

# BETTER ANGELS

**THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE HUNKY**

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# THE "GOOD," THE "BAD," AND THE HUNKY

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This scenario presumes that the player characters are the new bad guys in town—freshly infected by demonic power, perhaps, or just moved there from somewhere else so they can start over with fewer flammable relatives nearby. But they're not entering in a vacuum. Above and beyond any shadowy manipulators lurking out of sight, there are two prominent players in the city super-society, and they're not just in the scene. They're actively trying to upstage each other.

**Stargazer** is the local supervillain, noted for holding buildings hostage. He started his career about a year ago by threatening to destroy an abandoned convenience store at exactly 12:00 noon two days later. The cops didn't take it 100% seriously, but it was easy enough to search the building (finding nothing) and then keep it under tight surveillance. After all, they had 24 hours of advance warning, right? But right on time, they saw someone moving around inside and the next thing they knew it was collapsing. Examination after the fact found that someone had crumbled the load-bearing walls... in seconds... before disappearing without a trace.

The next day Stargazer called and suggested that the same thing could happen to the courthouse, unless his demands were met. They were surprisingly reasonable: \$12,000 for a year of protection for that building and he'd throw in City Hall for free. He's been randomly extorting businesses off and on since, in only one case rumbling a bank to the ground after hours with no warning. He claimed responsibility afterwards, ex-

plaining that the bank had foreclosed on someone he knew, and that he had to demonstrate his capabilities to keep people respectful. He dresses in black with an excessively long, swirly, midnight blue cape with tasteful white constellations. He carries a steel-reinforced telescope that doubles as a handy bludgeon.

His nemesis is **Chainsaw Sue**, a perennially popular ghetto heroine who can't be taller than 5'1" or weigh more than 110 pounds soaking wet in a pair of knee-high biker boots. Sue does not seem to have much in the way of impulse control, but she does have a chainsaw and her signature vehicle, the Chaincycle. She's been rampaging through the bad part of town for at least three years, starting with an undeclared war against a gang called the Seventy-Sevens. She'd deduced where their runners were going to pick up crack rocks and cut her way in, going straight Leatherface on the guards and doing a lot of property damage before getting bored and leaving. Her known powers include being bulletproof and chopping shit up with a chainsaw. Any questions?

Both have eschewed media attention. Only one reputable communiqué from Chainsaw Sue has ever been received. (It contained details that only a witness to last year's final Seventy-Sevens massacre could have known, like "Stoomy's head was way up in the light fixture" and "Some jerk from out of town got his feet cut off.") It was received soon after the bank implosion and warned Stargazer to get out of town. But she has not been able to find him, or even slow him down.

## GREG'S ASS-COVERING SIDEBAR

*Writing generic scenarios for superhero games is always tricky. The powers in dungeon fantasy games tend to be balanced and combat-oriented, while the powers in superhero games are often broader, bigger, and sometimes capable of undermining the entire setting's economy or political foundation. Better Angels is a bit more stable, since it offers only a limited palette of powers, but still: Something that's barely a challenge for combat-oriented demons whose Screwtapes are generous with MDs and Aspects is going to mop the floor for Hellbinders who use less-fighty abilities and who are loath to invoke.*

*All that is prelude to this: Don't be afraid to change things in this scenario. For most groups, I probably don't need to say that. But some gamers have this farcical notion that, as a professional game designer, I can present something that's better for every group than they can custom-make for their personal group. Dude, I can't. So tweak and adjust and tailor it, okay?*

## THE ADVENTURE

This scenario puts the PCs in the middle of a conflict between a scheming prick with ambitions of immortality (Stargazer) and a screaming, self-righteous sadist (Chainsaw Sue). Neither one is a good person, and neither one's motives are good for the city.

Stargazer is getting too old for this shit. Before he was Stargazer, he was 'The Unstoppable One' in Detroit from 1995 to 2009, and before that he was 'Doctor Devious' in Pensacola from 1981 to 1992. Thirty-three years of villainy have taken their toll. He's not getting any younger, and his demon can't (or won't) help him with his health issues. So he's planning to steal a new body, Freaky Friday style. Or even better, a series of them, each more alluring than the last. Like, say, a string of male models in town for Philippe Estrançor's fashion show.

Taking a page from Tolkien, he plans to construct a series of magic rings, irresistible to cruddy people. (That is, they are to have the Palpably Evil flaw from *Better Angels* page 65.) A central ring—one's tempted to say it 'rules them all'—permits its wearer to swap identities, or bodies, with anyone wearing one of the lesser, slave rings. But constructing that gadget (using Devilish Creativity) isn't easy, and Chainsaw Sue's pursuit has made it hard for him to get all the stuff he needs. He wants help. He wants the PCs' help.

As for Chainsaw herself, she started her anti-crime crusade when she was just thirteen. Initially, she thought it was going to be like an action movie, lots of boom and spectacle and no real thought given to the fragility of the human body. But of course, it wasn't like that, and the only person she could talk to about it was her demon, whose advice was sympathetic and sounded deeply reasonable. Thanks to its guidance, she's moved through her horror and acceptance and now kind of wallows in her own grotesque badassery. Now that she's sixteen, however, she thinks it's about time she got herself a boyfriend. Like, say, the fascinatingly scornful Philippe Estrançor.

## THE MAJOR GMCS

But who are these mysterious bad-actors? Let's have a look behind the masks, shall we?

## BENJAMIN "STARGAZER" MORRIS

Ben has now shared his body with Melectanath the Sky's Darkness for fully half of his life. This fact fills him with dejection.

Born sixty-six years ago, Ben was just a bit too late to be a hippie entheogen experimenter, and at the same time too early to explore the world easily and shallowly via discount air fares. When he wanted to find mystery, it meant signing on as a sailor on a freighter and working his way to South America with back-breaking labor. So when he went into jungle pilgrimages searing for forbidden cities, he was resigned to going all the way.

Thus, tripping balls on a local drug called juçamra (a powerful, fast-acting emetic and vasodilator which, hours later, produces serene delusions of one-ness with reality) he reached a cruddy run-down temple that looked, to his dilated pupils, like the first city of all humanity. That's where he found a tiny carved stone, so worn you can barely tell what it is, and that's how he became the vehicle for Melectanath.



At first, binding himself to the Sky's Darkness seemed like a pretty sweet deal. Not only could teleportation make his journey far quicker and easier, he also found himself seeing things more clearly. For all its cynicism, Melectanath is a shrewd judge of character (meaning, he possesses the power of Arrogance). Ben got to Florida ready to cut a slice for himself, which he did. Initially, he used invisibility and teleportation to spy on shady land developers, robbing or black-mailing or getting newspaper scoops on the cruddiest ones. Unfortunately for him, as 'Doctor Devious,' his frequent use of invisibility inevitably made him hardened and distant (meaning, low **Insightful**, high **Devious**). That, in turn, left him relying on Melectanath's Arrogance in his personal dealings so that he wouldn't be the sucker at the table... he hit a crisis point. He left Florida, refused to invoke Melectanath unless the circumstances were dire, and tried to get his head together.

He made a good start, and Melectanath bided his time, still watching (since Ben's **Insightful** trait was still lower than **Devious**) until the perfect time to manifest his Horns. (In Melectanath's case, blade-tipped tentacles of darkness and icy void, but they do emerge, writhing, from Ben's forehead.)

Forced onto the road again, they came to an uneasy truce in Detroit. There, 'The Unstoppable One' would fight crime (in a sop to Ben's uneasiness) while Melectanath got frequent 'visitation rights' to reality. That worked OK until some demon-infected criminals got a little too angry at The Unstoppable One and decided to see if they could drive him off.

