2	2	Connected (Empire City Police)
3	3	Gear (Various; Up to 10 pieces)
1	1	Mulligan (2 re-rolls/session)
2	2	Ranged Attack (Handgun)
1	1	Ranged Defence (Personal)
2	6	Skill Group (Detective)
1	2	Skill Group (Street)

RANKS POINTS DEFECT

1	-2	Obligated (Empire City Police Union)
1	-1	Red Tape (Police Business)

50 TOTAL CHARACTER POINTS**MYTHIC HEROES, ANY SCALE**

Superheroes are the modern gods.

You've heard, read, or seen this a thousand times, no doubt, in myriad ways. Creators in love with the genre wax lyrical about its iconic nature. Directors frame their heroes in ways that evoke classical, epic, or even divine imagery. Silver Age writers and artists even turned mythological gods into superheroes or invented entire pantheons of cosmic entities who serve as gods of the modern universe. As a theme, it has been beaten into the ground, then resurrected to dominate modern media.

This is not without reason. The epic hero never vanished entirely, but there was a time when critics scorned the epic. Some still do. After all, the only comic book character to ever serve as an actor's path to one of the highest awards in the entertainment industry is a murderous clown, and even then, the character had to be painted in "realistic" tones - twice. Meanwhile, the ultimate Afrofuturism *tour de force* that combined grand politics, intimate motivations, spectacular writing, and phenomenal performances - that movie barely earned a major nomination. Even the genre's best works struggle for recognition when they embrace the superhero's potential for mythic scale.

Yet therein lies the power that draws us to the superhero. No matter how many recognised experts demand stories of the mundane and mediocre, epics still sing in our dreams. Where society tells us in a thousand ways, "you are ordinary, you are small, you cannot make a difference", the epic retorts, "yes, you can". You can be Odysseus. You can be Hua Mulan. You can be Rama or Brunhilda or Anansi.

That does not mean that your hero has to be a star-spanning protector of reality. Street-level adventurers may face foes who threaten cities rather than worlds, but their lives become personal epics. Their enemies are masters of corruption, whether robbing banks or ruling organised crime families. Personal dilemmas revolve around beloved foes entangled in world-spanning conspiracies. Friends are replaced by cruel doppelgängers. Sympathetic rivals come from pits of unspeakable cruelty. Even shades of grey are titanic when vigilantes oppose monstrous syndicates with arsenals capable of toppling small governments.

THE PAST IS PROLOGUE

Depending on the version - ancient authors were just as divided on continuity as modern ones - heroes of mythology were more than just flawed by modern standards. In some versions of the Ninth Labour, Heracles kidnapped or killed Hippolyta. In legends of the Monkey King, both Sun Wukong and the Jade Emperor display epic hubris in dealing with one another, threatening the balance of the universe. The Epic of Gilgamesh begins with a portrayal of the king as a brutal tyrant. Racism, sexism, and bigotry of all kinds were not merely accepted by some cultures, but expected. Kidnapping, betrayal, and murder were excused if such cultural heroes had what appeared to be good reasons.

Superheroes can embrace the cultural status of such classic heroes without inheriting their baggage as well. Most powerhouses owe something to Heracles, but few slaughter their families, enslave entire matriarchies, or poison mentors in drunken brawls. At the same time, no hero is perfect. They often struggle with legacies of violence, substance abuse, or conquest. Some of the most vital heroic origins focus on the lessons learned from less-than-heroic actions.

POWER FANTASY VS. ABSOLUTE POWER FANTASY

One of the most common criticisms of superhero fiction is that it is a power fantasy. The implication of this label is that costumed adventure has no value as a genre since it serves no greater purpose other than entertainment. Superhero stories, this narrative claims, are only about juvenile dreams of lording over others. Cue sneers of contempt and complaints about how this pop-culture phenomenon distracts from important issues or "true art" or some other genre the critic prefers.

Even a cursory understanding of superhero lore proves more sweeping versions of this accusation laughable. The single most famous line in the genre's history is about how important responsibility is for the powerful. Indeed, every superhero that has become popular in mainstream media reflects that outlook, whether they came before or after that legendary quote. At its core, superhero fiction is not a fantasy about claiming power, but about using it to benefit others. The powerless gain power, and instead of seeking profit, they work towards a better world. Superheroes are brave, selfless, and just. When generosity of might seems impossible, the very idea of the superhero can be revolutionary.

At the same time, there is value in criticism. Superhero adventures can support unfortunate implications, either through innocence or by design. Masked vigilantes sometimes act with vicious abandon yet without accountability, even if they refuse to kill. With the best of intentions, superheroes create extralegal prisons to hold beings with godlike power, making a mockery of due process. The use of enhanced senses raises questions of illegal searches. Most frightening of all is the notion of the being so close to omnipotent that responsibility becomes an almost meaningless concept. What does it matter who watches a watchman, if the watchman is invincible?

Superhero fiction has confronted these issues as well. For those who aspire to heroism, the goal is not certainty, but nobility. We must do our best, accept that we will make mistakes, and then try again. It is also the reason that no superhero can be truly all-powerful. Without flaws, vulnerabilities, and quirks, a character can help others, but cannot truly be a hero.

The name Absolute Power was not selected haphazardly. It's not an ideal - it is a warning. Power can corrupt, but it does not have to. Awful traumas can drive great heroes to strive for ever-greater might, but no one person can fix everything. Only together can we solve our problems. When our friends and allies suffer, though, absolute power can seem like the solution. It's not. The absolute power fantasy is the most toxic one of all.

VILLAIN DESIGN

Next, give some thought to the villain's motif and abilities. Most of the suggestions provided in the hero creation chapters in Book One (page 25) also apply to supervillains. Consider the villain's origin and how that is tied into their motivation, then decide which powers the villain needs to effectively challenge the heroes. A villain's power scale ties directly to how they can serve campaigns in general and adventures in particular.

LESS POWERFUL

Weaker villains and henchmen are useful as cannon fodder for more powerful master villains. They give heroes the opportunity to flex their abilities on an easy opponent as a warm-up or short scene in a larger story. Henchmen can provide firepower to ordinary bruiser villains sent to soften up the heroes, and they might prove threatening in sufficient numbers. They can also be fun for comic relief. Is there a villain in your campaign that just makes the players laugh because they are so pitiful? If not, maybe there should be.

