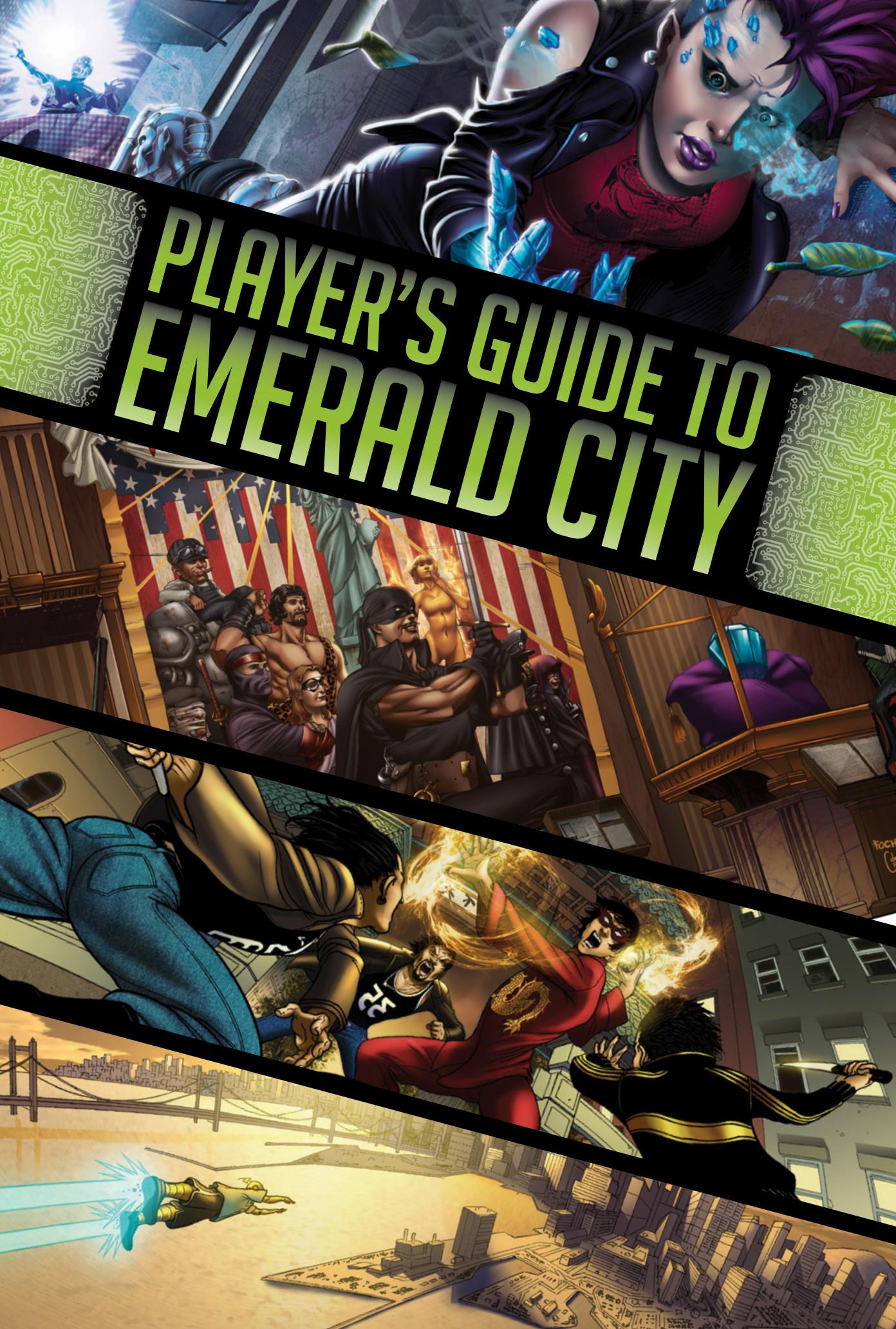


PLAYER'S GUIDE TO EMERALD CITY



The background of the cover is a collage of comic book panels. At the top right, a woman with purple hair and blue ice shards on her face is shown in a dynamic pose. Below her, a man in a black suit and mask is surrounded by glowing blue energy. In the center, a group of diverse characters including a man in a tank top, a woman in a bikini, and a man in a balaclava are gathered in front of a large American flag. To the left, a man in a golden suit is shown in a dynamic pose. At the bottom, a man in a red and gold suit with a dragon emblem is using his powers to create a fireball, while another character in a black suit with yellow stripes runs away. The overall theme is a mix of superhero action and political satire.



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WELCOME TO EMERALD CITY!

Emerald City is a setting for *Mutants & Masterminds* superhero adventures. While some groups may run only one-shot or short multi-session games using *Emerald City* as a backdrop, many will want to use the setting for an entire series.

This set includes three books; the first is this one, the *Player's Guide to Emerald City*, is meant for players and Gamemasters alike. The chapters herein contain information useful to players interested in learning more about *Emerald City* or who want to create a hero for a series set there. The chapters making up this book are:

- **A Visitor's Guide to Emerald City** styled to look like an actual guidebook to the City of Destiny. It includes some history, an overview of the neighborhoods and surrounding areas, and other tidbits to introduce the setting's major locations and attractions.
- **Chapter 1: Emerald City History** goes over the city's past in more detail, from its founding all the way up to the Silver Storm and its aftermath.
- **Chapter 2: The City & Surrounds** is a more in-depth examination of the city, its neighborhoods, important landmarks, and the surrounding area.
- **Chapter 3: Life in Emerald City** provides a glimpse into what it's like to live and work in the city. It covers everything from prominent businesses and shopping districts to its many schools and popular nightspots.
- **Chapter 4: The Emerald City Series** features information to help create a character for an M&M game set in *Emerald City*.
- **Chapter 5: Heroes of Emerald City** provides a team of heroes known as the Sentinels, including a headquarters, character sheets, and histories that tie them into *Emerald City*. You can use any of the Sentinels as your character, if you wish, or you can use them as examples of how to create heroes from *Emerald City*.

The other books in this set are the *Secrets of Emerald City* and the adventure series *Emerald City Knights*; both meant to be read only by the Gamemaster, so as not to spoil any of the secrets of the setting. If you're the GM, read *Secrets of Emerald City* and *Emerald City Knights* after you read this book.

SPOILER WARNING!

Some information included in this book discusses, in a general sense, the events of the *Emerald City Knights* series of adventures. This sort of information has been kept to a minimum, but it's still here and if you're playing through the adventure you may want to skip the sections discussing the events of the Silver Storm and its aftermath.

This book was written to present *Emerald City* as it is about six months after the Silver Storm, and as such we refer to new landmarks, the explosion in the super-population, and other parts of the adventure series as if they've already taken place.

BASIC PREMISES

Emerald City is a setting sourcebook for the Third Edition of the *MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS* superhero roleplaying game, although it is suitable for use with any superhero game. Like its East Coast counterpart *Freedom City* (subject of many *M&M* books over the years), E.C.—as it is often known—is a fictional metropolis, sharing some of the feel and qualities of various West Coast cities. In the tradition of the great fictional comic book cities, the exact location of *Emerald City* is left for the players and Gamemaster to decide, although it is presumably somewhere in the Pacific Northwest, between the northern border of California and the southern border of Canada..

We've tried to make the setting as useful and easy-to-use as possible for a new group of heroes. Towards that end, here are some of the basic ideas upon which *Emerald City* is built:

- Emerald City exists in the same world as *Freedom City*, the game's signature city since its debut. Although *Freedom City* is not required to use or enjoy *Emerald City* as a setting, the two cities are interconnected in certain ways and *Freedom City* includes more information on the wider world of Earth-Prime (also known as the World of Freedom).
- Although super-powered beings are common in other parts of the world, such as *Freedom City*, that has not been the case in *Emerald City*, which has very little public history with regards to paranormals..
- Recent events have changed that *status quo* and introduced a new rogue element in the form of numerous sudden (and potential) superhuman origins. *Emerald City* now has the potential for the next highest population of supers to *Freedom City*, perhaps even more! In some regards, E.C. is like a superhero setting in its infancy, as opposed to the more "mature" *Freedom City* setting.
- *Emerald City* now faces diverse challenges and is in need of heroes, and the player characters are expected to fill that role. Unlike *Freedom City*, they can't rely on established heroes to do it for them or even step in to help. While there are other heroes in the World of Freedom, most of them aren't locals and already have their own concerns. It's up to the players and their characters to save and safeguard the city.

So what are you waiting for? Let's explore *Emerald City*!

EMERALD CITY USA

CITY OF DESTINY!

A Visitor's Guide to Emerald City



*A Production of the
Emerald City Tourism Board*

A Visitor's Guide to Emerald City

WELCOME TO EMERALD CITY, Storm City, the City of Destiny, City on the Red and White Rivers, City of the Three Hills... a city in flux. Emerald City is a thriving Pacific Northwest metropolis, a port city known as a home to hardy pioneers for well over a century and a half. The people of E.C. need their pioneer spirit, too, since the city has also become the focus of world-changing events.

From the Desk of Mayor Amanda Talbot

Emerald City has been called "The City of Destiny" and it certainly seems like fate has special plans in store for us. All you need to do to know that is look out across the Albian River towards Council Island: See the towering silvery figure standing beside the bridge? That's all that remains of Tellax, an alien robot that threatened the world, and changed Emerald City forever.

The whole world knows about the "Silver Storm" and how it greatly increased Emerald City's superhuman population, but what you might not know is the day-to-day Emerald City I know and love so much. From the bustling shop stalls of the Cannery and afternoons strolling along the Riverfront, to fine dining on Royal Hill or the exotic food and culture in Jadetown. From visiting the famous Yellow Brick Row, to cheering the E.C. Bulldogs on to a win at USNet Stadium. From the Southern Shore to the shores of Lake Vallee or hiking in the Elysian Forest, Emerald City is a city of diversity, opportunity, and prosperity as well as destiny.

We haven't always been—it has taken a lot of hard work to make Emerald City into the modern metropolis it is today. From the earliest days of the city's logging and mining industry, to its role as a modern high-tech center for software, electronics, and aviation, Emerald City has grown and prospered through the work, hopes, and dreams of its people.

The same persevering pioneer spirit that settled three hills alongside the Albian River nearly two centuries ago is found here today. It is what allowed Emerald City to weather the Silver Storm and what followed—not only weather it, but continue to thrive. It is the spirit that welcomes the stormers who have chosen to use their gifts for good and seeks to help those still struggling, that has taken our greatest menace and made "Telly" into a watchful mascot on our city's shores. It's that spirit that makes Emerald City the place it is today and what makes me proud to call it home.

So, whether you are here just for a brief visit or here to stay, let me be the first to welcome you to "The City of Destiny"! You may discover Emerald City has something special in store for you!

Sincerely,

*The Honorable Amanda Talbot
Mayor of Emerald City*

Emerald City, USA



The City of Destiny

A Visitor's Guide to Emerald City

Emerald City At A Glance

Emerald City is centered on the sheltered inner peninsula jutting into the Albion River, with access to Malory Bay and the islands, built upon three main hills, modest in size compared to the mountainous terrain in the surrounding area, but still fairly steep. The city has since spread across the inlet to the western or outer peninsula and along the south of the riverbank eastward as well as pushing south towards the mountains.

The downtown area of the city is towards the waterfront, the early center of Emerald City's livelihood and activity. Royal Hill, the northernmost of the city's three main hills, lives up to its name with some of the most expensive real estate in E.C.. To the south rise University Hill, home of Emerald City University (ECU), and Sunset Hill, bordering the Red River. As the hills level out into a broad valley, the neighborhoods give way to the Eastern District and Lakeside, curving around Lake Vallee.

Inside, Outside, and Upside Down

It's an old local joke that Emerald City can be difficult for the directionally challenged, given how some places in the city and surrounding area are named. For example:

- The Southern Shore is **east** of Downtown.
- The Eastern District is **south** of Downtown.
- The "west side" usually refers to the side of Sunset Hill to the **east** of the Red River, rather than the Outer Peninsula, which is the actual westernmost part of the city.
- The "I.P." is the Inner Peninsula, where Downtown is located. The "O.P." is the Outer Peninsula, where the airport is located. Technically, there is a "middle peninsula" but it's considered part of the O.P. and no one calls it that.

Emeraldites tend to be raised with the idea that these local quirks are fun to play up for visitors and tourists, enough that visitors guides to the city encourage everyone to take directions from locals with a grain of salt and a dose of good humor.



Emerald City, USA



The City of Destiny

A Visitor's Guide to Emerald City

The Heart of the City

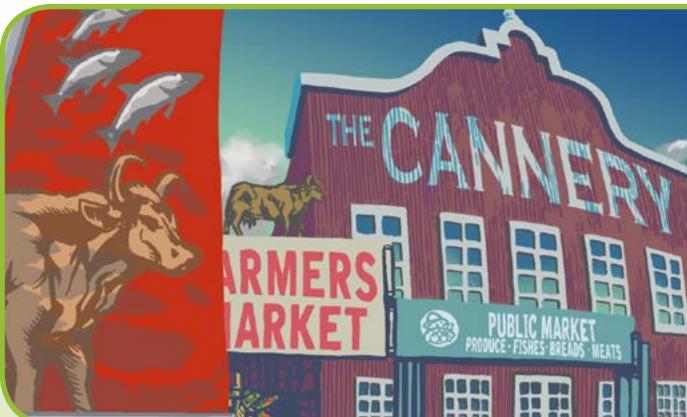
Emerald City's downtown area runs from the riverfront and slopes up and around Royal Hill. A main highway runs along the waterfront, connecting up with the two main bridges, crossing the Albian and Red Rivers to the north and west, running along the Albian River towards the east.

The Riverfront

Emerald City's Riverfront is still quite active as a port; much of the shipping has shifted eastward along the river and westward towards the outer peninsula, leaving much of the downtown waterfront area to piers dedicated to shopping, pleasure craft, and tourism. Smugglers ply their trade in some parts of the Riverfront, and heroes can find informants and suspects in some of the dockside dives.

The Cannery

An old fish cannery along the Riverfront has been converted into a multi-level shopping mall and local tourist attraction, the perfect place for a date or family outing, as well as an unexpected super-battle! The Cannery is surrounded by pedestrian shopping and high-class urban housing.



A Visitor's Guide to Emerald City

Royal Hill & Yellow Brick Row

Emerald City's most famous shopping area; it is paved in yellow-painted brick, forming a large pedestrian mall along the north-facing slope of Royal Hill. Yellow Brick Row is also the site of the infamous Silver Storm, which transformed Emerald City—along with a number of its residents.



The summit of Royal Hill is known as the Crown Heights neighborhood, expensive real estate commanding a good view of Emerald City (although not quite so good as it was before the soaring towers of the downtown area were built). The Crown Tower hotel, a local landmark, is found in Crown Heights, along with some high-class condos.

The Undercity

Emerald City suffered early flooding problems, which led to the city administration literally covering over and building on top of the old central part of the city in the lowlands. This created an "Undercity" where buildings and even streets from the 1800s are preserved beneath the current downtown area. The Undercity is connected to various tunnels and underground structures now inhabited and used by "underdwellers" like Pack-Rat and his gang, Fomorians, Morlocks, and, via deeper connections, even to the denizens of Sub-Terra.



A Visitor's Guide to Emerald City

The Eastern District

Although southwest of downtown, the city's Eastern District is so named because of its largely Asian population. It is located in the broad valley between and below Sunset and University Hills. The Eastern District used to have a reputation as the "shady side" of Emerald City, tucked away and hidden by the hills from Downtown, and a difficult walk from there, but in the present day, the District is a bustling tourist area with a thriving local culture.

Jadetown & Little Osaka

The neighborhood known as Jadetown is primarily Chinese, and you can see a good deal of Chinese writing, art, and architecture there. Local schools teach students Chinese languages, culture, and history in addition to the lessons they learn in public school. Jadetown residents are quite proud of their heritage. Jadetown is home to the Jade Arch, its official "entrance" and a major tourist attraction.

Little Osaka is the Japanese area of the Eastern District. It has a more subdued style and character, featuring a renowned Japanese Tea Garden and some hotels that make it a popular place for Japanese visitors to Emerald City to stay, as well as tourists to visit.



Southern Shore

The southern shore of the Albian River, running westward from Downtown, goes from the urban structures and zoning of the center of the city to more suburban and residential areas. Southern Shore properties are prime real estate, centered around riverfront marinas, coves, and similar properties. The presence of the highway and rail line along the Southern Shore causes building to cluster around the transportation arteries, thinning southward towards the forest and mountains.



The Islands

The islands of the Albian River are broadly considered part of the Southern Shore, although technically they're a district unto themselves. Some of the islands are set aside as parks and nature



A Visitor's Guide to Emerald City

preserves, while others are inhabited, connected by narrow bridges and ferry service. A home on the Islands is a sure sign of success in the area, as they feature some of the most expensive real estate in Emerald City.

Sunset Hill

The south- and westernmost of the three hills occupied by Emerald City, Sunset Hill is named for the vista of the sun setting over it, seen from the other (eastern) parts of the city. It was once the site of stately turn-of-the-century homes a reasonable distance from both Crown and University Hills, affording residents a degree of privacy. More and more, as the city has expanded, Sunset Hill has become urbanized, and many of those stately homes are now businesses, apartments, or condos, although some have been restored to their original condition and remain private homes.

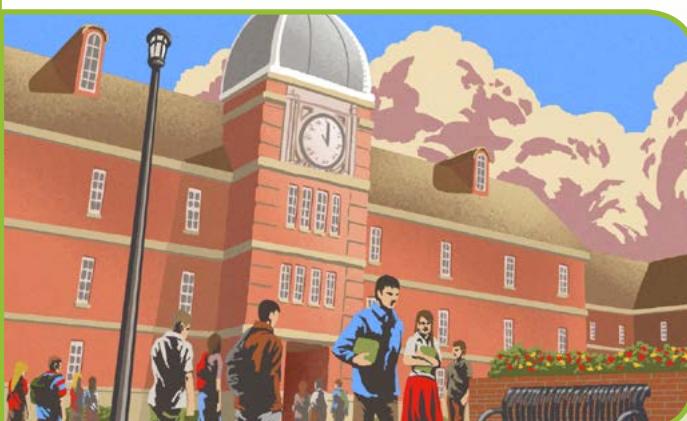


Overlook Park

A broad western portion of Sunset Hill forms a pleasant park overlooking the Red River. The Overlook Park neighborhood extends into the area around the park, which includes a variety of homes and small businesses serving the largely residential community.

University Hill

The southeastern hill of Emerald City is named for the placement of Emerald City University near its summit. It and the surrounding area are part of the city's youth culture and more artistic neighborhoods. "U-Hill," as it is sometimes known, is home to various cafés, trendy boutiques, thrift shops (equally trendy among the right crowd), theaters, and businesses serving the student community as well as local residents.



Lakeside

The area bordering the lake to the south of the Eastern District, Lakeside is a relatively new district of the city and its character reflects a blending of Emerald City's 19th and 20th century heritages with an eye towards life in the 21st century.



A Visitor's Guide to Emerald City

Getting Around the City

Emerald City covers a broad area, although not as large as some urban sprawls. As with any expanding and developing city, transportation is a regular concern, and Emerald City has a number of ways in which residents, commuters, and visitors get from place to place.

Bridges & Highways

As in most cities in the United States, most people in Emerald City get around by car, and the city faces the usual traffic congestion problems of modern urban areas, although not nearly as severe as some.



Major highways run north-south, cutting across the Albian River and heading westerly towards the Outer Peninsula, across the Red River as well. The main east-west highway runs along the southern shore of the Albian River. Once the main arteries leave the greater metropolitan area, the landscape quickly gives away to forest and some open farmland.

Emerald City has been a successful site for the AutoTemp car-rental service. Unlike conventional car-rental agencies, AutoTemp provides rental cars located in dedicated parking spots throughout the city. Members can reserve a car online (often using an Internet-enabled smartphone) and return the vehicle to any open AutoTemp parking spot when they are done using it. Charges are accumulated per hour, or portion of an hour. The service is popular with urban residents who primarily use public transport, but occasionally need a car, and prefer it to the expense of owning one.

Taxis

Emerald City has several active taxi companies providing service throughout the greater metro area. Emerald City Cabs are noted for their distinctive

green-painted vehicles. The fleet of Pacific Taxi is slightly newer, while the reliable Gold Cab service fields more traditional yellow-painted taxis. Various private limousine services also operate in E.C., from sleek sedans to massive stretch models (up to and including the stretch SUV).



Buses

Public transport in Emerald City is dominated by the city bus lines which, together with the newer light rail service, forms the Greater Emerald City Commuter Organization, or "GECCO" as it is locally known, complete with cartoon lizard mascot. Buses run most hours of the day and night on a regular schedule, with less downtime in the central urban areas, and a lighter schedule the further out one gets from Downtown.



The central ten-block area of downtown is a "Free Ride Zone" for the city bus system: anyone can get on or off the buses at stops here without paying, but taking a bus outside of the Free Ride Zone requires a transfer to a paying bus, and taking a bus anywhere else in the city likewise requires a fare. The Free Ride Zone has been an effective tool for combating traffic congestion in the heart of the city, encouraging more public transport use by locals and visitors alike.

Bus companies also move passengers in and out of the Emerald City area, following the north-south and eastward highways. Given the city's



A Visitor's Guide to Emerald City

relative isolation, many visitors arrive and depart via bus, especially if they live only a few hours away and a flight would be prohibitively expensive. Nighttime bus trips through the Arcadian Forest area or the highway passes through the Atlas Mountains have some adventure potential, should a bus full of innocent people run into something unusual.

Rail

Although it lacks a subway system, Emerald City boasts a substantial amount of surface light rail. The major project of the GECCO for the past decade, the light rail system connects the Outer and Inner Peninsulas, bringing passengers to and from the airport and business and suburban areas on both sides of the Red and Bronze Rivers. It also allows passengers to circumnavigate the three hills area of the Inner Peninsula, more easily reaching the outskirts of the city.



Waterways

Located at the mouth of the Albion River where it flows into Malory Bay and the Pacific Ocean, Emerald City has always been a port city with an active waterfront.



Cargo ships from all across the Pacific Rim make their way into Malory Bay on a regular basis. Much of the shipping that once came into the city's downtown waterfront has shifted westward to the Outer Peninsula. There, the shore is lined with commercial docks and broad holding areas for stacks of rectangular, colorful shipping containers. Massive cranes capable of loading and off-loading these containers dominate the docks and this part of the shoreline.