Now, in the PCs' home town, Ben seems to be a 'new' villain, but he is in fact an old hand at this, having fought on both sides of the line. He's weary of conflict

## STARGAZER'S INFERNAL DEVICE

**The Earthquake Amulet:** *This silver amulet has an onyx stone set in the middle. A white star glows from the gem, seeming at first to be a reflection on its smooth surface but, as one looks closer, it seems to sink deeper into the darkness, seeming at the same time vast and unimaginably distant...*

*Ben spent a point of **Generosity** building this gadget, and it needs no flaws. It's good for making large, heavy, rigid things vibrate, while becoming slightly more brittle. It doesn't affect people, and it wrecks buildings and cars about as efficiently as a bulldozer.*

and he has health problems. He wants to get money as easily as possible, and his protection scam is pretty solid. Between being unstoppable and reasonably priced, he's far lower on the police priority list than Chainsaw Sue, even though she claims to be all about Truth and Justice. (In practice, she's more about equivocation and severed body parts, while Stargazer's body count is exactly zero.)

Ben wants to build magic rings that let him steal other peoples' bodies, then distribute them to models at Estrançor's fashion show. With a sexy new body, he'll be ready to move again and take on a new identity, as hero or villain or just as a rich pretty-boy with no troubles.

Melectanath, on the other hand, wants trouble for its host and wants it badly. It's not quite ready to start making mischief with Aspects, since it's already kind of weak in the **Devious** department, but the fact that it's in the dark unless summoned does not sit well with it at all. Ideally, it wants to deniably maneuver Ben into giving it lots more **Devious** to work with, which isn't easy when it has to rely on Ben's choices. But it's very clever about Ben's weaknesses and it's fiendishly patient.

## STARGAZER'S STATS

**Cunning** 2, **Patient** 2  
**Greed** 2, **Generosity** 4  
**Espionage** 2, **Knowledge** 1

**Sly** 2, **Open** 1  
**Cruelty** 2, **Courage** 2  
**Cowardice** 3, **Endurance** 2

**Devious** 2, **Insightful** 2  
**Corruption** 4, **Nurture** 0  
**Deceit** 1, **Honesty** 1

**Powers:** Teleport Self, Arrogance

**Aspects:** Horned, Invisible

**Gear:** Telescope (+1 weapon Advantage as a bludgeon or to see long distances)

—Lockpicks, including electronic pick gun and a more old-fashioned bump pick gun (+2 weapon Advantage when picking locks)

—Lightweight flashlight

—Five ninja-style smoke bombs—drop them and they make a light like a flashbulb and a small cloud of black smoke. He likes to use these when teleporting or turning invisible while being observed.

## MAUDE "CHAINSAW SUE" SEIBERT

There's no origin story here. She didn't piece herself back together after a brutal attack, her parents weren't murdered by criminal acrobats, her family fortune didn't get stolen by nefarious lawyers, she didn't see her beloved neighborhood corrupted by the drug game.

Maude's neighborhood is quite nice, it's in the city's quietest and most prosperous suburb. Her parents are still alive, still together (though she's starting to suspect mom may be fooling around) and the worst thing that ever happened to her was she fell off a jungle gym and broke her wrist when she was seven. Her life has been so tragedy-free, it's kind of dull.

That, then, may be her motivation right there. At age 13 she was very bored. Her school's resident mean girl, she had a boggling sense of entitlement and invulnerability. When that got coupled with actual invulnerability, she needed to find a better class of victim. After all,

### CHAINSAW SUE'S INFERNAL DEVICES

**"Mr. Frisky":** Most witnesses to Sue's activities are too traumatized to remember much, but a few of the more sensible witnesses have testified that she calls her saw "Frisky" or "Mr. Frisky." If held and swung, the weapon gives +2 weapon Advantage, but with *That Hideous Strength*, Sue doesn't really need it. What she does, instead, is fling it to the ground and yell at it to attack. Then it does.

*Mr. Frisky* is a felling-sized saw and Sue has spent 3 **Generosity** to give it the ability to attack on its own. It does this by buzzing along the floor like a terrier, leaping up like a salmon to slash at people, quick and sharp and horrible. It has a 4d attack pool and +2 Advantage.

It has the flaws "blatant" and "palpably evil," the former taking the form of an extremely loud buzz (as saws are wont to have). The latter flaw just puts an acquisitive gleam in the eyes of the wicked, while provoking a lip-curved ick face from the righteous.

**The Chaincycle:** It looks like a chainsaw the size of a motorcycle, with the saw-blade working like a single track instead of wheels. Sue can ride it around at high speed (though it tends to gouge up potholes if she corners fast) and she can chop through people with it.

As a vehicle, it cost her 1 **Generosity** to build. Like *Frisky*, it can attack autonomously on its own, roaring and chasing people like a metal alligator on a meth binge. It's far less maneuverable, however, so it only rolls 4d for its attacks. That ability cost her 1 **Knowledge**.

It has the "bulky" flaw, making it big enough to ride on comfortably without making it impossible to parallel park.

super-strength is great, but it's not exactly something you can use on your homeroom fat kid.

(About that 'getting invulnerability' bit—her mom Phyllis works at a downtown gallery selling antiques, art and curios. A chain of recursively carved iron links caught her eye, and when she picked it up, she met Ur-vath the Wellspring of Savagery. She's worn it on one ankle or the other ever since.)

An ardent FPS player who'd been watching R-rated movies every time her older brother babysat her, she was ready to rip apart drug dealers because that's just what superpowered people did, as far as she knew. In point of fact, she got partially motivated by The Unstoppable One's exploits in Detroit, though she's far less equipped to do her deeds with panache and style than the guy who can make himself disappear two different ways.

Mm, about that older brother, Clint. He's the reason her parents (who were pretty distracted and laissez faire to start with) have been letting her get away with a second life as a a costumed multiple murderer. He's been playing the ball in a years-long ping-pong game between addiction and rehab, and what parental attention they can scrape together is spent fretting on Clint. As far as Maude/Sue is concerned, that's the tragedy that's 'forced' her into superheroism. Because her brother flirts with X and straw-bought Adderall, she trashes crack houses and meth labs. Also, she's entirely certain that all the people she extrajudicially chopped up were bad.

## CHAINSAW SUE'S STATS

**Cunning** 2, **Patient** 1  
*Greed* 1, *Generosity* 1  
*Espionage* 1, *Knowledge* 1

**Sly** 2, **Open** 4  
*Cruelty* 4, *Courage* 2  
*Cowardice* 2, *Endurance* 3

**Devious** 2, **Insightful** 1  
*Corruption* 0, *Nurture* 1  
*Deceit* 2, *Honesty* 0

**Powers:** That Hideous Strength, Armor

**Aspects:** Darkness-Shrouded, Ghost Form

**Gear:** Five fist-sized steel ball bearings. She throws these like baseballs with That Hideous Strength and they hurt like the dickens. After running out of ball bearings, she throws whatever she can grab, but prefers them because they're so aerodynamic.

—Black motorcycle leathers and helmet decorated with strings of saw chain. If she doesn't have her Armor on, these give her +1 weapon Advantage to Endurance rolls related to not getting hurt by blows, abrasion and the like.

## PHILIPPE ESTRANCOR

Philippe has no superpowers or demonic entanglements, though you wouldn't suspect if you heard his assistants bitch about him. He's the star of *Design Me a Dream* on basic cable. Half the show is his suave intensity as he creates dresses for 'everday' Los Angeles women to wear for special occasions. The other half is him terrorizing his underlings and making cutting comebacks to anyone with the temerity to disagree. The highest rated episode was the one where Sharla the hairdresser started screaming at him and throwing products, only to be dismissed with an icy cold insult that left her dissolved in tears. The second highest is where Allon (a tittering little man whose function is to find the perfect accessories) had what looked very much like a genuine nervous breakdown right there on the video tape. It's the only time Philippe has apologized—and that with all seeming sincerity and good taste—and ever since then, Allon has been considerably less flighty, while everyone else on the cast treats him with kid gloves.