AS POWERFUL

The majority of villains may be on a par with the heroes in terms of overall Character Points. Villains often have more Defects, or at least more conspicuous ones. This has the dual effect of making the villains both more powerful and more vulnerable, since clever heroes should be able to exploit their weaknesses. Villains at this level can take the heroes on one-on-one, and often band together for that purpose.

MORE POWERFUL

Master villains, ones capable of challenging an entire team of heroes single-handed, are usually more powerful than an individual hero. That does not mean that all master villains must have tremendous physical power, though. Villains might challenge superhero teams by being brilliant manipulators who invent a seemingly endless array of technological gadgets and traps or may command hordes of obedient minions who are eager to please their benefactor. Still, master villains often have the power to take on entire teams by themselves. The heroes have a teamwork advantage that lets them triumph in the end.

HIGH-OMNIPOTENT

Finally, some rare villains are so powerful that heroes cannot defeat them with physical might. They may command cosmic power, able to bend reality at will. They always have a weakness, however, which heroes can exploit to overcome them. The weak point may be an Item of Power that the heroes can steal, a magic word the villain must be tricked into saying, or particular rules the villain must obey to maintain their godlike powers. One possible way to model such a being is to design a "sentient Dynamic Power" with no Health Points to target, but burdened by Defects that heroes can exploit to banish them or force them to leave.



ALICE, QUEEN OF HEARTS

PIRE TIMES

DAY, AUGUST 6, 2005

ONE DOLL

V-H DAY CELEBRATION

By CATHERINE D'AULNOY

EMPIRE CITY, Aug 5 – Yesterday at 7:02 PM Greenwich Mean Time, Haud Empress Sa'yan Ingin broadcast the "immediate and indefinite cessation of hostilities throughout the interior of the Titanic Solar System". Stellar Alliance representative Sekichak Chisinir of the Chondrok people assured UNION command that this was an admission of defeat, at least in the short term.

Celebrations began within minutes and continued overnight as the people of Earth engaged in expressions of joy and relief not seen since the end of the Second World War. Members of every human military, superhero team, and advisory unit from the Sovereignty Defence Force have received outpourings of gratitude across the globe. Current estimates suggest that approximately one third of the contributing supervillains intend to adhere to the conditions of their pardons. Multiple nations have suggested making the 5th of August a holiday as an unprecedented moment in human history.

In bases of operation around the world, the mood was more sombre. Leaders and observers reported relief, but also had the first opportunity to grieve properly. UNION has scheduled the funerals of the first Captain Palatine and Kamoshika for

12 August. Seahaven is mourning the loss of Beholder and Songbird, both former villains honoured by allied forces. At least fifteen other metahumans, three dozen Wardens, over a hundred Adepts, nearly ten thousands soldiers, and unfortunately countless civilians around the world lost their lives in the war.

For the first time in human military conflict, metahuman action proved vital to minimising loss of life. When asked by pool reporters, Wardenlyffe Chairman Daniel Davis estimated that losses would be one hundred times current reports had Earth's superhuman sentinels not united to oppose the Haud Regime, and that most governments would have been overthrown by this point. Sentinel had the following comment: "I hope this crisis proves, once and for all, that our everyday men and women in uniform are without question the true heroes. As terrible as every loss of life is, the metahuman community has in all likelihood lost twenty members. Five hundred soldiers died for every superhuman who fell in the conflict." After that, Sentinel excused himself and left.

Spontaneous festivities broke out across Thule mere hours after Ernst Rauchenberger abdicated, disappearing thereafter. At present, there has been no announcement of succession, but Empire

University Prof. Jane Stone observed that Minister of State Lukas Herzog's cousin Hendrik, current leader of the New Thule Society, is the best-positioned candidate. Both Herzogs have made statements condemning Kreuzritter's actions and affirming Thule's intent to support human self-determination. No country's government had responded when this issue went to press.

Closer to home, the Marvels Tactical Unit led efforts to sweep the city of remaining Haud threats. Alongside Wardenlyffe agents and the new Mystic Transcendent, the MTU declared the streets of Empire City safe from the Haud. For the first time since May 22, New Yorkers are free to travel within and outside the city. Officer Prometheus made the following statement: "The Empire City Police Department offers its thanks to the Wardenlyffe Agency, Sanctuary Alliance, people of Ur, our superheroes, and everyone else who pitched in during this long struggle. More than anyone else, we want to express our gratitude to the people of Empire City for standing strong in the face of an implacable enemy. No matter how dire the situation became, New Yorkers held together. Now, we will rebuild together, better than ever."

Haud Jade Naga was unavailable for comment.

BIG CITY HEROES

Many of Sentinel-Earth's greatest heroes call Empire home. The Wardencllyffe Agency formed when the Frisco Flyer was the world's only costumed adventurer, protecting a world from threats it would not understand for decades. Ascension Force explores the cosmos from the Silver Towers, travelling across stars, galaxies, and even universes. UNION, Earth's largest superhero team, makes its primary American base here, co-ordinating efforts to protect the world from invaders, natural disasters, and other existential threats.

All of them operate in the shadow of the Guard. The most successful, beloved, and influential superhero team in the world, the Guard's five heroes have a unique operational status with both the United Nations and their home country. They are trusted by nearly every government on Earth, yet Empire City nevertheless considers the Guard's members its hometown heroes. Even as two of its members enter their twilight years, Empire breathes a sigh of relief when it sees any of these legends, whether it is Caliburn swinging into a back alley in Clinton or Red Phoenix soaring over Empire University.

With so many of the world's most powerful and notable superhero teams based out of Empire City, it would be easy to imagine that independent adventurers are a rarity there. New Yorkers know better. Most superheroes need to sleep, and Empire never does. Street guardians like the Lady of the Lantern, former police officers such as Citizen Prometheus, globe-trotting super-spies like Agent Thunderstroke, and cosmic wanderers including the immortal Amaranth all make their home in Empire City.

