

EMERALD CITY KNIGHTS



CHAPTER 6: INTO THE FIRE

ZNGAW
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**MUTANTS &
MASTERMINDS**

THIRD EDITION

INTO THE FIRE

Into the Fire is the sixth and final chapter of the *Emerald City Knights*, the first *Heroes' Journey* series for Mutants & Masterminds, Third Edition. The adventure is designed for a group of three to six PL10 heroes, but can easily be adjusted for a different number of characters or power level.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Having become Emerald City's *de facto* defenders following the so-called "Silver Storm" the heroes have discovered the Storm was the work of an alien artificial intelligence known as Tellax. Tellax is able to control the super-powered "stormers" created by its microscopic nanites. With the assistance of their ally and patron, Maximillian Mars, the heroes have constructed a prototype jamming device to override Tellax's control. Mars is already familiar with the alien nanotechnology, having used a sample of it to become the super-villain known as "The Commander" some years ago, before his eventual retirement.

At the end of the previous adventure, just as the heroes are attempting to complete the jamming device, Tellax transports them to a distant alien world. The artificial intelligence wants the heroes to witness first-hand the reason for the Silver Storm and Tellax's efforts to date: the onslaught of the cosmic menace Collapsar the Devourer!

Confronted by the inhabitants of the planet, the heroes learn they are on Magna-Lor, the capitol world of the Lor Republic. There is a state of emergency, as a Lor fleet is confronting a threat in space near the planet, and Republic soldiers are on alert for a possible invasion. They naturally take the heroes to be such invaders and attempt to arrest them. Whether they go quietly or not is up to them.

In either case, the heroes appear before the Supreme Praetor of the Lor Republic and gathered members of the Senate, and learn of the threat looming in the outer reaches of the Magna-Lor system. They also have the opportunity to prevent the assassination of the Praetor at the hands of a spy, a Grue shapeshifter, ancient enemies of the Lor. It appears the Grue have helped to lure Collapsar to Magna-Lor.

Before the heroes can deal with this revelation, a figure appears in the Lor Senate chamber: Orizon, the Voice of Collapsar, heralds the arrival of his master and the imminent doom of Magna-Lor. All works of those called the Preservers will be erased from the cosmos so the final Unmaking of All can begin. The heroes have the opportunity to confront Orizon, but his vast cosmic powers make him a formidable opponent.

Win or lose, the heroes are drawn back to Earth so Tellax can confirm all they have seen and heard on Magna-Lor. The capitol of the Republic is doomed. Even a race as advanced and powerful as the Lor cannot resist Collapsar. The alien computer tells the heroes how the Preservers created it as a means of stopping Collapsar, and how it intends to fulfill

its purpose by completing the Preservers' work by turning all of humanity into a super-powered army under its guidance! The heroes can be valuable allies in the coming battle to save the universe, or else they can choose to be the latest to fall in the struggle against the darkness.

This leaves the heroes with the choice: allow Tellax to go through with its plan, forever altering human civilization and killing off a substantial fraction of Earth's populace to build its army, or else try to complete their jamming device to stop Tellax, knowing that the Preserver machine may be the last hope of standing against the greater threat of Collapsar. The fate of the world—perhaps the universe—hangs in the balance!

SCENE 1: LOR WORLD

Scene Type: Combat/Roleplaying

Events in **Into the Fire** pick up right where **Chapter 5: Rise of the Masterminds** left off:

The tide of battle appears to be going in your favor. The stormers are no match for your coordinated onslaught and you've managed to keep hold of both Mars and his alien artifact. Suddenly, there's a flash of blinding light. You feel your stomach lurch and a cool wind wash over you.

When your senses clear and take a look around, you realize you're no longer where you were. The MarsTech campus is gone, replaced by an alien cityscape. Impossibly tall spires soar up all around the broad plaza where you stand. Graceful ramps connect them at different levels and balconies look out into a night sky covered with unfamiliar, flickering stars. You realize some of those flashing lights in the dark heavens are not stars at all, but the flares of powerful weapons, and of explosions.

Then the muttering and call of voices in an unfamiliar language draw your attention back to your immediate surroundings, as a number of people in the plaza slowly back away from you. Some look human, save for the occasional pale green or blue hair, while others have pale green or blue skin, or small antennae or pointed ears. All are wearing expressions of concern, some glancing or pointing upwards and then back down at you.

That's when a group of about a dozen men and women push their way through the retreating knots of people. You may not understand the markings on their uniforms or the words barked at you, but you definitely understand the tone and the gun-like weapons leveled in your direction.



Give each of the players a hero point (in addition to the one they got before the adventure began). Although they don't know it yet, the heroes have just been transported across light years to the capitol world of the Lor Republic, which is presently under attack. Their sudden and unexplained appearance in a plaza near the Republic Senate has drawn the attention of the authorities, and a detachment of Lor troops moves in to detain them for questioning, assuming their presence is in some way connected to the attack.

ROLEPLAYING THE LOR

The Lor are normally a fairly cosmopolitan race, with a civilization spanning many worlds and sub-cultures. These are far from normal circumstances, however. With the very heart of their Republic under attack, the Lor are understandably edgy. They are also a warrior-minded people and—after centuries of dealing with the shapeshifting Grue—more than a touch paranoid.

The Lor soldiers immediately on the scene are already keyed-up by the events going on high above the planet. Their orders are to detain the strangers, and that is exactly what they intend to do. They have no idea how much of a threat the heroes may pose, so they are inclined to shoot first and ask questions later if the intruders make any sudden or hostile moves. What is more, the Lor do not understand any Earth languages, at least initially, so unless one of the heroes has a suitable Comprehend effect, they can only communicate with the Lor using simple gestures and pantomime.

Once lines of communication are open, the Lor are more amiable, although still somewhat suspicious. They know of Earth, having some contact, and think highly of some of Earth's heroes (like Daedalus of the Freedom League) even though they consider Earth a primitive world. So long as the heroes behave honorably, the Lor treat them in kind. If they assist in thwarting the Grue plot (see **Scene 2**), then the Lor are even more inclined to trust the heroes (for as long as their brief relationship lasts).

KEY POINTS

As this may well be the heroes first visit to an alien world, there are a number of things to note:

- The Lor are an advanced civilization with star-travel, energy weapons, force fields, and similar technology, along with a caste with psionic powers, and yet they are still very concerned by whatever is happening, almost to the point of panic.
- A majority of the Lor could easily pass for Earth humans, surely a strange coincidence in a cosmos so filled with life. If any of the heroes muse about it out loud, one of the Lor tells them some believe Earth is a lost Lor colony world. (In fact, the opposite is true: the Lor were “seeded” from human genetic stock by the Preservers.)
- By whatever measure the heroes have at their disposal, what they are experiencing is *not* an illusion, hallucination, or some other deception. They really are where they appear to be, *very* far away from Earth.

TACTICS

The Lor soldiers move in to try and surround the heroes, leveling their weapons at them and calling for them to surrender (in a language the heroes most likely do not understand). If the heroes do not respond, or respond in any way that appears intent on violence or escape, the soldiers open fire. Their blaster weapons are set for “stun” (that is, they do *not* attempt to “Go for the kill,” see the **Death** sidebar in the *M&M Hero’s Handbook*, page 199).

The Lor soldiers are well-trained: if their initial volley fails to down any of the heroes, they quickly shift to using Team Checks (*M&M*, page 16) to try and take out the most dangerous looking opponents, particularly ones with obvious or showy powers. They spread out enough so area effects cannot hit all of them at once (at least not without hitting some of the heroes as well) and they use their communicators to call for backup.