Further upriver, the waterfront is more given to tourist and commuter traffic, with ferries taking

passengers across the river and bay and north and eastward to the islands. Many of the downtown docks have converted over to pedestrian malls and similar attractions, although some still serve as tie-ups for pleasure craft and private boats.

More of the same is found along the Southern Shore, where there are marinas and even some homes with private waterfront access and their own docks. Tour boats sail the length of the city along the Albion and back, and nighttime cruises are popular in the warmer months of the year.

Air Travel

Emerald City's main airport is Benjamin Jacobs International (code: BJI), also known locally as simply "Jacobs" or, more affectionately, as "Benji." It's located on the northern point of the Outer Peninsula and sees daily flights from points across the United States, Canada, and the Pacific Rim, particularly China and Japan.

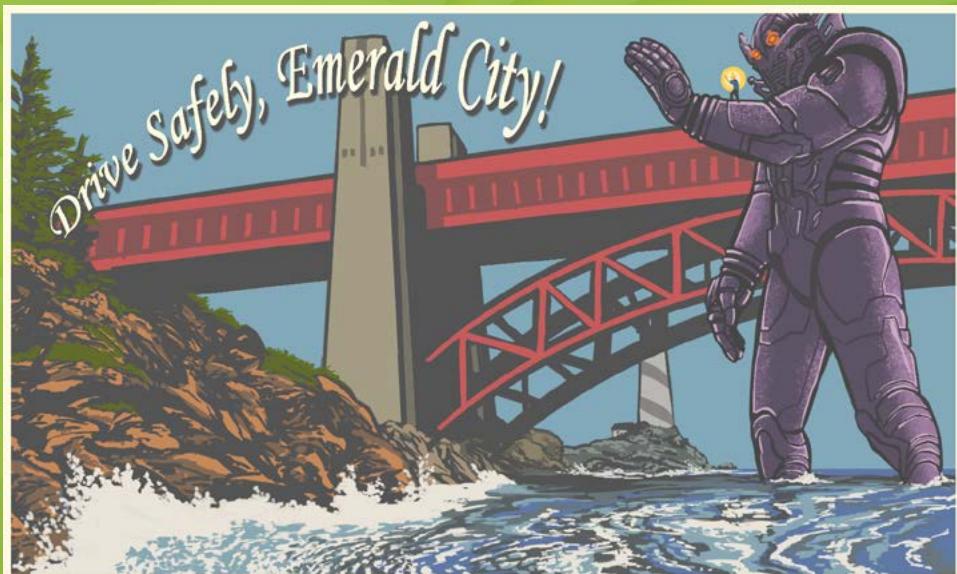


Nolan Aircraft also operates its own private airfield—Nolan Field—to the south of Jacobs. Nolan uses the field for test flights and corporate air travel, as well as leasing facilities to other companies. Nolan Field is limited primarily to cargo transport and some private business flights, rather than commercial passenger air travel, although it has served as an emergency landing field for troubled passenger craft in the past.

Small helicopter and seaplane services fly out of Emerald City. They are primarily aimed at tourists looking to see the sights of the area from the sky, campers and outdoor adventurers making their way along the coast or inland, and business travelers able to afford a private chopper ride to or from the airports. Some buildings downtown have helipads, mainly hospitals for patient evacuations and some corporate facilities. News agencies also make use of helicopters for reporting.



A Visitor's Guide to Emerald City



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Enjoy Your Visit to The City of Destiny!

CHAPTER 1: EMERALD CITY HISTORY



This chapter looks at Emerald City's history. It ranges from events in ancient prehistory just now coming to the fore, through the city's founding and development, to recent happenings which have put Emerald City on the super-powered map.

Players and Gamemasters can use the material in this chapter to provide context for the setting and their various characters. It is also a useful resource for flashbacks and time-travel stories in the Emerald City setting.

THE DISTANT PAST

Modern Emerald City occupies land once claimed by the crowned heads of Spain, France, Russia, and England, having been charted to varying degrees by explorers sailing under each of their flags. All noted the lush, verdant green of the land, but most did so in passing. Only the Czar's representative Nicholas Branovsky Petronovich and his expeditionary crew left behind archaeological traces of having come ashore for any length of time. Petronovich and his men made landfall in 1743 with the apparent aim of replenishing supplies after a long voyage from Mother Russia, rather than establishing a more permanent outpost.

With Petronovich's departure, the land again became home only to passing Hekawi Indian fisherman, bear, beaver, and—according to tribal legend—the ever-elusive Sasquatch. Over a half century passed before outsiders were again known to have entered their virgin wilderness realm.

BEGINNINGS

Spurred on by the Lewis and Clark expedition's reports of vast westward lands fit for settlement, American fortune-seekers first began the long, arduous journey across the Mississippi River in the early 1800s. Among these pioneers was a party led by explorers Charles H. Stanley and Steven R. Malory, which first began its historic trek to the present-day Pacific Northwest in 1807. By the end of 1809, the Stanley-Malory party had found its way to the mouth of the Albion River and mapped the surrounding area for eventual settlement.

Key to Stanley and Malory's success was their time spent together as boys serving under the legendary Revolutionary War hero Major Joseph Clark. From him they learned to be masters of both peace- and war-making, and because of these skills they survived many hazards on their journey west. Most critically, Stanley and Malory established good relations with the resident Hekawi tribe

ITEM: An episode of the Ancient Mysteries series all about how certain fossils found in the Atlas Mountains that seem to be of giant snakes with arms and legs are actually “confusions of the fossil layer” mixing up prehistoric reptiles with impressions of the bones of prehistorical humans (maybe even the victims of said snakes). Except we get no explanation of how those bones just happen to match up to form a fairly complete picture, with no humanoid skulls present, or how they pre-date all previously known estimates for the presence of humans in North America, to say nothing of why those fossils were immediately claimed by the Smithsonian and disappeared.

—EXCERPT FROM THE GHOST SIGHTINGS BLOG

from their very first encounter, and the resulting concord between settlers and natives endures more or less unbroken to the present time.

Tragically, Stanley was found dead shortly after the expedition embarked on its return to the east. The factual circumstances of Stanley's death remain unknown—the existing accounts of strange lights, sounds, and grisly dismemberment merely an embellished product of fear and superstition—and he was buried near the mountain that today bears his name. Malory, enchanted by the area's natural beauty, later returned to stay and established Fort Emerald (named after the surrounding, enveloping green wilderness) on May 28, 1818. Over time, this tiny fishing and fur-trading outpost grew into modern, sprawling Emerald City.

BORDERTOWN

The ensuing decades were a time of gradual, peaceful expansion for the Fort Emerald settlement, as the local trappers and fishermen were joined by those attracted to the area by the promise of jobs in the burgeoning lumber industry. Timbering had begun as a necessity, clearing land covered by old-growth forests, and in time it became the basis of Fort Emerald's economy. By mid-century, sawmills, lumberyards, and paper processing plants abounded; some remain in operation even today.

As always, tranquility and prosperity did not come without cost or effort. From the time of its founding until the 1846 Oregon Treaty finally resolved the issue, Fort Emerald remained near the disputed western border between the expanding United States and British North America (present-day Canada). Tensions between the two great powers were ever-present, and spies and provocateurs on both sides regularly drew up plans and intrigues involving (and sometimes targeting) Fort Emerald.

Time and again, the people of Fort Emerald were tested, but their wits and better natures prevailed. Even when political hotheads back east threatened the mighty British Empire with “54-40 or fight!” the more even-tempered Fort Emerald residents maintained the peace between themselves, their Canadian cousins, and the Hekawi.

RUSH

The settlement of all border claims in 1846 proved timely for Fort Emerald, as it prevented a dispute that surely otherwise would have been cause for war had the matter remained unresolved. On March 31, 1853, gold was first

discovered in the Atlas Mountains. As word of the discovery spread, prospectors flocked to Fort Emerald. In time their treasure hunting uncovered a fortune in precious gems elsewhere in the mountains, as well as diamonds in the clay deposits which give the Red River its name.

These dueling fevers for precious metals and gems led to booming prosperity and population growth for Emerald, with all the attendant blessings and curses. To many, this wild, reckless time of fortunes made and lost remains Emerald's quintessential era. Even in the present day, the Red River Diamond Exchange, founded during the boomtown years, remains one of the city's most famous and lucrative concerns. Likewise, gems from the Atlas Mountains are much sought-after by New Age devotees, who attribute a variety of wondrous capabilities to stones mined in that area.

DESTINY

As America realized its “Manifest Destiny” and the “Gem Rush” was in full bloom, the booming Fort Emerald settlement first acquired its nickname, “The City of Destiny.” This dramatic appellation grew out of the residents' pride in all they had built and struggled to achieve, and reflected their belief in the grandiose idea that Emerald was the “shining jewel in the American crown across North America.” While the “City of Destiny” title began as an affection rather than a reality, the area's continued growth soon vindicated the designation. In truth, its founders dubbed Emerald “the City of Destiny” because for them it was the last stop on the continent's edge.

WAR

The still-booming Fort Emerald settlement officially incorporated as Emerald City on August 27, 1857. This event was commemorated, then as now, with joyous celebrations, and subsequent events elsewhere only served to remind residents of their good fortune. Just as the city was finally coming to grips with its sudden wealth and rapid expansion, America itself sundered into a Great War Between the States.

Through most of the conflict, the distant muskets and cannons back east had no effect on the staunchly pro-Union people of Emerald City. However, on October 17, 1864 a surprise raid by Confederate agents operating from British North America netted the Rebels a sizable haul of gemstones from the Red River Diamond Exchange. Though they made good their escape, the ultimate fate of

the Southern spies is unknown, as neither they nor their treasure was ever seen again.

Emerald's fishing fleet also suffered unexpected losses when the Southern raider CSS *Shenandoah*—unaware of the war's end—claimed five prizes off the city's shores in July 1865. Some eyewitnesses claim the Confederate warship also harbored in the area for a time before resuming its circumnavigation of the globe, *en route* to the vessel's eventual surrender in Great Britain.

EXODUS

Part of the city's postbellum growth—certainly the portion which gives modern Emerald its distinctive character—came from an influx of Asian immigrants. Waves of Chinese and Japanese immigrants, both from across the wide Pacific Ocean and other West Coast settlements, made Emerald their home in the second half of the 19th century.

Those who came from overseas came seeking opportunities in America that simply did not exist in their feudal, unchanging homelands. They continued leaving China and Japan in sizable numbers until the U.S. government legally barred their entry (in 1882 and 1907, respectively). The ones who made the trek had already begun their quest for a new and better life in points further south and east, but increasingly found themselves unwelcome in less tolerant locales. In Emerald City, the Chinese and Japanese immigrants found an overall climate of benign neglect, which was as good as welcome to them in those less enlightened times. These new arrivals found work readily in the city's growing industries, including fishing and the railroads.

The burgeoning Asian community in Emerald made an already diverse area more so, and their initially strange ways and customs were gradually woven into the city's tapestry. They remain a cornerstone of Emerald City to this very day.

THE 20TH CENTURY

As the 19th century gave way to the 20th, the mad rush of people to Emerald City slowed to an easy, steady stream. The previous generations of city fathers, so eager to boast of living in the "City of Destiny" gave way to leaders quietly proud of successfully maintaining what their forefathers had built. As the gemstones became harder to find, the "shining jewel in America's crown" quietly transitioned to being more of a family jewel—still beautiful, but only rarely seen by outsiders.

To its residents, Emerald City became an island of calm in an increasingly turbulent world. Even as the Spanish-American War, the Great War, Prohibition, and the Great Depression shook the nation, the good people of Emerald largely focused on the next field of timber, the day's catch, and filing their mining claims.

OZ

The year 1938 marked Emerald City's 70-year-long love/hate relationship with the iconic film *The Wizard of Oz*, which sparked a brief revival of popular interest in the "City of Destiny." While many businesses and organizations worked overtime to avoid any association with the pop-culture classic the movie became, others embraced the eponymous association wholeheartedly from the day of release.

Those who revel in the city's connection to the works of L. Frank Baum seem, in the long run, to have won the strug-

gle against those who resent it. Supporters successfully lobbied to have the open-air walking mall in the downtown shopping district dubbed the Yellow Brick Row. There, the street is indeed bricked just as advertised, duly painted yellow every year on the official birthday of the city.

ATTACK

Like the country at large, Emerald City was awakened from its peaceful slumber by news of the Japanese sneak attack upon Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Due to the city's unique situation, the coming of war was an even greater shock to Emerald than elsewhere.

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt authorized the relocation of anyone of Japanese ancestry (including U.S. citizens—the *Nisei*) to internment camps. This wartime exigency struck Emerald City and its longstanding deeply ingrained Japanese community especially hard. The property forfeited in the process impoverished many of the *Nisei* for years after the war, and the dignity lost by those of a proud culture was an even greater, crueler blow.

Fear of a direct attack upon American soil was high in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, and such anxieties were acute along the West Coast, Emerald City included. Almost everywhere else, all the hysteria was for nothing, but the terror became real for Emerald City residents on more than one occasion during the war.

ITEM: Sinister summit at Joy's nightclub? Everyone knows that Joy's is the most exclusive "gentleman's club" in Emerald City, but for what sort of "gentlemen"? I've got reliable information about some of the city's Most Wanted dropping by to enjoy one of the club's "champagne rooms" and I'm willing to bet they were not there for the ambiance or the table service.

-EXCERPT FROM THE GHOST SIGHTINGS BLOG



UNDERGROUND

Emerald City's continued expansion brought with it various problems, but none more odious than the circumstances that led to the creation of the now-famous Undercity. The troubles began in the late 19th century as city residents first began to make widespread use of the wonder that is indoor plumbing.

By 1887, the tides and intermittent river flooding were all too often forcing water back into the sewer lines and into people's homes—much to their obvious chagrin. After considering several alternatives, the city fathers solved the problem by literally burying the first few blocks of the city closest the waters in order to raise the buildings a story or two, then rebuilt atop the now-subterranean structures originally there.

This dark, dank, and malodorous area was soon forgotten but remained surprisingly intact. The city's literally buried past was in this astonishingly well-preserved state in 1967 when resident teenager Benjie Carver rediscovered it whilst (by his own admission) looking for a private place to chemically alter his mind. Carver hit upon the idea of making money by giving guided tours of the Emerald Undercity.

Carver's impromptu excursions—embellished by his natural story-telling ability and imagination—soon became a sensation in the city's youthful counter-culture, and then a safe but seemingly illicit bit of excitement for thrill-seeking adults. Within five years, the Emerald City Police Department's already desultory efforts to curtail the tours ceased, and Carver's now-sanctioned informal expeditions became institutionalized in city lore. Even as more corporate and "family friendly" competitors have emerged in recent years, Carver remains a beloved Emerald City icon.

On the night of June 24, 1942, the surfaced Japanese submarine *I-14* lobbed several shells at Fort Breckinridge, situated at the Red River's mouth. While the panic the attack engendered was magnitudes greater than the damage it inflicted, it did lead to the formation of Emerald City's first publicly known team of costumed "mystery men" heroes, the Victory Squadron.

HEROES

Later that September 13th, Japanese submarine-launched seaplanes attempted to drop fire-starting incendiary bombs on the forests surrounding Emerald City, and only the Victory Squadron's intervention prevented a major economic and environmental disaster. This feat and the team's successful campaign that autumn against marauding Japanese submarines off Emerald's coast cemented them in the city residents' esteem. Despite the public adulation, further challenges remained.

Throughout the remainder of World War II, Emerald City was a focal point for espionage and sabotage attempts orchestrated by the mystic Japanese Green Dragon Society. Time and again, the Victory Squadron was the only thing saving the city from the Society's super-powered *Hinomaru* agents, Yakuza thugs, and deadly ninja assassins.

THE VICTORY SQUADRON

While their fame beyond Emerald City never rivaled that of the world-renowned Liberty League, the Emerald City-based Victory Squadron was nonetheless a vital component in protecting America's home front from Axis agents and saboteurs. This was particularly true of West Coast threats the East Coast-based Liberty League was geographically unsuited to meet. Even if the Squadron was not always duly lauded at home, fascist operatives knew it well, greatly fearing the very sound of the team's "V for Victory!" battle cry and accompanying two-raised-fingers sign.

The Squadron first came together in response to the June 24, 1942 attack upon Fort Breckinridge, an incident that brought together Emerald City's little-known (and largely unacquainted) "mystery men." At the behest of the Nightwatchman, they remained together as a team throughout World War II, becoming celebrated regional heroes. The Squadron's membership included:

- **ATLAS (Michael Forest):** A circus strongman of Greek ancestry who used his incredible physique to battle the Axis menace that occupied his ancestral homeland. Throughout the war, Forest hid a heart defect that rendered him ineligible for military service, and he fatally succumbed to it in 1949.
- **COLUMBIA II (Phoebe Dorin):** Michael (the Dreadnought) Dunn's longtime girlfriend who wielded a special flaming-torch weapon of his design. He code-named her in honor of a teammate of his grandfather. She was brutally murdered by the Crimson Katana during the war.
- **BLAZE (Mary Grindstaff):** A 17-year-old who gained flame-based powers after being accidentally caught in the explosion of a Japanese "fire balloon" in December 1944. The team's sole surviving member, after the war she capped off a colorful and semi-famous life by penning a candid book about her super-heroic experiences.
- **DR. SPECTRE (Tom Kovack):** A formerly mundane man who was in involuntary contact with the spirit world, and could temporarily channel it to gain supernatural abilities. Postwar, he was eventually driven mad by his abilities and died in a mental hospital.
- **THE DREADNOUGHT (Michael Dunn III):** Phoebe (Columbia) Dorin's longtime boyfriend. A brilliant engineer and inventor, Dunn's grandfather was a Civil War era hero-turned-villain called the Ironclad. Like his ancestor, Dunn employed a suit of powered armor, battling Axis tyranny in an attempt to redeem his family name. A dwarf, Dunn perished in 1946 as a result of complications related to his physical condition.
- **Madame Crossbow (Karla Miller):** A bored socialite who wielded a crossbow that fired special trick bolts. Throughout the war, she managed to keep her costumed adventures secret from her husband, then retired for good after V-J Day to raise a family.
- **THE NIGHTWATCHMAN (James Holland):** A wealthy crusading attorney by day and well-known radio commentator and playboy by night, he somehow found time to use his superior wits, fighting prowess, and arsenal of gadgets to battle injustice. Throughout the Squadron's existence, he served as team leader and sponsor, and tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to maintain and resurrect it after the war until his death in a plane crash in 1950.
- **THE SCARLET CYCLONE (William Schallert):** Operator of an incredible armored submersible autogyro christened the *Albatross*, the Scarlet Cyclone was instrumental in defeating the Japanese submarine menace on the West Coast. He was assassinated by ninja working for the Green Dragon Society during the war.
- **#1017 (Takei Hosato):** A highly honor-bound Nisei, Takei regarded the internment of his people as such a dishonor he only answered to the prisoner number assigned to his family until he could vindicate their name. Trained in the ancient arts of the ninja, Takei used his lethal abilities to aid the Allied cause until he fell in battle with the *Hinomaru*. He is one of the better-remembered Squadron members today, a hero to Emerald City's Japanese-American population.
- **THE UNKNOWN (Alonzo Cheney):** A seemingly superhuman master of disguise who kept his true identity and gender hidden throughout the war, striking from the deepest of covers to defeat Axis agents and acquire their secrets. Cheney's contact with his teammates grew more sporadic after the war, and ceased entirely during the "Red Scare." He is presumed dead, but his fate is (fittingly enough) unknown. Ironically, this man of secrets is one of the team's more famous members today, as he was outed as a bisexual after the war and is now honored by Emerald City's gay community for his wartime service.



USING THE VICTORY SQUADRON

In addition to serving as a springboard for a Golden Age Emerald City series, the Victory Squadron also establishes several heroic legacies for player characters to adopt should they so desire. Should a rookie team need a heroic mentor, Mary Grindstaff (formerly Squadron member Blaze, see *Secrets of Emerald City*, page 17) lives in retirement in Emerald City and is ready to fill such a role. Also, loose ends left over from the Squadron's wartime cases can be the basis for modern-day adventures.

While many of the Squadron's wartime exploits are unrecorded, forgotten, or classified, the team did famously save Emerald City from a final strange peril late in the war. Beginning in November 1944, the Japanese military unleashed nine thousand bomb-laden "fire balloons" towards North America. While only about 10% of them

survived the trans-oceanic voyage, a great many that did landed in the Emerald City area. The Victory Squadron spent much of the last few months of the war intercepting and disarming "fire balloons," or else dealing with the aftermath of the damage caused by them.

MODERN HISTORY

To most, the post-WWII history of Emerald City is fairly unremarkable up until quite recently (see the Emerald City Knights series). There have, however been odd occurrences over the decades since the war that hint at the strangeness surrounding the city.

UNIDENTIFIED FALLING OBJECTS

The term UFO (for "Unidentified Flying Object") was coined in the Pacific Northwest in 1947. It was not long thereafter that a series of sightings of UFOs occurred in roughly the same geographic area. They included one in which several strange objects were sighted over Mt. Stanley near Emerald City although, like other such reports, they were widely dismissed.

In the years since, the Arcadian Forest and Atlas Mountains have been home to numerous sightings of unusual creatures and phenomena, ranging from unexplained lights and sounds to claims of spotting Sasquatch or other cryptozoological oddities. No evidence apart from blurry amateur photos or videos have ever appeared, leading most to dismiss these sightings as hoaxes or outright fabrications. Still, many would-be "cryptid-hunters" find their way to Emerald City to venture out into the wilds with camera and scanning equipment in hand in hopes of being the first to find and bring back conclusive proof.

NO DEVIL'S HAVEN

In the mid-1980s, a change in administration in Freedom City led to the enactment of the Moore Act, outlawing costumed vigilantes, previously welcomed by the government and law-enforcement. While some heroes chose to follow the law and quietly retire, or operate elsewhere, the Moore Act also created a new generation of lawless, and violent, crime-fighters. Willing to break one law to do what they felt needed to be done, these new heroes were willing to break others, up to and including using lethal force against their opponents.

Although lacking the kind of superhuman activity in Freedom City, other parts of the United States and even

the world began to see a rise in vigilante activity, and in even more violent criminals choosing to fight back. Rather than curtailing crime, the Moore Act instead drove heroes and villains into a shadow-war, with innocent people caught in the middle.