Philippe is now filming Season Two, in which he has left L.A. (unless that's where your villainous PCs are) and is traveling the country. The third best ratings he's ever gotten were for the season finale fashion show, in which all the women were brought back for new dresses (hinted at throughout their episodes) and a runway show. This time, he's doing something a little different. He's been working on a menswear line, inspired by the women he's 'helped,' to be unveiled amidst tremendous hoopla. That's what's going down in the final act of this scenario, with both Chainsaw Sue and Stargazer interested.



## PHILIPPE'S STATS

**Cunning** 3, **Patient** 2  
**Greed** 1, **Generosity** 3  
**Espionage** 2, **Knowledge** 2

**Sly** 2, **Open** 1  
**Cruelty** 1, **Courage** 1  
**Cowardice** 2, **Endurance** 3

**Devious** 3, **Insightful** 3  
**Corruption** 3, **Nurture** 3  
**Deceit** 3, **Honesty** 2

## GARTH WARWICK

There's a good dozen models coming to town on Philippe's dime, running the gamut from blonde hunks with chisel cheekbones through dewy eyed Carib

dreamboats with entrancing accents and graceful, whippet-like bodies. For his part, Garth is a sizzling slab of beefcake with pouty lips, a bad-boy expression, and preposterous biceps and pecs.

He's also a jerk, if you want to be charitably vague. A more specific description would be "habitually dishonest serial adulterer." He swings both ways, so he breaks twice as many hearts and infects twice as many groins as a strictly gay or heterosexual manslut would. (Currently, he's carrying trichomoniasis and chlamydia, both without symptoms.)

He's got a sociopath's knack for social adaptation, so he feigns perfect sincerity on Friday, talking religion with a nice Republican boy he suspects is in the closet, then emits pitch-perfect macho grunts at Saturday's frat party, and blushes with disarming (apparent) candor in the coffee shop for Sunday's folk music poetry slam.

### THIS TIME IT'S PERSONAL

*Two playtest groups found motivation to be a sticking point. This may be an unavoidable issue for a scenario without either pregenerated characters or an ongoing and persistent threat. As written, it's possible for the hellbound to shrug and leave Chainsaw and Stargazer to their own private trips. If you're starting a sandboxy game where the PCs set their own agendas, this may be fine—you might want to bring Sue and Ben Morris back in later, implying that the characters had their chance to nip their evil in the bud and failed. But there are avenues for tying new characters to the story without blatant railroading.*

*The most obvious way to generate some interest is to suggest to Screwtapes that they know the demons inside Chainsaw Sue and Stargazer. Someone who swore a blood-oath of comradeship to Stargazer's demon back in the day now has a good reason to offer MDs to a mortal who helps Morris. Alternately, a mortal whose demon is suspiciously eager to help with Stargazer's project may resist it for exactly that reason. A demon who was in love with Chainsaw Sue's demon **Urvath the Wellspring of Savagery** two hundred years ago may still long for its approval. Or it may feel spurned and crave revenge. Or it may want to help Urvath while its mortal host gets increasingly uneasy about its eagerness.*

*Then again, there are appeals to increasing Tactics. Getting paid by Stargazer improves **Generosity**, while taking a stand against Sue's reckless vigilantism could justify transferring points off the sinister side of the character sheet. Or, for power-players, ill-gotten gains are splendid for **Greed**, while a big bloody showdown is a good way to exchange **Courage** for **Cruelty**. If enough civilians die, it could even put **Sly** up directly.*

*Finally, there's the standard fallback of "dependent in jeopardy." Did your characters build some family members, or kindly employers, or hapless minions into their backstory? Find a way that Chainsaw Sue threatens them. (Given her indifference to human safety, that's not too hard.) Or make them Estrançor fans. It's a little contrived, but after all, everyone likes pretty people. That's what made Phillippe famous, it's what draws Morris' attention, so it's not too much of a stretch to have a character's mom interested in the show as well.*

Garth likes sex, and he sometimes likes humiliating people midway through sex, and he sometimes likes stringing people along for months before cutting them off cold, with no explanation. His phone is stuffed with mementoes of his conquests, arranged with finicky care, the picture he took with her on the first date next to the sexually explicit shots she doesn't know about and the increasingly anxious and confused voice mails she's left.

Unless something untoward happens, Garth winds up stuck in Ben's aging, homely body with Ben in Garth's buff (albeit VD-riddled) frame. Unfortunately, the switch leaves 'fat, old Garth' holding the 'thief' ring that unlocks access to everyone else who's wearing a 'chump' ring.

Incidentally, every demon who meets Garth thinks he's a great guy. Just a real winner, a prize human being, someone they'd be proud for their mortal steed to hang around with.

## GARTH'S STATS

Cunning 3, Patient 1  
Greed 2, Generosity 2  
Espionage 2, Knowledge 1

Sly 1, Open 3  
Cruelty 3, Courage 1  
Cowardice 3, Endurance 3

Devious 4, Insightful 3  
Corruption 4, Nurture 1  
Deceit 3, Honesty 0

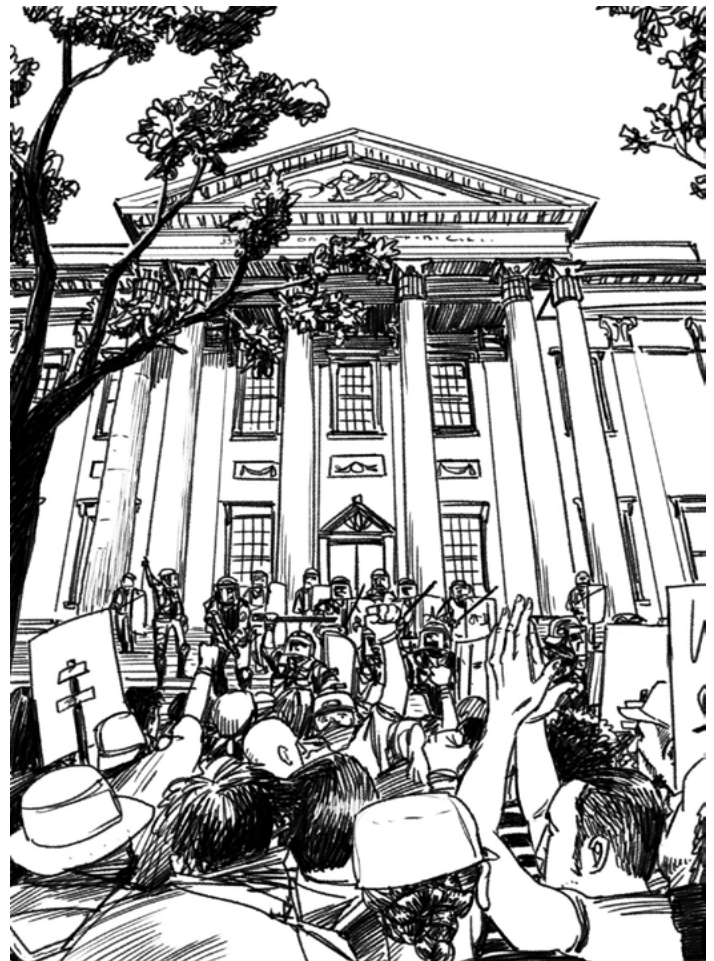
## SCENE ONE: I MUST PROTEST

Start this scene with a question: "Why are you downtown near the big bank?" It's reasonable. Everyone goes downtown sooner or later, whether it's because they're putting money in or taking it out (if they have high *Generosity*) or because they're applying for welfare nearby (if *Generosity* is running a tad low). Ask, as well, whether they're in their normal civilian guise, or if they're tricked out as supervillains. Find out if they know one another and whether they're downtown coincidentally, or as part of a plan. ("Dammit, I can't get

my food stamps because I'm out of gas and my disability check won't be in for two more weeks!" "Well, I'll pay for gas if you give me a ride, I need to shake down Holly for that money she owes me.") Finally, are their demons aware of what's going on, or are they un-invoked and with primary Strategy too low to peek?