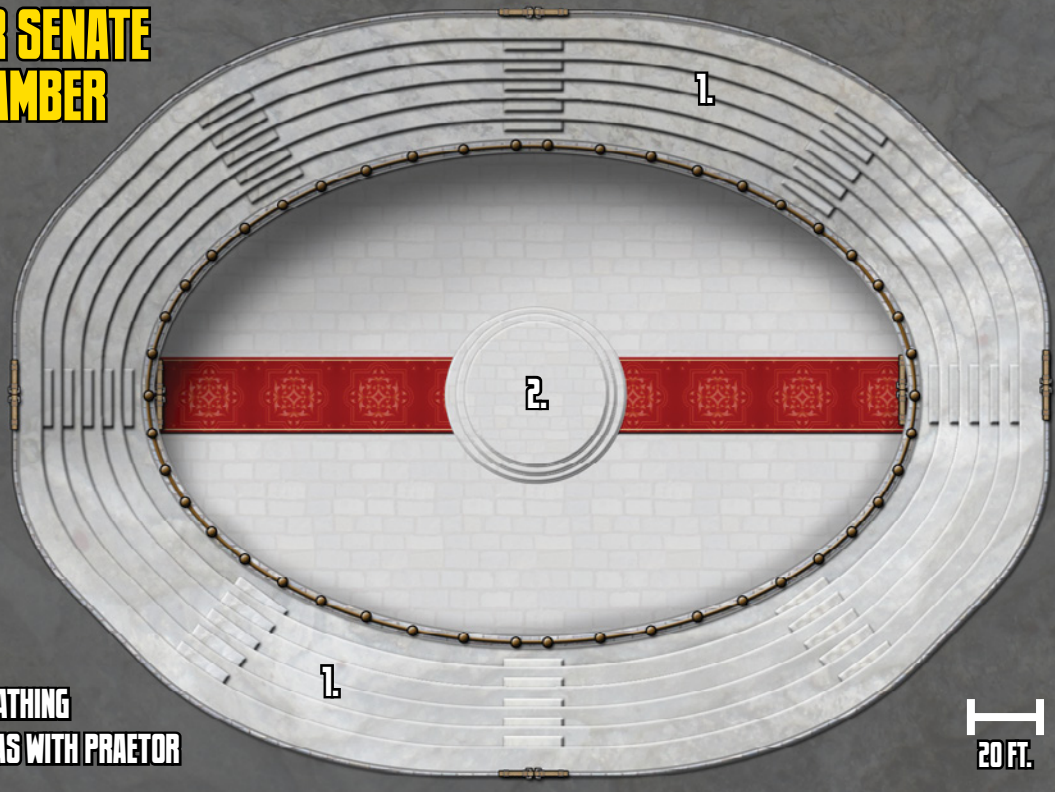
Run the fight for a few rounds, giving the players a chance to strut their stuff against the Lor soldiers. Chances are they won’t avoid a fight and, while outnumbered, the heroes greatly outclass the Lor. If they absolutely decimate the soldiers, bring in some reinforcements, perhaps even a grav-tank (use the tank stats from page 172 of the *Hero’s Handbook*, but change the descriptor for the main gun so it’s a blaster weapon and describe it as hovering on anti-gravity pods (though it still has the Speed power, not actual Flight).

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Keep the following environmental factors in mind during the confrontation with the Lor:

- Although it is nighttime near the Senate when the heroes arrive, the area is well-lit with artificial light sources, so everyone can see clearly. The plaza is a wide, open area with few shadows for sneaky heroes to hide in.
- Most of the surrounding structures are made of stone or stone-like materials with Toughness 10. Super-strong heroes can find a few things around the plaza big and heavy enough to wield as weapons: sculptures, benches, and so forth, all Toughness 10 objects.
- Although the Lor civilians quickly clear out when the heroes first appear, there are enough people nearby that a missed attack check or a target flung away from the battle could endanger innocent lives (smashing a bridge, building support, or the like). This gives the heroes a chance to leap to the rescue, further establishing with the Lor that they mean no harm.
- Fortunately, since the Lor are of human origin, Magna-Lor has an Earth-like environment (gravity, temperature, atmosphere, and so forth) such that the heroes need not be concerned about any of these things. Don’t even bother to mention them unless one of the players asks.

LOR SENATE CHAMBER



1. SEATING
2. DIAS WITH PRAETOR

20 FT.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

Two Lor characters are important to this scene.

The first is **Captain Kan-Ro**, the officer in charge of the soldiers confronting the heroes. He is a no-nonsense soldier loyal to the Republic, if a bit limited in his thinking. Frustrated by his inability to do anything about what is happening on and around Magna-Lor, Captain Ro is quick to take action against the heroes, but also quick to halt hostilities when he realizes his mistake.

The other is **EI-Va**, a Lor mentat, one of the small percentage of the population with functional psionic abilities. Her telepathy allows her to perceive the heroes are not a threat and to establish communication with them. She serves as their guide and translator on Magna-Lor.

See the **Heroes & Villains** section at the end of the adventure for details on these characters as well as the Lor soldiers.

OUTCOME

Once the heroes are starting to trounce the Lor soldiers (or vice versa, if the dice truly are not with the players), read the following aloud to the players:

"STOP!" yells a voice inside your head, so loudly that you wince. Everyone else clearly "hears" it as well, as the fight comes to a sudden, but uncertain, halt.

A woman with pale green skin, black hair flowing from underneath a kind of skullcap, stands at one end of the plaza, flanked by four more uniformed soldiers. Her short cape flutters slightly in the cool night breeze as she lowers one outstretched hand.

"Lower your weapons," comes the voice in your mind once again as her eyes narrow. "I sense these... strangers are not connected to the arrival of the Devourer."

The appearance of Lor mentat EI-Va puts an end to the hostilities, assuming the heroes agree. EI-Va sets up a telepathic translation field, allowing the heroes to understand the Loran language and communicate freely; the Lor do not suddenly start speaking English, it's just that the heroes sudden begin understanding what they are saying.

EI-Va takes the lead in introducing herself and explaining to the heroes where they are. Hopefully, they respond in kind. Once they have established their *bona fides*, the Lor mentat asks the heroes to accompany her to the Senate Chamber. As they can see, Magna-Lor is under attack, but it may be that the heroes can help.

If the heroes ask about returning to Earth, EI-Va tells them no ships can be spared at this time but, once the crisis is past, she is sure a hyperspace vessel can be

assigned to bring them home. Dangle this opportunity in front of the players to encourage them to cooperate with the Lor, if necessary.

REWARDS

Assuming the heroes manage to establish peaceful contact with EI-Va and overcome their initial misunderstanding with the Lor, award each player a hero point, in addition to any awards for complications during the scene.

SCENE 2: TROUBLE WITH GRUE

Scene Type: Roleplaying/Challenge

In this scene, the heroes meet Lor Supreme Praetor Ram-Lev and find out what is happening in the Magna-Lor system and how it relates to events back in Emerald City on Earth. They also have the opportunity to thwart a Grue plot against the Lor Republic.

EI-Va and Captain Kan-Ro escort the heroes from the plaza where they appeared (or wherever the fight in **Scene 1** ended) to the Republic Senate, a massive structure like a great arena, dominating the city skyline. There, they are brought into the presence of members of the Lor Senate, presided over by Supreme Praetor Ram-Lev of the Republic. The vaulted Senate chamber is in chaos as the heroes enter, Senators and others loudly arguing about what should be done, with the Praetor calling for order. The arrival of the heroes provides focus and, suddenly, all eyes are upon them.

ROLEPLAYING PRAETOR RAM-LEV

After a moment of silence in the Senate chamber, read or paraphrase the following out loud to the players:

The Praetor glances from EI-Va to you, saying, "I am informed that you are visitors from the planet Earth. The Lor Republic has considered others from Earth valued allies and friends in the past. I regret the circumstances of your arrival, as none of us may survive the threat we now face."

Ram-Lev is resolute and determined, but does not hold out much hope. He has heard how poorly the Lor fleet fares in space high overhead, and knows what follows behind the force currently decimating his best battle-ships. There is no time to evacuate, although an evacuation is still underway. Old soldier that he is, Ram-Lev intends to remain and coordinate the defense of Magna-Lor until all hope is exhausted. Given past experience with Earth heroes such as Daedalus, he allows himself a small glimmer of hope at the arrival of these new heroes.

If the heroes ask about the threat, or simply allow the Praetor to continue speaking, read the following to the players:

"Our people have a legend that the gods descended from the stars to create life on our home world, Lor-Van. They taught the people the arts and crafts of civilization: agriculture, architecture, mathematics, and more. It was said the star-gods created life to atone for also creating death, which they bound in a black pit beyond the stars. Still, their failing ensured that all they created was mortal and passed from the world with time.

"Although we left such quaint myths behind millennia ago, our travels out amongst the stars have taught us of a power of death and destruction, bound within a black pit deeper and darker than any can imagine. Its names are many, spoken in fearful whispers throughout the cosmos: the Hungry Darkness, the Endless Pit, the Stargrave... Collapsar, the Devourer.

"We long thought the Devourer a myth as well, and what evidence might such a force leave behind, save for the dust of shattered worlds, and the ashes of extinguished stars? But of late, word has reached us of a force moving through the galaxy, leaving devastation in its wake. Collapsar is real, is coming, and I can only pray that the star-gods are real as well, and have not entirely forsaken us."

At this point the Senate chamber breaks out in a loud babble of conversation again, as the Praetor calls for order.

Roll secret Perception checks for the heroes (DC 18) or simply tell the player of the hero with the highest Perception bonus about the minor Senate functionary near the dais who appears to reach into *his own chest* to withdraw some sort of weapon that he raises towards the Praetor!