Emerald City initially suffered a significant increase in super-powered criminal activity, but it didn't last as the villains moved on to greener pastures, disappeared entirely, or were incarcerated (or worse, given the times) by out-of-town heroes. It quickly became clear that Emerald City wasn't worth the time or effort, despite its burgeoning population and growing reputation as a center for technological developments. In the later years of the Moore Act, Emerald City actually saw less crime and super-criminal activity than most places in the United States, a trend that continued for years.

MARS RISING

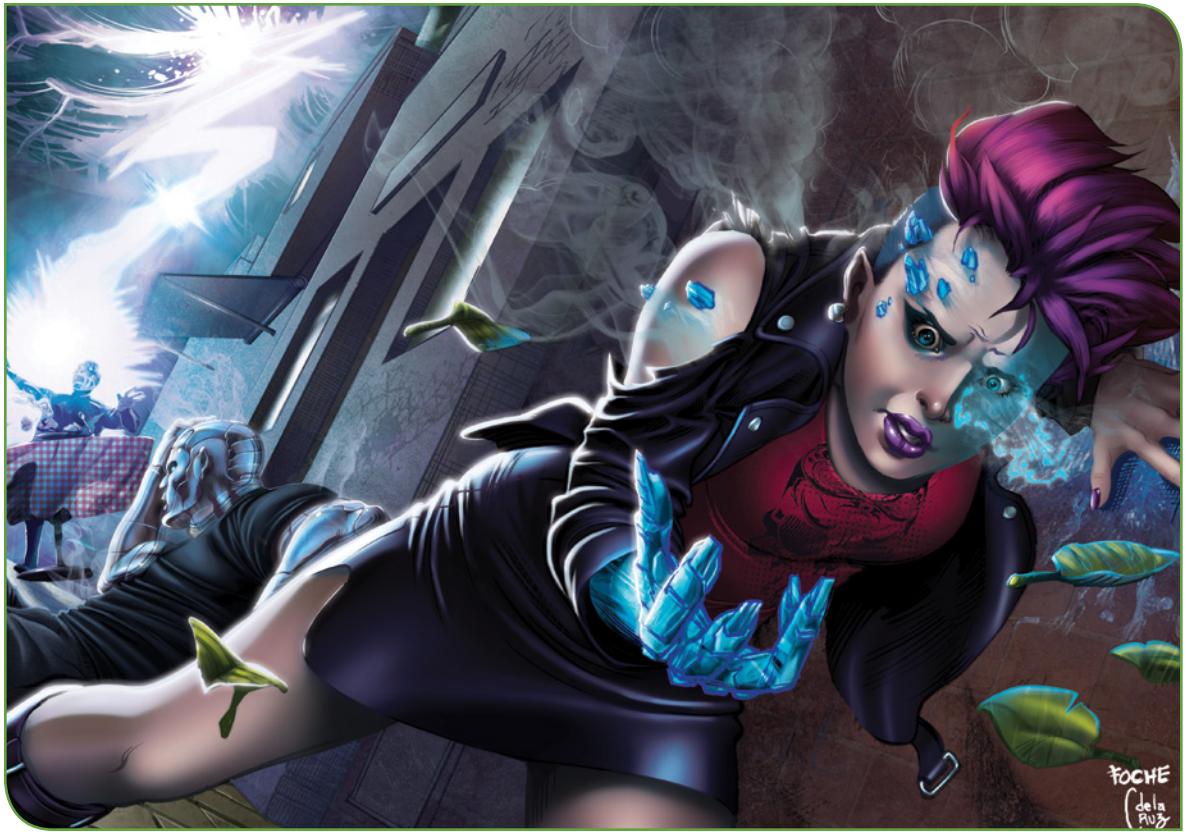
Emerald City went through a long economic slump as the local paper and forestry industries cut back on their operations and closed mills, while at the same time the fishing industry declined. Emerald City's white knight appeared in the form of Maximilian Mars, the founder and CEO of MarsTech, which set up shop on the outskirts of Emerald City, where office and industrial space was relatively cheap.

Mars turned a "garage industry" of personal computers, software, and peripheral devices into a multi-billion dollar corporation and one of Emerald City's largest employers. The success of MarsTech attracted other high-tech businesses to the area and they, in turn, brought in businesses to serve the needs of their growing number of employees: highly educated, skilled, and typically well paid.

Ever since the success of MarsTech, Max Mars has been a fixture of Emerald City civic life, supporting local causes and giving generously to charity. His company has provided resources for schools, libraries, and civic centers, and everyone says Mars would be a sure bet for mayor, if he ever decided to give up that much power and prestige!

ITEM: I know Max Mars owns a controlling interest in Emerald City (openly or behind the scenes) but still, no criminal investigation, indictment, or prosecution based on his past activities?

-EXCERPT FROM THE GHOST SIGHTINGS BLOG



FOCHE
Cela
Pluz

Like the rest of the country, the tech-sector in Emerald City saw tremendous growth in the last part of the 20th century with the boom in Internet-related businesses and startups, followed by the bursting of the Internet bubble and the collapse of a great many of those same startups. MarsTech endured, too large to fall victim to such shifts in the market, and well positioned to buy up some of those failing companies to expand its portfolio. In more recent years, with the growth of mobile computing technology, tech is on the rise in Emerald City once more, and MarsTech is blazing the way.

THE SILVER STORM

Emerald City was on the right track: peaceful, increasingly prosperous, and a rising star as a hub of culture and as a place to live. Things changed in a way no one could have expected on a pleasant early summer day when a storm struck without warning, an unnatural storm that changed the city forever.

What is now widely known as “the Silver Storm” occurred in the busy shopping district of Yellow Brick Row. An explosion released a violent silvery-grey cloud, filled with crackling blue-white energy that spread across several city blocks. Wherever that cloud touched, people were left transformed. They gained strange powers, and many were twisted and mutated. Known as “stormers” these people began using their newfound powers: some for personal gain, others lashing out from pain or madness

due to their transformation. A small handful used their gifts to help, to contain the damage, along with the efforts of some local heroes.

THE FUTURE OF THE CITY OF DESTINY

In a moment, Emerald City went from quiet metropolis to one of the largest superhuman populations in the world. Even after the storm itself passed, the foreseeable future still looked cloudy for the city. Super-criminals and other dangers seemed to come out of the woodwork after that, one after the other. Max Mars stepped up once again, offering to fund and support a team of heroes to protect Emerald City, and they have been able to contain these threats, even the origin of the Silver Storm itself, and although things have started to settle into a new status quo, it is anything but quiet or calm.

The future of the City of Destiny remains uncertain. Emerald City has weathered a storm, battered and bruised, but unbowed and unbroken. There is a great deal of rebuilding to do, and there are still many threats to the city and its people that keep them from fully reclaiming their lives. They could come back from this stronger than ever, or spiral down into despair and devastation. Emerald City needs hope, perseverance, protection, and determination. In short, it needs heroes.

CHAPTER 2: THE CITY & SURROUNDS



Emerald City has grown considerably from a small trading outpost to one of the premier cities of the Pacific Northwest. The lumber mills and fur traders of the past have given way to a bustling metropolis of soaring skyscrapers and modern architecture, colleges and universities, shopping plazas and coffee shops, and much more surrounded by residential and suburban neighborhoods and a growing outlying business district.

The past few decades have been good to Emerald City overall, with economic growth and expansion. Even the trials of the Silver Storm and recent events promise to make Emerald City stronger in the long run, putting it on the map alongside places like Freedom City. Only time will tell how the new heroes and villains of the City of Destiny will shape it and its future.

DOWNTOWN

The downtown area of Emerald City grew up from the southern shore of the Albian River towards the summit of Royal Hill, spreading east and west along the shore. This gives Emerald City a prominent skyline when viewed from the river or the highway headed south in the city.

THE RIVERFRONT

Emerald City has a long history as an active port, and miles of waterfront along the Albian and Red Rivers, jutting into Malory Bay. The shore of the Inner Peninsula is lined with piers, ranging from massive docks for the loading and unloading of cargo ships to small tie-ups and marinas for private pleasure craft or ferries crossing the Albian to the Islands or the northern shore.

The White Water Highway separates the Riverfront from the rest of the city, four lanes of traffic crossed by footbridges and broad crosswalks at regular stoplights along the downtown area. It exits the peninsula across the Red River Bridge to the west, following the Southern Shore towards the east.

The eastern Riverfront, from close to the mid-point of Royal Hill eastward, is lined with piers for sailing and pleasure craft, river ferries, fishing and smaller commercial boats, and piers used primarily for commercial space like shopping and restaurants.

RIVERFRONT SHIPYARDS

The western Riverfront, from the mid-point of Royal Hill westward, particularly west of the Bay Bridge, is covered

with cargo piers and sorting and storage yards for maze-like stacks of cargo containers. Heavy cranes stand high overhead, lifting those containers onto and off of ships docked at the port, and workers sort the containers for loading onto trucks that take them from the Riverfront to their final destination.

THE CANNERY

A long stretch of Emerald City's waterfront is taken up by the Cannery Marketplace, which creates a kind of dividing line between the Riverfront and the start of Royal Hill. The sprawling series of interconnected buildings were once a factory complex for the canning of fish (mainly salmon and tuna). The owners went bankrupt in the late 1920s and the Cannery was eventually converted into a large marketplace, with a combination of stalls and hole-in-the-wall shops, ranging from food vendors to booksellers, antiques dealers, and peddlers of various handicrafts or tourist memorabilia. The Cannery—also known simply as “the Market” or “Marketplace”—is one of the most active shopping areas in Emerald City and a major tourist attraction.

THE ROTUNDA

The heart of the Cannery is the massive two-story Rotunda, where the branches of the old factory buildings meet. The circular, domed portion of the building serves as a kind of “lobby” for the market and has traditionally been the site of Cannery Market farm stands and fish stalls since the place opened, offering fresh produce and seafood daily to tourists, locals, and restaurateurs. The second-floor level of the Rotunda, overlooking the bustling market floor below, offers seating for shoppers looking to pause a moment and eat, talk, or simply people-watch or enjoy the view from the second floor windows looking north over the river or out over the city.

The Rotunda dome is painted with a 19th century mural depicting the industry of Emerald City at the time: pioneer lumberjacks and fur-traders taming the wilderness and meeting with local Native Americans to trade, including the vistas of the Elysian Forest and the whitewaters of the Albian River. Below, near the entrance to the Rotunda and therefore the Cannery Market, is a life-sized bronze statue of a cow, facing south into the city, standing on a raised pedestal about a foot off the floor. “Bronze Bessie,” as the locals call her, is the market mascot. More than a few have noted the irony—or even inappropriateness—of having a “golden calf” at the heart of one of the city’s mercantile districts, but most city residents take a sort of perverse pride in Bessie’s controversial presence. Photos with her are considered a must for tourists, and she’s commonly believed to bring good luck to the Market and the city.

YELLOW BRICK ROW

From the eclectic and touristy shopping of the Cannery Marketplace, it’s just a short walk downtown to the upscale and equally touristy shopping of Emerald City’s famous “Yellow Brick Row.” This open-air mall runs along a

SHIPYARD TRAITS

An empty cargo container has a mass rank of 9 (around 12 tons) and Toughness 9 for its sheet metal construction. A full container can easily mass a rank higher (closer to 25 tons). A STR 12 character could throw such a container 120 feet! Heavy cargo cranes have sufficient Strength to move these containers, an effective rank of 10, and Toughness 10 for their construction and materials. Piers are typically reinforced concrete construction (Tou 8).

Use the cruise ship traits (*Hero’s Handbook*, page 172) for a cargo ship: Awesome size, STR 20, SPD 5, DEF 0, Tou 15. It requires STR 17 to lift an entire (unloaded) cargo ship.

CANNERY TRAITS

Most of the exterior of the Cannery buildings is of brick and mortar (Tou 5-6). The interior of the larger, open-air, portions offers plenty of obstacles: reduce movement speeds by 1 rank for characters looking to avoid plowing through crowds of people, displays of produce, and so forth. Characters can grab and wield (or hurl) whole vendor carts as weapons if the character has Strength 5 or greater; an attack with one likely smashes it to pieces, however.

Should it ever come up, Bronze Bessie (see The Rotunda) has a mass rank of 7 and Toughness 8. Should she ever be animated, use the Herd Animal archetype from the *M&M Gamemaster’s Guide*, increasing STR, STA, and Tou to 8 each and adding Immunity to Fortitude Effects.

main street that extends roughly north-south, away from the Riverfront and towards Royal Heights (technically angling around Royal Hill).

The street is closed to vehicular traffic for eight blocks, and paved in that area with brick, annually painted the Row’s signature color. The cross-streets are open to traffic, but footbridges arc over most of them, completed in the past six years to deal with complaints about traffic congestion crossing the Row. Still, experienced Emerald City motorists tend to divert around Yellow Brick Row, especially during peak hours in the city.

Yellow Brick Row is lined with a variety of shops, restaurants, and cafes, most of the latter offering sidewalk seating during fair weather (and table umbrellas during lighter rainy days). Likewise, “sidewalk sales” are common for stores during fair weather, but most keep their business indoors during Emerald City’s long rainy season. Yellow Brick Row’s retail offerings range from major chain stores (tending towards the upscale the closer you get to Royal Hill) to small, independent boutiques. You can find multiple Starbase Coffees along with Arcadia Coffee Roasters, and the Mud House and Victrola, two independent coffeehouses.

Yellow Brick Row is also famous, of course, as the site of the “Storm Heard ‘Round the World”—what E.C. residents and others came to call the Silver Storm—which forever changed the course of events in the city. The intersection where the Redshift Energies truck exploded,

*Searching for
Style?*

*Follow the
Yellow Brick
Row!*

CAR (AND BUS) TOSSING

Cars and buses are popular projectiles and makeshift weapons for super-strong characters fighting in the urban environment. It takes at least STR 6 to effectively lift a car (7 or more for a truck) and the makeshift weapon inflicts damage equal to the STR required to lift it.

A hero who avoids being hit by a thrown car or other vehicle can attempt to catch it, particularly if there are innocent people inside! Treat this like a grab attempt (*Hero's Handbook*, page 196) except no Strength check is required, so long as the hero is strong enough to lift the vehicle. On a failed grab check, the hero is automatically hit by the vehicle, even if the attacker's initial attack check failed. Thus, there is some risk to the maneuver. The hero can then attempt to set the vehicle down safely; heroes who do so to their detriment typically earn a hero point award.

unleashing the Silver Storm, now features a chromed commemorative plaque with the names of those who perished due to the storm. Maximillian Mars has also paid to commission an original work of sculpture from Emerald City artist Heidi Hesse, to be entitled "Shelter from the Storm" with an unveiling planned during the anniversary of the event.

ATLAS MALL

Yellow Brick Row's own "Emerald Palace" is the Atlas Mall, a two-level shopping complex at the far end of the district and the largest of its kind in central Emerald City. Two above-ground stories, along with an underground level and attached parking garage, provide room for shoppers to enjoy more than a hundred different stores, extending the shopping of Yellow Brick Row in, up, and down. The mall's central area features a glass-panel ceiling modeled after the Crystal Palace of London's Great Exhibition in the 19th Century, and other parts of the mall feature the stylings of late 19th century train stations and similar public buildings.

ROYAL HEIGHTS

Climb away from the Riverfront and the downtown area of Emerald City and you ascend the first of the city's three hills, overlooking the Albian and Red Rivers: Royal Hill. The skyscrapers of the downtown business district and the sprawling shops and pedestrian malls begin to give way to more humble structures and streets lined with retail shops, apartment and condo complexes, restaurants, and, most of all, cafés and coffee shops galore. Welcome to Royal Heights, the ritziest neighborhood in Emerald City.

Originally, Royal Heights was a sufficient distance from the somewhat disreputable docks, but close enough to the activity of the city, to be prime estates for the well-to-do of Emerald City. In the generations since, the downtown area has encroached more and more on Royal Heights, but it remains prime real estate in many regards. Most of the old manor homes are gone, leaving only those on Sunset Hill. Replacing them are more modern buildings constructed throughout the 20th century, including an increasing number of condos and apartments.

THE CROWN TOWER HOTEL

One historic Royal Heights building still around is the Crown Tower Hotel, an Emerald City landmark for nearly a century. Built in the 1920s, the art deco style hotel was the largest of its kind in the city, offering the most luxurious stays in the Pacific Northwest. Although it went through a fallow period during the mid-20th century when its elegant stylings were considered passé, the Crown Tower underwent renovation and restoration in the 1990s (aided by local Emerald City tech money) that has brought it back to its former glory and prestige.

Among the hotel's many fine features include the beautiful bronze and marble lobby with flanking grand staircases up to the second floor ballrooms, a full-service spa, and two restaurants (three, if you count the Arcadian Coffee Roasters kiosk off the lobby): Neptune's is a fine seafood restaurant located on the north-facing side of the hotel's ground floor while the Emerald Crown sits atop the building, a revolving restaurant with a commanding view of Emerald City, to say nothing of the view of the city's rich and famous dining at the nearby tables.

THE UNDERCITY

In the late 1880s, lower-lying areas of Emerald City suffered significant flooding- and sanitation-related problems, which led to the city authorities covering over, then building atop, the old central part of the city closest to the water. This created "the Maze" where buildings and streets from the 19th century are preserved beneath the city's current downtown area, a ghostly echo of Emerald's past. Today, portions of this once-buried secret is the city's leading tourist attraction for those with a taste for the macabre and outré.

THE MAZE

Old Emerald's submerged structures and streets lie under an endless, sunless sky of earth and concrete, now forming a labyrinth ghost town. The Maze's "walls" consist of storefronts touting wares long gone, interspersed with empty hotels and restaurants with nary a soul to succor. It is a shadowy land of skeletal hitching posts and long-dimmed gaslights, allowing the darkness to stretch to infinity. Compared to the size of the Undercity as a whole, the Maze is just a small section that's been explored and exploited.

THE FORGOTTEN UNDERGROUND

Like most West Coast cities, the concept of subways never really caught on in Emerald City. Although not as earthquake prone as some areas, the city still sees the occasional tremor. The risk was considered small enough to experiment with the construction of a subway system in the 1950s, but the same original flooding problems that led to the creation of the Undercity downtown plagued the project. Coupled with cost overruns and questions of financial mismanagement, it was eventually abandoned with only a few elements completed. These have since either become part of the Undercity or been sealed off and largely forgotten.

These lost tunnels and elements of the city's forgotten underground infrastructure can be used as supervillain hideouts, lairs for underground creatures, or even headquarters for heroes who prefer to operate "under the radar" and maintain a degree of secrecy. The original underground excavations and structures may have been expanded upon or further developed by ambitious underdwellers.

Despite the Maze's spooky reputation, a good portion of it is now an electrically lit, thoroughly mapped tourist attraction; monstrous only in the amount of embellishment its corporately employed guides use in describing it to the very young, the very gullible, and out-of-towners. Thanks to them, stories of forgotten gem-filled bank vaults and assorted subterranean bogeymen hidden in the Undercity persist unabated.

Beyond the lighted, well-trodden areas of the Maze, the Undercity conceals some hazards. Rotted floors, collapsing ceilings, fetid water, vermin packs, fugitive criminals, violent lunatics, and more dangers all lie just past the souvenir stands. Areas as yet unexplored may hold even greater hazards and—as some brave, foolish folk insist—greater rewards. No matter how many go missing in the attempt, others continue to follow.

Between the family friendly areas of the Maze and the great unknown outside it lies a subterranean offshoot of the city's homeless community. While some are trapped there in the grip of their addictions or madness, others have simply grown accustomed to living off (and underneath) the grid. As with the other members of Emerald's "invisible residents," they see and hear quite a bit, and can be great—if not always reliable—sources of information.

ITEM: Word from the Undercity is Bobby Ray Thompson, age 60, has gone missing. Local authorities are unconcerned at best, but Thompson makes the seventh disappearance from the city's homeless population in as many weeks. Wonder if the mayor will spin one less homeless as another city resident joining the workforce. Thompson brought back a sack full of medals from Vietnam back in 1971 and deserves a better memorial than an already forgotten police report and a blog entry.

-EXCERPT FROM THE GHOST SIGHTINGS BLOG





Mount
Forge

Atlas Mountains

Northern Shore

Islandview

Albian River

Angel Island

Fortress Island

• State Penitentiary

Stepstone Islands

Bethlehem Heights

Bethlehem Heights
Psychiatric Hospital

White Water Highway

Ports

Southern Shore

Atlas Mountains

MarsTech
Campus

Elysian
Forest

University
Hill

Emerald City
University

Eastern
District

ark

Lake
Valley

Lakeside

Mt. Stanley

THE EASTERN DISTRICT

Although it is located southwest of downtown, Emerald City's Eastern District is so named because of its largely Asian-American population. Situated in the low-lying area between and below Sunset and University Hills, the District encompasses land prone to flooding only in the rainiest of Emerald City's rainy climate. As a result of the infrequent, but still inconvenient flooding, it remained sparsely populated until immigrants from China began arriving *en masse* in the 19th century. To those who had lived by the *Huang He*, the bloodthirsty river aptly called "China's Sorrow," this area of Emerald City was practically an oasis.

Through much toil and sacrifice, the Chinese settlers made their little community, dubbed "Jadetown," viable, and their numbers swelled with new arrivals even after an act of Congress forbade new arrivals from the Middle Kingdom itself. This occurred because, almost unique to Emerald City, the Chinese immigrants were politely ignored rather than actively oppressed—a marked change from their treatment elsewhere. When word of Emerald City's comparatively welcoming attitude spread, other Chinese immigrants left more hateful settlements and made their way to the City of Destiny, including a few hundred forced out of Seattle due to anti-Chinese sentiment that came to a head in 1886.

Japanese immigrants also began to settle in the district in the late 19th century, and built their own thriving (though smaller) community alongside Jadetown, which came to be known as "Little Osaka." Like Jadetown, it was considered exotic and somewhat mysterious, but its now-famous Tea Garden attracted curious visitors from the start. The area suffered severe setbacks as a result of the Nisei relocations during World War II, but recovered from them surprisingly swiftly postwar, though Little Osaka still plays second fiddle to Jadetown in terms of size and public awareness.

Today, the two long-settled Chinese and Japanese communities which diversified Emerald City more than a century ago see their district undergoing demographic change. Though Jadetown and Little Osaka remain the two most well-known neighborhoods (particularly amongst tourists), other ethnic and cultural "islands" are found there as well. In and around the Chinese and Japanese neighborhoods of old are enclaves of Koreans, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Thais, and Cambodians. The weaving of these newcomers into the tapestry that is the Eastern District has not always gone smoothly, as misun-

derstandings have occurred. Thankfully, none has ever threatened to turn ugly.