With their various motivations settled, you can throw them right into a sweet, crashing conflict. It starts with the mob in front of the bank. They're occupying something or other, camping illegally on the city park right in the middle of the financial district, chanting this, human microphoning that, and passing around literature.

As the PCs arrive on the scene, there are a few cops at the corners of the park, wearing regular patrol gear and looking fairly unhappy. The protesters' numbers have jumped overnight and some of the new people from out of town are a little more... feisty than the droning stalwarts who started the protest. The cops had come to a sort of détente with the first layer of Occupiers, ticketing them for camping and breaking up any fights, arresting people who were actively confrontational but





turning a blind eye to a lot of the picketing. These new protesters want to kick-start the revolution, with an emphasis on 'kick.'

There are two cops at each corner of the park, for a total of eight. There's maybe fifty protesters, but only a dozen of them are ready to rumble, should that go off.

If the PCs just hang around doing nothing (or, less likely still, go about their business) the tensions rise but seem manageable. A protester gets in a cop's face, asking how she can stand to be a tool in the hands of an indifferent state, but she's ignoring him.

Enter Chainsaw Sue.

First, it's just a rumbling crunch, and then there she is in all her leather-garbed glory, shrieking down the road and skidding to a very stylish halt right at the main entry to the park. The police immediately draw weapons and shout for her to stand down and show her hands, but they're taking cover behind trees or the engine blocks of their cruisers: They've seen enough of her handiwork to know she's unlikely to just appear and then hand herself in.

The protesters initially give a cheer, though it's a little ragged—some of them regard her as an anarchist heroine using personal initiative to do what the government can't, while others consider her an unhinged psychopath.

"GET OUT OF THE PARK!" she yells. Then she rides around the fountain, heads down the walking path (still on her motorcycle), ramps the little bridge (to a few more cheers) before pulling up right in the middle of the densest clot of protesters and tents. Some are still cheering her, not having heard her first announcement. The cops at the entrance, meanwhile, pile into their cruisers and get closer, while calling for backup.

As they use their car megaphones to order people back from her and demand that she put up her hands, she again demands that the people clear the park. Then she raises her hands.

(This is the moment when the PCs can intervene. If they ran off to change clothes when she roared up, stretch out the tension a little until one of them, at least, is back.)

If the PCs don't intervene, the police sergeant commands Chainsaw Sue to dismount and put down her weapon, which she does. The protesters are milling around uncertainly. Then, when the cops tell her to lie down on her stomach, Sue snickers and says "Bike! Frisky! Clear 'em out!"

PCs still not involved?

Her pet bike and chainsaw attack the protesters' camp, not going after people (yet) but shredding tents and running over coolers. The cops, not knowing what else to do, open fire on her. (She's armored, natch.) As for the angry protesters, it's up to you, GM, to decide what they do. Whose side are they on? Who are they against? Mostly though, throw them wherever seems most interesting in terms of getting the PCs to do something.

The non-combatant protesters are fleeing. (If you're using the Collateral Damage rules, this is a fine time to start rolling.) After a round or two of terrorizing the 99%, Chainsaw Sue whistles, gets back on the Chain-cycle, picks up Frisky, and zooms away, with the cops in hot pursuit. If the PCs don't chase her, she escapes. If they do, she uses Darkness-Shrouded to cloak her vehicle, jumps off it in Ghost Form to phase into some hiding place (the storm sewer if nothing better's avail-

### **THE POLICE MOB (8)**

*Eight trained cops, led by Sergeant Zachary Cross and armed with night-sticks and sidearms, produce an 8d pool with +3 weapon Advantage. After two cops get wounded or killed, they withdraw to the interior of a nearby building or, in the worst case, hole up in a police cruiser.*

### **THE MOB OF PROTESTERS (12)**

*A dozen protesters without serious weapons or training rolls 10d and has no Advantage. They're disorganized enough that they don't stop fighting until four of them are down or out.*

able) and then changes back into Maude-form while everyone chases off after the cycle in the black cloud.

More likely, though, the PCs wind up in the middle of the melee between her, the cops and the protesters. As GM, you control Sue, and the cops, and the protesters. Mostly you just have to decide who slags whom, based on what's most entertaining and easy to handle. With the police and the protest mob, remember that people are unpredictable in groups, especially when weapons are being brandished and there are loud noises. So the protesters might jump on Sue, they might decide to take on the cops, or they might assault the PCs for no reason beyond confusion.

Sue's goal is to get the protesters out of the park, and she doesn't want to cut up any cops, but anyone who looks "supervillainous" could get an uprooted tree slung in their face: As far as she's concerned, beating supervillains is just what she does. That said, she retains enough of a sense of proportion that she realizes a deadly chainsawing is too severe a punishment for 'assembling without a license.' So she doesn't really uncork on anyone but the PCs (if them). The cops are willing to put Sue down like a dog in the dirt, but aggression from anyone else is likely to turn their attention, especially if shooting Sue isn't doing anything.

If the cops open up on the protesters, or vice versa, don't bother rolling dice and comparing results. Your players are unlikely to care much about the result of

GMC-on-GMC violence. Just assume the cops drop one protester per turn and the protesters drop a cop every other turn. That goes on for five rounds (or until some other factor wipes out more of either group), ending when eight injured protesters withdraw from six very angry cops.

Some cool things can happen with this fight scene...

There's a large **fountain** towards the northern end of the park. Big fire powers can make clouds of steam, or be drenched by the copious spray. Or it can be wrecked to produce a miniature rainstorm.

There are **trees** scattered throughout the park, providing cover for frightened bystanders. At some point, someone could climb a tree and cower while one of the sentient chainsaws snaps at the bottom like a dog chasing a treed cat. (It would never occur to either Chaincycle or Frisky to just cut the tree down.)