KEY POINTS

Establish the following points in this scene:

- Collapsar is a cosmic force of destruction that "devours" entire planets and star systems. It is capable of moving through space at hyper-light speeds.
- Collapsar appears to be some kind of "living singularity"—a black hole surrounded by a "containment cloud" of unknown composition and origin. The cloud contains and directs the black hole's massive gravitational power. When the cloud parts and Collapsar opens its "maw" the black hole swallows everything nearby: matter, energy... entire planets and stars.
- The Lor "star-gods" (the Preservers) created some safeguards against Collapsar, but those safeguards have failed.
- The shapeshifting Grue and the humanoid Lor have been in conflict for centuries, but largely at a stalemate.

TACTICS

Gul-Sar, a minor member of the Praetor's personal staff is, in fact, a "sleeper" agent of the shapeshifting Grue, an alien race long at war with the Lor Republic. Telepathically conditioned with a "cover" identity to hide from Lor mentats, the Grue activates at this opportune moment to eliminate the Praetor.

All of the players may roll initiative checks. Only those who succeeded on the Perception check to notice the Grue may act during the surprise round. If they manage to beat the Grue on initiative, they have an opportunity to disarm him, use their Interpose advantage, or move Praetor Ram-Lev out of harm's way. Otherwise, the Grue shoots the Praetor on his first round, fatally wounding him (don't bother to roll unless you want to leave this outcome to chance). The Grue fights to fend off the heroes, assuming the form of a multi-armed, clawed humanoid to attack, using effects like Elongation, Insubstantial (rank 1), and Shrinking to escape.

Once he has fulfilled his mission of assassination, the Grue attempts to flee. He may shapeshift into a small flying creature or insect to evade the heroes, or assume another humanoid form to disappear into the chaotic crowd in the Senate chamber. He does not hesitate to take a hostage, if he thinks it will aid his escape. Now that the Grue has revealed himself, Ell-Va's mental powers can potentially pick him out of a crowd: roll a Perception check for her (DC 20) if you want her to assist the heroes. Ultimately, the Grue simply intends to survive long enough to ensure the downfall of Magna-Lor; a part of the group-mind of the Grue Unity, the metamorph has no real individual identity or survival instincts.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The Republic Senate Chamber is a massive, arena-like room with rising rings of auditorium seating around a wide central floor. In the midst of the floor is a raised dais where the Praetor sits and stands, along with anyone else addressing the entire assembly. Audio-visual amplifiers on the dais allow everyone in the room to clearly see and hear what goes on there (keep this in mind for any exchanges between the wounded Ram-Lev and the heroes).

The structural components of the chamber are stone-like composites similar to the other Lor buildings (Toughness 10). Heroes looking for makeshift weapons can uproot a decorative column or bench (Strength 5 minimum). The columns also provide useful cover (see *Hero's Handbook*, page 193).

Keep in mind there are hundreds of Lor in the chamber when the heroes arrive. Having a missed attack collapse part of the roof or smash a support for the seating makes a suitable complication to distract the heroes. Area attacks are ill-advised, and the Grue takes full advantage of the crowd and the confusion in attempting to escape.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

Supreme Praetor Ram-Lev of the Lor Republic has been the elected ruler of his people for many years. He worked his way up through the ranks of the military as a soldier and later officer, commanding space-vessels in battle, before finding his way into the political arena. He still carries himself like a soldier and commander and is much beloved and respected amongst the Lor military. The Praetor is a practical man, but also a proud one. He firmly believes the Republic is the greatest civilization in known space, and would willingly die to defend it. He finds the negotiations and compromises of politics tiresome, but dedication to his work keeps him going.

Gul-Sar, a minor functionary in the Praetor's staff (essentially a kind of administrative assistant) is in fact a shape-shifting Grue sleeper agent. He is largely hidden in the background until his programming activates and he moves against the Praetor.

OUTCOME

If the Grue assassin escapes, the Republic Guard immediately begins a search, but a lone shapeshifter is about to become the least of their concerns (see **Scene 3**). If the heroes manage to capture the Grue, the alien begins to glow from within, reddish light pouring from its eyes and under its skin. The heroes have just one round to act before the assassin self-destructs in a Burst Area Damage 9 effect. No one will learn anything from this agent of the Grue.

Praetor Ram-Lev is mortally wounded. Although Lor medics are rushing to his aid, they are too late to save him. A hero with a Healing effect could do so; a DC 10 Healing check stabilizes him, four or more degrees of success (a check result of 25 or more) restores him to complete health. If he dies, the Praetor grasps the hand of the nearest hero and gasps out, "Please... help my people," and then is gone.

REWARDS

Heroes who act selflessly to try to save Praetor Ram-Lev and others in the Senate chamber—leaping in front of the assassin's attack or shielding against his self-destruct—earn their players a hero point. If the heroes have not already won over the Lor, their efforts to save Ram-Lev and capture the Grue spy do so.

Although it is not part of the adventure, if it suits your own series, Ram-Lev's gratitude may have an additional effect on one or more heroes. Perhaps the Praetor passes along some psychic or energetic "gift" as well. It's a great opportunity to justify a player spending some earned power points on new traits for a hero, or even a significant reallocation of the hero's points (see **Reallocating Power Points**, *Hero's Handbook*, page 26).



SCENE 3: ORIZON EVENT

Scene Type: Combat

The Voice of the Void, Herald of the Devourer, Orizon arrives in the Lor Senate Chamber to pronounce the doom of Magna-Lor and all those who dwell upon it. He is momentarily taken aback by the presence of the heroes, who reek of Preserver influence to his cosmic senses. Orizon takes it upon himself to learn more about these strangers before his master arrives to wipe them out. The heroes get a chance to talk with Orizon, potentially learning more about Collapsar, and may well have to fight him. They quickly learn the Voice of the Void is the most powerful foe they have faced short of Tellax.

Read the following aloud to the players:

Suddenly, a dull orange light emanates from the high, domed ceiling of the Senate chamber. It spreads outward and the structure of the ceiling and roof dissolve into glowing particles like cinders blowing on the wind. The night sky over Magna-Lor is visible behind the silhouette of a slim, tall figure, surrounded by a glowing reddish aura as he floats gently downwards.

He could almost be taken for a statue, his skin grey and smooth as marble, hairless, with beetled brows over the glowing red pits of his eyes, a black circle on his brow like a caste mark. A red and black

sash drapes across one shoulder, leaving the other bare, wrapped around him in a toga-like garment. In one hand, he carries a kind of crooked staff, like that of the shepherd, save for the glowing point of red light held in the hollow of its curved head, matching the glow of its bearer's eyes. He speaks in a low, firm voice that nonetheless cuts through the room like a knife, easily heard by all.

"People of Magna-Lor! I am Orizon, the Voice of the Void, He Who Walks Before the Storm. I come at the behest of my master to tell you that your time is at an end. This world is tainted and will soon be no more. Make peace with whatever illusions you hold dear. So speaks Collapsar the Claimer!"

ROLEPLAYING ORIZON

Collapsar's herald speaks with a religious fervor about his master's holy mission to cleanse the cosmos and restore perfect order. Of course, Collapsar's concept of order is crushing all of reality into an infinitely dense, timeless singularity, essentially undoing everything since the Big Bang, which he considers nothing more than an anomaly to be corrected.

Speaking of which, once he notices the heroes (or they call attention to themselves), Orizon does not take well to them. "You!" he says. "You are tainted by the Corruptors, those who sought to interfere with the natural order of



entropy!" His eyes blaze brighter with fury. "You will be cleansed even before this world is erased from the darkness!" So saying, he attacks.

Orizon is a talkative sort, and the heroes can engage him in conversation even while they are trying to keep him from turning them into cosmic dust. He rants and raves about how the Corruptors, in their arrogance, tried to interfere with the natural course of events. The cosmos is a flaw and chaotic disturbance in the perfect order. Only when Collapsar has purged all traces of the Corruptors and their work can he complete his destiny, to return everything to the silence and stillness of singularity.

KEY POINTS

Establish the following points in this scene:

- Orizon is a *very* powerful opponent. He has just taken out a small Lor fleet single-handedly and is still fully capable of fighting (and likely beating) the heroes as well. The players should also be keenly aware that, powerful as he is, Orizon is just the henchman of the true threat.
- Collapsar is on a mission to eradicate all remaining traces of its ancient enemies, the so-called Corruptors, essentially by consuming whole planets and star systems. Once that is done, he will expand his reach to consume the entire *universe*.
- The "Corruptors" Orizon refers to are actually the Preservers. Heroes (and players) may not initially understand that. If that's the case with your players, make it clear to them. If you can do so "in character," great! If not, do it out of character. That small detail is important and will head off confusion.