THE GUARD

Most discussions of Empire City superheroes begin with its first and most famous team. While the Wardencllyffe Agency predates the Guard by seven decades, the Wardens did not recruit their first full-time metahuman agent until the 1990s. Born from the tragedy of the first Lady Starbright's death, the Guard continues to protect the world in her name, carrying on her legacy.

In 2020, the Guard's most notable traits are its vast global influence and its remarkably stable membership. Decades of heroism that stagger the imagination even as they capture it have made the five Empire City heroes Earth's favourite protectors. Those decades have transformed five extraordinary people into one invincible team. After everything they have experienced together, the Guard's members need no telepathy to work, move, and fight as though with a single mind.

Yet after a year like no other, age has caught up with some of them and started tightening its grip. Caliburn and Grandmother Raven are mortal human beings. Both are past retirement age, with the modern knight reliant on his armour to fight crime and the spirit champion thin and frail without her Raven form. Their teammates, who age more slowly, face their own challenges. Slipstream

is pulled in a dozen directions by his many friends, the rebellion on Parousia, and a forbidden love. Sentinel is heartsick, riven by the state of his beloved nation divided in ways unseen since the American Civil War, and haunted by the second Lady Starbright so like his lost Angela. Only Red Phoenix, who remembers dozens of lives when she outlasted those around her, is adjusting to the future they are facing with an even keel. Even she faces a choice: to let go of her life as Sarah Gebhart and be reborn, or come out in a different way to reveal her true identity to the world.

Faced with a burgeoning metahuman population and multiple assaults capable of wiping out the entire human race, humanity yearns for stability. A changing world has relied on the Guard to be its touchstone of liberty, justice, security, and peace over the past 40 years. Now, the Guard itself is on the verge of transformation, and the world wonders what comes next. For now, at least, the superheroes that define Sentinel-Earth across the multiverse remain inseparable and unconquered.



CHAPTER 04 SENTINEL-EARTH

Empire City might be the centre of the superhero world, but it is home to fewer than one percent of the world's metahuman population. Sightings of costumed adventurers and individuals with special abilities – whether human, near-human, or alien – have been reported in every country on the planet.

Dozens of nations command notable superpowered forces. Non-governmental organisations range from ancient mystic guardians to modern scientific explorers. Covert forces operate in Earth's shadows for their own purposes, whether to defend the innocent or betray humanity to monstrous forces. Teams of metahumans wield the power to change the world, for better or worse. Sentinel-Earth's superheroes can find adventure no matter where they might travel.

GLOBAL POWERS

Metahumans can soar through the heavens, cloud weaker minds, and move literal mountains, but when pundits speak of “superpowers”, they most often mean Earth's mightiest nations. At the same time, small countries can alter the course of global politics if they command enough superhuman forces, technology, or magic. From fantastical kingdoms to mundane autocracies, these countries all exert influence over the metahuman world in different ways.

Except where noted otherwise, each leader of a Global Power has the Connected Attribute at Level 7 (National Authority) to reflect their Head of State position. All other characters with Connected for these nations should be ranked below Level 7. Depending on the specific setting, style, and tone of a game campaign, these Connected Attributes may be associated with the Significant Power or Great Power Enhancements as well.

APRATZIM

Before the dawn of known history, Apratzim flourished. Forged from many cultures and five distinct peoples – humanity, Lodestars, kindeva, erdala, and xian – Apratzim endured for nine millennia as a symbol of Earth's potential. This nation of countless wonders faced equally countless perils. Apratzim's first heroes were legends for longer than recorded history, but their successes led to complacency. Khon Demon numbers and ferocity caught the Apratzi by surprise, with each wave greater than the last. This led the ambitious Duke Mirkom to seek rule of not only Apratzim, but all Earth's planes.

When the Aparat Council rejected his plans, Mirkom activated the dread vowel-stealing Spellbreaker. The results devastated the kingdom, thrusting it into the Esoterrena and transforming it into Prtzm. Civilisation collapsed, forcing metahumans to step in. For ten millennia, Prtzm survived behind the Scar-Shell, weathering occasional Khon Demon invasions while relying on crystal-clockwork devices and ether magic.

A mere half-century ago, Davis Malloy appeared thanks to his metahuman gift that allowed him to bypass the deadly Scar-Shell. Malloy survived every assault, becoming the heroic Drifter and Princess Prsmtch's champion. Furious at the collapse of millennia-old schemes, Duke Mrkm betrayed his kingdom once more – this time to Fairshadow and its Dark Queen.

That was Mrkm's undoing. Zaira's invasion claimed Prtzm within days as the Scar-Shell was no match for her genius. She returned Apratzim, vowels restored, to the Terrene as a beachhead for Fairshadow. Only Princess Prismadsha escaped, fleeing to the Untouchables. Mirkom turned to the White Rooks and promised them Apratzim's magi-science knowledge if they put him on the throne. The three-way war that followed became known as the Apratzim Revelation: a battle that rivalled any Etheric Age legend. In the end, the heroes liberated and restored Apratzim at last. After 9,000 years of constant invasion and 10 more isolated from all else, the Apratzi see a bright future before them in this new age of freedom and hope.

Today, the kingdom of Apratzim is an island nation roughly the size of France, situated between the Caribbean and North Africa. It floats on, and occasionally above, the North Atlantic. Though a fairy tale wonderland of magic and mysticism, most mundane people avoid Apratzim. It attracts dreamers and outcasts instead, and serves as an occasional base of operations for the Untouchables. While Queen Eternimaz VII still reigns, Princess Prismadsha and her consort Prince Davis serve as executives in most ways. They have, however, restored the Aparat Council as a parliament, making Apratzim a constitutional monarchy for the first time in over eight millennia. Its military is like most others in structure, differing chiefly in resources.

The restored Aparat Council is bicameral, much like Canada's and the UK's national parliaments. The Council of Nobles and Council of Folk develop the laws and systems Apratzim needs to adapt to the modern Terrene (Earth) with advice from their heroes. Unlike Britain's Parliament, the Council of Nobles is an equal partner in legislation. As most Aparat Nobles are metahumans of some sort, the government expects them to maintain the nation's defences. While Apratzim still works on modernisation, its magi-science, wizardry, and superheroes keep the kingdom safe.