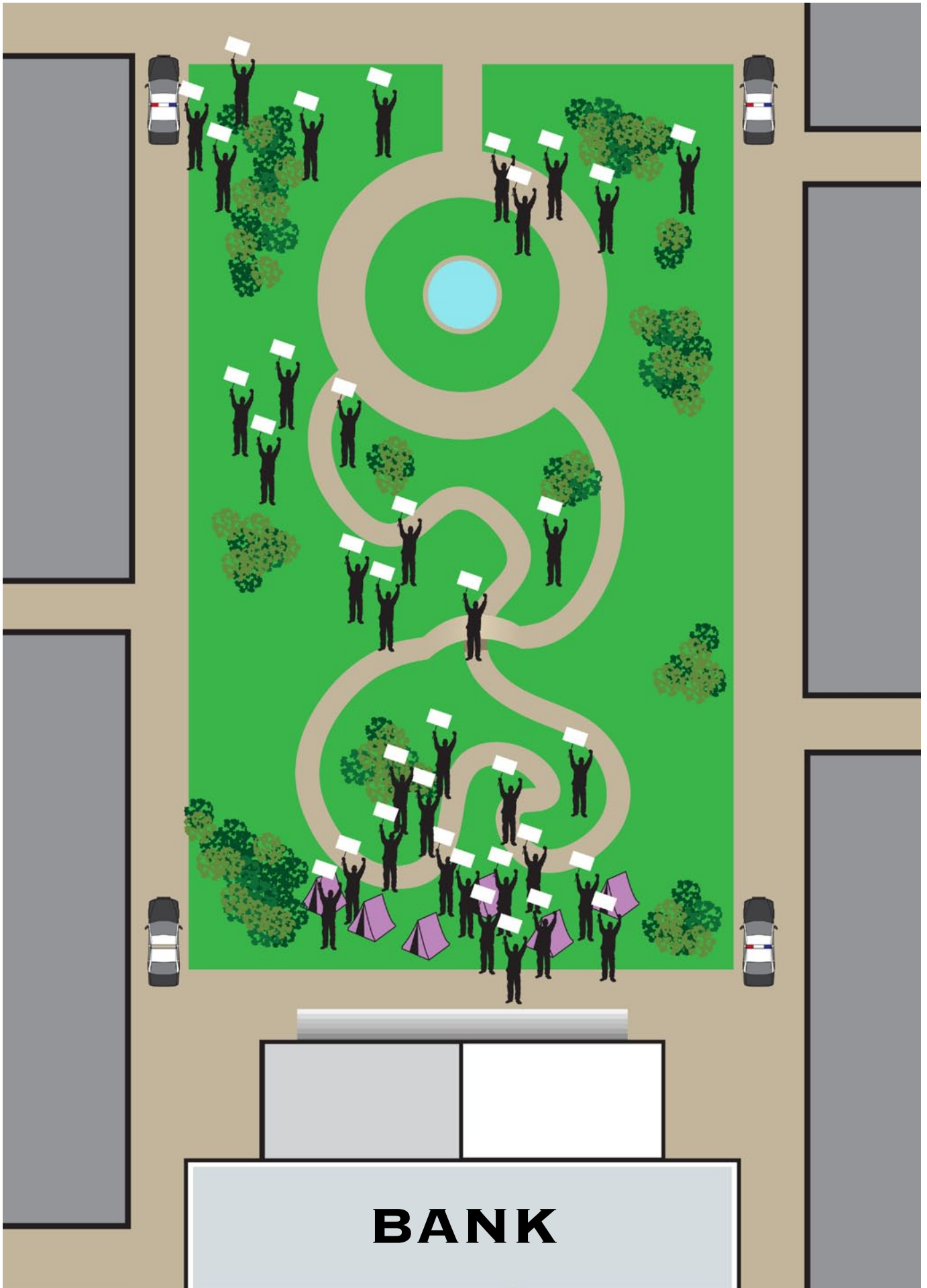
The pedestrian footpath that winds around has a **bridge** in the middle where it crosses itself. That could collapse, provide cover, or serve as a vantage point for a ranting monologue.

The **bank** has a stately, shallow set of grand steps in front with pillars supporting an overhanging portico depicting Prosperity with one naked breast weighing grain in a scales. Sufficient blows to one pillar could send it crashing down. If two pillars are destroyed, the whole fresco falls.

The point of this scene is to make the PCs mad at Chainsaw Sue and to get their personae out in the public eye. You should therefore tilt events and motivations to make sure that whatever most disgruntles them occurs. If they're offended by the idea of being subordinate (or appearing virtuous) you can have the news media suggest that they're Chainsaw Sue's 'sidekicks.' If they hate the idea of the OWS movement, have her assume they're defending it. If they love the OWS movement, have them get blamed for attacking the encampment. Get the PCs in the spotlight, have them be misunderstood, and have Chainsaw Sue available for blame. If they get roughed up a little, that's good too.

### **A PEDANTIC REMINDER, 'CAUSE IT'S IMPORTANT**

*Remember that just because a Screwtape is aware of what's happening, it doesn't mean he's empowered to comment on what's happening. Even if primary sin is greater than primary virtue, that just permits voyeurism. It's not constant invocation! Screwtapes can only comment when (1) a power has been activated or (2) their mortal has asked for their input. They're muted until those things happen, no matter how high their primary sin.*





## SCENE TWO: MEET & GREET

How does one anonymous villain set up a meet with another? If it was a comic focussing on heroes, it could be brushed off with a facile explanation that they arrange it through their 'underworld contacts.' So when Stargazer finds out that the PCs tangled with Sue, he tries that.

Now, up to this point, Stargazer has done what he can to be a one-man crime wave. The last thing he needs is someone who to identify him, betray him, or take a percentage of the proceeds. There are rumors, but Ben has mostly kept Stargazer insulated from the criminal demimonde. The opposite is not nearly as true. Using tactics picked up from his stint as a superhero, Ben made sure to keep tabs on who the local crime gangs were and where their turf was—not too tall a task when you can teleport and, in a pinch, turn invisible. After the PCs thrash things out with Chainsaw Sue, he teleports into the homes and vehicles of several identified street crooks and leaves notes reading “STARGAZER WANTS TO TALK WITH [[insert PCs’ aliases here]] — TELL THEM” weighed down with a shotgun shell. At the same time, he paints the same message (minus “TELL THEM”) on the top of several water towers and high schools, in the hopes that flying PCs see them from overhead. He also vandalizes billboards on the busiest highways with the same message.

If you’re starting the game with this scenario, the players are probably settling into their characters and pursuing agendas or ideas they came up with during character generation. After the scene of clashing with Sue, follow their leads for a bit—let them pursue their own death-ray schemes, or bicker with one another, or hide their natures from loved ones and suspicious neighbors. But have them get that message in the background. If they appear in public, scruffy people shout “Aaay dere, Stargazuh wantsta talk wit’cha!” and know no more when confronted. If they move around incognito, have them spot a billboard getting the message cleaned off it. If they fly, they see the rooftop message. At the same time, of course, the police are asking after them and the media are breathlessly speculating about What It All Means.

The PCs probably come up with some scheme of their

own to talk with Stargazer. That’s great. If it’s at all plausible, go with it. Otherwise, he shows up within 5-15 minutes whenever his police band scanner reports their presence. If they’re still keeping it quiet, he activates Melectanath and roams around hoping to find them when their demons are also active and can be identified.

If they leave messages with the hoods and thugs, eventually those work their way through to him, and if their message was just “We’re listening,” he passes a message back: “Meet me near the food court of Cumberland Mall this Saturday at noon. Have your friends ready to talk, and I’ll have mine ready too. That way we can recognize one another.”

If they meet at the mall, he’s just Ben, with Melectanath active in the background. He’s got on sunglasses and a big hat pulled low, but it’s clear he’s a senior citizen in a long coat. Otherwise, he might be in his Stargazer costume, which is a lot less impressive close up. Either way, he emphasizes that he just wants to talk and is willing to make it worth their while.

First off, he hands each of them a slip of paper with a series of numbers on it. “These are codes for Cayman Islands bank accounts. You have your own offshore accounts, I assume? Top number is the account identity, bottom is identification number. I opened ‘em in your names. There’s a thousand bucks in each, just as a thank-you for listening to me.” (Anyone with *Generosity* 0 can automatically pump it up to 1 by raiding this bank account.) “I assume you’re going to raid ‘em and shut ‘em down, which is what I’d do. If we can come to an understanding, there’s more where that came from.”

He listens to their concerns, patient and grave, as people who can teleport away from trouble are wont to do. His interests are as follows.

He’s working on a device that requires certain exotic ingredients. Two of them have proven very difficult for his particular skill-set. One is a string from a genius’ violin, freely given. He has no idea how to arrange that. Buying one hasn’t worked, and he’s not really sure how to tell a genius violinist from one who’s merely competent. Anyone who delivers that gets, in payment, one... *million*... dollars!

## **"TAKE MY FOOT. I GOT TWO."**

*The most obvious source for a demon's paw (to those of a certain perspective) is either Stargazer himself, or one of the PCs. (Would you let someone chop off your foot for a million bucks? How about for a share of a million bucks?) What if the players want to take this shortcut?*

*Well, Stargazer isn't going to be a cheerful donor, and if they decide to force him, he won't pay them. (Somewhere, a play group is going to be angry that Morris fails to pay up when they cut off and try to sell him his own foot. I think that's marvelous.) When the foot gets used for a supernatural device, it does not come back. No matter what body Ben skips into, it's going to be one-footed when he puts on an Aspect... forever.*

*For PCs who donate their tarsals for the greater good, their mortal selves retain feet, but any time an Aspect is invoked, the foot goes away. I'd suggest that it means losing a point of **Open** or **Sly** (50/50 chance) every time the Aspect goes on, with a minimum of one point. Explain to the players that this hobbling is permanent and will impede both human and demon during Aspect-fueled actions. If they're still gung-ho, fine.*

The other thing he needs is a demon's paw. He'd prefer it come off Chainsaw Sue because, seriously, she's a pain in the ass. He doesn't have the combat chops to hold her down, force her into demonic form, and then lop off one of her hands or feet. If the PCs can do that, it's two million dollars and they get the satisfaction of butchering a superheroine. Win/win, right?