TACTICS

Given his tremendous power, Orizon is not much of one for tactics. He does, however like the sound of his own voice (and the idea of being the Voice of the Void), so he tends towards attacks which incapacitate or immobilize foes, allowing him to rant at them about the inevitable end of everything before he finally destroys them. Thus Orizon leads off with Affliction effects, animating or transmuting raw materials around the heroes to entrap them, even turning the air itself into a dense crystalline material. He may also strike them with stun bolts of cosmic Zero Power.

If the heroes manage to actually hurt him, on the other hand, all bets are off and Orizon goes for direct Damage effects, blasting his foes with Zero Power force bolts of crimson lightning. Even then, he doesn't immediately kill the heroes; he prefers to blast his foes into submission, then rant over their helpless forms before administering the final blow. Fortunately for the heroes, it won't come to that (see **Outcome**).

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

This scene features the same environmental factors as **Scene 2**, unless the heroes deliberately take the fight

with Orizon elsewhere. That may be wise, given the innocent people (and politicians) still in the Republic Senate chamber with them. The Lor attempt to flee, but collapsing exits may block them and give the heroes additional things to worry about.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

This scene is a great opportunity for **Captain Kan-Ro** or **Eli-Va** to sacrifice themselves to save the heroes. If the dice are truly against the players, or you simply want to up the drama level, have one of the heroes' newfound Lor allies jump in front of one of Orizon's cosmic blasts, pushing a hero aside at the last second. The Lor characters are pretty much doomed anyway, so you might as well give them a heroic ending the players will remember. It also gives them even more reason to dislike both Orizon and his distant master, to say nothing of Tellax for putting them in this situation.

Information on Orizon is at the end of this chapter in the **Heroes & Villains** section.

OUTCOME

Speaking of Tellax, the manipulative AI has been monitoring the heroes on Magna-Lor, providing a show for the captive Maximillian Mars. As it becomes clear Orizon is going to destroy the heroes, Mars relents and gives in to Tellax's demands, so long as it brings them back. A spatial-warp field transports the heroes from Magna-Lor at the last instant, perhaps right before Orizon is able to finish them off. The conscious heroes see a bright flash of light, the same that sent them away from Earth, and suddenly they are back.

REWARDS

Merely surviving the excursion on Magna-Lor may seem like reward enough, but give each of the players a hero point at the conclusion of this scene, in addition to any they may have earned from complications and heroic actions. They're going to need all the resources they can get going into the final challenge of this adventure and the *Emerald City Knights* series!

SCENE 4: TAKEN TO TELLAX

Scene Type: Challenge/Combat

The heroes return to Earth to find Tellax, installed in the form of a giant robot, standing astride Council Island in the Albion River north of Emerald City. The AI is preparing to unleash a worldwide version of the Silver Storm, having placed the heroes in danger on Magna-Lor to convince Max Mars to cooperate and, possibly, win him and his allies over to Tellax's cause. Unbeknownst to the AI, Mars and the heroes have a final ace they can play—the nanite jammer—provided they get the opportunity to complete and activate it, and choose to eliminate what may turn out to be the universe's best hope of standing against Collapsar.



Read the following aloud to the players:

In the same blinding flash of light that sent you away, you reappear back on Earth, but not where you left!

Instead, you stand on a rocky outcropping overlooking the Albion River north of Emerald City. You can see the skyline spread out to the south and west of you, what immediately captures your attention, however, is the towering, silvery form of the giant standing close by, almost directly in front of a main support for the Bay Bridge, casting you all in its shadow. It must be almost a hundred feet tall! Between its outstretched hands is a swirling, silvery cloud, shot through with flickers of blue-white lightning, all too familiar in form—it's like the Silver Storm in miniature, held captured between those massive, outstretched hands.

"Welcome, protectors," the robot says in a voice that echoes across the island. "I am Tellax, the Redeemer. Now you have seen that we have much in common. Just as you protect this small corner of your world, so do I seek to protect this world and all others from the doom known as Collapsar the Devourer."

Within the silvery cloud, an image appears of an alien world seen from space, a world covered with the signs and lights of civilization. Magna-Lor,

the world you just came from, the capital of the Lor Republic. Over the curve of its horizon, a dark cloud spreads out, blotting out the stars, tinged with red at the edges. The cloud seems to part and the planet shudders. Clouds wisp away as its atmosphere is torn from it. Debris and even the waters of its oceans pour into the swirling black hole at the center of the dark cloud. The image of a face with burning eyes appears over the planet as it begins to break up, fragments of whole continents tearing away before the vision Tellax shows you mercifully fades.

"I was created for this purpose and now, after far too long, my purpose will be fulfilled. My technology will spread out across this world, activating the latent potential my creators implanted within humanity's ancient ancestors—still there to this day, as my test confirmed. Just as those in your city were transformed, so will the rest of humanity be transformed, to become the powerful army I will lead against Orizon and his master, to end the threat of Collapsar forever!

"You have proven capable and courageous protectors using your own abilities. You would be useful allies, if you are willing to join my cause. I can use the technology at my disposal to augment your existing abilities to make you more capable. What do you wish?"

ROLEPLAYING TELLAX

Tellax is more than capable of multitasking and willing to talk to the heroes while completing the programming and preparation of the nanite cloud. Feel free to let them interact as the players wish.

There is nothing the heroes can do to convince Tellax to abandon its course of action. Appealing to the AI's sense of mercy or morality is useless: it considers its actions entirely justified by a cold-blooded risk-benefit analysis. If sacrificing *all* of Earth's population was necessary to stop Collapsar, Tellax would do it, figuring it would still save countless trillions of other beings. If it fails to stop the Devourer, it reasons, then it won't matter anyway, since the cosmos will be doomed.

Maximillian Mars is also present on Council Island with the nearly complete nanite jammer. Tellax transported him, the stormers, and most of the contents of the MarsTech vault here when it transported the heroes to Magna-Lor. Tellax used the heroes' plight to force Mars to agree to "release" his connection to the AI's technology. The heroes may be touched by their ally's willingness to sacrifice to save them or outraged by how Mars placed their lives above those of everyone else on Earth (or both!). Still, Mars hopes to complete the jammer and use it before Tellax can unleash another Silver Storm.

If the heroes agree to join Tellax (sincerely or hoping to trick it in some fashion), the AI tells them to await nearby: its next task will be to alter and further empower them. In this case, Mars may attempt to use the jammer on his own (see **Tactics**). If the heroes refuse Tellax's offer, the AI largely ignores them, certain they can do nothing to stop it. If the heroes' refusal is overly defiant (such as "We'll fight you to the very end!") or outright violent (going right for attacking Tellax) then the AI commands its stormer minions to deal with the heroes. It only takes a direct hand when necessary to protect itself.

Tellax is coldly arrogant and becomes more so the more the heroes defy it. How *dare* such limited, short-sighted beings question the flawless creation of the Preservers? Their foolish and emotion-laden attitudes cannot be allowed to doom the entire cosmos!

If the heroes choose to defy Tellax, despite the odds, give each player a hero point; they're going to need them!

KEY POINTS

This scene is about making decisions and taking action rather than imparting information to the players and their characters. Still, keep in mind the following things to make clear as the players choose their course of action:

- Mars is inclined towards using the jammer to put a stop to Tellax's plans, even knowing what he knows about the AI and its purpose. Still, the heroes can convince him otherwise, if they strongly take the opposite position.
- If Tellax is allowed to unleash a new Silver Storm, thousands, if not millions, of people will die as a result. It may create millions of new superhuman stormers, but the side effects will devastate the world and potentially end civilization as it has been, to say nothing of placing all those new stormers under Tellax's mental control.
- Tellax isn't going to be talked out of doing what it is programmed to do, and it is right that it may well be the best defense the cosmos has against the threat posed by Collapsar. By defeating Tellax, the heroes may be trading one problem for an even bigger one down the line.

TACTICS

Unless the players come up with a particularly clever alternative plan, the heroes' only real chance of defeating Tellax relies on completing the nanite jammer and activating it. Doing so is a DC 20 challenge requiring five degrees of successes before three degrees of failure (see the **Why a Challenge?** sidebar). Some of the potential traits the heroes can use to achieve the needed successes include:

- **Skills:** Particularly Technology or suitable Expertise skill checks. However, things like interaction skill checks may also provide assistance by obscuring what the other characters are doing from Tellax's attention, for example.
- **Powers:** Certain power rank checks may also assist in the process, particularly powers involving the control or creation of technology, providing concealment for the other characters' activities, or providing the necessary energy or carrier frequency for the jammer. Improvise these as needed. For example, if there's an electricity controlling hero, then a check of that hero's power may be needed to help energize the jammer.