The division of labour between the citizenry and nobility is more entrenched in local matters. Each principality is ruled by its princess or prince. Principalities are divided into realms, led by High Nobles, with Nobles below them to manage local matters. Nobles capable of magical combat are granted the honorific “Ether”, sometimes gendered as Ether-Lady or -Lord. The Chamberlains, magistrates, and directors are always citizens who work with the nobility at each rank. Direct election is not yet universal for magistrates and directors, as both roles involve fighting bandits and supernatural predators.



CHAPTER 06 BEYOND EARTH

Sentinel-Earth is a world of endless adventure and limitless possibility. Compared to the expanse of stars around us, this planet is a tiny blue mote. Our galaxy, a realm so vast the human mind cannot comprehend it, is itself a speck within a boundless universe. That universe is but one of countless others in a transdimensional multiverse, each defined by a slight variation in Concord frequencies.

Across infinite realms exist myriad dangers. The Milky Way alone is home to tyrannical empires, interstellar crime syndicates, and all-consuming horrors. Beyond the galaxy's edge, the void holds uncountable terrors and unfathomable powers. Alternate realities host anomalies that threaten worlds, murderous hordes born from malignance given form, and beyond them all, a living Nightfall that longs to end all that is.

One thing remains the same on every world in any universe: the need for heroes. Wherever disasters threaten the vulnerable or villains prey on the innocent, good beings rise to protect those in need, no matter the species or even reality. It seems that every free-willed people produces sentinels of liberty, justice, security, and peace.

The galaxy that Earth calls home is an unimaginable distance from New Solace, the heart of intergalactic civilisation, but it is a nexus of cosmic action all the same. Empires grand and minuscule seek control over thousands of worlds. Monsters from the birth of creation stalk the void, sundering civilisations and shattering stars. Things from beyond the universe plot their invasion from every shadow. Crime, far from being unique to Earth, haunts the far corners and back alleys of every world. Our closest neighbour one planet away is home to a race of vampire Titans, whose ancient reign still forms the nightmare of species across half the galaxy.

One noble alliance stands against every threat, and it is the first dream of freedom to survive here since before the dawn of mankind. They have patrols, machines, and armies to keep the peace, but the sentinels they treasure more than any others are their heroes. Enhanced by demigods, exalted by training, or empowered by science, those heroes soar across 10,000 light-years to protect the future.

Their battles, unfathomable in scope to the human mind, take place in less than half the galaxy. Beyond alliances and empires, a frontier of limitless possibility awaits those brave enough to explore it. Perhaps new friends and heroes wait for those with the courage to seek them. Other galaxies also hide greater threats than those Earth's neighbours know. As horizons expand for Earth and its allies alike, the time is coming when they will learn the truth - whether they look for it, or it finds them.

OPTIONAL CONTEXT IN THE UNIVERSE

This chapter is proved as part of the Absolute Power core game to provide galactic and universal context for the adventures on Sentinel-Earth. Your superheroic adventures may take place only on Earth with primarily human characters and NPCs (perhaps Slipstream and Jade Naga as alien exceptions), so your gaming group may have little need for this chapter. As you read through it, adopt what you'd like and discard the rest.

HAUD EMPIRE

4,000 years ago, the planet Tolihar was much like Earth. While larger and warmer, the world's great continents are more arid and less habitable than ours. Its native sentient people, the Haud, were just taking their first steps into space. They had a wide variety of cultures, most of which had clashed with others at some point in their history. Conflicts between those who wanted to progress by embracing their world's diversity, and others who hungered to unite their world behind a single ideology, seemed endless.

Five centuries later, the two impulses had coalesced as the Tolis Republic and the Ingin Empire. Twined around one another like warring serpents, each fought for the soul of their people with a fierce, determined passion. Neither side had a significant advantage, and over half the species were unconcerned with politics. They had just developed interstellar travel, and the hope of relieving Tolihar's population crisis was far more important to the average Haud than which set of ideals got the job done.

It was at this point in their history that the Martian Titans arrived in Haud space. The Titanic Empire reeled from multiple setbacks, and they were desperate for worlds on which they could feed. Between their strength, regeneration, and durability, the Haud were the perfect targets. Had the Martians found them a thousand years before, the Titans might still rule the galaxy.

When the Titans attacked, it threw Haud civilisation into chaos. Desperate people flocked to anyone who could protect them from the vast, terrible power of the aliens who fed on the beaten. Republic forces urged the Haud to unite while Empress Zi'ten Ingin sent fleets to combat the Martians. Tolihar belonged to the Empire almost overnight. Seeing her chance, the Empress threw a second offensive at the Titans while sending agents to negotiate with the Reserpans on their nearby planet. Thousands of Haud died to kill an Ascended Titan, but numbers were on their side.

Everything changed when the Reserpans, tired of living in fear of Mars, joined the Haud Empire as a client state with privileges that remain unique. In exchange, the Haud gained full access to their advanced technology. Enough Reserpan engineering is based on psionic power that the Haud still cannot replicate the full might of a combat saucer, but the advances, combined with Haud combat capabilities, turned the tide against the Martian aggressors. Empress Zi'ten lived to hear that the Titans had vanished. Her people spoke of republics and democracy no longer.



LADY STARBRIGHT II

KOSAGENT AND ERDALA

Two species reoccur across the universe. Each are bound to a Concord frequency: the kosagent to Conduction, and erdala to Ether. The species seem to be heirs to the Sevenfold, yet have no clear ties to the Lost Quartet. Both are immortal, but they have yet to reach the heights of raw power found in the Concord Trinity.

Kosagent are eternal wanderers who are capable of travelling between stars, but they create separate civilisations in each different galaxy. They form anywhere stars gather in overwhelming numbers, by all appearances a consequence of clashing cosmic forces. Yet once they come into existence, they lack the inherent purpose that members of the Concord Trinity feel. In most cases, kosagent end up exploring the void without ambition or cause until they begin to care for organic beings.