He gives them a cell phone number "for absolute, time-sensitive emergencies. It's good once, after that, I'll throw the phone away and try to get you a new number." For unimportant stuff, he suggests communicating through newspaper ads. "Mine'll be an ad for free holly bushes, available to anyone willing to transplant them. Add one to every digit in the phone number, so if I list it as 444-2222, the real number is 555-3333, got it? You do the same, what's your bullshit ad going to be for? Remember, something no one really wants."

If they have schemes that could be helped by a self-teleporter, he listens but is skeptical. He's willing to help, but he makes it as expensive as he can—he can

feel time breathing down his neck every day he gets up with less hair and blearier eyesight.

It's quite possible that the PCs pick a fight with this generous would-be patron (as one does). That's fine. He can ignore a lot of blustering and threats, after thirty-plus years dealing with unhinged Hellbinders. If anyone takes a swing at him, he teleports away. If necessary, he turns invisible too. But he's intimately familiar with a lot of locations within four miles of the mall, and if the meet goes sour somewhere else, he can teleport to any visible location within that range. He always tries to get to the open (and remember, he can knock down walls with his amulet), so he can zoom off in any direction, popping to the top of a building and using that perspective to immediately travel again, changing direction frequently to foil pursuit. If they spurn his suggestions, he tries to engineer a confrontation between them and Chainsaw Sue so that, when one is beaten down, weak, and in demonic form, he can zip in, sever a hand, and flee.

## SCENE THREE: CASING VARIOUS JOINTS

The presumption is, the PCs team up with Stargazer, at least conditionally. (If they don't, there's a sidebar full of advice nearby.) The other presumption is, they try and spy on him because duh, it's what you do.

This sets up a very loose middle section that can get muddled if your players aren't highly self-directed. That's OK. Ideally, they have all kinds of ideas and hare-brained schemes for (1) capturing or cornering Chainsaw Sue, (2) finding out intel about her and/or Stargazer and (3) getting their own goals met. If not, the first two are covered in more detail, below. If they're stuck, or things are getting boring, suggest one of the following, but don't be too eager to offer them advice. You want to teach your players to make their own trouble without you having to lead them by the hand, after all.

### CHASING SUE

Sue/Maude has about four costume stashes throughout the city, but there's only one Chaincycle, which she keeps hidden in an abandoned cement factory on the southwestern outskirts of town. This is a little less stupid than it initially appears, in that she keeps it in a partially collapsed corner of a condemned garage. There are only two ways in (though, of course, she can always get there with Ghost Form if she's willing to pay for using it). One of those ways is a tiny collapsed crevice through the roof that only a tiny person or a child can squeeze through after climbing (or jumping with That Hideous Strength) to the top of the building. That leads to a ladder that (through no planning of hers) collapses if anyone over a hundred and ten pounds gets on it.

The other way in is to get past the suspiciously new padlock on bigass battleship chains around a sliding garage door. Inside there's a forgotten vehicle bay where Chaincycle and Mister Frisky wait, with orders to scare off anyone who finds it there.

This has led to urban legends among the scruffy kids of the neighborhood, that there's a killer robot built by the army hiding in the old abandoned garage. (Scrounging up this rumor requires some footwork and a **Patient Espionage** roll to find out.)

If interviewing dingy sixth-graders isn't the villains' style, a **Patient Knowledge** roll can scour the newspaper morgue and internet for reports about her sightings and, after sticking a bunch of pins in a map, the PCs can discern that while she acts all over the place, she's most often seen in passing towards the western side of town. Moreover, much of her activities are focussed on that southwestern segment (which tends to be the poorer and more crime-ridden part of town). Lurking in that area nets them a Patient Espionage roll to spot her one night as she rides out 'on patrol.' Alternately, the can use **Cunning Generosity** in the area to pay off spies and informers who are far more willing to dime her out to crazy villains (who seem like they might burn down their houses if they disagree) than to cops (who are, one hopes, less likely to fall back on arson).

Instead of **Patient Knowledge**, one can use **Patient Espionage** to analyze the timing of her activities. (Or just winkle the data out of cops or reporters by some **Devious** means.) That approach indicates that on weekdays her actions are practically nil between 1:00 AM





and 4:00 PM. She's moderately active between 4:00 and 6:00 PM, but usually quiescent after that until 11:00 PM. The majority of her weekday actions take place between 11:00 PM and 1:00 AM. On weekends, however, all bets are off. She rarely acts between 3:00 AM and noon on Saturdays or Sundays, but other than that, the data's all over the place. So clearly, she's got some kind of commitment that gets out around 4:00 on weekdays, which seems unusual for a job but is exactly right for the local high school schedule, which has a 3:00 dismissal.

So far, this is all stuff the cops know. But the cops don't have demons in their skulls that recognize other demons. Cruising by the high schools and peering intently at the young female students as they emerge, while creepy, may eventually reveal Maude... if she happens to be engaged with Urvath at the moment, something she avoids when people are around.

By far the easiest way, of course, is to simply dress up and act out. Kidnapping a bank VP is all well and good, but putting a ransom tape on YouTube in which the villain dismisses Chainsaw Sue by name—oh, that gets her going.

Of course, once she's there fighting, the challenge is to (1) get her to become Darkness-Shrouded without going into Ghost Form and (2) to reduce her to one point bouncing back and forth between **Sly** and **Open**. When she's in that state, any attack on her with an ap-

propriately edged weapon can lop off an appropriate limb instead of shifting that last point. Good luck with that, though.

One final possibility, for villains who really play the long game, is to uncover the rest of the Seibert family. Snatch Clint, Phyllis or her father Brent and it's easy to get her to cave in with a few **Devious Corruption** rolls. (In this case, any weapon held to the head of her family member gives its Advantage to **Corruption** as well, i.e. "Just let me chain you up, then put on your darkness field, and my associate won't go to town on your dad with this plunged-base router.") Whacking her hand in these circumstances not only satisfies Stargazer, it's also worth 2 **Espionage** to the whacker, or 1 **Corruption**.

## CHASING STARGAZER

Running down a dude who can teleport at will and turn invisible with a little grunting is a tall order, which accounts for Ben's lengthy career as both selfish supervillain and putatively selfless vigilante. There's no patterns to be found in his sightings because Ben's far too mobile and smart to establish one—with teleport, getting around unseen is actually more efficient than walking places. Unlike Chainsaw Sue, he doesn't want attention. Most of his crimes have consisted of illicitly entering places, leaving threats, and then having money sent to shady offshore bank accounts.

### LET'S MAKE AN ENEMY OF THE INVISIBLE GUY

*PCs who fail to help Stargazer don't get a big "You dare defy me?!? You'll rue your foolhardy boldness! RUE IT, I SAY!" speech. He just sighs, looks regretful, and says to call his burner number if they change their minds. Then he leaves, turns invisible, and follows the most irritating or weak-seeming character home. After covertly observing that person for a few days (possibly involving some **Cunning Espionage** roll-offs to determine who spots whom) and getting a grasp on their daily routine, he anonymously posts their contact information on the internet and waits for Chainsaw Sue to show up. Then he tries to get the two alone in a house together so he can knock it down on them and hopefully capture one or the other.*

*(If you're wondering why he hasn't followed Sue this way—he's tried. But she's not shy about using Darkness-Shrouded and Ghost Form to change back into Maude, and Chaincycle knows how to put itself away. Though she does get stuck sneaking off to close the padlock behind it now and then.)*

*Note that if any PCs contact him behind another's back for a separate peace, he's happy to comply. If they scheming to backstab their erstwhile comrade? Hey, he just wants a hand.*

## STARGAZER'S NEXT INFERNAL DEVICE

**Body-Stealing Ring(s):** Although this is considered one 'device' it's actually a network of up to eight rings—one gold 'thief' ring and up to seven silver 'chump' rings.