The Eastern District has been among the city's most densely populated regions since the first immigrants settled there. It remains an area of narrow streets and wall-to-wall buildings where a postage-stamp sized front yard is a rarely seen luxury. Communities tend to be self-contained, with most stores and services geared to serve each specific linguistic and cultural group. Others aim for tourist dollars, offering exotic tastes and wares to multicultural seekers. Around these small businesses are the apartments, townhouses, and modest homes that typically house the district's residents.

To tourists and other casual visitors, the Eastern District is like a carnival ride, with every turn of a corner presenting strange but delightful sights, sounds, and smells. It becomes a kaleidoscope of neon dragons in gift-shop windows, open-air markets with haggling in a dozen foreign tongues, and alien cuisines tempting the gastronomically adventurous. Beyond the occasional mugger or pickpocket, the mystery and danger remain well within the tolerance ranges of passers-by.

Getting past these surface impressions to the true heart of the Eastern District is a task of which few outsiders are capable. It requires intimate knowledge of two-to-six separate cultures, and gaining the hard-won trust of an equal number of tightly knit communities not always well-treated by interlopers. However, the rewards are equal to the effort, and the blessings of acceptance are many for those who succeed, from as simple a thing as good restaurant seats to a timely warning about the sudden Yakuza's unhealthy interest in them. They may even get to meet the legendary martial arts and mystic masters outsiders falsely believe are found on every Eastern District street corner.

JADETOWN

Settled in the late 19th century by Chinese immigrants, the neighborhood known as Jadetown remains primarily Chinese and retains that unique character and close-knit sense of community today. Chinese writing, art, and architecture abound in Jadetown, and most students learn Chinese languages, culture, and history in addition to the lessons they learn in public school, reflecting residents' pride in their heritage.

ITEM: *The Ghost is hearing different (nick)names, but yet another mid-level Triad member has been found in Jadetown with a bad neck. I write "bad" because "broken" doesn't do the job justice—more like twisted completely around twice or thrice. Fingers are pointing at the Yakuza, but twisting necks isn't their style. Then again, who does twist necks? I'm thinking a very crazy or very angry stormer myself, but the Ghost will continue to watch and listen as always.*

-EXCERPT FROM THE GHOST SIGHTINGS BLOG



Jadetown is a popular tourist draw, especially during its elaborate Chinese New Year celebration, a spectacle rivaling any held elsewhere in the country. The neighborhood's famed Jade Arch serves as its official entrance and is a major attraction in its own right, with an especially ubiquitous presence on Emerald City postcards. Tourists also come for the superb restaurants serving native cuisine, or the unique markets and shops.

Despite its many visitors, much of Jadetown remains a mystery to outsiders, and few of its residents are privy to all its secrets. Among the lesser-known facets of life in Jadetown are the equally exotic but far more illicit attractions, such as heroin, prostitution, and even more unsavory pastimes. Like all criminal activities in Jadetown, these rackets are firmly under the iron-fisted control of the local Triad, the Golden Dragon Society, as they have for over a century—largely in secret.

In contrast to the Society's very real but invisible rule in the shadows of Jadetown, the secret martial arts masters and enlightened hermetic mystics some outsiders assume to be widespread are few and far between. Simply because the area maintains a traditional Chinese cultural identity, some (usually disappointed) visitors continue to assume life in Jadetown is the stuff of Hong Kong cinematic legend.

THE GOLDEN DRAGON HOUSE

Publicly, the Golden Dragon House is one of Emerald City's most exclusive attractions, a restaurant and hotel offering first-class meals, accommodations, and entertainment to a very wealthy international clientele.

LITTLE OSAKA

In contrast to the Jadetown, which immerses visitors in the exotic wonders of East Asia, the Japanese area of the Eastern District—dubbed “Little Osaka”—has a much more reserved style and character. To be sure, it's by far the best place in Emerald City to get sushi, and its renowned Japanese Tea Garden brings in many visitors on its own. On the whole, however, the narrow roads, densely packed buildings, and the residents themselves remind visitors they are in the Eastern District. Even the latter is no longer the unambiguous sign that it once was, as the more recent immigrant populations from Korea and Indochina predominantly chose to settle here.

The differences are historical and economic in nature. Prior to World War II, Little Osaka was unmistakably Japanese, but the wartime ouster of the Nisei handed the neighborhood over to the opportunistic *gaijin*, who remade it in their own culture's image. When the Nisei returned postwar, there was little sentiment in their dispirited numbers to restore it, and thus Little Osaka remained in its Americanized state.

Business then became the neighborhood's main pursuit, and for that reason not every shopkeeper in Little Osaka is actually a ninja or Zen martial arts master, although some tourists persist in thinking so. Ironically, this commerce-first attitude spurred the creation of two new popular hotels catering to businessmen and visitors from Japan, but as they strive to be authentically Japanese (as opposed to Japanese-American), most Americans find them off-putting—absent those with a taste for squid chips in the vending machines.

JAPANESE TEA GARDEN

The most obvious trace of Nipponese culture to be found in Little Osaka is its famed Tea Garden. Built in traditional fashion by the city's first Japanese residents during the 1890s, over time the Garden became a favorite destination for all the people of Emerald. Even at the height of the Second World War when the Nisei themselves were forcibly ejected from the neighborhood and Japan itself was demonized, the Tea Garden itself stood undisturbed and was never once vandalized in any way.

Today, the Garden plays host to those who come for traditional religious and philosophical contemplation. This aspect has grown in importance as the number of non-Asian adherents to Eastern faiths has grown in recent years. Others are similarly drawn to the Garden for more secular reasons, like appreciating its great beauty or just getting in some reading or a healthy stroll. Of course, there are also tourists, drawn to a famous city landmark and photographing everything in sight.

The Garden itself consists of lush gardens, its iconic teahouse, several stone arrangements, a stone lantern, and sculpted-hedge enclosures. Water flows in streams and falls throughout the Garden by design.

SOUTHERN SHORE

The aptly named Southern Shore area covers the land below the Albian River, running westward along its lower

"I'VE GOT A TRAIN TO CATCH!"

Another common superhero trope is stopping a runaway train before it hits a break in the tracks or a collides with an obstacle. The rail system in Emerald City provides such opportunities, either for commuter trains in the city itself, or cargo trains operating outside of it, such as along passes in the Atlas Mountains.

Stopping the train is a challenge (*Hero's Handbook*, page 185) with a base DC of 10, plus the higher of the train's Strength and Speed, typically 10 and 5, respectively, for a total DC of 20. The heroes must accumulate at least five degrees of success before three degrees of failure, with each degree of success roughly slowing the train's Speed by 1 rank. Three or more degrees of failure mean the involved heroes are no longer able to stop the train: perhaps they are thrown from it, or even run over by it! The heroes are assumed to be unharmed by the failure, but also out of action so far as stopping the train is concerned.

Traits useful for the challenge include sheer Strength (and effects like Move Object), including bonuses from Power-Lifting (*Hero's Handbook*, page 123) and force- or momentum-based power effects. Some movement effects might be useful, such as applying a hero's Flight as a kind of "air brake" for the train. Similarly, effects with the right descriptors, like a sticky Affliction, might also apply. Skills may include Technology to jury-rig the train's brakes or Vehicles to operate its controls. At the GM's discretion, Athletics may apply in place of a Strength check, especially for STR 7+ heroes.

bank from Downtown. This stretch of suburban flat-land (known simply as "the Shore," to city residents) is one of upper middle class family houses, surrounded by the schools, strip-malls, shops, and service conveniences that cater to their wants and needs.

Residents of the Shore are typically college-educated professionals, many of them working their first real job while raising their firstborn in their very first house. Every day, they send their kids off to a progressive-curriculum school, catch a bus or a car-pool to work, grab a quick Thai lunch between filing reports, then return home to begin the cycle anew.

While Shore residents represent an almost bewildering array of racial, ethnic, and religious demographics, they largely subscribe to the same covenant of suburban conventions. Hybrid vehicles, solar panels, and recycling bins are commonplace, as are designer dogs and youth soccer leagues. It is an area where more problems are dealt with by homeowner's associations than the police department, and the head of the parent-teacher-student organization wields more practical power than the mayor.

The relatively affluent and highly populated Shore houses the workforce that forms the backbone of such important local concerns as MarsTech, Inc., Nolan Aircraft, and KesKorp. As such, it receives more than its share of attention from the local government and media. The seemingly constant parade of city politicians, patrol cars, and Action News Team vans ensure the Shore's crime rates stay low, and any other municipal difficulties are swiftly brought to the public's attention before being swiftly dealt with by the powers that be.

In the midst of all the Shore's contented sameness lies a true city landmark, the Van Sant Drive-In, a still-operating ozoner founded in 1950 and now on the National Register of Historic Places. During the warmer months, families flock there to enjoy old-fashioned double-features, the playground, and the snack bar's famed "Chihuahua" sandwich—a diet-destroying combination of corn tortillas, pimento cheese spread, onions, cabbage, chili, and jalapeno peppers.

SUNSET HILL

The southwestern-most of the three mounds occupied by Emerald City, Sunset Hill is named for the everyday breathtaking vista of the sun setting over it. This spectacular natural panorama has captivated and inspired Emerald residents from Steven Malory (first to call the Hill home) to today's digital photographers.

For many years Sunset Hill was the private reserve of Emerald's "old money," and the mansions and grounds there passed from one Roman-numerated son to the next. Many remain there today, such as the Malorys, but their venerable ranks began to thin during the 1970s. The failing economy and social turmoil of the era combined to dispossess some of the long-landed blue-bloods, a trend which has accelerated over the years.

OVERLOOK PARK

By the late 19th century, Sunset Hill's status as a lofty Olympus for Emerald City's plutocrats had been firmly established. The city-founding Malory family believed the Hill's awe-inspiring sunsets should be viewable by rich and poor alike, and to address the disparity, they conditionally deeded the western portion of Sunset Hill overlooking the river and lake areas to the city provided it was maintained as a public park.

For more than a century, Overlook Park has offered a place to relax, play, contemplate, and reconnect with family and friends. In keeping with the Malorys' intent, it remains a place where all of Emerald City can gather. A stroll around the Park reveals picnicking blue-collar families enjoying buckets of fast-food fried chicken next to millionaires being served brie and *Beaujolais* by servants. Overlook Park is where a well-heeled captain of industry wearing two grand in running gear jogs past a half-dozen work-study college students playing hacky-sack.

UNIVERSITY HILL

Known as Gallows Hill until public education replaced public hangings there, University Hill is southeastern-most of the three upon which Emerald City rests. As the neighborhood's name indicates, Emerald City University, the region's leading public college, is located there. Its sprawling campus is surrounded by artsy neighborhoods full of apartment complexes with student-friendly rent, all-night bars and dance clubs, *avant-garde* art galleries, midnight movie theatres, and other amenities aimed at the youth culture.

The people of University Hill tend to fall into one of two broad categories. First are the students: young, attractive, and blessed with copious amounts of free time plus their first exposure to higher knowledge and wisdom. For the first time in their lives, they have embraced something with a passion, be it Plato, anime, enviro-feminism, beer, Buddhism, Red Phantom graphic novels, sororities, Native American studies, or sex. Life for them is pursuing their chosen devotion with every fiber of their hearts, souls, minds, and parents' bank accounts... or working if they're not so lucky.

Category number two encompasses all the people gainfully employed at providing and facilitating the passions of youth. In many ways, this group is as colorful and diverse as the population they serve. Among them are the brilliant and eccentric political science professor who greets admiring students in ancient Greek, the hip theatre owner who books *El Topo* for a week of midnight shows, and that cool bartender who totally doesn't check ID's.

To venture onto University Hill is to enter their world. Even caped heroes who fly there in pursuit of a world-threatening super-criminal had best be prepared for an anti-globalism rally, carloads of fans on their way to an ECU Sasquatches football game, a wicked awesome kegger at the Gamma Rho Phi house, and similar inconveniences.



ECU PARKER SCIENCES BUILDING

Named in honor of famed Emerald City-born oceanographer William H. Parker, the ECU Sciences Building houses some of the top professors and students in the physical and para-sciences. To be sure, the other scientific disciplines are well represented at ECU, but they lack the (deserved) world-class reputation the more technologically and esoterically oriented departments have achieved.

ECU's renowned excellence in the physical sciences helps attract and keep companies like KessKorp, Redshift Energies, and MarsTech, Inc. in Emerald City. Moreover, these companies have successfully partnered with ECU, giving promising students unparalleled real-world, hands-on opportunities to study the practical applications of their chosen fields. This gives the companies involved an inside track on hiring top talent, and ECU a powerful recruitment tool with which to attract talented young people.

The para-science programs at ECU reflect the legends, folklore, and seemingly supernatural events that have been part of the region since before the city's founding. Given the ever-present element of the paranormal in Emerald City life (even before the Silver Storm), it's understandable that ECU has not only a cryptozoology program staffed with the leading Sasquatch experts in the country, but ECU's parapsychology studies department is also highly regarded, as is (to a lesser degree) the exobiology program.

At any given hour, any number of potentially useful or destructive experiments are being conducted in the Parker Building. The city's new superhuman champions may be needed there at any time to avert a disaster, or else avail themselves of the wealth of knowledge housed within.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Similar to runaway trains (see the "**I've Got a Train to Catch!**" sidebar) heroes sometimes have to deal with crippled or falling aircraft. An aerial battle might damage a plane as a complication for the heroes or a villain might do so deliberately as a distraction. Criminals and terrorists might target aircraft, and accidents happen, leaving it up to the heroes to prevent disaster.

Catching a falling aircraft is a challenge similar to stopping a runaway train, save that the heroes need suitable powers or movement effects to reach the plane in the first place. Base DC of 10, plus the higher of the plane's Strength or Speed, typically 16 and 7, respectively, for a passenger jet use a DC of 26, with a requirement of seven degrees of success before three degrees of failure. Each degree of success lowers the plane's Speed rank by 1.

Suitable traits include sheer Strength (and Lifting Strength) and effects like Move Object or Movable Create. Some movement effects or even attack effects may be able to provide supplementary propulsion, such as a fire-generating hero creating temporary "rockets" to help stabilize a missing engine. Skills like Technology and Vehicles can also contribute to the effort, as can traits which help to clear a path for the plane's descent and avoid a collision.

LAKESIDE

The Lakeside area was originally—in addition to being nowhere near a lake—sparsely populated, save for a few gem miners working a few smaller claims. When those finally petered out in early 20th century, there was some talk of what to make of the area, but no real action was taken until the Great Depression. Then in 1933, under the Works Progress Administration, work began on the Red River Dam Project. When it was completed, the present Lake Vallee was formed.

Since Emerald City's "old money" was then still firmly ensconced atop Sunset Hill, and everyone else was even more solidly stuck in the ravages of the Depression, it took some time for the Lakeside neighborhood to take shape. As it turned out, Lakeside finally began to take off after World War II, as the area became home to the city's "new money." The influx of entrepreneurs who struck it rich during America's postwar economic boom finally established the neighborhood's unofficial boundaries, beginning to the south of the Eastern District and running along the lakeshore itself.

Today, Lakeside remains the place in Emerald City where people who've just gotten the means to realize their dreams congregate. Its residents tend to be outside-the-box thinkers whose lack of patience with rules and convention got them where they are, and thus refuse to conform now. It is the natural habitat for those who could put on a five-grand suit and go to a five-star bistro, but are happier donning a Hawaiian shirt and heading to a neighborhood restaurant where they can get some good ribs and the kids can play a few video games in the little arcade off the dining room.

Lakeside, therefore, is spiritually and practically the perfect spot for super-heroes to settle down in their secret identities. Its distance from the city center and ready access to both water and sparsely populated wilderness are obvious pluses. In addition, there's much to be said for an area where any strange, super-powered, or occult happening is almost certain to be written off by the neighbors as another crazy, artistic experiment or the next million-dollar idea in its early stages.

THE LOST MAXEY MINE

In addition to forming Vallee Lake, the Red River Dam Project flooded an abandoned mining town in the valley called Maxey. Rumor has it the town (or a nearby mine shaft—stories vary) was used to stash loot from a series of robberies during the 1920s. Others claim it wasn't Prohibition crooks, but the Confederate raiding party who hid their ill-gotten gains there back in 1864. There are even a wild-eyed few who say both treasures are in the mine.

Trouble is, far more people know the legends and attempt to recover the lost treasure(s) than are actually capable of pulling it off. One of the jobs the ECPD is more than happy to pass along to the new super-heroes in town is rescuing such fools—literally in over their heads—from drowning. Whether or not any loot is there to be found, as well as what else might be down there after the Silver Storm, are questions for the players (and, of course, the Gamemaster) to ponder.

OUTSIDE EMERALD CITY

True to its name, Emerald City is surrounded by nature in one of the most beautiful areas of North America. Unlike more urbanized parts of the United States, Emerald City is relatively isolated: get outside of the city limits, and even the suburban neighborhoods quickly give way to Pacific rainforest, rolling foothills, and, eventually, the high peaks of the Atlas Mountains or the flat expanse of the Pacific Ocean.

THE ARCADIAN PENINSULA

The Arcadian Peninsula, also known as the Outer Peninsula, lies across the Red River from Emerald City, and is further subdivided by the Bronze River where it flows from the mountains down to Malory Bay.

The westernmost part of the peninsula, to the west of the Bronze River, is rolling Pacific rainforest, except where areas have been cleared, primarily along the coast and river shorelines. The Benjamin Jacobs International Airport is located on the northwestern point of the Arcadian Peninsula, with smaller airfields to the south. An increasing industrial zone has spread southward from the airport.

The Arcadian Peaks, a spur of the Atlas Mountains, make up the spine of the central portion of the peninsula, between the two rivers. Most of the build-up in this area is along the eastern side, between the Peaks and the Red River, particularly near where the river flows into Malory Bay and southeastward towards Lake Vallee. This area saw waves of construction in the 1950s and again in the 1980s and early 2000s, building up suburban neighborhoods and later numerous small office and technology parks.

Numerous smaller rivers flow down from highland lakes, joining the Red and Bronze Rivers or making their way directly into Malory Bay or the Pacific. Salmon runs are common throughout these waterways, and the Arcadian Peninsula has an active salmon farming industry. Bronze River salmon is some of the most popular in the region. The salmon runs have been on the decline for decades, and both industry experts and environmentalists are concerned about sustainability issues in the future. This has led to increasing environmental impact studies for construction and industry in the area.

THE ELYSIAN FOREST

A broad swath of greenery stretching from the southeastern borders of Emerald City into the lowlands of the Atlas Mountains, the Elysian Forest helped to give the city its

name and remains a local and national treasure. Large parts of the forest near the mountains are protected national parkland, safe from development to preserve wildlife habitats as well as their natural beauty.

The Elysian Forest is part of the temperate rainforest region of North America, the largest temperate zone rainforest area in the world. It sees considerable annual rainfall (primarily in the winter rainy season) as well as heavy summertime fogs, which recirculate moisture on the forest floor. It is primarily made up of old-growth redwoods, Douglas fir, Sitka spruce, western hemlock, and the western red cedar. Heavy layers of moss, ferns, and similar undergrowth are common due to the moisture and richness of deadfalls and other decaying plant matter.

The Elysian Forest is home to a wide variety of animal life as well, from Pacific Northwest species of elk and deer to foxes, bears, and timberwolves. Owls, eagles, and other hunting birds share nesting grounds with crows, ravens, woodpeckers, flickers, and numerous smaller bird species. The rivers and streams have abundant life, from salmon and other fish to frogs and salamanders. Local and national environmentalist groups work hard to protect and study the biodiversity and native species of the Elysian Forest.

The expanse of the forest is a popular destination for tourists and locals alike looking to enjoy the great outdoors. It is a site for hiking, camping, fishing, and—in proper season—hunting. Hunting trips into the Elysian Forest are licensed and regulated, limited to specific areas and species. From time to time, rangers catch poachers illegally hunting in restricted areas or trying to bag some game (like the endangered Elysian elk) on the forbidden list.

THE CRYPTIDS

In truth, the Elysian Forest is far more diverse than most suspect: millennia of outside influences—from the ancient Preservers to Serpent People survivors from Lemuria to the shapeshifting alien Grue—have left their marks on the forest and surrounding wilderness in the Emerald City region. Since before the time of American settlers, the forest near Mt. Stanley and the Albion River has been known as home to the strange and unusual.

Alien and engineered DNA spawn various mutant creatures, the sources of tall tales from foresters and explorers in generations gone by, and the subjects of “cryptid

ITEM: Another Bigfoot sighting by campers in the Elysian Forest. I'm hoping they'll alibi the Big Guy for the attack on Col. Braeden. You all know I don't want to see Bigfoot's future in politics compromised in any way. Remember, if you're reading this Big Guy, I am ready and willing to manage your campaign for mayor. We simply cannot lose!

—EXCERPT FROM THE GHOST SIGHTINGS BLOG



hunters" seeking to prove the truth of those tales. Occasionally some hunter or camper goes missing in the Elysian Forest and rangers find only a trace: the remains of a campsite, a scrap or two of clothing, or a discarded shoe. Indeed, some Elysian Forest Park Rangers have themselves gone missing from time to time, but they are a good deal more cautious. It is an open secret in the Elysian Park Service that there is something odd about the place. They respect the forest's reputation and exercise the caution necessary to prevent tragedy, encouraging visitors to do the same.

If you're interested in learning more about the unusual inhabitants of the Elysian Forest so you can use them in your character's background, ask your GM to show you the section about them in **Chapter 5** of the *Secrets of Emerald City*.

THE ATLAS MOUNTAIN RANGE

The majestic Atlas Mountains surround the Emerald City region like a massive fence, stretching in a roughly north-south range some distance eastward of the peninsulas and the mouth of the Albion River. The Arcadian Peaks, forming the middle of the Outer Peninsula, are a spur of the Atlas Mountains, smaller than their eastern cousins. The natural barrier of the mountains keeps clouds and weather formations moving in from the ocean trapped over the Emerald City area, contributing to its famous rainy and often overcast weather. On the eastern side of the mountains, precipitation drops off considerably, leaving miles of arid plain in the range's "rain shadow".

The Atlas Mountains are part of the Pacific "Ring of Fire" formed by the meeting of two great continental plates. A great many of them are volcanic, although most of the volcanic mountains in the Atlas Range have been mostly dormant for decades, if not centuries, and eruptions are

relatively rare. Precipitation in the upper reaches of the mountains is typically snow, the only regular snowfall in the region. Well over a hundred inches of snowfall in the high mountains is not unusual in one year, and the tallest Atlas Mountains remain snow-capped year-round.