Erdala spring from the Concordance, taking shape in the Ether as mystic life. Mad, beautiful realms form around them, but erdala gain purpose from ideas long before they encounter physical reality. The dreams, passions, and terrors that flow through the Etheric plane inspire young erdala, and entire worlds live and die within it across the aeons. At the same time, erdala who do not emerge to claim young planets for themselves inevitably become fascinated by the mortals they discover. Most erdala live in Concordance realms bound to the hopes and fears of incarnate species, using the magic they call Fairlight to befriend - or bedevil - the peoples of mundane reality.

GUARDIANS OF SOLACE

If the Nightfall War taught the Concord Trinity one thing, it was that even they could not overcome all evil alone. When they empowered heroes from across the young species of the universe, that combination of unity and diversity led them to victory. Learning the lesson well, all three peoples of the Trinity have continued the tradition ever since. Starbrights, Voidheart Sentinels, and Batar Rangers protect the multiverse from all threats, native or invasive. The leaders of the Concord Galaxy have described them as the Guardians of Solace. In the rare galaxies where they work together, they have been known by that collective name ever since.

THE STARBRIGHT PATROL

By far, the most famous and successful intergalactic alliance of justice is the Starbright Patrol. Chosen by the Nimbus for their courage, kindness, imagination, and dedication, Starbrights defend regions thousands of light-years across. They face all the horrors born from the Nightfall War and every modern villainy imagined since, holding civilisations together across the universe. Nimbus choose Starbrights with great care, for they infuse each champion with a fragment of their personal living energies. Borrowing a cue from their Lodestar cousins, they grant each Starbright the power of Conduction to generate light as a solid force.

Starbrights also gain a number of secondary powers and ancillary benefits, ranging from bodies that neither age nor suffer the ravages of space, to Scintilla-based hyperspace travel that lets

Commander Deva scrolled through requisitions, frowning as they went past. "Do they really make you do that in the field?" Magistrate grumbled, scanning the dig site. Los Angeles glowed in the distance, a riot of colour in contrast to the sunset turning the ocean into molten gold.

"Either I babysit requisitions," Deva replied, "or someone else gets them." She pocketed the smartphone and analysed the dig. It looked like a half-complete basement for a future building - a perfect cover for any group hoping to search with discretion.

Edgar - Deadeye Chimp - grunted and shrugged. "As long as I get paid," he grumbled, straightening his tie. He glanced at Magistrate, who had taken out his own mobile with a third arm.

Amaranth smiled. "Is Magistrate texting Tokkotai again?"

"When is he not?" Deva quipped back, mirroring Amy's grin.

Magistrate put the phone away again. "Grew an extra eye so I wouldn't be distracted," he explained. "Rescheduled our next support group meeting."

Edgar raised an eye ridge at the Canadian. "Support group?"

"For superheroes who have lost more than a decade to captivity or stasis," Deva explained, smile vanishing. "Stay sharp. Best case, we've got tech smugglers. Worst case, Haud."

Magistrate was liquid nitrogen for an instant before turning into titanium. Edgar offered a sour half-smile. "Respect," was all the bull gorilla said.

"Thank you," Magistrate whispered, glaring at one of the diggers. "They're savages."

Edgar rubbed his chin. "An odd, if understandable, description of an interstellar empire," he noted.

"Savage' is an attitude, not a tech level," Amaranth pointed out, scanning the ground with another of her miraculous magi-science devices.

One of the tricks Deva had learned to understand the many heroes she co-ordinated with was picking up their body language. When the immortal Amaranth, who had literally faced every form of evil known to humanity, went utterly still during an investigation, something was about to go sideways. "Doctor Ranthe?" Deva asked.

"The Haud," Amaranth replied, "are not the worst enemies we could be facing."

"Indeed," Jade Naga's all-too-familiar voice echoed from a digger radio. Magistrate rushed towards the machine, body turning molten with each step, while Deadeye Chimp drew his pistols, Amaranth activated her Ether Gauntlet, and Deva gripped the controls on her force bracer. "Truce," Naga rushed to add, "Titans!"

Edgar chuckled. "That's an odd safe word," he quipped as Magistrate skidded to a halt, cooling his body back down.

"He means Martian Titans," Deva explained, "and the Haud are serious enough about them that any truce related to them lasts for three days after the end of an encounter."

Jade Naga teleported in with ghost-like Haud Agent Malachite and Reserpan mentalist Psion Khan. "Whatever our differences," Jade Naga explained, while Magistrate retracted the blades he'd formed from his arms, "the Haud wish to rule, while the Titans seek to ... feed." He glanced from Deadeye Chimp to Commander Deva. "Do you not brief your operatives?"

"I'm a private detective," Edgar replied, guns still out, but attention turned toward the deepest part of the dig. "Alien vampires are usually outside my pay grade."

"Ah. A mercenary, then," Jade Naga said, and it burned within Deva just a little that it sounded like he approved.

"Close enough," Deva said. "Spread out, encircle the site. Amaranth?"

Ranthe adjusted one of the blue crystal knobs on the visor she had formed while they were talking. "It's not like any Titan signal I've seen before," the immortal reported, "but the energies match their psychomancy. The overall strength is enough for multiple Titans, but the signature is diffuse."

Naga's eyes widened. "Diffuse? How is that?"

The first corpse burst from the ground, human except for its Martian snout. "Weapons tight!" Deva ordered, creating a barrier with her bracer, then opening fire with her Coil Rifle. Her allies followed her lead, and the Martian zombies - which rated high even on Priyavati's weirdness meter - fell before them.

It was a closer thing than she would have liked, but the site was clean in under a minute. *Though I would not argue if someone objected to the word "clean"*, Deva mused, noting the crushed, sliced, and incinerated bodies below them. "Daniel, call in sweepers," she ordered, "I want this location sanitised within the hour." He nodded and turned to relay her instructions. "Naga," she added, closing with the would-be conqueror. "Amaranth. Either of you ever see this before?"

Jade Naga, who had faced armies without flinching, could not keep his tail from lashing. "I have never seen a report of this," he whispered.

"I've seen zombies, and I've seen Titans," Amaranth replied, her gallows humour making a reappearance, "but these are my first zombie Titans."

"Well, that's going on my 2020 bingo card," Edgar quipped.