Anyone who's wearing the thief ring can exchange bodies, in the style of Face/OFF, Freaky Friday, All of Me and The Case of Charles Dexter Ward. He or she can only jump into the body of someone wearing one of the chump rings, however. Doing this successfully requires a successful **Cunning Greed** roll.

(This means that the body with the gold thief ring can quickly switch back, if it knows what's going on. Due to the Cool Down flaw, it can only be activated every other round. How hard is it to wrench off a chump ring? Depends on how beefy your hands are. If you have toned, slender fingers, you can do it without a roll, before the thief gets a chance. If your hands are muscular or pudgy, however, it takes an **Open Cowardice** set to yank it off. In other words, if it's more fun to have the target immediately pull off the ring, you the GM can decide his fingers are skinny. If it creates drama and tension the other way, fat fingers force the roll.)

When the gold ring is invoked, the user gets a sense of how many options there are, but no other information. If you have no idea who's wearing Chump Ring #2, you get pot luck if you pick #2. If you're looking at someone who's wearing a chump ring, however, you know which one it is.

Swapping bodies is a major Environment Change so Stargazer only has **Generosity** 1 after completing the device. Its two flaws: Cooldown Rate and Palpably Evil. The first means that **Cunning Greed** activation roll can only be made every other round.

The second means that all the rings, thief and chump alike, repulse good people (who only have Sinister Tactics at 2 or lower), while any mortal with a Sinister Tactic of 3 or greater is infused with a creepy desire to own it. This can be resisted if there's good reason, but openly wearing any of these rings gives you a -1d penalty on all **Devious** rolls because wearers ineffably seem like they should be wearing an "I'd Rather Be Smothering Your Grandma" t-shirt. (Demons and their hosts are immune to the lure of the rings, or at least recognize it as a symptom of toxic enchantment, but they can still be targeted if they do anything as stupid as put one on.)

When people's bodies swap, they exchange everything in the **Sly-Open** segment of the character sheet, while keeping everything else as it is. (That may seem a bit of a stretch for **Generosity**, but given how much finance is conducted over the phone with passwords and identity questions... maybe not.) Demons stay with their hosts' souls.

But again, the PCs have advantages the police lack. For one thing, it's entirely possible they've seen his naked face, if they went to the mall meet. More importantly, they've got demons who respond to Melectanath, when both are active. It's also at least likely that they have access to offshore bank accounts he created, along with one or more telephone numbers.

Because he relies on his international intermediaries and his invisibility, Ben's a bit complacent about what spies call 'tradecraft.' He's driven the same car for years (a bronze-colored Honda Civic), has a modest house purchased in his own name, and he wouldn't recognize an audio bug if he stumbled across one stuck inside his dashboard.

The easiest way to find him is to stick a GPS tracker on something he owns—affordable web-based devices on the commercial market are about the size of a small garage door clicker. Slip it into his pocket, toss it in the trunk of his car, or sew it into the inside of the backpack you deliver that damn violin string in.

Tracking him back through his shady accounts requires explanations from the PCs about how they're going to do it. A **Patient Greed** roll against Difficulty 5 can let them fraud their way into his accounts over the course of days. That in turn shows them which ATMs he uses and when. Though he's fairly random about it, the ATMs are clustered close around an unassuming middle class neighborhood. Making a sketch with **Patient Knowledge** (Difficulty 3 unless there's some sort of artsy profession in play) gets them something they can show around, and **Devious Deceit** makes it possible for them to get an ID after a few days of hitting the streets. (Don't hang it up though. He'll see it and freak out.)

Catching his scent with a trained tracking dog? **Patient Espionage**. (Doing it after transforming oneself into a tracking dog is **Cunning Espionage**.) Assuming, of course, that they don't follow him invisibly, or fly overhead watching him while Darkness-Shrouded on a rainy day, or use some specific "find people or things" power built during character generation.

If they track him back to his home base, it's not hard to break in (**Cunning Greed**) but his life is really kind of... dull. No drugs, no women, a shoebox full of fifties in the bedroom but nothing really exciting or incrimi-

nating. Man, lot of pill bottles in that medicine cabinet though. Also a whole big accordion file of magazines and articles and printed-out internet interviews with Philippe Estrançor. Filed with it, though apparently unrelated, is articles of incorporation for "Feldstein's Fine Jewelry." In an envelope under the carpet in his bedroom (if one makes a **Patient Espionage** roll) is a driver's license and passport for "Stuart Feldstein." The pictures on them are of Ben.

The basement of his house has a very smooth floor painted as a chalkboard. That's where he does his device creation. He's got some weird and ugly stuff in jars—a preserved zebra fetus, a caterpillar, a cocoon and a butterfly, a donor bag of O-neg blood labeled "VIRGIN!"—but there's the teeniest bit of dust on it. He's waiting for the hair and the paw. Also waiting are seven chunky silver finger rings, with a fancy gold inlaid pattern. A similar ring of gold has the same pattern inlaid in silver.

## CHASING THAT DAMN VIOLIN STRING

How does one get a genius to voluntarily donate a violin string? **Devious Corruption** is an obvious option. Or you could use **Devious Deceit** to claim it's being donated to a charity auction, then **Devious Nurture** to sell her on the fundraiser. (Once it's in hand, 'tis but a moment's work to hand off the genuine item to Stargazer and swap in one you picked up cheap online for the auction. Once it's unstrung, who can tell the difference?)

All this assumes one knows a genius violinist, however, and the nearest one is at a conservatory a few counties over. (Her name's Aida Rankin and she's only seventeen, but she's played some serious concerts.) Determining that this performer is a genius, while another is simply very good? Could do it with **Patient Knowledge** or **Insightful Honesty**, but in either case you're looking at Difficulty 4 and a lot of time spent listening to records.

Aida herself is pretty affable. If approached by a fan who says nice things, schmoozes successfully, and asks nicely, she acquiesces. But! Schmoozing successfully may not be as simple as it sounds. She's got **Insightful** 5, so pulling the wool over her eyes with a phony compliment isn't easy, nor is misleading her



when she says “One of my strings? Whatever do you want that for?” If she gets suspicious, she just tries to get away, and as soon as she’s threatened or attacked, any string she gives becomes useless—Stargazer is quite irked, though he tries to hide it (with **Devious Deceit**—how’re your PCs’ **Insightful** scores?) and patiently explains that coercion is no good.

If Aida gets the idea that her violin string is needed for some kind of occult jiggery-pokery, she’s initially surprised and a little dubious, but characters who display superpowers to her (or just persuade with something like Impossible Beauty) can make a deal. She offers a freely given string if they beat up her ex-boyfriend. Not kill him, just... you know, make him suffer. Somewhat. A lot. Not too much. And don’t tell him why.

(The boyfriend has **Open 1/Sly 2, Courage 1, Cowardice 3**. It’s not quite impossible that they kill him by accident if they’re careless with a 4x+ set, but they can always keep him alive until help comes... if they don’t mind being there when the first-responder cops arrive.)