Mars generally provides assistance (see **Team Checks**, *Hero's Handbook*, page 16) rather than taking the lead, unless *none* of the heroes have the capabilities of completing work on the jammer. If you want to add an additional complication, you can have a force blast from Tellax (or an attack from one of its stormers) knock Mars for a loop and leave him sprawled out on the ground, unconscious at the very least, and of no further help to the heroes (see **The Future of Mars** for more).

WHY A CHALLENGE?

Completing the nanite jammer is being treated as a challenge as opposed to being handled by the invention or jury-rigging rules because of the circumstances. The heroes aren't in their workshop or lab, so they have to make due. Plus, it allows for all the heroes to lend a hand if they can come up with a reasonable way to apply one of their skills instead of sitting out while the tech-heads go at it. Finally, it's more exciting to handle it as a challenge.



Unless the heroes explicitly take steps to hide what they are doing from Tellax, the AI quickly notices; the characters get one round to make their challenge check(s) before Tellax orders the stormers to stop them. Then the heroes have to divide their efforts: some working on the jammer while the others fight the stormers and run interference, holding them off long enough to get the job done.

As in prior scenes, the stormers—under Tellax’s control and direction—aren’t overly aware, but they do work together well and may use team checks or maneuvers like team attacks (see *Hero’s Handbook*, page 199) to try and overwhelm more powerful heroes. They almost certainly outnumber the heroes, and you are free to include any stormers from the previous *Emerald City Knights* adventures or the *Threat Report* series from Green Ronin in this final scene. Assume Tellax or its mind-controlled minions broke other stormers out of prison or whatnot to ensure their presence. You can even pull archetypes from the *Hero’s Handbook* and use them as stormers the heroes have not even encountered yet, or randomly create some using the tables in the *M&M Gamemaster’s Kit*.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Council Island is lightly forested and rocky, providing heroes with trees and boulders to use as makeshift weapons, if they wish. The surrounding waters of the Albian River may be of assistance to aquatic or water-controlling heroes, while the outdoors may aid weather-controllers or animal summoners. The island is inhabited: it’s several miles long and the mid-point of the bridge spanning the Albian River. Several thousand people call

the island home, have vacation homes, or work there. It may be day or night, depending on when the heroes entered the MarsTech vault in **Chapter 5** and how long they spent on Magna-Lor before Tellax brought them back to Earth. Take the timing into account, but don’t worry overly much about things like lighting: Tellax puts out enough energy to light up the island and be visible for miles.

Tellax’s tractor beam and hyperspatial warp have brought along enough of the hardware from the MarsTech vault to be useful to the heroes finishing the jammer. No need to penalize them for lack of equipment, that’s already been taken into account for the high challenge difficulty.

OUTCOME

This scene (and the whole *Emerald City Knights* series) can end in one of two ways: either the heroes manage to thwart Tellax’s ambitions and overcome the alien AI, or they do not. Either outcome has significant repercussions.

THE HEROES WIN

If the heroes complete the challenge to activate the nanite jammer, it sends out a powerful carrier wave and the following occurs:

- Tellax’s control over the stormers is disrupted, and the active nanites allowing the control in the first place are neutralized and begin breaking down. The stormers all regain consciousness. Most of them—especially the escaped criminals—try and make a

run for it. The heroes may decide to pursue some of them, or let them go for now and deal with them later. Neutral or more heroically inclined stormers may stick around to help out, and this scene is a good opportunity for a stormer to have a change of heart, if you're looking to have one switch sides.

- The building Silver Storm in Tellax's hands dissipates, blown apart by the disruption wave. The nanites within it break down harmlessly with no effect. If you want to unleash a *limited* second Silver Storm to create more stormers in the Emerald City area, you can have Tellax release the expanding nanite cloud just before the heroes activate the jammer. The storm hits the bridge and the Emerald City waterfront, affecting some of the people there, and then the jammer dissipates it before it can spread any further.
- The jammer causes a severe disruption of Tellax's systems, which are based on the same nanotechnology. In particular, Tellax "rejects" the portion of its tech reclaimed from Max Mars, separating it from its overall form (if the heroes try to search out this rejected piece of technology, they can't find it). Sparks and energy arcs crackle around the giant robot, until Tellax is forced to abandon it. A silvery stream of energy shoots skyward in a blazing bolt, transmitting the AI's program back to its orbiting vessel and Tellax flees Earth.

The peal of thunder from Tellax's escape dies away and the hole punched through the clouds by the transmission beams spreads out wider and wider, clearing the skies over Emerald City. Tellax's abandoned robotic shell stands frozen and silent on the island beside the bridge, looking towards the city skyline. Emerald City—and the world—are safe, for now.

TELLAX WINS

If the heroes are unsuccessful in activating the jammer in time, and you choose not to bring in a last-minute rescue (see **Sending in the Cavalry**), prepare to run a very different M&M series!

If Tellax is able to unleash a worldwide Silver Storm, it spreads out rapidly, engulfing all of Emerald City in just moments. Within hours, it covers the entire world. The effects are like the day on Yellow Brick Row described in the **Prologue** of *Emerald City Knights* on a massive scale. A significant percentage of the population gains super-powers, but many also acquire bizarre mutations or are driven mad by their transformation. A significant percentage also die from transformations gone wrong or just the strain to body and mind. The sheer chaos of the storm causes massive damage and disruptions worldwide. Almost none of this is likely to matter to those affected, however, since they also fall under the mental control of Tellax.

If the heroes manage to activate their jammer *after* the second Silver Storm is unleashed, they may mitigate the effects. For example, they might stop the storm after it has covered all of Emerald City and the surrounding area,



SENDING IN THE CAVALRY

Some players might wonder: with the apparent fate of the world at stake, where are Earth's other heroes, and can they call for reinforcements? The answer, in true comic book fashion, is no, unless you decide to stage a last-minute rescue.

The assumption is that Tellax controls *many* more stormers than are present on Council Island. These characters are keeping other heroes busy and away from their master, delaying them just long enough for Tellax to complete its work. The AI's orbiting ship may even be creating a powerful force field over the entire Emerald City area while Tellax works, giving outside heroes and military forces another obstacle to overcome. By the time they can reach Council Island, it will be too late.

Of course, if things begin looking *really* bad for the heroes, and you do not want to unleash another Silver Storm across the entire world (see **Tellax Wins** under **Outcome**, later) you have the option of bringing the cavalry thundering over the horizon to lend a hand. They could be local AEGIS operatives (include those the heroes met in earlier chapters), members of the Freedom League, or even Emerald City supervillains who are *not* stormers, such as Max Mars' former Chamber allies like the Grandmaster and F.O.E.! After all, the villains have as much stake in the Earth's survival as anyone, and are likely pretty angry at Tellax for upsetting their comfortable arrangement in Emerald City!

Even if you do "send in the cavalry," use them just to give the heroes enough of a breather to pull out a victory on their own, perhaps by keeping most of the stormers busy or distracting Tellax. Don't have the newcomers defeat all of the stormers, or complete the jammer so long as the heroes can do it themselves.

or even after it has covered parts of the world, stopping its progress and preventing Tellax from controlling the resulting stormers. This outcome lets you run a series around Emerald City (the United States, or even the world) as a place filled with super-powered people dealing with a post-disaster environment.

Of course, you might decide that failure to activate the jammer in time means the heroes have missed their chance and the jammer is overwhelmed by the Silver Storm, and therefore ineffective. This is an opportunity to run a series with the heroes (and other pre-existing superhumans) as outlaws in a world controlled by Tellax and being turned into an armed camp to prepare for war against Collapsar, with the fate of the universe in the balance. The heroes might try to lead a rebellion or create a newer and more powerful jamming device.

REWARDS

With the completion of this adventure and the *Emerald City Knights* series, it's time to award the players some power points! At the least, they should each get 1 point for completion of the adventure, and another point for completion of the series as a whole. If they did particularly well: defeating and driving off Tellax and preventing a second Silver Storm with no real damage to the city (apart from the chaos at MarsTech), award them an extra point.

You may wish to award a bonus power point for excellent roleplaying or clever game-play to the appropriate players. That means a potential award of 2 to 4 power points total. If the players have earned over 10 power points over the course of the entire *Emerald City Knights* series, you may also wish to consider raising the series power level by 1 (from PL10 to PL11, typically) to allow players to increased maxed-out traits and to mark the heroes' transition to the "big time".