Deva did not laugh. *This new Red Rector gets more clever by the year*, she thought, recording the aftermath for her report. *We need to do something about the Temple of Mars, and soon.*



SENTINEL

IDENTITY: Maxwell Liberty (Publicly known)
OCCUPATION: Adventurer, CEO Liberty Enterprises
FIRST APPEARANCE: War Stories #20 (Max Liberty crippled)
 War Stories #23 (Reborn as Sentinel)
OTHER ALIASES: The American Sentinel
PLACE OF BIRTH: Boston, Massachusetts (1898)
AFFILIATION: The Guard
TERRITORY: Empire City; operates worldwide
HEIGHT / MASS: 193 cm (6'4") / 159 kg (350 lb)
HAIR / EYE COLOUR: Black (greying) / Blue

PLAY NOTES

Begin with as perfect a father as humanly possible. Maxwell Liberty has no biological children, but pundits call modern metahuman history the Sentinel Age for a reason. He remains humble, but offers advice based on a century of experience ranging from his pilot days to his time in a wheelchair to 80 years of superheroism. In battle, he protects the innocent first and always, then uses minimum force against sentient foes. At the same time, Maxwell loves his powers and flies to the rescue of falling children and carving through automatons with equivalent (but different) joy. He reserves his wrath for fascists like Kreuzritter, and true camaraderie for his oldest friends. Sentinel should always try to compromise with others, but never compromise himself.

SENTINEL

Size Rank 0: Medium | 350 Character Points

LEVEL	POINTS	STAT
12	24	Body Stat
12	24	Mind Stat
15	30	Soul Stat

VALUE	DERIVED VALUE
17	Attack Combat Value
13	Defence Combat Value
175 / 135	Health Points / Energy Points
5	Damage Multiplier (Weapon Attributes 10)

LEVEL	POINTS	ATTRIBUTE
14	28	Armour (Armour Rating 70)
4	4	Attack Mastery
6	6	Combat Technique (Brutal, Judge Opponent, Lethal Blow, Lightning Reflexes, Multiple Targets, Steady Hand)
7	7	Connected (Liberty Enterprises CEO)
9 (8)	9	Connected (Leader of The Guard; Significant -1)
1	4	Extra Actions (1 Extra Action/round)
2	2	Features (Appearance; Foreign Languages: Cantonese, French, German, Russian)
5 (7)	15	Flight (10k kph; Detectable: Hearing, Radiation, Sight +2) Healing (40 Health Points; Area: 10 metres -2, Targets: Up to 10 -3; Concentration +1, Deplete: 50 Energy Points/use +5, Detectable: Hearing, Radiation, Sight +2)
5 (8)	5	Heightened Awareness (+8 awareness roll bonus)
4	4	Heightened Senses (Hearing, Sight)
2	2	Immovable (-60 metres knockback)
6	6	Inspire (Allies gain +3 Stat and Skill roll bonuses; Galvanise -2; Emotional: Extreme Compassion +3)
2 (3)	2	Massive Damage (Focussed: Atomic Attributes +1)
4 (5)	12	Mulligan (2 re-rolls/session)
1	1	Resilient (Disease, Low Pressure, Own Attributes, Poisons, Radiation: Complete -5; Ageing, Lack of Air, Lack of Sleep, Lack of Sustenance)
14 (9)	28	Skill Group (Adventuring)
3	9	Skill Group (Business)
3	6	Skill Group (Military)
2	6	Supersense (Ultravision; 100 metres)
2	2	Supersense (Gamma Vision; 10 metres)
1	1	Superstrength (100k tonnes; +90 unarmed damage)
9	72	Tough
4	4	Wealth (\$10M)
4	12	Weapon: Atomic Thunder (Area: 10 metres -2, Flare: Sight -1, Penetrating -2, Piercing -2, Range: 100 metres -3; Activation: 1 round +1, Backblast +1, Charges: 4 times/day +1, Deplete: 30 Energy Points/use +3, Unreliable +2)
12 (10)	24	Weapon: Atomic Gaze (Alternate; Piercing -1, Penetrating -1, Range: 10 metres -2, Stun -1)
12 (7)	12	Weapon: Atomic Fire (Alternate; Continuing -2, Penetrating -3, Range: 3 metres -1)
12 (6)	12	

RANK	POINTS	DEFECT
2	-4	Achilles Heel (Cold-Based Attacks)
1	-2	Bane (Extreme Cold: Below -100 °C; Uncommon -20 damage/round)
3	-6	Hounded (World's most famous superhero and leader of The Guard)
3	-3	Nemesis (Kreuzritter and the White Rooks)
1	-1	Social Fault (Honour Code)
1	-3	Special Requirement (Sunlight or intense radiation to recharge)
2	-4	Vulnerability (Extreme Cold: Below -100 °C)

350 TOTAL CHARACTER POINTS

CHARACTER BACKGROUND

If any one hero defines the struggle against tyranny and fear, it is Maxwell Liberty, the Sentinel. He has always been the foremost champion of the mythic America: an ideal land of freedom, justice, opportunity, and peace.

Raised to believe in that lofty vision, Liberty fought for his country in the Great War, only to be shot down by the Red Baron. Then paraplegic, Maxwell returned home to administer his formidable inheritance, Liberty Enterprises. He never lost his desire to serve America, however. When WWII broke out, he became a civilian instructor for the military. Max's sharp mind and noble spirit drew the attention of Project Anodyne, an experimental human regeneration project. A dozen handicapped veterans went into Anodyne. Liberty alone emerged, his might far beyond anything Anodyne had conceived.

The project trained Liberty, then issued him an inspiring costume and code-named him the American Sentinel. During the war, Sentinel faced superhuman villains and weird weapons produced by Axis desperation and ingenuity. No enemy was more vicious or stalwart than Kreuzritter, and their battles were legend.

After Kreuzritter's apparent death and Germany's defeat, Sentinel escorted the Enola Gay over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The devastation drove Sentinel to request a discharge - he could not be responsible for more death. Liberty transferred most of his holdings to Empire City and trusted managers to run his business while he explored the world. Through the decades that followed, Sentinel allied with adventurers like Slipstream and Lady Starbright, opposing a new generation of metahuman villains ranging from Doctor Extinction to Seawolf. When the "second" Kreuzritter caused the death of Lady Starbright, Sentinel helped found the Guard in Angela's memory. Not long after, he officially dropped the "American" from his moniker. Near the turn of the millennium, Janus discovered Sentinel's identity. Sentinel embarrassed Janus on live television, then unmasked himself in the hope of becoming more accessible to the people he protects.