The volcanic nature of the Atlas Range makes the surrounding terrain and soil especially rich. Below the snow-line of the mountains stretches the verdant expanse of the Elysian Forest, and the mountain slopes are home to a variety of plant and animal life, from wild cats and owls to other species of birds, rodents, wild sheep and goats, bears, and more.

The volcanic peaks offer another largely untapped resource: vast stores of geothermal energy. The United States government has an experimental geothermal generator plant high on the slopes of Mt. Forge, a dormant volcano in the range. The project is to prove a design to tap subterranean sources of magma for heat energy to generate electricity.

Mount Stanley, named for the explorer Charles H. Stanley, is the tallest and most visible peak in the Atlas Range. On a clear day, it is visible from across the Albion River area. Mt. Stanley is also one of the range's volcanically active peaks, although it has not erupted in the history of Emerald City. Hakawi legends, however, talk of tremendous eruptions from the mountain in the past.

MOUNTAIN GEMS

The Atlas Mountains, particularly the slopes of Mount Stanley, are known for veins of various crystals and gemstones, including obsidian, quartz, and emeralds—associated with the city of the same name—along with "Atlas emeralds," a form of green meteoric tektite similar to moldavite (essentially fused mineral glass). They are also the source of the mysterious multi-colored minerals known

as viridian stones, rare minerals with a variety of unusual properties (see *Secrets of Emerald City*, page 15 with your GMs permission).

Gems were widely mined in the mountains during the late 1800s and early 1900s before many mines and surface veins were tapped out and environmental protections, as well as difficulties in reaching deeper veins, made the work unviable. Now, mining is heavily restricted in the Atlas Range, a *cause celebre* for economic developers who want to open more of the mountains up for exploitation of their mineral wealth, versus conservationists who want to preserve their natural beauty and habitats.

The process of mining gems and crystals in the Atlas Mountains revealed numerous ancient lava tubes and tunnels riddling parts of the peaks. Some of these led to gem deposits, but most were worn smooth by ancient lava flows or water, leading into the depths beneath the mountains, where few explorers beyond the occasional brave geologist or volcanologist have ventured.

TITANIC MYTHS

Numerous myths and legends surround the Atlas Mountains. The Hekawi and other local tribes tell tales of gods fighting wars amongst the peaks, hurling fire and lightning at each other, and stories about the Animal Peoples of the mountains and surrounding forests: humanoid animals capable of speech and various feats of magic. Local legends like the elusive “bigfoot” or “sasquatch” are associated with the Atlas Mountains, along with chilling stories of cannibalism and depravity on the part of lost or trapped travelers, hunters, or explorers in bygone days. (See *Black Vulture* in *Threat Report*.)

Modern myths involving the Atlas Peaks tend to cluster around the number of UFO sightings in the general area since anyone began keeping records of them in the 1940s. Initially dismissed as Japanese “fire balloons” or more mundane weather balloons, the sightings have been frequent and semi-regular for decades, so much so that they are often categorized as particular types, from strange hovering lights or auroras to unusual craft, often silent and far more maneuverable than any earthly vessel. Confirmation of the existence of alien life from space-faring heroes and even actual aliens has only intensified the sightings since people know they *could* be actual extraterrestrials.

THE RED AND BRONZE RIVERS

After the mighty Albion River, the two major waterways in the Emerald City region are the Red and Bronze Rivers, running northward from the heights of the Atlas Mountains and Arcadian Peaks to join with the waters of the Albion River in Malory Bay.

The Red River is the larger of the two, so named because of the rich red clay found along its banks and the reddish rocks of the Red River Canyon area. It divides the Elysian and Arcadian Peninsulas, spanned by the Red River Bridge. A dam was built in that area in the 1930s to provide hydro-electric power to Emerald City and the surrounding

region. Prior to that, the Red River Valley was known for its mineral deposits, particularly an active gem mine.

The Bronze River subdivides the Arcadian Peninsula on the western side of the Arcadian Peaks. It is narrower than the Red River along its length, cutting a canyon along the peninsula towards Malory Bay. The Bronze River is also rockier, with more whitewaters and cascades along its length. It is known for its annual salmon run, and Bronze River salmon is a delicacy sold in markets throughout Emerald City and the Pacific Northwest.

RED RIVER DAM

In the 1930s, the U.S. federal government developed a project to dam the Red River in the area known as the Red River Canyon, a plan to generate hydro-electric power for Emerald City and the region as well as put much-needed money into the local economy. The Red River Dam Project was complete in 1939, nearly a year ahead of schedule, and the dam formed present day Lake Vallee, covering the abandoned mining town of Maxey. The dam continues to provide a significant portion of Emerald City's electricity and is a local tourist attraction, as well as an occasional target for those looking to threaten the city's power supply or the area downriver from the dam.

LAKE VALLEE

Lake Vallee is a man-made lake formed by the placement of the Red River Dam, filling a low-lying area near Emerald City between the Elysian and Arcadian Peninsulas south and eastward of Sunset Hill. The area now occupied by the lake was once the site of a small mining town called Maxey, as well as a tapped-out diamond mine, which caused the formation of the town in the 1800s. By the time the Red River Dam Project began, Maxey was already a ghost town, so there was no concern about flooding the area where it was located, nor was any attempt made to remove the remains of the town before the dam was built.

Present day Lake Vallee is about five and a half miles in length along the Red River, some three and a half miles wide at its widest point and some 450 feet deep near its center (distance ranks of 11 by 10 by 4). It is bounded by the Eastern District and Lakeside areas of Emerald City on its eastern side, and by the Arcadian Peninsula and one of its main highways along the western side.

Lake Vallee serves as the primary freshwater reservoir for the Emerald City area, via the Lakeside Water Treatment Facility, and offers year-round recreational activities, including boating, fishing, and water sports.

ALBIAN RIVER & THE ISLANDS

Emerald City is situated at the broad mouth of the Albion River where it flows out into Malory Bay. The Albion was so named by early American explorers because of the number of cascades and whitewaters further upriver, which make it navigable only by small craft. In the area near Emerald City, the Albion is actually quite broad and is much deeper, although still fairly swift-flowing. Its



pebbled beaches and sandy shoals were among the first sites for building the new settlement that became E.C.

Five sets of islands dot the river from the South Shore outskirts of Emerald City to Malory Bay: The cluster of the Stepstone Islands, where the Albian widens out after its passage across the Atlas Mountains; Angel Island, now primarily a nature preserve; Fortress Island, home to the Fortress Island State Penitentiary; Council Island, the most populated and center point for the river spanning Bay Bridge; and the three Gateway Islands located at the northern tip of Malory Bay.

In addition to the Bay Bridge, ferry services carry passengers and vehicles between the northern and southern shores of the Albian River on a daily basis.

COUNCIL ISLAND

In Hekawi Indian tradition, Council Island was a neutral meeting place, suited for settling disputes between tribes, but otherwise prohibited as a place where only spirits dwelled. The Hekawi said as much to American settlers, who largely ignored them, seeing the island like any other piece of land. It is noteworthy that several buildings on Council Island suffered disasters, including a trading outpost swept into the river during a terrible storm in the late 1800s and a luxury resort hotel built in 1920 that burned to the ground just weeks after it opened. Emeraldites remained undaunted and any talk of "the Council Island Curse" was considered just that: talk and idle superstition.

Council Island saw some slow and steady growth as a place for private island estates for those wealthy enough to ferry back and forth between the island and the peninsula or reclusive enough not to care (and willing to have all their goods brought in by boat). The post-World War II construction boom changed all that with the building of the Bay

Bridge, an ambitious span across the Albian, anchored in the center at Council Island. Following the bridge's opening, the island was just an off-ramp away from the rest of central Emerald City. Now, Council Island has a population of several thousand in an area of about 12 square miles.

For some time, the Bay Bridge was Council Island's most prominent feature. It has since been eclipsed by the giant silvery robot standing near the main bridge support on the island; the now inert form belonged to the alien computer Tellax, which created the Silver Storm to test the genetic potential implanted in humanity by its creators, the Preservers. Tellax later appeared, using the massive robotic chassis, on Council Island, preparing to unleash a worldwide version of the Silver Storm, but a group of local heroes put a stop to it. Tellax fled Earth, but the robotic form still stands, frozen, arms spread, looking out towards Emerald City across the river like a sentinel. The authorities were initially concerned about "Telly" (as locals have come to call the robot), but all evidence is that it remains inert and unpowered, nothing more than a shell. Still, AEGIS has cordoned-off the immediate area around the robot. Seeing Telly from the bridge, island, or river is fast becoming an E.C. tourist attraction, and photos and logos of the silver robot standing beside the bridge are everywhere.

ANGEL ISLAND

The small, lone Angel Island is set aside as a bird sanctuary by the National Audubon Society to protect various species that nest and live in the wooded areas and rocky beaches of the island, including a number of sheltering sea birds and inland raptors. Parts of the island are open to the public as parkland, accessible by ferry from the mainland and the other islands, although other areas are closed off to protect certain habitats and species. Angel Island has been threatened with funding problems in the past, which nearly resulted in the property being sold,



but fundraising improved greatly during the Emerald City tech boom in the 1990s and the island sanctuary is once again financially stable.

THE STEPSTONE ISLANDS

A set of six islands fill much of the Albian River Narrows, flowing out of a canyon between the peaks of the Atlas Mountains. Here the rougher waters of the Albian from upriver smooth out as they flow quickly into the widening riverbed towards Malory Bay. From east to west the Stepstone Islands are: Breakwater Island, Westward Island, Clearwater Island, Midway Island, Clam Island, and Orchard Island. The islands' collective name comes from how they cluster like a set of stepping stones across part of the river.

FORTRESS ISLAND

A small, rocky island in the middle of the Albian River, between Council and Angel Islands, it is off-limits to the public and is home to the Fortress Island State Penitentiary. The only legal way to access the island is to take one of the prison ferries, which make frequent runs from the ferry port in South Shore.

THE GATEWAY ISLANDS

The northern border of Malory Bay is defined by Hook Point Peninsula and the three islands known collectively as the Gateway Islands, standing as they do at the entrance of the bay. The northern two are Pelican Rock to the east and Gullstone to the west, with smaller Nodell Island situated to the south in between them, named for explorer and trapper William Nodell.

The Gateway Islands are relatively small and rocky, with scrub pines and similarly hardy local plant life. The northern two islands earned their names from the large number of sea birds which nest there: pelicans on the western shores of Pelican Rock, and seagulls virtually everywhere.

MALORY BAY LIGHTHOUSE

On the southwestern shore of Nodell Island stands the Malory Bay Lighthouse, built in 1882 as an aid to navigation, particularly fog and rains known in the region. The lighthouse has been maintained and modernized over the years and, in spite of being recognized as a historic structure, is still in use. Its old lamps have been replaced several times, most recently with a powerful searchlight visible from the Emerald City waterfront when it is operating and for many miles at sea, particularly at night.

MALORY BAY

Malory Bay is the deepwater harbor near Emerald City, sheltered by the Arcadian Peninsula to the south and the jutting spur of Hook Point and the Gateway Islands to the north. It is named for the 19th century explorer Steven R. Malory, one of the first westerners to see and chart it. The Bay is fed by the confluence of the Albian, Red, and Bronze Rivers along with numerous other, smaller, rivers and streams from the Atlas Mountains and

"HOPE I CAN HIT THE RIVER FROM HERE!"

A common superhero trope is to dispose of dangerous items, particularly ones about to explode, in the nearest body of water, which helps to muffle and contain the explosion and ensure nobody gets hurt except some of the local fish or the like.

The Albian or Red Rivers are rarely more than five miles from any central part of the city, a distance rank of between 10 and 11 (more often than not 10, which is 4 miles). So a Strength 12 hero—like the Battlesuit, Paragon, or Powerhouse archetypes—could hurl a 100–200 lb. object into the river fairly easily from anywhere in the downtown area. Extra effort (*Hero's Handbook*, page 19) can double that amount of weight.

Heroes needing to close up the distance can use a combination of movement effect (a move action) and throwing the object (a standard action) to do so. For example, a Powerhouse with Leaping 10 can pick up a burning vehicle about to explode and leap towards the water, reducing the distance rank by 8 (Leaping covers rank –2 distance in a standing jump) then hurl the vehicle the rest of the way; assuming the maximum distance rank of 11, that leaves rank 3 (about 250 feet) meaning the Powerhouse could toss mass rank 9 vehicle weighing up to 12 tons!

Gamemasters can normally assume objects that hit the water explode or sink harmlessly, although there are things like piers, bridges, and boats to consider. Ordinance disposal in Lake Vallee is risky, given the presence of the Red River Dam! A lot of aquatic explosions might also cause issues with river dwellers like the Cryptid Clans (see *Secrets of Emerald City, Chapter 5*).

Arcadian Peaks. A strong northward current in the Pacific Ocean along the coast warms the waters beyond Malory Bay, although the Bay itself is often a good deal colder, fed by snow melts from the high mountains.

Malory Bay is an active port, welcoming ships from across the Pacific Rim, including the west coast of North and Central America, South America, and Japan, Russia, China, and East Asia. Most make their way to dock along Emerald City's waterfront, off-loading and taking on cargo. Some passenger ships also make their way across the bay, mostly cruise ships destined for points north and ferries taking tourists from Emerald City across to the Gateway Islands or the northern part of the Arcadian Peninsula. Water taxis also make the run from the E.C. waterfront to the airport and back. Fleets of fishing boats also set out across Malory Bay early each morning, making their way out to the ocean or casting their nets and checking traps in the bay itself.

Malory Bay is home to a wide variety of life, from different species of fish (including salmon, tuna, and mackerel) to clams and crabs, which are both fished and farmed in the area. Harbor seals and sea lions are fairly common sights in Malory Bay, so much so that Emerald City has been forced to pass laws against feeding them, since it only encourages them to congregate on empty piers along the waterfront. Malory Bay is also known for orcas and other species of whale, including humpback, minke, and grey whales. Whale watching cruises are popular around the bay, as tourists pay to spot some of its largest inhabitants.

CHAPTER 3: LIFE IN EMERALD CITY



For all the changes the Silver Storm and the events that followed wrought on Emerald City, the "City of Destiny" is still a growing urban area home to ordinary people, businesses, and the services and infrastructure that support them. A city transformed, it finds stability in holding on to the day-to-day, the mundane, and the routine. You'll find considerable respect for history and tradition in Emerald City, looking back to the days when there weren't figures flying through the sky or looming over the bridges.

On the other hand, Emerald City has embraced its sudden new status as one of the most "super" cities in the world. The tragedy of the Silver Storm has turned into tourist spectacle and online fandom. The abandoned shell of the alien robot Tellax has been adopted as a local mascot, and anyone with superpowers willing to step up and use them for the public good is practically assured a warm welcome in a city greatly in need of civic-minded superheroes.

All in all, life goes on, as it must, adapting to the changes, no matter how great, and Emerald City is no different. It has weathered a terrible storm, and there may be more troubles yet to come but, for now, life in the city is settling back into what could be called their "new normal".

This chapter looks at the many facets of life in Emerald City. Each section discusses a different aspect of the everyday world of the "City of Destiny," and how the re-emergence of super-powered heroes and villains has changed them, for better and worse.

BUSINESS

For many years, the major businesses in Emerald City were the fishing and lumber industries. More recently, the area has attracted high-tech companies, including computers, software, and aviation. Because of these thriving new corporations, Emerald City has grown almost exponentially in the last two decades, becoming a true boomtown.

ATLAS MOUNTAIN SPORTS

The Stover family opened the first AMS store in Emerald City in 1948—a natural enterprise, being situated near some of the world's best spots for outdoor activities. AMS' owners parlayed the invaluable firsthand knowledge

ITEM: Recent attempts to uncover some information about some of Emerald City's corporate masters have all come to naught. Norville Barnes at Brande Management still refuses to answer my questions, despite my reassurances that I'm both single and pretty—Hey Norville, if you can't trust the word of an anonymous blogger, who can you trust? Colin Trafford at Redshift, on the other hand, won't leave me alone. He tells me soon he can "show me a whole new world." Best line I've heard in a while, Colin, but I'll pass.

-EXCERPT FROM THE GHOST SIGHTINGS BLOG

gained in Emerald into becoming a national sporting-goods retail chain. Today, under third-generation owner Aiden Stover, the business thrives. In Emerald alone, the city's scores of avid hunters, sport fishermen, campers, kayakers, skiers, climbers, and ball players have one thing in common regardless of their particular pastime: an AMS charge card in their wallets.

The company's national headquarters remains in Emerald City, and virtually every neighborhood in the city has at least one AMS store. As such, the chain is an important part of the city economy, especially for young people seeking that all-important first job. Three generations of Emerald City residents have the shared teenage experience of donning the familiar green smock and reminding customers to always shop at AMS "For Peak Performance!"

Among AMS' pimply faced, cracking-voiced workforce may be the heroes' older children, and trouble from their Relationship or Responsibility complications can stem from their kids' part-time jobs. Emerald City's ubiquitous AMS outlets are also a quick and easy spot to grab any needed accouterments for a mission outside urban areas. Any survival gear (see *Hero's Handbook*, page 163) can be found there.

BRANDE MANAGEMENT

In contrast to household name AMS, only those with strong business or political backgrounds have really heard of Brande Management, although chances are better of having heard of one of its many subsidiaries. Brande Management is a diversified holding company, specializing in acquiring and maintaining a portfolio of subsidiaries and corporate clients who make use of Brande's management, support, and security services.

Brande's two largest areas of interest are in energy and security. They control a wide variety of mining, drilling, and refinery assets for the production of fossil fuels and petrochemicals but are also invested in alternative energies. The company's private security force is larger than the armies of many nations, and are regularly hired out to provide security to private and corporate clients as well as Brande Management subsidiaries.

Brande's subsidiaries are too numerous to describe in detail, but include real estate holdings, shipping, construction and contracting, building and property management,

truckling, delivery services, and plastics production. The company also shows a strong interest in acquiring promising research start-ups and tech companies. One example is Kinetix, the Emerald City company that developed the Kinetic Deflector project, which led to the creation of Kid Robot (see page 73). Brande poured considerable resources into the legal case to claim Kid Robot was Kinetix property based on the work of Dr. Natalie Hallemer. In the end, the courts ruled against them and Kid Robot was accorded legal status as an individual and U.S. citizen.

Unsurprisingly, Brande Management has been involved in other legal cases and investigations related to both its energy production and security services branches, but no criminal charges have ever been brought. Former Brande Management executives occupy various state and national political offices in the United States and Canada (where the company's primary management is located).

Brande Management corporate headquarters is in Emerald City, with subsidiary offices in cities around the world, overseeing the company's assets. The company's net income is around three billion dollars annually, with total assets of nearly five times that amount. The current CEO of Brande Management is Norville Barnes, a corporate dynamo who rose through the ranks as a junior executive before earning the corner office and the trust of

the board of directors. A capable "hands-on" manager, Barnes is considered a likely candidate to run for office after he decides to leave his current position with Brande.



GRANT CONGLOMERATES

Grant Conglomerates is a multinational holding company overseeing a number of high-tech interests, and has long maintained a sizable division in Emerald City. This is not surprising, as the Conglomerate's owner Jonathan Grant attended Emerald City University during the early 1970s. During this time, Grant was a noted part of the Emerald's counter-culture and a close friend of local hippie icon Benjie Carver.

KESSKORP

Kessler Industrial Technology (K.I.T.), which does business as, and is more commonly known as, KessKorp, is one of the anchors of Emerald City's "Silicon Circle" of tech compa-

nies. It was founded in the late 1990s by Dr. Arwin Kessler, a former AEGIS R&D section chief who left the agency a step ahead of charges for numerous ethics violations. Since its founding, the company has swiftly grown into a powerful multinational, with facilities in over three dozen countries and cutting-edge interests ranging from computerized microelectronics and exotic metallurgy to pharmacology and biochemical engineering. KessKorp is one of MarsTech's largest rivals and was recently outed by a team of investigative journalists as the shadowy backer for a failed buy-out attempt targeting ASTRO Labs.

KessKorp is Emerald City's biggest polluter (a rap more culpable, more covert companies are happy to see KessKorp take). The public relations fallout has been intense, so much so that protesting KessKorp is practically a required course at ECU.

MAJESTIC INDUSTRIES

Majestic is a large international corporation with interests in chemicals and heavy industry. Though its headquarters is in Freedom City, the company maintains a large manufacturing plant in Emerald City. In addition, Majestic's owner and CEO Hieronymus King is fond of the waters around Emerald, and he (sometimes aboard his famed yacht the *Ocean Queen*) is a frequent Emerald visitor.

MARSTECH, INC.

Emerald City came out of its late-'80s and early-'90s economic slump by successfully transitioning to a high-technology center. Spurring this growth was the establishment of MarsTech, Inc. (MSTI on the New York Stock Exchange) by the flamboyant plutocrat and techno-wizard Maximillian Mars. After MarsTech set up shop in Emerald and flourished, other high-tech companies followed it there, transforming the once-sleepy burgh into a leading center for information technology and other cutting edge businesses.

MarsTech specializes in computers, computer software, and various kinds of mobile and Internet technologies. What sets the company apart in a crowded field is how quickly its tech gadgets "learn" and adapt to its users' needs. Customers have to come to rely on MarsTech products lasting through several upgrades, remaining state of the art for modest cost. Typically, a MarsTech device remains technologically viable three times longer than its competitors, and the company has built up a tremendous customer brand loyalty because of it.

MORGENSTERN LABS

Morgenstern Labs is an Emerald City biotech research concern, and a Grant Conglomerates subsidiary. It has

offices and research facilities in the city and has close ties to ECU, especially with regards to internships and recruiting.

NOLAN AIRCRAFT

Using a veteran's stipend from the Spanish-American War, Major Matthew Nolan secured ownership of a failing

Emerald City boatyard in 1909, and then and there a dreamer at last met his dream. With great determination and ingenuity, Nolan converted the facility over to producing new-fangled "aeroplanes." Nolan's designs tended to be far ahead of their time and impractical for mass production, but at the same time, superior to anything else in the air.

This led to several financially dicey years for the company, but Nolan managed to stay afloat because of the reputation his designs enjoyed with a select clientele of adventurers who needed and could afford what only Nolan could build. Among these early customers were many

costumed mystery men who employed special Nolan-made craft during the World Wars, including the *Albatross* flown by Emerald City's own Scarlet Cyclone.