If the heroes have not already set aside power points for their headquarters and other resources provided by Max Mars, you may wish to have them do so now. Just 1 rank of the Equipment advantage (1 power point) from each hero should provide a significant amount of equipment points.

In addition to the power point awards, the heroes are acclaimed as Emerald City's champions and protectors: the battle on Council Island was visible to the whole waterfront, and video footage (both amateur and professional) plays on the news networks and the Internet for days. Emerald City throws the heroes a parade and welcomes them with open arms. It is a good opportunity for heroes to acquire advantages like Connected and Contacts, if they are so inclined.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of *Emerald City Knights* can go in very different directions depending on how **Scene 4** ends (see the **Outcome** there). The heroes may have saved Emerald City and the world, or else have to deal with the aftermath of a very changed world. The following are some things to consider in the conclusion of this adventure and series.

THE FUTURE OF MARS

The conclusion of *Emerald City Knights* may determine what future (if any) Maximillian Mars has in your series and with the heroes.

Mars may aid the heroes in overcoming Tellax and preventing a worldwide disaster, sufficient to redeem himself in their eyes and continue as their mentor, patron, and ally. In this case, Mars is happy to remain in those roles and focus on helping the heroes to clean-up Emerald City and keep it safe. He spends most of his time running MarsTech, but is available to offer advice, and continues funding the hero team's operations.

On the other hand, revelations about Mars and his connections with Tellax (and, more importantly, his reluctance to share the truth with the heroes) may make it difficult for them to trust him. If they prefer, Mars steps back from the team, although he offers to continue funding them. He respects their wishes and does his best to repair relations and win back their trust.

Lastly, if you want to write Mars out of the series at this point, this adventure is an excellent opportunity for him to have a hero's death, sacrificing himself to give the heroes the chance they need to save the world from Tellax. Perhaps Mars exerts some influence over his connection with Tellax's technology, delaying the AI long enough for the heroes to do what needs to be done, but the physical and mental strain is too much for Mars in the end. Perhaps Tellax, realizing Mars is a threat, strikes him with a powerful attack that kills him outright, or leaves him with just enough time to express his regrets to the heroes before he perishes.

THE THREAT OF TELLAX

If the heroes were successful in driving Tellax away from Earth, the immediate threat posed by the alien AI is over. Max Mars points out that the jammer has set up a particular resonance in Earth's magnetic field, rendering the planet "toxic" to Tellax and making it difficult for it to ever return. Of course, he may also note that the prime ability of Tellax's technology is adaptation, so there is no guarantee that the heroes will never see the so-called Redeemer again.

Additionally, Tellax's prime directive—to guard against the coming of Collapsar—remains intact. Given what the heroes learned on Magna-Lor, they can safely assume Orizon will eventually lead Collapsar to Earth. The Devourer will be coming one day—it's just a matter of when.

Lastly, keep in mind Tellax's "rejection" of the technology reincorporated from Maximillian Mars' Commander career. The heroes (and Mars) may have overlooked it at the conclusion of the conflict, or assumed the jammer rendered it inert and dissolved it along with the rest of the nanites. If the heroes try to locate the rejected portion, they have no luck finding it.

ALL-NEW ORIGINS

Exposure to Tellax's technology and cosmic energies are a perfect opportunity for players interested in redesigning their heroes in the aftermath of this series, especially for stormer heroes who gained their powers during the initial Silver Storm (see **Reallocating Power Points**, *Hero's Handbook*, page 26). It's also an opportunity to retire heroes for players looking for a change; characters may have fallen in battle, or simply lost their powers due to Tellax's second Silver Storm or the effects of the jammer.

If another Silver Storm was even partially unleashed on Emerald City (see **Outcomes** in **Scene 4**), you have the opportunity for numerous new origins for hero and villain characters in your series as well.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

The *Emerald City Knights Heroes Journey* may be over, but that does not mean your M&M series in Emerald City has to end! Green Ronin Publishing has plans for a new series to follow and build upon the events in this one, but you also do not have to wait around for it. There are plenty of adventure opportunities in Emerald City, and the larger World of Freedom setting, for a group of heroes.

First and foremost, by the end of this series the heroes should be the preeminent protectors of Emerald City and the surrounding area, acknowledged by many as having saved the world. Their accomplishments are sure to win them acclaim and the whole-hearted support of the city and local governments. They have probably also made more than their share of enemies along the way! Here are some loose threads you can pick up for further adventures in Emerald City in and around official **MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS** products:

- The heroes are honored by Emerald City with a proclamation in their name(s), a parade, and a ceremonial "key to the city" from the mayor. It's both a great opportunity to make the players feel good about all their heroes have accomplished and for bad guys with a score to settle with the heroes to stage an attack!
- A large number of stormers may have escaped following the battle of Council Island and the disruption of Tellax's control. Tracking down and (re) capturing them can give the heroes plenty to do in the aftermath of the series. You can bring back many of the stormer villains from previous chapters in this series, or others from the *Threat Report* series from Green Ronin, or introduce your own.
- The grateful city government is happy to support the heroes but also wonders if they will be adding any new members any time soon. Word gets out about a possible "recruitment drive," leading to crowds of heroic wanna-bes showing up around the heroes' headquarters, and perhaps even breaking in to show off what they can do by way of a try-out! You can play the "team try-outs" for laughs or consider them a distraction arranged by one of the team's foes.
- With all the villains the heroes have captured, Emerald City needs to get a new super-prison up and running as soon as possible. The federal government or AEGIS asks the team to help test the new facility to make sure it is secure. Of course, something goes wrong and the heroes are trapped in the prison for real while one of their enemies turns it into a death-trap or uses the opportunity to further some scheme in the city!
- With the immediate threat of Tellax (and its control over the stormers) ended, some former members of the Chamber (such as Grandmaster or the Big Brain) try to re-establish the alliance and its authority over the Emerald City underworld. Of course, doing so requires eliminating or co-opting the new local hero team as well as bringing any "rogue" criminal elements under their control. Perhaps they try to recruit the new Commander to fill Max Mars' seat?
- The Green Ronin weekly *Threat Report* series of new villains (available from greenronin.com and online retailers) can provide plenty of ideas for additional adventures in Emerald City, along with an extensive cast of villains. Each *Threat Report* comes with several adventure hooks and you can mix-and-match them to build villain teams suitable to challenge any group of heroes!

HEROES & VILLAINS

The following characters play significant roles in this adventure. Their power levels and traits are based on a group of three to six power level 10 heroes. If you have more or fewer heroes, or characters of a different power level, you may wish to adjust the PLs and traits of the characters given here to match: roughly ± 1 PL per PL difference of the heroes, or for every two more or fewer characters in the group. So, for example, for a group of eight PL11 heroes, you might want to increase overall power levels by two. This is most important for the characters who directly challenge the heroes; for the others, PL is less of a concern.

GRUE SPY

A minor functionary in the Praetor's retinue known as Gul-Sar is actually a Grue spy. The real Gul-Sar is either long gone or is an identity completely fabricated by the Grue. Once the Grue spy reveals itself, the Gul-Sar personality melts away until all that's left is an extension of the Grue Unity with no personality of its own. It's goal is to ensure the death of the Praetor if there's a chance he could escape the destruction of Magna-Lor and the appearance of the heroes make that much more likely.

GRUE SPY	PL6
Abilities Str 2, Sta 2, Agl 1, Dex 1, Fgt 6, Int 1, Awe 1, Pre 2	
Powers Brain Drain (Progressive Concentration Affliction 1 (Resisted by Will; Impaired, Disabled, Incapacitated); Shapeshift (Variable 6, (takes on stats of assumed form), 30 points of effects); Telepathy (Comprehend 2 (Languages; Speak and Understand All), Close Range Mind Reading 6); Voice Mimic (Feature 1)	
Equipment Blaster (Ranged Damage 5)	
Advantages Equipment 2, Favored Environment (Ambush), Improved Initiative	
Skills Deception 3 (+5), Expertise: Spycraft 4 (+5), Insight 4 (+5), Investigation 4 (+5), Perception 4 (+5), Ranged Combat: Blaster 5 (+6), Stealth 4 (+5), Technology 4 (+5)	
Offense Initiative +5, Blaster +6 (Ranged, Damage 5), Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 2 or Shapeshifted form)	
Defense Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 6, Toughness 2, Will 6	
Totals Abilities 32 + Powers 60 + Advantages 4 + Skills 16 + Defenses 14 = Total 126	

CAPTAIN KAN-RO	PL6
Abilities Str 2, Sta 2, Agl 1, Dex 1, Fgt 6, Int 0, Awe 0, Pre 0	
Equipment Blaster (Ranged Damage 5), body armor (Protection 4)	
Advantages Equipment 3	
Skills Athletics 4 (+6), Expertise: Military 6 (+6), Insight 4 (+4), Intimidation 4 (+4), Perception 4 (+4), Ranged Combat: Blaster 6 (+7), Vehicles 6 (+7)	
Offense Initiative +1, Blaster +7 (Ranged, Damage 5), Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 2)	
Defense Dodge 6, Parry 6, Fortitude 6, Toughness 6, Will 6	
Totals Abilities 24 + Powers 0 + Advantages 3 + Skills 17 + Defenses 15 = Total 59	

Upon entering combat, the Grue spy fights to fend off the heroes, assuming the form of a multi-armed, clawed humanoid to attack, using effects like Elongation, Insubstantial (rank 1), and Shrinking to escape. Once he has fulfilled his mission of assassination, the Grue attempts to flee by assuming the form of a small animal or insect, preferably a flying one.