Instead, humanity came to view him as even more godlike as the world darkened. Terrorists destroyed the Twin Towers. Aliens conquered the world. Two entire nations returned from beyond the Earth. Bigots of all stripes plotted to tear down everything the Guard works to protect. A well-meaning tyrant from beyond the universe proved a greater threat than Maxwell imagined possible. Through it all, Sentinel stands like Atlas, ready to hold the world together through sheer might and determination.

PERSONALITY

Max Liberty is a paragon of human virtue. That statement is far more complex than the stereotype can make it seem. Well aware that he has known more privilege than almost anyone, Liberty strives to help others in every way he can. Sentinel patrols the world, racing to protect as many as possible. Maxwell continues to teach, whether instructing the Marvels Tactical Unit in metahuman containment, new executives at Liberty Enterprises in corporate ethics, or UNION commanders in

aerospace strategy. Both Maxwell and LE donate enormous sums to the impoverished, both to serve a direct need and to aid those striving to escape that need.

Sentinel is also keenly aware that ideal virtue is a moving target. Though always a stalwart champion of liberty, justice, and equality, Liberty keeps himself educated on the current state of progress, and has evolved with the times. Sentinel is a man of deep faith with some long-held traditional beliefs of his own, and has always worked to reach out to both sides of America's ever-growing divide.

That division is tearing Liberty apart. Appalled at the deep, vicious partisanship in his homeland, sickened by the global rise of nationalism, and furious at the surge of murderous violence aimed at the vulnerable, Sentinel works harder than ever to defend every person he can. He speaks out for science, reason, and fact at every opportunity, tempted for the first time to take a political stand in the country he once represented as a whole.

Through all the pain, the Guard remains a reliable bedrock foundation for Sentinel. They have become his true family, one on which Liberty depends more than he admits. Watching Caliburn and Grandmother Raven grow old while the grey at his temples holds fast tempts him to suggest, once again, anagathics that both have already refused. Sentinel has always resisted selfish temptations, but this time, even he might give in.

For decades, love and loss tormented him. His Golden Age love Anna Rivera could not accept a double life. Losing the first Lady Starbright tore out his heart, and he still grieves for Angela. The new Starbright, Kartika, reminded him of her predecessor, which torments him in ways he never imagined possible. He is unable to decide if he truly loves her or longs for a shadow of a ghost. Then, as dawn broke after the Endless Night, Kartika asked him out. To his own surprise, Max said yes. Perhaps all he needs is hope.

ATTRIBUTES AND DEFECTS

Maxwell Liberty is the embodiment of what the people of Sentinel-Earth consider a superhero. He is the strongest human alive, all but invulnerable and immovable, capable of flight and healing, and surviving in almost any environment. His senses transcend human limitations, and he can wield atomic power for a variety of attacks. Sentinel is also broadly skilled and trained in combat, and commands tremendous influence through the Guard and Liberty Enterprises. He is famously vulnerable to extreme cold, and depends on sunlight or intense radiation to maintain his powers. The White Rooks dog Sentinel's heels, with his archnemesis Kreuzritter forever pulling the strings.

"Liberty. Justice. Security. Peace. We must have faith that they are possible, to build a world that knows them all."

THE UNTOUCHABLES

Once as much myth as reported fact, the Untouchables became legends when they defended the West Coast during the Haud Crisis. The American government legitimised the status of the members by pardoning them along with the villains with whom they fought side-by-side to push back the invaders.

The Untouchables continue to search for metahumans who feel trapped or confused by their circumstances. Some fall through the cracks, run away, or turn to crime, and most lack the luxury and support of groups like the Guard. The Untouchables are a way to start over without joining Seawycck or the Echelon Alliance.

At the centre of the group is Anasazi - a Navajo of untold years who believes that everyone deserves a life free from persecution and hatred. He seeks those teetering on the edge between freedom and damnation. Anasazi works with the older members of the team to help young metahumans find their own way; teaching their new brothers and sisters how to use their abilities responsibly is a key component of team integration. They still live as nomads, often helping others only to be feared or hunted. The Puritan Protectorate has dedicated itself to their destruction, but the Untouchables emerge from each conflict stronger than before.

ANASAZI

Few know exactly how old the ancient Navajo is, but Anasazi has made oblique references to the fall of the Canyon de Chelly and the Long Walk from the mid-1800s. Anasazi accepts the role of the elder - both a father and a teacher - guiding each new generation through its challenges. He is an excellent warrior and strategist, and is both the physical and spiritual heart of the Untouchables. Although Anasazi appears wizened, he is capable of remarkable feats of strength, dexterity, and endurance. His most formidable power is density manipulation; he is able to make himself strong and heavy or light and nimble. He can even phase through solid objects as needed.

RAZE

Once the youngest - and still angriest - member of the team, Andrea Bhalla has become Anasazi's best teacher as she helps other metahumans learn to control their powers. Andrea was born in Las Vegas to an East Indian animal trainer and a Portuguese cocktail waitress. Her life of petty crime became serious when her flight and blaster powers manifested unexpectedly. Anasazi soon found Andrea and steered her toward a brighter future. Raze discovered that she loved being a hero. In spite of the team's tragedies, Andrea has found that she wants no other life. Her crush on Skybreaker has cooled to become a steadfast friendship, and the two have become a nigh-unbeatable team.

SKYBREAKER

Born with amazing growth powers, Paulo Ramirez grew up during a time when Mexico had an anti-metahuman policy. He was wanted equally by drug cartels and the Mexican army once his powers became publicly known. Paulo fled across the border to settle in Los Angeles, but risked his anonymity within the first year when he revealed his true nature while saving a friend. Forced to serve a cartel as El Gigante II and armed with his now-famous Storm Bands, it took what was then a quartet of Untouchables to set him free. Skybreaker is a gentle giant most of the time, and he has become both a beloved hero in a more enlightened Mexico and a stalwart friend to Raze and the new members.