While Matt Nolan himself was aiding America's masked heroes during World War II, his company began manufacturing simpler designs licensed from other companies, and successfully meeting the huge wartime demand transformed it into the region's major aircraft manufacturer. This wartime marriage between cutting-edge and practicality endures today, and under the able direction of Matt Nolan III the company retains a healthy market share. Thousands of city residents cash Nolan Aircraft paychecks, easily placing it among Emerald's top employers.

NOVA COMMUNICATIONS

Nova Comm (for short), headquartered in Freedom City, but with offices in Emerald City, possesses one of the country's largest cellular communication networks. Stores and kiosks with its familiar sunburst symbol are common throughout Emerald City and sell many different models of cellular phones sporting nearly every imaginable feature. The company's digital network already extends nationwide and continues to expand—part of the "Nova Communications explosion," as the ads say.

Naomi Sinclair, the President of Nova Communications, is a savvy businesswoman who joined the company on the promise of increasing its market share. She has followed through on her promise and then some, quite pleasing the board of directors.

Sinclair's success included Emerald City, at least until the Silver Storm. During the crisis, Nova Comm's local network

was overwhelmed—as any in the world would have been under the circumstances—and left many panicked city residents with nothing but an unsympathetic prerecorded voice. The technical reality plus the fact the Homeland Security Department would've disabled the network in any event (to prevent cell-phone detonated bombs) has done little to assuage many angry, irrational customers.

As a result, Sinclair has allocated considerable sums towards repairing the public relations damage and developing new technology to prevent a reoccurrence. The latter is an exceptionally bold move, and the research and development resources involved are major targets for Emerald City's supervillains and Nova Comm's greedy and less scrupulous competitors.

REDSHIFT ENERGIES

Redshift Energies is a local research company looking into new and alternative sources of power. In recent years, Redshift had been quite successful, most notably selling its designs for use in some of the newer-model hybrid vehicles. Unlike other concerns primarily engaged in research, Redshift Energies enjoyed a safety net as a wholly owned subsidiary of Paladyne Industries—a shell company owned

by MarsTech, Inc. With the firm backing of Emerald's resident plutocrat, Redshift's future appeared bright.

Everything changed for the company on the day of the Silver Storm. Despite the fact it was Tellax's manipulations and not Redshift that was responsible for the disaster, the early revelation to a still-panicked city that the Storm originated from a Redshift truck was enough to send the company into veritable free-fall. The company continues to exist, with new CEO Colin Trafford at the helm, but he and the company are struggling.

USNET

Emerald City's leading Internet service provider is USNet, "the online company for US," thanks in no small part to an aggressive marketing strategy few other major ISP's can match. It offers online services and Internet access to millions of customers, having poured millions of dollars into improving their extensive network of servers across the country, smoothing out many prior complaints about the reliability of the company's online services. USNet offers web-page hosting as part of its standard membership package, making it a booming business among the many start-up high-tech companies in Emerald.

EDUCATION

In most respects, education in Emerald City is no different than anywhere else. Primary education remains a political issue of wildly varying priorities, with each individual's interest bearing a strong relation to the number of school-age kids he or she is responsible for and school paychecks cashed. This dearth of support often leaves public schools underfunded while trying to cope with an ever-increasing slate of responsibilities: educating young people, job- and career-training them, and (in many cases) raising them in lieu of absentee parents.

The regular shortages of funds hinders much of the impetus for radical change, leaving most of the familiar facets of school life unchanged, including cliques, proms, big games, and headline-grabbing troubled kids making bad decisions. Many other aspects of school life are only superficially changed, such as texting supplanting passing notes during class.

Emerald City public schools are in some cases more experimental than elsewhere, with some schools offering targeted curriculums to artistic or scientifically gifted students. They are also largely free of culture-war battles raging elsewhere, as the city's progressive consensus carries little appetite for skirmishes over teaching evolution or reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Higher education, by contrast, is a major public concern in Emerald City. Not coincidentally, it also a big business in its own right, with millions of private and public dollars spent on it every year. Even the people not gainfully employed by a local college are interested in post-secondary education, if for no other reason than the

brutal reality that medium- and low-skill jobs are increasingly out of reach.

Supply meets demand, so the local options for college-bound Emerald City residents are many. What follows is a brief run-down of the more outstanding (for various reasons) schools Emerald has to offer.

ARCADIA COLLEGE

Under the stewardship of the iconoclastic Dr. Mathilda West, Arcadia College sets the standard for progressive instruction. A private institution located in a beautiful corner of its namesake Peninsula, Arcadia takes full advantage of the freedom such status offers from government mandates, answering only to a coterie of wealthy donors who are fully in keeping with the school's guiding outside-the-box philosophy.

Students design their own majors and requirements thereof (in conjunction with a faculty advisor), receive no grades, and remain enrolled until they or their professors decide they've met the self-determined criteria. Some students chose something resembling a traditional academic discipline like history or English literature, but Arcadia's main draw is for those who want to major in peace studies, reflexology, or outlaw-biker-film studies.

Arcadia is also unique in its outreach to Emerald's new population of college-age stormers. The school has always touted itself as the best choice for those who don't fit a traditional curriculum, and certainly those who've suddenly gained superhuman abilities match that descrip-

tion. Arcadia is sincere in its stormer outreach, and as part of that effort the school is making a concerted effort to bring in established costumed crime-fighters as professors or guest lecturers. More controversially, the school is considering extending the same invitation to supervillains so that students "get the full range of perspectives and make their own value judgments." With many costumed bad guys needing some good behavior (as in "time off for"), there would be no shortage of takers on Dr. West's offer.

EMERALD CITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE (ECCC)

To the snobbier in Emerald City, Emerald City Community College remains "the high school after high school." However, for those short on time, money, and/or GPA, but who still need some college on their resume, ECCC is nothing less than a godsend.

ECCC's student body is made up of working people too busy to be full-time students, teenagers who missed out on the scholarship/government aid gravy train to a four-year school, and those needing to rehabilitate a shaky high school academic record. Thus, in this way, ECCC's campus in Southern Shore is as diverse as any in the city.

Many ECCC students seek two-year associate degrees in various fields, while others attempt to fulfill general education course requirements at a lower cost *en route* to transferring those credits to a four-year institution like Emerald City University. For their education bargain hunting, ECCC students receive largely competent instruction, highlighted by the occasional geniuses in a particular field temporarily taking on a teaching assignment while finishing their latest books. After the Silver

Storm, it seems likely these slumming prodigies at ECCC will be joined by super-genius heroes equally in need of a quick academic paycheck.

EMERALD CITY UNIVERSITY (ECU)

Resting atop University Hill, Emerald City University is the region's leading public college. ECU's combination of broad curriculum range, generous financial aid and scholarship programs, and high graduate employment rates make it the school of choice for much of the Pacific Northwest.

ECU enjoys a well-deserved reputation for excellence in the theoretical and applied sciences, and the current president Steven "Mac" Macinter is dedicated to maintaining it. The University's good name is even more meaningful to Emerald's grateful city fathers, as it was a key factor in attracting high-tech companies to the area and reversing the early-'90s economic doldrums. To borrow an old phrase, the attitude in Emerald City is "What's good for ECU is good for the city."

The university's various athletic teams all play in the Pac 12 conference, but the ECU Sasquatches football program is by far the best known, most beloved, and successful of them all. ECU also boasts several NCAA lacrosse titles (men's and women's), and the Lady Sasquatches are a perennial power in basketball. Other ECU sports teams like men's basketball and baseball are mostly outstanding only in their punctuality in showing up for games.

Like the rest of Emerald City, an undercurrent of the supernatural exists on the ECU campus. The land the university is situated upon was formerly known as Gallows Hill, and was the site of many public hangings back in the days of swift, harsh punishments. Even before the last man was strung up there, tales of unquiet spirits roaming the Hill



ITEM: More rumblings from City Hall that the mayor's office will once again look into the possible rescission of Overlook Park to the Malory family. Questions abound. Why try to give the Malorys something they don't want? Why do we bother voting for supposedly "pro-green" candidates in this city? And who exactly hates smiles and sunshine so much they've decided the Park has to go? Doesn't the city have any other worries at all?

-EXCERPT FROM THE GHOST SIGHTINGS BLOG

at night abounded, and ghost stories remain a common thread in ECU student life. As ever, the truth and seriousness of such sightings are a matter to be proven or disproved by further investigation.

MALORY COLLEGE

Located on Sunset Hill, Malory College is a private school started by the eponymous city-founding family in 1869. Though noted for their egalitarian and altruistic acts, the school that bears the Malorys' name is one of the most exclusive in the city. Malory College requires of its students a rare combination of high intelligence, true talents, exemplary community service, and a healthy bank balance.

Malory's student body is therefore made of the children of the city's elite, along with those destined to join them after graduation. Referring to someone's "Malory College education" is verbal shorthand around Emerald City for having lived a life of wealth and privilege.

Despite the resentment engendered, a degree from Malory College is a true achievement, bestowed only on those who flourish in a demanding, rigorously classical curriculum. Not only can a Malory graduate quote a fitting line from Shakespeare to match almost any occasion, they can translate it into Latin as well, should the need arise.

Malory's academic environment is dictated by its president Henry Addison's conservative governing philosophy as well as the practical reality of filling a desired niche. Progressively orientated students are bound for Arcadia, so Malory aims for the tradition-minded. The future scientists are lined up at ECU's gates, so Malory stresses the humanities. Since the budget-minded apply to ECC, Malory can maintain its "If you have to ask..." tuition rates.

THE ELYSIAN ACADEMY

The Elysian Academy is a private preparatory school on Sunset Hill. It was founded in the past few years and has a very small student body made up of the children of the wealthy and "special cases" that make it in due to family history, extraordinary talent, or extremely good performance on entrance exams.

The school hasn't been in existence long enough to have developed a reputation (other than being exclusive), nor have the students done anything to stand out from any other high school in the area. Elysian's only unique feature is that it's a boarding school, so all of the students live on campus, although they, like everyone else their age, enjoy exploring the city and getting into whatever teenagers get into.

ARTS & POPULAR CULTURE

Even under the sometimes conformist, homogenizing, dumbing-down influence of mass media culture, Emerald City retains a lively arts scene. While much of it is talented local artists working within established forms, Emerald's history and situation lend a distinctive stamp to a great deal of their output.

MUSIC AND DANCE

While country and hip-hop dominate the mass-market airwaves and downloads, Emerald City's local music scene is dominated by rock, played on electric guitar, bass, and drums. From that common basis, Emerald-based bands still represent hundreds of different styles, from cover bands to unusual hybrid sounds to idiosyncratic acts that defy easy description.

Though his sound is somewhat atypical for the scene, the largely acoustic, folk-tinged coffee-house rock of Frank Larrabee is Emerald City's biggest local draw, and a couple of major labels are interested in signing him on

the strength of his signature tune "California Lady" alone. Other well-known local acts include grunge-scene holdovers the Sidehackers, rockabilly revivalists the Continos, club music diva Michelle Wilson, teen-pop sensation Eddie Crane, hardcore punk diehards Teen-Age Strangler, heavy metal favorites Spydor, and modern-psychadelic fusionists Narcotic Casserole, who are big on the Arcadia College scene.

The hip-hop scene in Emerald City tends toward the pedestrian and predictable, but does feature one very notable act. Two full-blooded Hekawi Indian brothers, known professionally as Jon-E Longbow and Bill-E Longbow, make up an act known as the Longbowz. The Longbowz produce tracks fusing rap with the traditional American Indian sounds of their ancestors, making for a truly unique sound. The group has a growing following in Emerald City proper, and are absolutely huge among the Hekawi youth. The Longbowz also sport hip-hop/tribal fusion clothing in public, creating a trendy fashion for area American Indian young people.



High culture in Emerald City, with its rough-hewn frontier roots, lags behind that in comparable eastern cities. Despite this, the area's colleges and universities provide many opportunities for both fans and performers to enjoy and practice their arts. Arcadia College's drama department leans toward the *avant garde*, but even at its most *outré* is never dull. Malory College's opera and ballet companies delight thousands every year, and ECU's symphony orchestra routinely performs before sold-out houses.

CINEMA

Emerald City's independent movie scene is thriving, thanks in large part to an abundance of local talent groomed at Arcadia College's film school. These newcomers are helped along by a number of ready backers flush with cash from the city's booming high-tech industries, and the world-famous Arcadia Film Festival (held annually at the College and surrounding movie houses) provides them a high-profile venue to exhibit their wares.

The biggest name of Emerald's indie film-makers is David G. Lewis. Lewis, atypically, is a Malory College graduate, but while his professors drilled him in the methods of Eisenstein and Kurosawa, he fell in love with low-budget grindhouse and exploitation fare. His films are like a shotgun wedding between the great masters' techniques and B-movie subject matter. Though its "shock theater" aesthetics surprised and appalled his professors, Lewis' student film *The Legend of Gallows Hill* earned him his honors degree, and was later picked up for national distribution. The film became a critical favorite and earned the neophyte director a tidy profit... and many fans.

Rumor has it the loquacious, coffee-fueled Lewis is working on a Silver Storm-inspired follow-up. In any case, he and dozens of would-be Scorseses in Emerald City are going to be lensing their personal visions for some time to come. Observers cannot help but wonder how the newfound presence of super-beings with secrets to protect will cope with so many people shooting film in unexpected places.

MUSEUMS

The original Emerald settlers were too long preoccupied with cutting down trees and catching fish to support the fine arts to any extraordinary degree, creating a cultural lag the modern, tech-driven city has never fully closed. Even so, art lovers' palates are largely satiated by great works brought in on loan by the area colleges and universities. Those with an appetite for the *avant-garde* find their share of contemporary, transgressive works in small galleries in the University Hill area and the output of Arcadia College's arts programs.

The Emerald City Historical Museum, the Native American Cultural Center, and the City Museum of Natural History all offer extensive collections of artifacts relevant to their respective subject matter. Thousands of interested patrons, enterprising students, and renowned experts flock to Emerald's museums, both to do research and simply see the many one-of-a-kind exhibits.

There has been much talk of late about the city constructing a Silver Storm Museum. However, at this early date, there is still far too much disagreement over whether such an establishment is warranted—or what shape it would take—for it to progress beyond the discussion stage.

THE EMERALD CITY HISTORICAL MUSEUM

The Historical Museum offers a highly interactive journey through the whole of the city's past. Built adjacent to the preserved site of the original Fort Emerald settlement, visitors can relive the experiences of the area's first non-native inhabitants through diary entries and period relics. Other exhibits recapture the wild, unruly days of the Gem Rush, with photographs commemorating some of the area's biggest finds.

There is also an extensive World War II-related collection, recounting the overseas heroism of Emerald's veterans and the home-front exploits of the Victory Squadron. There is even a captured Japanese "fire balloon" on display. Currently, Museum curator Arthur Pimm is working on an outreach program to Emerald's Asian community in an effort to more inclusively document the part it has played in the city's history.

THE CITY MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Also in the Downtown area, the Natural History Museum captures the natural wonders of the Emerald area right in the city's heart. Exhibits document Mount Stanley's fiery, volcanic past, as well as the region's fossil history. Most famously, the Museum houses some of the largest and most spectacular examples of gemstones unearthed in the area, including (unbeknownst to the curators) some viridian stones of varying sizes and hues. Museum security is thorough yet unobtrusive, but likely inadequate to the task of thwarting the powerful entities who crave the viridian stones' power. The head curator Dr. Carl Carson is a scientist, not a warden, and would certainly require some super-human help in guarding or recovering them.

THE NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER

One of the leading museums dedicated to the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest, Emerald's Native American Cultural Center is one of the city's proudest

landmarks. Situated on University Hill, the Center draws upon the nearby expertise of the ECU faculty, but the greatest amount of input into the content presented are the tribes themselves. The Center's chief coordinator, Professor John Salinas—himself half-Hekawi—wouldn't have it any other way.

The culture, folklore, and native art of the Hekawi and other regional tribes are thoroughly depicted within the Center's walls. It also has an extensive research library of Native American Studies books, including many out-of-print titles and other sources that simply cannot be found online. The collection is made freely available by appointment, and is invaluable to those who believe the old legends about evil spirits and Sasquatches roaming the area have a basis in fact.

Kept open solely by donations, the Center has flourished even in tough economic times thanks to the savvy promotional skills of Prof. Salinas. Salinas' latest effort involves a series of public service messages featuring popular local American Indian hip-hop artists the Longbowz, which have managed to make the Center a popular destination for area youth seemingly overnight.

THE EMERALD CITY ART MUSEUM (ECAM)

The Emerald City Art Museum is in the heart of Emerald City, not far from Yellow Brick Row. It has a permanent collection of works from the classical to the modern. It also has a rotating roster of shows touring the country and the world. Although it's not the largest or most prestigious art museum on the West Coast, it is making a name for itself and is very popular with local art fans.

Many of the pieces on display at any given time are from the museum's own collection or on loan from its wealthier patrons and local collectors. It's not uncommon to encounter a number of the most powerful men and women in town at a show opening. Museum Director Abby Stanton cultivates solid relationships with the museum's supporters and works hard to make ECAM events worthwhile for attendees.

HEALTH CARE

The state of health care in Emerald City is, on the whole, strong, as its hospitals and public health facilities are generally up to the challenge of tending to the well-being of diverse millions. While the system is by no means perfect, and Emerald has its share of bureaucratic mishaps and people with no regular access to medical help, there is a widespread dedication to improving matters by the city's doctors, administrators, and other care providers.

EMERALD CITY UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

The largest, most modern facility in Emerald City is synonymous with the very best quality care available and research

breakthroughs. Its name is also verbal shorthand for serious health issues, as word that a loved one "has been sent to ECU" indicates such advanced care is required.

ECU Medical Center is overseen by Dr. Richard Vollin, a gifted physician and true visionary. While his primary focus is on keeping the Center at the forefront of new medicine, he is also careful to ensure the facility never loses sight of the needs of the people who come there seeking aid. Therefore, the Center remains equally adept at developing new surgical techniques as it does making sure young patients' tonsils are in good condition.

All of ECU Medical's careful plans and preparations proved inadequate in the aftermath of the Silver Storm. While the Center and its thousand-patient capacity were able



to deal with the scale of the crisis—even one the size of the Storm—the types of physical changes inflicted on its victims were something no amount of planning could have prepared them for. After all, there are few texts on how to cope with people who've been changed into a human-octopus hybrid, or suddenly driven insane by their ability to manipulate magnetic fields.

Dr. Vollin aims to address that. His plan involves training trauma specialists to deal with super-human abilities, both the unique demands of treating those who have them and those effected by them. As noted, the existing body of knowledge is slight, and so Vollin is recruiting researchers to study both human mutation and super-human physiology. It's an audacious plan, but one with the noblest of intentions.

ST. HELEN OF THE BLESSED SHROUD HOSPITAL

Established in the Downtown area during the mid-1800s for the benefit of the city's immigrant poor, this formerly Catholic Church-run facility still serves the people of Emerald. Though small and geared toward providing basic care, the current administrator Dr. Felix Bennet works diligently to see the services provided are the best possible. Importantly, Dr. Bennet and his staff are well aware of their facility's limitations, and do not hesitate to transfer patients who require advanced services to ECU Medical Center.

BETHLEHEM HEIGHTS PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

As with all such facilities, Bethlehem Heights is popularly believed to be a chamber of horrors and was nicknamed "Bedlam Heights" early in its existence. To be sure, it is a place no one would choose to be confined inside, but the facility fulfills an inescapable societal need, and does so to the best of its means. Unfortunately for the hospital, powers and factors far greater than it are aligned against it.

On the list of minor issues is the fact that the hospital's Austrian-born administrator Dr. Vitus Werdegast too readily fits the popular stereotype of the Teutonic mad scientist. In truth, Dr. Werdegast is a dedicated mental health professional, but the sad reality is he comes off as creepy as Dracula to most of a TV-viewing audience. In addition, city ordinances and states laws make it difficult to involuntarily commit all but the most obviously dangerous. Thus, many mentally ill people in need of care don't receive it, and the public widely assumes "Bedlam Heights" is simply living up to its name.

To add to its problems, the facility itself is ill-equipped to deal with the influx of mentally unbalanced stormers, who are dangerously deranged even under the provisions of Emerald City's strict standards. Werdegast and his staff are handling the situation as best they can, but in the meantime berserk stormers breaking out remains an alarmingly common occurrence.

THE MEDIA

As elsewhere, the Emerald City media market has been nearly wiped out, at least old forms of media. Ancient print media like newspapers and magazines stagger along like dinosaurs, looking for a spot to die. Safe beneath them are smaller electronic media, preparing to wage their own battle for supremacy wherein the younger and more agile enjoy a clear edge.

PRINT MEDIA

After peaking at three during World War II, Emerald City now supports (barely) only one daily newspaper, the *Courier-Express*. The venerable *Courier-Express* has a proud history predating the American Civil War, a wall full of awards for excellence, and a declining subscriber base that will send it in search of a buyer once 87-year-old owner Luther Heggs finally passes on.

BROADCAST MEDIA

Anointed for decades as print media's rightful heir, individual television and radio stations now find themselves losing their audiences and influences to even newer technologies. The increasingly desperate broadcast media have responded in ways not always in keeping with the public's best interests. That said, TV and radio *en masse* remain the greatest arbiter of public taste and sentiment. Emerald City's new costumed heroes must learn to cope with a personality-heavy, fact-light, image-is-all invasive media environment that never rests. It's not always fair-minded, but it attracts eyeballs, which is everything to station management and staff.

Emerald City broadcast television is the same mix of network shows and syndicated sitcom reruns found throughout the rest of the country. Only its local newscasts retain any sort of distinctive stamp, and even then, they remain committed to the human-interest-heavy, hard-news-poor style prevalent in the contemporary media scene. Any given hour spent watching Caleb Gardner pointedly empathizing with the myriad tragedies and inconveniences of his audience is much like any other, and nearly indistinguishable from the Gardner clones on the other channels.

As television surrendered to the blandest, lowest common denominator, FM radio was taken over by computer-programmed, corporate-approved playlists, and AM radio fell to the demagogues and crazies. True audiophiles continue to desert the broadcast airwaves for the diversity of satellite radio and non-corporate entities like college-run KECU, creating pressure for even more commercials on broadcast stations to make up for the lost listeners.

The state of AM radio is epitomized by Emerald City's own KSKY talk radio. KSKY's air time is essentially open to anyone who can sustain an audience and not get the station sued too often. Its broadcast schedule is a parade of conspiracy theorists and partisan political hacks of all stripes. Colin

Hoke is the best known and most successful of the lot, but sadly is far from the most odious or obnoxious.