Another possibility is to find a nonmusical genius, give him or her a violin, and then ask for a string back. This works, surprisingly, though hopefully the excuse they give for presenting the stringed instrument and then asking politely for part of it back is something amusing. How many geniuses are there in your game’s hometown? If you go with a straightup Stanford-Binet test scorer, it’s 0.4% of the population, so you could find over a thousand just in Cincinnati. Stat-ed characters are considered “geniuses” if they have five dots in either **Patient** or **Knowledge**, but don’t tell your players that.

## SCENE FOUR: LIGHTS, CAMERA, GLAMOUR!

The final scene can come hard on the heels of the PCs delivering the severed hand and violin string, or you can put it off a little while if their self-driven plans are blowing up in interesting ways.

Eventually, however, Stargazer figures out how to get his remaining ingredients and activates his “Feldstein’s Fine Jewelry” business façade, using it to get his rings into the gift bags local merchants offer to the



visiting models. How many of the rings work? Up to you, GM, but at least three or four.

Ben attends wearing the thief ring and carrying the chump rings (at least two, possibly as many as seven). Unless intercepted by the PCs, he gets the chump rings into the gift bags. (If they do intercept him, any scuffling summons Security Goons Squad #1, and he attempts to teleport back to the parking lot.) Then he gets inside and makes another go at the bags.

Keep in mind that Ben has hidden his earth-moving amulet somewhere safe. No way is he leaving that trinket behind with his worn out aging carcass!

Maude, of course, is also present, along with her mom Phyllis (who's a big fan and her heart really goes out to poor Allon). Any kind of super-throwdown attracts her, though in that case she is (critically) lacking Chaincycle and Mister Frisky. Even if she doesn't know what's going on, she doesn't let that stop her from decking any caped troublemaker within reach. This happens even if she's been mangled. Phyllis brought her to the show because she'd been planning it for weeks and was really determined to go. She may be on crutches or have an empty sleeve stuck in her pocket, but she's there, and when you've got That Hideous Strength, it makes up for a lot. As Chainsaw Sue, she either tapes an empty glove over the missing hand or does the same with a stuffed biker boot.

Most probably, the rings make it through. Unless the PCs are profoundly on the ball at this point, Philippe and Garth each get one. Other models may get them as well, or may leave them in the bag because they're "icky." Ben, though he's aching for a new body, wants to suss out who's got which ring. Moreover, he doesn't want to have to do the modeling. He watches, either visibly as a guest or (if the PCs or Sue have messed with him) from a perch up in the shadowy rafters, concealed by the glare of the stage lights. (Note that if he gets knocked off there, it's a 50/50 chance whether he can teleport to safety before he hits the ground. What that does to his aging-but-demon-defended body is up to the GM.)

Philippe comes out and whips the crowd into an enthusiastic frenzy, except for Phyllis, who's distracted looking for Maude. (If there have been villainous hijinks, she's off in one guise or another looking for trouble. If

there haven't, yet, she's snuck off trying to get closer to the dreamboats.)

Once Ben sees Garth strut contemptuously across the catwalk, that's it. He's the one. As soon as Garth reaches the backstage, Ben swallows a dose of ipecac. (It's a chemical that makes you throw up.) Then, as it's kicking in, he makes the switch.

From here, things break down into round-by-round actions, which I fully expect the PCs to derail sooner rather than later. Still, here's the timeline for guidance.

**Round One:** What Ben doesn't know (because how could he?) is that Chainsaw Sue is waiting backstage, in full uniform, just rounding the corner to grab Garth and demand to know where Philippe is. Ben-as-Garth doesn't wait to find out what she's there for, while Melectanath panics and whips out the horns, which pretty much obligates them to fight. (Maybe he doesn't panic. Maybe he does it just because he's a jerk.) What Ben does not do in that round is take off the chump ring like he planned.

Meanwhile, a barfing Ben-bodied Garth-soul starts shouting about how his body has gone all old and slack and horrid. That's how he spends that round, before noticing the ring.

**SECURITY  
GOONS SQUAD  
#1 (4)**

*This is a group of four heavyset off-duty cops with tasers, pepper spray and (in the case of Larry, their leader) a .32 caliber drop piece. They roll 4d and have +3 Advantage.*

**SECURITY GOONS SQUAD #2 (6)**

*This is a group of six boxers-in-training with gigantic, shock-resistant D-cell flashlights even though it's broad daylight. They roll 6d and have +2 Advantage.*

**Round Two:** There are now two points of confused screaming to attract the PCs. You've got a svelte wan British male model running hysterically onto the stage, the front of his tailored velvet pants suffused with terror-urine. And you've got Ben, collapsing into a heap and moaning "I've shriveled up like a discarded Speedo..." then looking at his hand and snarling, "This is all YOUR fault, fabulous ring!"

Philippe Estrançor takes the stage, demanding silence and calm just as Ben/Garth runs out from behind the curtain with hideous darkness-tentacles writhing from his forehead. Chainsaw Sue runs (or leaps) from behind, decking him just as the tentacles vanish. Now Ben's back in his own body, and Garth's back in his. Ben's tentacles are still writhing. Garth's developing a goose egg on his forehead and Sue's about to cock-punch him into submission when Philippe grabs her hand and says "Hey, don't!" She looks up at him with starstruck awe and mutters "I thought you'd be taller."

**Round Three:** Ben teleports to the alley behind the building, (having carefully cased it beforehand), and appears—tentacles out—right in front of Security Squad #2. They're responding to the report of a disturbance in the back. Those weird tentacles freak them right out. Unless PCs intervene, they smack a point of *Courage* right off him as he tries to dodge and weave out of their way. Melectanath does turn him invisible, however.

**Round Four:** Ben puts away the tentacles and teleports back inside to where Garth and Philippe are trying to talk down Chainsaw Sue. For extra fun, if it's her limb that got chopped for the rings, Phyllis recognizes her and calls "Maude? Mauddie, you get down here right now!" and battles her way onto the stage while Sue shuffles back, embarrassed. Garth is still babbling about how he was briefly turned into an ugly old man.

**Round Five:** Ben goes visible, closes his eyes, puts his hands behind his back, leans way far forward and activates the thief ring again. This time he takes Philippe.

**Round Six:** Philippe-as-Ben crashes forward onto his face (sliding his last point off *Courage*) while Ben-as-Philippe takes off the chump ring. Security Goons #2 come in the back. Security Goons #1 converge on the area, if they're not already decimated.

**Round Seven:** Recognizing Ben's body as the teleporting dude with tentacles, Security Goons #2 fall on him. Sue, seeing a bunch of thugs descending on an obviously confused old man, fights them. She smacks one of them right into a fire alarm, setting it off, before another bludgeons Philippe-as-Ben, unintentionally killing him.

Did all that play out with your PCs standing coolly to the side? For your sake I hope not. But you can easily see how the situation could end with Ben in the body of a well-off fashion designer—not as young as he'd like, but a damn sight better than the old Ben body and with access to all kinds of media personalities to boot—with the thief ring on a cooling corpse.

Ben/Philippe might go to no small lengths to get the thief ring back, and Garth understands its power now too. In fact, the two of them might come to an agreement: Garth gets to keep the ring he has, and Philippe's ring, and the thief ring... in Philippe's body, as long as Ben gets Garth's chiseled abs and flawlessly tanned pecs. That leaves Ben the demon in a slammin' new chassis with another fifty years to play with and a new career. Garth the user not only gets to steal his boss' fame, money and life, he has irresistible-to-assholes rings that let him jump to a new life as soon as he's tired of being Philippe.

But of course, that's only what happens if the PCs don't intervene.

### PLAYTESTERS

Christopher Crossley with Sam Bumgardner, Tom Bumgardner, and David Jacovy; Caleb Stokes with Jason Ariciu, Aaron Carsten, David Dobelman, Tom Church, and Ross Payton. **CLICK HERE to listen to the RPPR playtest.**





# BETTER ANGELS

A SUPERVILLAIN ROLEPLAYING GAME  
By Greg Stolze