MISTHUNTER

This former trucker was the victim of a failed Artificer experiment. Chuck Evans found himself forced to harm others just to survive after his transformation into a bio-vampire. He spent years on the wrong side of the law as a way to turn his hunger against violent criminals. His luck took a turn for the better during the Haud Crisis, though, when he found his powers worked on the alien invaders as well. Ascension Institute scientists developed headgear that lets him feed on animals, and Misthunter was hailed as a war hero and pardoned alongside many others. Chuck carries tremendous guilt for his past actions, but Anasazi gave him a second chance - a chance that Misthunter will not let slip by.

DOCTOR WILDE

Rachel Wilde is a brilliant enchantress who was once an infamous explorer and supervillain. She became the first adventurer in ten millennia to steal part of the Phoenix Angel Mantle; as Green Ronin, Rachel became one of Red Phoenix's greatest foes. Whether serving ELITE Operations, mercenary employers, or her own agenda, Green Ronin was respected and feared, but ultimately alone. Rachel was saved - yet again - by Red Phoenix during the Apratzim Revelation, which forced upon her a realisation that her ambitions had led her astray. Rachel gave up her part of the Mantle, and her Green Ronin identity, to save her rival as Red Phoenix battled Iron Duke. Directionless in the aftermath, she took the first Drifter's place as the Untouchables' magic gadgeteer. If only Sarah Gebhart did not haunt her so.

LADY LUMINETTE

Omolar Luminette, Ether-Lady of Yrk, was one of Prtzm's greatest defenders - and great-granddaughter of Duke Mirkom. For years, she resented the alien Drifter, until Mirkom betrayed their kingdom to the White Rooks and Dark Queen. She fought alongside the Untouchables and watched in awe as the united Terrene heroes drove back the invaders and saved Apratzim. Determined to redeem Mirkom's stain on her family's heritage, Omolar left Yaraku to follow the Untouchables and come to their aid when Khon Demons attacked them. Though proud and prickly, her courage, dedication, and skill with her inborn light magic make her a valuable member of the team.

THE FIVE SHIELDS

This controversial team of metahumans is one of the most enduring symbols of a divisive age. Groups like the Guard, Ascension Force, and the Untouchables avoid entanglements with corporations, religions, and political parties. Assembled by a business consortium eager to take advantage of the void, the Five Shields are happy to take sides for the right price. For that, they are seen at turns as authentic and artificial, sincere and branded, in-touch and sell-outs. The team members wear costumes bearing sponsorship labels - GenTech is their biggest and most visible sponsor - and they are spotted in more commercials than battles. The Five Shields' allies and detractors alike wonder if these social media super-mercenaries represent the future. Perhaps the most telling element of how others view them is from a nickname on which both sides agree: NAS-Guard.

THE AMERICAN III

After Rain Killer crippled the first American (gimmick-villain Ronald Boyd) and the White Rooks murdered the second (heroine Lucy Tarleton), the world thought the epithet dead and buried. Yet Brad Knutson took the risk and has become the mighty face of the Five Shields. Seen as little different from Boyd, who earned nicknames like "the Ugly American" and "the American Scheme", Knutson is also dubbed "Sentinel-lite" for his copycat power set. That does not make him any less dangerous, as Brad favours the powerful heat beams he shoots from his eyes. A few heroes wonder if he might be Ronald Boyd, somehow transformed by one of the world's ruthless mad scientists. For now, the American fights crime for the right price, revelling in his wealth and fame.

BREACHFIST

The Five Shields are genuinely competent at their jobs. Much of the credit for that goes to Annabelle Silverman, a former Miami police officer who was injured in the line of duty. Annabelle was restored by one of the many experiments based on Anodyne; she also developed enhancements to strength, resilience, and agility that made her a low-level superhuman. Frustrated with the "kid gloves" approach of traditional superheroes, but sceptical of grey operations like the Order, she joined the Five Shields to get the job done. It even works at times, when they listen to her. She wears enhanced gear on top of her powers, including a "burst gauntlet" that inspired her brand name. Breachfist must also deal with bigoted clients on occasion, who try to use her transition and dead name to push for the American to take command. Annabelle ignores them; the thought of Knutson commanding the Shields freezes her blood.

DEVIL DOVE

Helen Dover began as a solo adventurer who was touted by Matthews GenTech as one of their success stories. Once a potent telekinetic with difficulty controlling her power, Mister Matthews spliced DNA from a few choice hybrids into Helen. Now, in addition to mastery of her psychokinesis, she has white wings and regeneration that heals her almost instantly. Her

Five Shields salary was enough to convince her to join. Devil Dove is something of a spokeswoman for the team: beautiful and diplomatic, yet bland and incurious. She comes alive in combat, though, and shows genuine interest in victory - but no real desire to save lives. Dover keeps her mean streak in check when necessary but is as much a terror on social media as the battlefield.

MINDSPEED

It's ironic that Mindspeed was the last super-agent recruited to join the Five Shields, but there would be no team without him. An artificial metahuman created alongside his "siblings" in Red Rush Reckoning, Matt Ketterman was granted legal representation to plead for his status as a natural American citizen in exchange for his service with the Five Shields. Matt has served out his initial contract, but remains with the Shields because he feels that he has nowhere else to go. He also has a crush on Annabelle the size of Olympian Tower. Mindspeed is a capable telepath and powerful teleporter who is gifted with passable superspeed that helps him serve as the meta-inventor behind most of the team's equipment.

SWORDBUSTER

Ethan Addison is unique on his team, between his supernatural origin and his notable career before joining the Five Shields. As a mercenary in Iraq after the Coalition Provisional Authority was dissolved, Addison came across a strange axe that looked like a small machete on a stick. When he picked it up, the weapon transformed itself into a broadaxe, and Ethan into a strong, tough superhuman. He immediately went solo - never descending into an outright criminal enterprise, but content to fight anyone for the right price, whether hero or villain. Swordbuster fought Red Phoenix and Slipstream more than once while employed by Matthews GenTech. Though less sadistic than the American, he is more bloodthirsty and charges into battle with howling glee. Devil Dove claims the Ur-tech axe affects him, but Swordbuster's wild abandon is all his own.