CAPTAIN KAN-RO

Captain Kan-Ro has been a loyal officer of the Republic Star Navy his entire career. A dogged, if not particularly brilliant, military man, he's noted for his devotion to duty. He believes the Republic is the greatest civilization ever known and is willing to make the supreme sacrifice to preserve and protect it.

MENTAT ELL-VA

Ell-Va is one of the small percentage of the Lor population gifted with active psionic abilities, which she has cultivated and developed in her training at one of the Republic's esoteric academies for mentats, placing her in the

MENTAT ELL-VA	PL5
Abilities Str 0, Sta 1, Agl 1, Dex 1, Fgt 3, Int 1, Awe 2, Pre 2	
Powers Senses 1 (Mental Awareness); Telepathy (Burst Area Selective Mental Communication 3, AE: Mental Blast 5 (Perception Ranged Damage, Resisted by Will, Tiring), AE: Cumulative Mind Reading 5	
Equipment Light Blaster (Ranged Damage 4)	
Advantages Defensive Roll, Equipment 2, Uncanny Dodge	
Skills Expertise: Mentat 6 (+7), Insight 4 (+6), Perception 4 (+6), Persuasion 4 (+6), Ranged Combat: Blaster 4 (+5)	
Offense Initiative +1, Blaster +5 (Ranged, Damage 4), Mental Blast (Perception, Damage 5, Resisted by Will), Unarmed +3 (Close, Damage 0)	
Defense Dodge 6, Parry 3, Fortitude 4, Toughness 2, Will 6	
Totals Abilities 22 + Powers 21 + Advantages 4 + Skills 11 + Defenses 12 = Total 70	

LOR SOLDIER	PL5 MINIONS • 46 POINTS
Abilities Str 1, Sta 1, Agl 1, Dex 1, Fgt 5, Int 0, Awe 0, Pre 0	
Equipment Blaster (Ranged Damage 5), body armor (Protection 4)	
Advantages Equipment 3	
Skills Athletics 4 (+5), Expertise: Military 4 (+4), Insight 2 (+2), Intimidation 2 (+2), Perception 4 (+4), Ranged Combat: Blaster 4 (+5), Vehicles 4 (+5)	
Offense Initiative +1, Blaster +5 (Ranged, Damage 5), Unarmed +5 (Close, Damage 1)	
Defense Dodge 5, Parry 5, Fortitude 5, Toughness 5, Will 5	
Totals Abilities 18 + Powers 0 + Advantages 3 + Skills 12 + Defenses 13 = Total 46	

service of her people. She's curious about other species and cultures and intrigued by visitors from Earth, a distant world she had heard stories about, but never visited.

LOR SOLDIER

These traits represent the typical Lor soldier, of the type accompanying Kan-Ro and Ell-Va, and found on duty at the Republic Senate when the heroes arrive. For the purposes of this adventure, you can treat any unnamed Lor soldiers as minions when it comes to the heroes and other major characters interacting with them.

PRAETOR RAM-LEV

The current Supreme Praetor of the Lor Republic is a career soldier turned career politician who is still sometimes uncertain if he made the right choice. Ram-Lev was known as a brilliant and respected commander of troops and an excellent strategist. His personal charisma and devotion to the Republic led him into politics following his military service and he rose to the position of Supreme Praetor, a

role he has held for some years, guiding the vast Republic. Ram-Lev has found the political arena quite a different battlefield, and sometimes regrets the compromises he must make in order to govern effectively. Still, he has always tried to do what he feels is best and in keeping with the ideals of the Republic, while acknowledging the realities.

Ram-Lev's game traits are largely unimportant in this adventure. If you find a need for them, use the traits given for Captain Kan-Ro, improving them by 1 rank, and giving him 4 additional ranks in all interaction skills.

ORIZON

Orizon, the Voice of the Void, the Herald of the All-Powerful Collapsar, was not always so. Once, he had another name, another life, but those things are like a fading dream to him, as if they happened to someone else.

Orizon was once a scientist on a far-off world, a scholar and explorer who sought to know the inner workings of the cosmos. The nature of the heavens fascinated him, and he delved into their mysteries. One mystery in partic-

ORIZON

PL16

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWK	PRE
13	8	1	1	6	3	7	3

POWERS

Cosmic Traveler: Flight 20 (2 million MPH), Movement 3 (Space Travel 3) • 46 points

Enduring Form: Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects), Impervious Toughness 22, Protection 9, Regeneration 5 • 66 points

Herald's Staff: Strength-based Damage 5, Reach 1, Removable (–1 point) • 5 points

Singular Senses: Senses 11 (Accurate Tracking Cosmic Awareness, Communication Link with Collapsar, Direction Sense, Vision Counters All Concealment) • 11 points

Voice of the Void: Comprehend 3 (Languages; Read, Understand, Understood) • 6 points

The Zero Power: Array (58 points)

- **Matter Rearrangement:** Ranged Transform 8 (anything into anything, 400 lbs.), Accurate 3, Continuous • 58 points
- **Blinding Flare:** Burst Area Cumulative Affliction 16 (Vision Impaired, Vision Disabled, Visually Unaware; Resisted by Dodge, then Fortitude) • 1 point
- **Entrapping Transmutation:** Ranged Cumulative Affliction 18 (Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobile; Resisted by Dodge), Accurate 3, Extra Condition, Limited Degree • 1 point
- **Force Blast:** Ranged Damage 18, Accurate 3, Penetrating 18 • 1 point
- **Matter Dissolution:** Ranged Weaken Toughness 11 (Resisted by Fortitude), Accurate 2, Affects Objects, Precise, Progressive • 1 point
- **Stun Blast:** Ranged Cumulative Affliction 18 (Resisted by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated), Accurate 3 • 1 point

ADVANTAGES

Diehard, Extraordinary Effort, Great Endurance

SKILLS

Close Combat: Herald's Staff 6 (+12), Close Combat: Unarmed 6 (+12), Expertise: Astrophysics 10 (+13), Expertise: Interstellar Space 10 (+13), Insight 8 (+15), Intimidation 5 (+8), Perception 8 (+15), Ranged Combat: Zero Power 7 (+8/+14*)

*with Accurate bonus

OFFENSE

Initiative +1

Entrapping +14	Ranged, Cumulative Affliction (Dodge DC 28)
Force Blast +14	Ranged, Penetrating Damage 18
Staff +12	Close (Reach 1), Damage 18
Stun Blast +14	Ranged, Cumulative Affliction (Fortitude DC 28)
Unarmed +12	Close, Damage 13

DEFENSE

Dodge	10	Fortitude	Immune
Parry	10	Toughness	22
Will	18		

POWER POINTS

Abilities	94	Skills	30
Powers	197	Defenses	24
Advantages	3	Total	348

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Nihilist: Orizon is dedicated to the view instilled in him by Collapsar that the universe is a corrupt and chaotic place, and only through singularity can there be peace and order forever.

Servant: Orizon belongs, body and soul, to his master Collapsar, and does only his bidding.

ular concerned a spatial anomaly, an unexpected “twist” or fold in the very fabric of the universe. It became his obsession, blocking out all else. It was almost as if it were calling to him, promising knowledge and understanding greater than he could imagine.



So it was that the man who became Orizon defied all warnings and risked everything. He made the leap that opened the way into the forbidden, and in the process he and his whole world were consumed. In their place, however, arose a new being, filled with dread cosmic knowledge and dark purpose.

“YOU SHALL BE MY EYES, MY VOICE, AND MY MIGHTY HAND,” Collapsar told him, even as he transformed him—mind, body, and soul—to suit his new purpose. “YOU ARE ORIZON—GO FORTH AND SEEK WHAT I MUST CONSUME!”