ONLINE MEDIA

The wonderful, terrible universe that is the Internet is a major facet of Emerald City life. Statistically, the percentage of Emerald residents who are online is comfortably above the national average, and the influence it has on their daily existence is nearly incalculable. When the Silver Storm irrevocably altered Emerald City life, large numbers of residents looked to the web to make sense of it all, and it is that most adaptive and innovative of mediums that has best adjusted to the new status quo.

USNet was the first to publicly respond to the re-emergence of super-heroes. In record time, the company established the TroubAlert social network site, which offers free access and accounts to "verified" heroes so they can keep in touch with the public and receive crowd-sourced tips and information. This system is in its infancy, but like many other Internet projects its potential benefits are tremendous.

MAJOR EMERALD CITY MEDIA OUTLETS

FM STATIONS

- KVTF 89.1 Public Radio
- KRXT 90.3 Contemporary Christian
- KPAR 91.3 Spanish Language
- KXLK 92.3 Top 40
- KSNV 93.5 Adult Contemporary
- KSLC 94.9 Country and Western
- KROV 96.3 Classic Rock
- KSQL 99.1 Jazz
- KVBE 100.1 R&B/Hip-hop
- KZZI 101.5 Alternative Rock
- KJJX 102.7 Rhythmic Top 40
- KECU 101.7 Emerald City University Radio
- KSFF 106.1 Classical
- KJJS 104.9 Oldies
- KYD 107.9 Easy Listening

AM STATIONS

- KVBE 610 Classical
- KFIR 910 Sports/Sports Talk
- KGMN 960 Urban Contemporary
- KRIS 1410 Religious
- KSKY 1480 News/Talk

BROADCAST TV STATIONS

- KOAY Channel 4—ABN affiliate
- KCYB Channel 5—NBN affiliate
- KTBS Channel 8—GBN affiliate
- KSET Channel 9—Public broadcasting
- KJHL Channel 11—CBN affiliate
- KLEC Channel 12—FNA affiliate

ITEM: Lt. Col. Eric Braeden, late of Joint Base Clark-Gordon Special Operations Command, was given an honorable discharge and the standard military farewell, as per a well-buried blurb on the base's website and the back page of the Courier-Express. At last report, Braeden had been placed on medical leave after suffering unspecified injuries during a jog through the Elysian Forest. Braeden's discharge notice doesn't mention that, but one of the Forest's main trails still shows signs of a bloody struggle a government-worthy scrubbing job couldn't erase. If Braeden really is okay physically, why is the Army letting go of a Spec Ops expert?

-EXCERPT FROM THE GHOST SIGHTINGS BLOG

MAJOR EMERALD CITY MEDIA PERSONALITIES

The heroes are going to go a long way towards keeping the public's trust if they maintain good media relations, and the right on-air and print contacts can make that happen right from their debut.

EDDIE POLLARD, THE EMERALD CITY COURIER-EXPRESS

Pollard's been uncovering truths the rich and powerful of Emerald City would rather keep buried since he first caught on with the *Courier-Express* as a cub reporter back in '75. He has few friends as a result, but has the respect of everyone who still values the public's right to know, even when it would rather remain blissfully ignorant. Pollard is surprisingly tech-savvy for a 56-year-old, but it's his ability to dig up information from the old-fashioned filing cabinets housing the paper's "morgue" of offline stories dating back to the city's founding that sets him above and apart from his peers. It's said with not much exaggeration that if the *Courier-Express* hasn't reported on something, it either never happened, or Eddie Pollard hasn't uncovered the real truth behind the story yet.

COLIN HOKE, HOST OF KSKY'S THE NIGHTWATCHMAN

The volatile Colin Hoke fills the radio airwaves with all the bombast they can carry seven nights a week during his

top-rated nighttime call-in show. Like most of its kind, Hoke's show prospers because of its host's unpredictability. His listeners never know what he's going to say next, and at times, neither does Hoke himself. In truth, Hoke does have a guiding principal: whatever type or degree of controversy that keeps people's dials tuned into his show is totally fine.

CALEB GARDNER, ANCHORMAN FOR KLEC CHANNEL 12 EYEWITNESS NEWS

The eternally forty-year-old looking Gardner hosts Emerald City's most-watched news program, and his face (in person, on screens, and on billboards) is as ubiquitous as rain. While he's in truth a bit of a dullard, his mellifluous voice, reassuring manner, and unerring sense of public empathy make his news reports a welcome, trusted presence in the homes of most city residents.

"THE GRAY GHOST," OWNER AND AUTHOR OF THE "GHOST SIGHTINGS" BLOG

No one knows who she is or how she comes by her information, but observers of the *outré* in Emerald City swear by the irregular but seemingly always accurate blog posts made by the mysterious "Gray Ghost." The "Ghost Sightings" blog reports on many of the weird and unexplained happenings in and around the city, and while its information is rarely complete and detailed, it is more than enough to keep readers riveted.

PARKS & RECREATION

Emerald City, it is said, is the greatest city in the world for people who love the wilderness. As it happens, that saying is all fact, no brag. In the time it takes most urbanites to commute to work, most Emerald City residents can be camping, canoeing, skiing, fly fishing, or hiking without a trace of civilization in sight.

In all likelihood, the land is destined to remain so, as huge swaths of it are legally protected: state and federal parks as well as nature preserves. Though barring logging on this land was not totally well-received at the time—it was a critical blow to an already ailing timber industry in the early '90s—the city's successful transition to a service-economy center eventually softened the impact. Nowadays, there is a broad consensus in Emerald City to keep

the surrounding countryside pristine regardless of any potential economic benefits from doing otherwise.

The surrounding undeveloped land compensates for a relative lack of greenery within the city area itself. Overlook Park on Sunset Hill and the Japanese Tea Garden in Little Osaka are the two notable exceptions, but beyond them there are only a few small parks, typically little more than city-block sized plots of landscaped area.

THE ELYSIAN NATIONAL FOREST

"Elysian" was an early, romantic name the original settlers bestowed upon the area around Emerald, and the forested region is still called that by city residents today. When



the largest of the National Forests in the area was established in 1913, the name became official.

The Elysian Forest successfully achieves a balance between providing access to visitors and maintaining suitable habitats for the wildlife that call it home. Aside from the occasional novice would-be outdoorsman whose ambitions exceed their actual skills, man and nature coexist in Elysian without serious incident.

Since the 1970s, Elysian has been a hot spot for alleged Bigfoot sightings; so much so that what is a punchline elsewhere rises to the level of actual controversy in the Emerald area. Some city residents, like the cryptozoology department at ECU, treat Bigfoot as a serious public issue, lobbying for greater research efforts and legal protection for what they consider an endangered species. Others respond with equally fervent mocking derision, but most Emerald residents regard their potential furry neighbors with good humor, such as dubbing the ECU athletic teams the Sasquatches.

Bigfoot is only the best-known of the many strange creatures and happenings witnesses claim to have seen in the Elysian Forest. As crazy as some of the tales sound (especially those of Emerald's early settlers), there is little to disprove them. Large areas of the Elysian Forest have only ever been trodden upon by the Hekawi, and even they recount a host of fantastic tales of what lies in the great green wilderness. Thus, it remains to be seen whether the Elysian Forest holds wonders beyond the trees, monsters from childhood fables, or simply things better left alone.

MAGIC HILL AMUSEMENT PARK

An Emerald City institution since guests first trod upon its sawdust-covered grounds back in 1903, Magic Hill has entertained generations of young people as well as the young-at-heart.

Still on its original site in the Downtown Riverfront area, Magic Hill still offers some of the same old-school thrills it always has, like the famous Screaming Dragon roller coaster and the region's best corn dogs. However, like the city itself, the Park has been swept up in Emerald's high-technology boom.

The Park's classic Haunted House has been upgraded with holograms and audio-animatronic monsters, and the old pinball arcade has given way to state-of-the-art, nearly virtual reality video games. Under the direction of noted engineering genius Abner Devereaux, the park is even experimenting with the possibility of functioning androids and the possibilities they offer.

VICTORY SQUADRON MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

The emergence of new super-hero teams in Emerald City has caused a resurgence of interest in the first such group, the Victory Squadron. Emerald's very own World War II-era mystery men had fallen into obscurity since the end of the war. The Squadron's brief return to prominence in the 1970s with the publication of former member Blaze's warts-and-all memoir ultimately damaged its reputation at the time, as the public simply was not ready to accept

that super-heroes had real-life human failings. Thus, those who still remembered the team recalled them as a tawdry, unsavory group of neurotic nut-cases.

With the 70th anniversary of the Squadron's founding approaching, a more accurate assessment of the team and

revaluation of its genuine wartime heroism prevails. As part of the growing public sentiment to honor the city's original costumed heroes (however belatedly), the Victory Squadron Memorial Committee was formed to see to the construction and dedication of a monument in Overlook Park. Local businessman Ed Cheatham was elected as chairperson.

RELIGION

Emerald City, like many Pacific Northwest cities, is more religiously diverse and diffuse than many older Eastern cities. One can find members of nearly every denomination and religious affiliation, but the differences go beyond that. Emerald City, like the region as a whole, has one of the highest percentages of residents who claim no religious affiliation at all, making it one of the most secular areas in the entire United States.

About two-thirds of Emerald City residents claim no affiliation to any organized church. Of them, about half profess some degree of belief in something approximating mainstream Protestant Christian faith, with the remaining half having no religious beliefs at all. This statistic neatly explains the near-total absence of "culture war" clashes going on elsewhere in the country, as Emerald City by and large lacks the strong, clashing convictions to provoke them.

The one-third who are actively religious are made up of about 43% Roman Catholics, 6% Mormons, 5% Lutherans, and the balance counting themselves as part of a bewildering variety of sectarian beliefs. In that great spiritual diversity are sizable populations of other mainline Protestant Christian congregations, Buddhists, followers of Shinto, neo-pagans, and perhaps the fastest growing sect of all, the Pinnacle Path.

THE PINNACLE PATH FOUNDATION

The religious organization called the Pinnacle Path is a newcomer to the spiritual scene. It began in Freedom City, the city that inspired founder Jeremiah Ross' vision of a better humanity. Ross gave up his advertising career and wrote a book entitled *The Pinnacle Path: Achieving Your*

Highest Potential. The book put forth his ideas for a spiritual discipline allowing people to achieve their maximum personal capabilities, which are (Ross claims) closer to limitlessness than most conceive.

Although considered "New Age claptrap" by many, the book steadily climbed up the best-seller lists and remained there. The book and its message gathered a popular following for Ross, who regularly appears on the talk show circuit and in infomercials to promote his work and vision.

Ross has established the Pinnacle Path Foundation, an official church preaching beliefs drawn from his book, with its headquarters in downtown Freedom City. Since then, the Path has steadily drawn new converts. Followers of the Path are usually well-educated professionals disaffected from mainstream religions. They perform an abundance of charitable work, since helping others is a strong part of the Path's philosophy.

In addition to being a good writer, Ross is a charismatic and persuasive speaker, and believes strongly in what he's selling. There's still a bit of the advertising executive in him, and he knows how to turn a phrase to make it sound appealing to a particular audience. Still, he doesn't think he's deceiving people or pushing anything on them. He simply wants to show them the truth as he understands it, giving everyone a chance to reach their full potential.

Within Ross' paradigm of a world where all people achieve a higher ideal, super-humans are regarded as a reflection of that potential, embodying the best—and the worst—humanity can achieve. In many ways, supers are the gods and demons of a modern mythology for Ross. These ideas resonate with many people, if book sales are any indication.

ENTERTAINMENT & NIGHTLIFE

Take Emerald City's relatively young, comparatively affluent population, then add in the normal human desire to have some fun, and the result for area entrepreneurs is money just waiting to be made. To a degree, the city's entertainment options lag behind its transformation from a "trees and fish" town to an information technology center. There is still much of old Emerald about, like the low-rent bars and greasy-spoon cafes in the Riverfront keeping area fishermen full of beer and burgers once the day's catch is brought in.

The new Emerald City nightlife eschews the city's blue-collar, sawdust and sea salt roots. It mixes the high-technology present with a trendy interest in Emerald's

longstanding (but not always embraced) Asian culture. Modern Emerald City nights-out begin with Asian-fusion cuisine, move to a Kurosawa film festival on University Hill, and end at a karaoke club.

While technology and Asian cuisine enjoy newfound popularity after dark, old Emerald culture still prevails in the daylight hours. Diners serving up endless breakfasts still suitable for those with a long day of timbering ahead of them are (seemingly) on every block. Emerald City's love-affair with coffee has grown to include espresso and lattes, but in practice it remains the same old Joe that has warmed and fueled area fishermen from the start. Even the trendier IT people



and software engineers typically eat the same Dungeness crab cake lunches their oceangoing city forbears did.

Like all major American urban and suburban areas, Emerald City offers up the full slate of national-chain safety and predictability among its entertainment options. There are no shortage of casual, after-work dining restaurants, multiplex theaters showing big-budget Hollywood blockbusters, and kid-friendly game-filled pizza and video game places. This section, however, focuses on establishments that are Emerald City originals.

GOLDMAN'S GOOD STARTS DINERS

Harry Goldman opened his first diner in Emerald City back in 1922 and weathered Prohibition, the Depression, and the Second World War, serving hot cups of Joe and stacks of flapjacks to rum-runners, Dust Bowl refugees, and Okinawa-bound Marines. It provided a nice living for his family and a steady stream of regular customers, and did much the same for Harry, Jr. as he oversaw the diner through Vietnam, Watergate, and the '90s city-wide economic bust.

"A nice living" was not enough for Harry III, who took the college education his father's "nice living" provided him and devised an aggressive expansion plan. The idea was simple: take the massive, affordable, tasty breakfasts people had always enjoyed at Goldman's, and offer it up on every street in Emerald City working people frequent. Within a decade, Harry III's scheme paid off handsomely, and seemingly everyone in Emerald who wasn't "just looking to grab a latte" was spending their mornings refilling their plates at Goldman's.

This introduced all of Emerald's to the now-legendary "Lumberjack Breakfast," an all-you-can-eat bacchanalia of flapjacks, assorted breakfast pork, eggs, and coffee. The satisfying start of many a resident's day and the bane of city cardiologists, "getting the Lumberjack" is now an Emerald ritual. Even the yogurt-and-granola crowd eventually succumbs to its charms.

JOY'S NIGHTCLUB

This longtime hot-spot is located in one of the older, but still cool neighborhoods of Downtown. It's been in existence for a few decades, but has become more popular recently because Joy, the owner, has begun hiring and catering to stormers and other super-powered beings, which has drawn in a lot of mundane patrons looking to rub elbows with the unusual.

Joy's has something for everyone; it includes a restaurant, bar and dance club, and even a gentleman's club... all of which employ at least one paranormal, not including the reptilian head of security known as Snake-Eyes. There are rumors of private rooms in which anything goes, probably fed by the rumors Joy is actually a Madame with a stable of super-powered prostitutes, which makes the club even more exciting, but seems unlikely considering its longevity and popularity.

The décor differs from one business to the next, but the restaurant is like a nightclub from the 1950s, with high-backed wooden booths, privacy curtains, and tight walkways that give the place a comfortable, romantic even, but slightly claustrophobic feel. The bar and dance club is remodeled every decade or so and is very modern, with a large dance floor, well-stocked bar, and a very good lighting and sound

system for music played by popular DJs and the occasional live act. The gentleman's club is a cut above other, similar establishments. It's clean, duskily lighted, and filled with comfortable leather chairs that sit around small wooden tables. There is, of course, a stage with a couple of dance poles and a lighting and sound system that rivals the one in the dance club, but overall the place looks respectable.

Joy, a lovely, raven-haired woman in her 50s, is ever-present and takes an active hand in the running of her businesses. Sometimes she works as one of the hostesses at the restaurant, other times makes the rounds greeting customers or dealing with unruly customers at one of the clubs.

NGUYEN'S

Located in Royal Heights, Nguyen's is on the bleeding edge of the "new Emerald" nightlife. Nguyen's neo-Asian decor and fusion cuisine is truly trendsetting, as other area clubs and would-be upscale restaurants race to copy its style and menu in the never-ending battle to stay hip.

Nguyen's ascension in local pop culture stems from catching the moment that Emerald City's elite embraced the area's Asian influences, but there's more to the place than just hype. Proprietor Ellen Nguyen is a second-generation Vietnamese American raised in the Eastern District, giving her both a solid understanding of the city's Asian influences as well as an outsider's perspective on their traditionally Chinese and Japanese roots.

Ellen's eclectic tastes are well-complimented by a solid business sense. Already lauded by customers and critics alike for having the city's best seafood, Ellen is ever vigilant that the food and atmosphere remains top notch. Her commitment to excellence makes Nguyen's a pricey experience that easily manages to be worth every penny—for the sheer uniqueness of the experience, if nothing else.

OZ

Emerald City's hottest nightclub wholeheartedly embraces the local ties to *The Wizard of Oz* to a wonderful, campy, and somewhat creepy excess. Scarecrow and Tin Man bartenders, a Munchkin wait staff, and "Pay no attention to the DJ behind the curtain!" are all on the regular bill of fare. OZ also reflects the city's mosaic-like populace, as it caters to the area's large lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender population (roughly 12% of Emerald residents, by best estimates). Since its opening in 1979, OZ has managed the minor miracle of simultaneously serving a diverse subculture, resisting periodic homophobic assaults, and remaining a fun, happening place to be.

During its existence, OZ has gone from being the subject of periodic police harassment to tourist brochure features.

These days, non-LGBT patrons frequent the club simply for the anything-goes atmosphere and its DJ's who are rightly recognized as the city's best. While not all of the gay community embraces these "intruders" on their scene, most see their presence as welcome proof of the growing acceptance of LGBT people in the larger society.

STARBASE COFFEE

Emerald City-based Starbase Coffee survived fierce competition from a series of other cyber-cafés during its early-millennium expansion to the east coast. As one of the Last Java Chains Standing in the aftermath, it has become one of the most successful of its kind with locations throughout the United States. Its sleek science fiction theme is popular with its patrons—mostly younger, nerd-ier people in the high-tech industry and college students. All of its locations offer free wi-fi connections for Internet surfing.

Between its geek credentials and array of darn good coffees, Starbase Coffee has been a can't-miss business proposition in geeky, java-fueled Emerald City from the start. Its city-wide ubiquity is convenient, and potentially even life-saving for, say, a super-hero in urgent need of checking his TroubAlert account.

ARCADIA COFFEE ROASTERS

As Starbase Coffee's main regional rivals, Arcadia is in an unenviable market position. It survived where Starbase's other competitors fell by carving out its own niche in the socially and environmentally conscious demographic, which occupies a healthy percentage of Emerald's coffee-consuming population.

To be sure, Starbase Coffee is among the more environmentally responsible businesses operating today, but Arcadia outdoes their rival at every turn; either in truth or in the equally important court of public opinion. Seemingly everything inside an Arcadia outlet is recycled and biodegradable, even when making them so isn't really practical.

Still, for Arcadia's core customers, any inconvenience is just a reminder they're saving the planet. That sense of self-satisfaction invariably leads them past a half-dozen Starbase Coffees to the only place in town where the coffee is brewed with solar or wind power. They sip easier knowing the beans were produced by sustainable, organic agriculture, and planted by workers duly organized into unions and paid a living wage.

While nowhere near as prevalent as Starbase Coffee, Arcadia shares the same convenient free wi-fi for customers. The main difference is heroes desperately needing Internet access may have a hard time when it turns cloudy or the wind stops blowing.

ITEM: The impending Giordano meteor shower has sky-watchers of all sorts turning out and telescope sales at an all-time high (along with tinfoil for those elegant hats). So why has the city closed down some of the primer outdoor viewing spots for a combination of "maintenance" and "landscape work"? Coincidence?

-EXCERPT FROM THE GHOST SIGHTINGS BLOG

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The establishment of companies like MarsTech, Inc. has firmly established Emerald as a leader in tech-heavy industries, and it also created a big upswing in the number of concerns more devoted to pure research in the city. ASTRO Labs, thanks to its world famous ties to the Freedom League, is the best known scientific research firm in Emerald. Several other organizations, like Redshift Energies and Emerald City University are also active in many fields of study, and are discussed in their respective portions of the book.

ASTRO LABS

The Applied Scientific and Technical Research Organization (ASTRO) was founded in Freedom City back in 1942 by Dr. Allan Grant. Through friends and contacts in the scientific community and the government, Grant secured the support and financing to start his own research company. It originally produced weapons and rocketry for the war effort, and their designs helped keep the Axis in check for much of the war. ASTRO quickly drew attention from the nation's intellectual community, along with a number of lucrative contracts from the government and various corporations.

Now ASTRO Labs is the largest scientific research company in the world. The company's Emerald City branch occupies its own office park, quite near the ECU campus. ASTRO Labs has established itself as a resource for the Freedom League and other superheroes, and the company is often consulted when heroes are in need of specialized equipment or assistance in analyzing a particularly difficult scientific problem.

The Emerald City branch, under the direction of Dr. Eric Vornoff, has made public overtures about assisting the area's new costumed heroes in a similar fashion. Vornoff knows well from the experiences of the Freedom City lab such assistance is an incomparable opportunity to study extraterrestrial and other advanced technologies, as well as being a public relations boon. The fact that the city—if not the planet—often gets saved in the process is a nice bonus.

DANGER INTERNATIONAL

This foundation, started by 1930s explorer and adventurer Johnny Danger, got its start-up capital from diamonds collected from a secret mine in Africa. DI began around the nucleus of Johnny's old organization, the Jungle Patrol, and has always kept a strong interest in environmental protection issues and preserving peace in Africa. The foundation has worked with the government of Dakana many times in the past, and serves as an NGO (non-governmental organization) go-between for Dakana and the U.S. government at times. This duty includes interceding for the Dakanan consulate in Emerald City as well.

Although Mr. Danger is long since retired, his five grandchildren run the foundation quite well and keep his spirit in the foundation. DI provides money for humanitarian aid, exploration, research projects, and similar activities.

Based in New York City, Danger International has offices in the Downtown district of Emerald City, headed up by his grandson, Jake Danger.

THE ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE FOR GEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Bored by the steady but staid approach of the City Institute for Natural History, renegade geologist Dr. Paul Armstrong resigned an assistant curatorship to take a more proactive approach to his chosen field of scientific endeavor. Over the years, Armstrong has accumulated evidence that the Emerald City area's geological wonders had yet to truly be explored, and the wealth of gemstones uncovered over the years was only the beginning. He has vowed to follow the path of knowledge wherever it leads.