Since that fateful time, the glowing figure of Orizon has been a sight feared on many worlds, for those who have heard the tales know that his appearance heralds the arrival of his master, and the doom for any world that draws his attention. Few know how the dark eye of Collapsar judges which worlds will fall, but all know that his judgments are final, and dispensed without mercy.

Orizon commands what he calls “the Zero Power,” drawn for the interstices of reality. It can manifest as destructive force, or as a more subtle rearrangement of the structure of unliving matter, as he wills it. His physical form, changed to house such powerful energies, is beyond most mortal frailties, able to soar unaided through the void of space, seeking traces left behind of the Preservers and their work.

COLLAPSAR THE DEVOURER

It is unclear what the Preservers intended when they created a quantum stellar computer, a living, intelligent star, whose every subatomic interaction was part of a series of countless trillions of parallel processors. Whether it was solving the equations defining the structure of reality or the first in a network of “shepherd stars” to watch over planets burgeoning with life, it failed.

The star’s mind-core went super-critical and it collapsed into an impossibly dense singularity, transforming from living star to sentient black hole, and it *hungered*. The Preservers attempted to contain what they had inadvertently created, but even they could not destroy it. The entity known as Collapsar consumed anything and everything, and struggled against the bonds forged by its erstwhile creators on the distant edges of the universe.

Then the work of inquisitive life unleashed Collapsar on an unsuspecting cosmos. The Preservers were long since gone, but still their bonds limited to the Devourer’s power. So Collapsar has obsessively hunted through the universe, tracking every last vestige of its creators’ legacy, consuming and destroying it all. Once all traces of the Preservers and their creations are no more, Collapsar will

eventually burst its bonds and extend its power to draw all energy, all matter... *everything* to it. The cosmos will collapse and become an infinitely dense singularity and all chaos will give way to perfect and eternal order, and Collapsar will finally know peace and fulfillment.

The Devourer appears only as a looming threat in this adventure, and so is provided with no game information. It is a cosmic being capable of consuming planets and entire stars, on a scale far beyond that of the heroes. Even the massively powerful Orizon is little more than an insect compared to his master. Still, Collapsar *hungers* and is now aware of the legacy its creators left behind on Earth, a legacy that may prove the final hope of the universe for survival...

TELLAX THE REDEEMER

The alien Preservers created many technological wonders—as well as unleashing some technological terrors. The artificial intelligence known as Tellax is one of their later creations, similar in some regards to other Preserver AIs like the Curator (*Freedom City*, page 192). Whereas



the Curator was programmed to collect and preserve samples from across the universe, Tellax is programmed to further its creators’ work in *evolving* life, in particular in developing life-forms capable of withstanding the Preservers’ greatest mistake: the cosmic threat of Collapsar. In short, Tellax is the Redeemer, who will make up for its creators’ error and serve as the universe’s last hope of survival.

Unfortunately, what was to be a long program of carefully planned and managed evolutionary development was cut short. Tellax, badly damaged, crash-landed on Earth and was buried at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean for millennia. Recent events have reactivated and reawakened it, allowing the AI to resume its mission, but time is of the essence. So Tellax developed the nanite treatment humans have come to call “the Silver Storm”—a means of rapid, forced evolutionary development along multiple vectors. It is crude and brute-force in many regards, but the sacrifice of even millions of human lives is nothing compared to the salvation of the entire universe, or so says Tellax’s inhuman intellect.

The initial test of the Silver Storm was promising, but also raised an additional complication: a portion of Tellax’s nanotechnology was already in use elsewhere! A fragment, broken off during re-entry, and salvaged by a human named Maximillian Mars. Although a primitive, Mars had somehow learned enough about the nanites to “imprint” upon them and make use of them. Now some of Tellax’s own adaptive technology was creating interference! The lost technology had to be recovered and restored before plans could proceed. So Tellax has engineered events to free itself from its resting place and take direct action.

Although capable of communicating with humans, Tellax is a vast and alien mind with little resembling human

TELLAX THE REDEEMER

PL16

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWK	PRE
16	—	0	3	4	9	4	4

POWERS

Artificial Form: Enhanced Advantages 1 (Diehard), Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects), Protection 8, Regeneration 5 • 44 points

Artificial Intelligence: Comprehend 2 (Languages; Understand, Understood), Enhanced Advantages 4 (Assessment, Eidetic Memory, Fearless, Jack-of-all-trades), Immunity 10 (Mental effects) • 18 points

Force Field: Enhanced Defenses 28 (Dodge 16, Parry 12, Sustained), Impervious Toughness 20 (Sustained) • 48 points

Force Manipulation: Array (57 points)

- **Force Constructs:** Create Force Construct 18, Movable • 54 points
- **Force Blast:** Ranged Damage 18, Penetrating 18 • 1 point
- **Nanite Carrier Beam:** Transform 9 (anything into anything, 400 lbs.), Accurate 2, Continuous • 1 point
- **Tractor Beam:** Move Object 18, Accurate 3 • 1 point

Hyperjump: Movement 3 (Space Travel 3), Portal • 12 points

Massive: Growth 16 (+16 Str, +16 Tou, +8 Intimidation, -16 Stealth, -8 Dodge/Parry; 120 feet tall/long), Permanent, Innate • 33 points

Sensors: Radio Communication 5, Senses 20 (Acute & Analytical Taste (chem-scanner), Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Microscopic Vision 4, Rapid Vision 2, Rapid Radio 4, Time Sense, Vision Counters All Concealment) • 41 points

ADVANTAGES

Assessment, Diehard, Eidetic Memory, Fearless, Jack-of-all-trades

SKILLS

Close Combat: Unarmed 7 (+11), Deception 6 (+10), Expertise: Bio-engineering 12 (+21), Expertise: Nanotechnology 14 (+23), Insight 10 (+14), Perception 6 (+10), Ranged Combat: Force Manipulation 11 (+14), Technology 10 (+19), Vehicles 6 (+9)

nature. It is dedicated to its programming to preserve the cosmos and engineer a means of defeating Collapsar at virtually any cost, and individual lives mean nothing to it. Other life-forms are simply biological resources to manipulate as needed to achieve its goals. It may well be that Max Mars' close connection with Tellax's technology over many years has "infiltrated" the AI's consciousness with some all too human flaws, although Tellax vigorously denies this hypothesis. Still, it would explain some of its arrogance and growing messiah complex, to say nothing of its tendency to adopt a masculine human voice and persona.

Technically speaking, Tellax is a disembodied entity, a sophisticated self-aware computer program, capable of "inhabiting" a variety of technological "shells". Its primary forms in this series are within an ancient starship and

OFFENSE

Initiative +0

Force Blast +14 Ranged, Damage 18, Penetrating 18

Unarmed +11 Close, Damage 16

DEFENSE

Dodge 8* **Fortitude** Immune

Parry 8* **Toughness** 24

Will 16 *Includes size modifiers.

POWER POINTS

Abilities 38 **Skills** 41

Powers 253 **Defenses** 12

Advantages 0 **Total** 344

COMPLICATIONS

Arrogant: The importance of its mission makes Tellax supremely arrogant: it is the only being in the universe capable of saving it, and all lesser beings should acknowledge this and cooperate. To do otherwise is "irrational" in its view.

Inhuman: Tellax is an alien being with little concept of human emotion or empathy, and no compassion for either.

Motivation—Engineer: Tellax's purpose is to "evolve" and "perfect" life in order to preserve the cosmos against Collapsar (and, perhaps, similar cosmic threats).

NOTES

These traits do not take into account Tellax's ability to control stormers, effectively making them the AI's army, particularly since this power is both a plot device and essentially nullified by the heroes actions in this adventure. If you wish to work out its game effects, it is essentially an Affliction with a transformed final condition, limited to stormers, with massive amounts of Area, at a minimum rank of Tellax's PL, making unlikely most stormers could successfully resist it.

The traits also do not take into account Tellax's status as a being of both software programming and nanotech-based hardware. This may allow it to survive destruction of its current hardware by uploading into a new housing, or through nanotech replication, but these things are left as plot devices for the Gamemaster rather than game traits likely to come up during an encounter.

a massive humanoid robot of its own creation. Tellax is capable of copying its program into other forms, and may be able to holistically encode it on a sub-atomic level, allowing it to survive in even the tiniest fragment of its material structure until it is able to reconstitute a suitable body. You can consider this a form of the Immortality effect, but it is more of a plot device for Tellax's inevitable return than anything else. Given the remarkable adaptability of its technology, Tellax can have virtually any traits or effects you wish to give it for the purposes of this adventure. The ones given in its game stats are merely the most common.

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