BULLOCH OCEANOGRAPHIC CENTER

Located on Emerald City's Riverfront district, the Bulloch Center has been one of the west coast's leading centers of sea-related research since its establishment in 1961, producing solid research and offering support for some of the field's brightest minds. The Center's major claim to fame is the exploits of its founder, Emerald City native Captain James "Jimmy" Bulloch.

After exhausting a considerable inheritance setting up the Center itself, Bulloch realized a steady source of grants was needed to sustain its work. At the time, Emerald City was still largely a fishing and lumberjack town, and what little academic support money there was went to Malory College or ECU. Something big and splashy was called for, and Bulloch drew upon some of the nautical lore he picked up during his hitch in the US Navy.

The normally reserved, bespectacled scientist developed a second, more public persona as the world's leading shipwreck hunter. Bulloch cannily pre-sold his initial forays to television, and the combination of the spectacularly photographed and dramatically edited footage plus his own natural charisma captivated audiences. Millions of American viewers tuned in for Bulloch's periodic TV specials documenting his exploits, making him a familiar presence on the tube. More importantly, the money and big-time donors the show brought in kept the Center operating, allowing Bulloch and his fellows to continue the serious ocean research that is his true passion.

Bulloch's next planned expedition is to commemorate the upcoming 70th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Fort Breckinridge by attempting to locate the Japanese submarine *I-14* responsible for it. The *I-14* is believed to have been sunk during the attack by members of the Victory Squadron, and Bulloch seeks to confirm this by diving down to what he believes is the wreck, just off the coast from Emerald City.

SOCIAL LIFE

In earlier times, Emerald was socially divisible into prospectors, fishermen, lumber workers, and Asians. One ate, lived, worked, played, and worshiped alongside one's fellow tradesmen or ethnic kinsmen and their families. The 20th century broke down many of these barriers, as motion pictures, mahjong, the Ospreys baseball club, radio, league bowling, the Girl Scouts, and Uncle Miltie gradually bonded Emerald with a greater mass culture.

Today, a more diverse and affluent city engages in an amazing panoply of pastimes. The Ospreys are still a draw, mahjong is now an online hit, and televisions remain on now more than in Berle's heyday. In addition to these traditional amusements, Emerald residents are now into parkour, yoga, peewee soccer, speed dating, and a million other things. Emerald even boasts a company of Union Civil War re-enactors, who regularly skirmish with their Confederate counterparts from Canada, three thousand miles away from Gettysburg and Appomattox.

Safe to say whatever a person is into they can find fellow enthusiasts in Emerald City. This section outlines some of the more unusual pastimes to be found in the City of Destiny.

THE TOBACCONISTS' CLUB

An exclusive gentleman's association founded in 1872, the Tobacconists' Club was once Sunset Hill's private gathering spot for the city's elite, but considered long past its prime a century later. The relative handful of remaining members were discussing to what better, charitable ends the group's meeting place and assets could be directed when the health of the city turned around and the Club experienced an influx of new blood.

PROSPERO'S BOOK CLUB

Located on University Hill, Prospero's Books is an independent dealer specializing in used and rare tomes. It is the sort of cozy place a true bibliophile could easily lose a day or more exploring, but the extremely knowledgeable staff is adept at finding specific titles on request for those in a hurry.

STREET LIFE

Homelessness in Emerald City is markedly less common than in comparable west coast metropolises like Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco. Emerald's comparatively mild climate and access to rudimentary shelter in the Undercity blessedly prevents many of the horror stories of people dying from exposure to the elements all-too-common elsewhere.

City residents are also proud of the municipal government and private charities' efforts to provide homeless shelters, food banks, and the like to mitigate the problem, as well as the area's generous public welfare programs.

Unfortunately, Emerald City's record of clean streets is threatened by recent developments. The Silver Storm and the events that followed have led to what some are calling a "dream lure" effect. Record numbers of people, especially young people, are flocking to Emerald City. More than just tourists, this includes runaways, young artists, and those who simply believe that the "City of Destiny" truly does have some kind of power to infuse their lives with wonder (or simply hope). Some even look for a repeat of the Silver Storm or some other opportunity for "an origin" and super-powers. The vast majority of these hopefuls find themselves in dead-end jobs or, worse, out on the streets where they become involved with addiction, criminal gangs, prostitution, and the city's criminal subculture.

Prospero's owner Erika Swarthout has done a masterful job over the years expanding the store's stock, frequenting auctions, library discards, estate disposals—anyplace a long out-of-print title might be found. In addition to her own book-finding acumen, Swarthout purchases titles from the students and professors at ECU, and that eclectic gathering from all corners of the globe has made Prospero's collection nearly unique in its diversity and depth.

Such a treasure trove of hard-to-find volumes is like a magnet to book-lovers, and in due course Emerald City's bibliophiles began congregating at Prospero's. The shared exchanges quickly evolved into organized gatherings at the store, and Prospero's Book Club was born.

GROOVYFEST

Music lovers, particularly jam-band fanatics, annually flock to Emerald City for GroovyFest, a three-day music festival dedicated to good vibes, global awareness, ingestion of recreational chemicals, and scantily clad people. Held in late June on a privately held stretch of land on the Arcadian Peninsula, GroovyFest attracts aging hippies, neo-hippies, and wanna-be hippies from around the world for a long weekend of camping out, hooking up, turning on, and listening to the very best in mellow-out music.

Bands featured range from nationally known current acts to '60s groups down to one original member and the name. The only consistent head-liner is local jam-band legends Box of Weasels, who have appeared at every GroovyFest from its inception back in 1989. Regardless of the lineup, GroovyFest is now an Emerald City institution; Arcadia College even schedules a summer session break around it.

EMERALD CITY TOURNAMENT OF MARTIAL ARTS

First held in 1973, Emerald's own Martial Arts Tournament was a sign of the growing interweaving of the city's Western and Asian cultures. As those ties grew, so did the

Tournament itself. Now this annual event is a city-wide happening, and is big enough for MarsTech Field to play host.

The Tournament itself attracts top competitors practicing many different styles, from the various kung fu sub-styles

to karate to capoeira and Muay Thai. It's an opportunity for devotees to meet and discuss new techniques with true masters of their chosen arts, and for casual fans to be amazed by demonstrations of skill and pick up some imported region-free Shaw Brothers DVDs.

PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

For decades, Emerald City was the forgotten "middle child" between Seattle and Portland when it came to professional sports. Passed over by league after league in sport after sport, Emerald City fans either had to embrace the humbler charms of their local minor-league squads or endure long treks to other cities to cheer for other people's teams.

Emerald City's fortunes seemed to bottom out in 1985 when it failed to attract the United States Football League's Breakers team upon their exit from New Orleans, losing out to Portland instead. As Emerald City fans can attest, there may be no greater indignity than being snubbed by the USFL.

Things began to improve in the mid-1990s. The city's improving economy created a growing, affluent population the major sports leagues couldn't help but take notice of, and by the decade's end Emerald City fans had two big-time franchises to call their own. They support them both with a ferocity fueled by many years of having done without, making Emerald a city visiting squads dread facing.

FOOTBALL: THE BULLDOGS

Most observers had Emerald City pegged as a baseball town. As it turned out, city residents have an equal ap-

petite for pigskin action; they simply lacked an outlet for it until the mid-1990s. In 1994, the Canadian Football League awarded the city a franchise as part of its expansion into America's summer sports market, and the Emerald City Lumberjacks first took to the 110-yard field that very same year. Despite never seriously challenging for the Grey Cup, the Lumberjacks consistently drew solid crowds until the CFL abruptly abandoned its American experiment in 1995.

The Lumberjacks' sudden demise united sports fans and the city fathers in a tenacious desire to at long last bring the National Football League to Emerald City. Led by local banking magnates the Owens family, the city's unyielding tenacity finally paid off in 1999 when the NFL granted the city an expansion team. In recognition of the determination that successfully landed the franchise, the team was christened the Emerald City Bulldogs.

After some skilled intra-family business deals, Tammy Owens-Hines ultimately secured sole control of the team from a feuding consortium of older male relatives. Under her keen management, the team was finally able to leave the ECU college stadium behind for the all-new USNet Field. It's a modern, open-air facility—much to the chagrin of visitors from drier climes when the Emerald City rains hit.



At the start, the Bulldogs weathered some tough years playing in the highly competitive National Football Conference West Division. However, when their natural rivals the Seattle Seahawks joined the division in 2002, it sparked one of the most intense rivalries in the NFL. The seemingly inspired Bulldogs have become a playoff contender in the years following, and successfully ingrained themselves into the city's culture just as much as the Ospreys. Proof of this appears anytime Emerald residents are given an electoral choice between two unappealing candidates, as they invariably take advantage of the city's liberal write-in vote law and propel the team's purebred English bulldog mascot Buster to a strong third-place finish.

BASEBALL: THE OSPREYS

Throughout the 20th century, the hearts of Emerald City sports fans belonged foremost to the Ospreys triple-A baseball club. Long touted as "the scrappiest club in the Pacific Coast League," the Ospreys enjoyed nearly a century of sellout crowds, with only the Great Depression and similar calamities able to make the ballpark anything less than full. In fact, it took one of the greatest crises in human history to ultimately ground Emerald's beloved Ospreys.

In the fallout of the Terminus Invasion of 1994, Maximilian Mars departed Freedom City for his hometown of Emerald. As he packed up his things, he resolved that one of his great passions, big-league baseball, would make the trip with him. With an inescapable mix of charm and cunning, Mars manipulated Freedom City Flags' owner Matthew Sandston into making demands for a new ballpark cash-strapped Freedom couldn't meet. With that pretext, Sandston moved the Flags to Emerald City just as Mars had "persuaded" him to do, rendering the Ospreys redundant and prompting the club to sadly fold.

Mars shed some of his ruthless tendencies in the years following, but like a true fan never developed any tolerance for a losing ball club. Thus, after a decade of losing seasons for the "Emerald City Munchkins" under Sandston's mismanagement, in 2006 Mars again "persuaded" him—this time, to sell the club to MarsTech, Inc. Mars then set about remaking the entire organization, starting with the name. Much to the delight of Emerald City traditionalists, the club was re-dubbed the Ospreys, even wearing replicas of the uniforms it sported during its minor-league heyday.

Under Mars's administration, the Ospreys have become the terror of the American League West. The club has a star-studded lineup built on a payroll larger than the GDP of a third-world country. Four championship pennants (and counting) now fly above MarsTech Park, a state-of-the-art retractable dome facility that is a baseball's fan delight and a noisy nightmare for visiting clubs.

HOCKEY: THE CHIEFS

Ice hockey remains a distant third in the affections of Emerald City sports fanatics, but its area following makes

up in devotion what it lacks in numbers. Despite their enthusiasm, efforts to bring the National Hockey League have been rebuffed thus far. This has left the city barren of a pro team since the World Hockey Association's Fishermen folded in 1976, and the American Hockey League's Emerald City Chiefs were established to fill the void.

Since moving cross-country to Emerald in 1977, the Chiefs have only rarely been in playoff contention, and are routinely in the West Division's cellar. However, the Chiefs inevitably lead the AHL in penalty minutes, as its goon-laden roster attempts to send better teams to the hospital before losing the actual game. While the Chiefs are not good, their fans are quick to point out they are rarely dull. To the Chiefs' credit, a number of their players have gone on to stardom with the parent club, the NHL's Freedom Blades.

The Chiefs skate in the ancient, battered War Memorial Arena in Downtown—a perfect aesthetic match for the unglamorous but double-tough team itself. On game night, there are as many cops present as opposing team players to deal with rowdy fans. Cleanliness is a distant second to profits for general manager Joe McGrath, but he does keep the arena beer cheap and plentiful. For the Chiefs' fans, that's enough.

Controversy follows the team off the ice as well. Several area civil-rights groups have campaigned against the team name, deeming it insensitive to the local Native American population by perpetuating negative stereotypes. The Hekawi themselves are split on the controversy, but at least one of their number—reputedly a stormer—is rumored to be responsible for a recent string of violent incidents directed at team facilities and players.

OTHER SPORTS

Emerald City's lack of a National Basketball Association franchise is the sorest point for local fans. Commissioner David Stern earned the eternal enmity of area hoops fanatics when he deemed Emerald "too small market" in 1999. To be fair, as long as the Seattle SuperSonics, Portland Trail Blazers, and Vancouver Grizzlies all called the Pacific Northwest home, a fourth team would have been a financially dicey proposition at best.

However, with the Grizzlies' departure for Memphis in 2001 and the Sonics' leaving for Oklahoma City in 2008—coupled with Emerald's continued resurgence—Stern's remarks drive Emerald City fans to greater fury than ever. During the latter relocation, Emerald's city fathers made a concerted effort to lure the disgruntled Sonics to the City of Destiny, but it ultimately served only to fuel the already intense, bitter rivalry with Seattle.

Major League Soccer views Emerald City much as the NBA does. With the Portland Timbers, Seattle Sounders, and Vancouver Whitecaps already in place, another professional team in the region is likely some time in coming, if ever. The sport is growing in popularity in Emerald by leaps and bounds, however, and the city may yet change the league's mind by sheer force of enthusiasm alone.

CHAPTER 4: THE EMERALD CITY SERIES



This chapter looks at some of the elements of setting up an Emerald City series for M&M, building on the series creation guidelines given in the *MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS Gamemaster's Guide*. The material in this chapter contains important information for players and Gamemasters of an Emerald City series, and contains some of the secrets of the setting along with options Gamemasters can use to customize the city and make it their own. Some of this information contains hints at secrets of the setting or reveals them outright, but since you'll be creating heroes that live in Emerald City, you can use those pieces of information to tie your character into the city and its secrets.

This chapter is divided into four main sections: First, Series Complications discusses a new way to use complications you and players may want to explore in your series. Next, the Series Frameworks section offers outlines and ideas for different types of M&M games set in Emerald City. Then the Emerald City Origins section discusses different background elements useful for creating new heroes (or villains) to populate your series, while also tying them into the overall setting. Lastly, the Alternate Emerald Cities section looks at ways you can modify the Emerald City setting to suit different style games or types of settings.

Ultimately, as with all things *MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS*, Emerald City is what you choose to make of it. All the material in this book, up to and including this chapter, is just a guideline to provide inspiration and fuel the fires of your own imagination.

SERIES COMPLICATIONS

The concept of complications appears in **Chapter 2** of the M&M *Hero's Handbook*, focused primarily on the individual complications faced by heroes. One element of a setting or series may be complications able to challenge any character in the series, or faced by a team of heroes as a whole. For example, there's the Enemy complication for enmity between a particular hero and villain, but

a team can also have an Enemy complication for a foe they share as a group. Series complications can go a long way towards defining the overall themes in a *MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS* series, and can influence the elements of a setting. You can use the material in this sourcebook to provide complications for your Emerald City series or even borrow parts of the book for series set elsewhere.

CREATING SERIES COMPLICATIONS

Because they affect all of the characters and the series as a whole, series complications should generally be created in collaboration between the players and the Gamemaster, just like the other parameters of the series. If the players do not care for the idea of their heroes having to deal with widespread prejudice against them, for example, then it's probably best to find out when discussing ideas for series complications in advance rather than after the series has already started.

Exactly how to handle the collaborative process is up to the individual group. Some GMs might have each player suggest a series complication, then have the entire group (including the GM) vote on a suitable number of choices. Perhaps the GM reserves veto rights or decides which suggestions come to a vote. The players might suggest complication concepts the GM then chooses from as best suit the overall series. So long as the process is fair and allows for everyone to have some input, you should end up with a series complication everyone can work with. The primary idea is to get the players' imaginations going, thinking up different elements they would like to see in the game. The GM then has a useful set of resources for bringing complications into play that the players want to see.

SAMPLE SERIES COMPLICATIONS

The range of potential series complications is considerable. The following are just some general ideas you can use to get discussion started on complications in your own series, particularly related to those set in Emerald City. The series frameworks in the next section also contain lists of potential series complications.

ENEMY

Superhero teams often have common enemies in addition to personal adversaries. A series Enemy complication is usually the main antagonist of the series as a whole, although that is not necessarily the case. Likewise, a series Enemy (whether an individual or a group) tends to be con-

HEROES JOURNEY

If your group is planning on playing the first *Heroes Journey* series of adventures, *Emerald City Knights*, included with this set, then some of the decisions about the series are made for you, although your Gamemaster may choose to modify the series and the adventures in some ways. In particular, you'll want to look at the **Emerald City Knights** framework on page 61, and keep in mind that some of the origin concepts in this chapter are just getting started in that series, particularly the Silver Storm, which is the event that kicks it off. Plan your character accordingly and, when in doubt, check with your Gamemaster.

siderably more powerful than an individual hero, since the villain is intended to take on an entire team.

The primary difficulty with a series Enemy is keeping the complication from dominating the entire series. If every adventure features some new plot by the Enemy, the players are going to tire of that opponent, especially if the plot requires the Enemy to escape or somehow return at the start of every adventure. It is wise to space out encounters with the Enemy (and thus uses of this complication) with various other subplots, unrelated foes, and change-of-pace adventures.

Many of the villains in **Chapter 5** of the *Secrets of Emerald City* book or from *Threat Report* make suitable Enemy complications. In particular, the Chessmen, Dr. Shock, F.O.E., MEDUSA, and Scion are good Enemy complications for a whole team of heroes.

FAME

Superheroes tend to be famous as a rule. A series with a Fame complication most likely focuses on the inherent drawbacks of the heroes' widespread fame and what it is like to lead a life of celebrity. The heroes may be under constant scrutiny by the media and their various fans, dealing with critics, stalkers, and endless numbers of "helpful volunteers" who spend more time getting in the way than anything else. The heroes also have to deal with a lack of privacy, especially in the modern age of instant communications. Virtually everything they do is recorded and transmitted for the world to see and talk about.

The fact that superheroes have been scarce in Emerald City is sure to make new heroes instantly famous, and keeping a low profile fairly difficult.

IDENTITY

A series Identity complication can have some interesting implications: What is it about the identities of the heroes *as a group* that can complicate things for them? Many examples are variations on the Secret complication: the characters might all actually be wanted criminals masquerading as heroes, or good guys working undercover as criminals or super-powered gladiators. The heroes could be "deep cover" agents who are not even consciously aware they are heroes in their ordinary lives!

POWER LOSS

A particularly difficult, but useful, series complication is when the heroes share a form of Power Loss! Perhaps they have a common origin or descriptor, allowing one effect to negate all of their powers equally. This gives the GM a useful tool for challenging the heroes in the right situations, although it should be used sparingly. If the heroes' powers are negated in every adventure, the players will begin to resent the complication (and, by extension, the GM). Still, it can suit a series where the heroes share a common theme or origin.

In Emerald City, the most common shared origin is the Silver Storm (see **Emerald City Origins** later in this chapter). Although the default assumption is that the alien nanotech that caused the stormers' various mutations is no more, the common point of origin can make stormers potentially vulnerable to certain effects. Perhaps someone comes up with a variant on the jammer technology used to eliminate Tellax's nanotech, capable of jamming the genetic "key" to stormer powers and rendering them temporarily useless. The interesting thing about this series complication is that it cuts both ways, affecting villainous and heroic stormers, unless one side has some sort of countermeasure.

PREJUDICE

Many comic book heroes struggle to protect a world that fears and mistrusts them, and Prejudice against the heroes can be an effective series complication. In some regards, it is the reverse of the Fame complication, previously. Rather than the heroes having to deal with constant scrutiny and well-wishers, they must endure the slings and arrows of the very people they are trying to protect.

Given that Emerald City has been without heroes of its own, and a haven for super-criminals, there are bound to be suspicions when new heroes come onto the scene, especially ones who gained their powers during the Silver Storm (or simply first appeared after it). Aliens, and those influenced by aliens, are also a potential mistrusted minority in an Emerald City series, and you could greatly step up the influence of groups like Majestic (see *Secrets of Emerald City Chapter 5*), perhaps even with a public anti-alien (or "pro-human") element.

The Prejudice complication is also a good example of how series complications can change and develop over time. There's a good chance the actions and deeds of the heroes will change public perceptions, allowing them to eventually overcome the complication for good. Retiring a series complication can be a major landmark, along with the chance to introduce something new to take its place, such as the formerly mistrusted misfits now saddled with the complication of extreme Fame.

RELATIONSHIP

Relationships and supporting cast members are a vital part of an ongoing series, and Relationship complications make good choices for a series as a whole, especially when dealing with characters who primarily interact with the heroes as a group.

Examples of Relationship series complications include a team patron or mentor, team staff personnel (from mechanic to administrative assistant or butler), a police or government liaison, or a team advisor, counselor, or medic, to name a few.

Some of the series frameworks in the following section include potential supporting characters (and therefore Relationship complications). In particular, Maximillian Mars (see *Secrets of Emerald City*, page 24) plays an impor-

tant supporting role in the *Emerald City Knights* adventure series, and can be a Relationship complication for a team of heroes organized with his assistance.

REPUTATION

One relationship spotlighted in the comics all of the time is the often fickle relations between the heroes and the general public. The good guys can be adored one day, with the mayor giving them a parade and the key to the city, and then wanted by the police on the next, after someone has framed them for a crime they didn't commit (or, worse yet, for some blunder the heroes actually *did* make!).

The shifting winds of fortune tend to be more situational than a true series complication, unless the series is all about how the heroes deal with the public. Reputation complications tend to focus on teams with a particular reputation for something, whether it is shooting first and asking questions later or going after particular kinds of criminals. Others may seek to take advantage of such a reputation, putting traps in the group's path or setting them up for a fall.

RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility is a tricky complication to apply to a series as a whole since, one hopes, a group of heroes are generally responsible types. The GM should consider what "default" level of responsibility is expected of the good guys and what crosses the line into complication territory. For example, fighting crime and stopping disasters should probably be a part of any hero's responsibilities, but a team that dedicates itself to cleaning up the aftereffects of a disaster, for example, or to searching for a cure to a particular disease, has taken on additional Responsibility (in the form of a series complication).

The main way Responsibilities become complications is their potential to conflict. What happens when the heroes are faced with the choice of acquiring what they need to safeguard the world from the extradimensional threat they're sworn to avert, but at the cost of risking a handful of innocent lives? What if a villain has the cure they're seeking? Do they bargain for it or even try to steal it, going against their own moral code?

Underlying events in Emerald City, like the legacies of the Silver Storm and the Chamber, can create hero teams with other responsibilities to consider.

RIVALRY

In addition to individual rivalries between characters, a team might have a Rivalry as a series complication. While not as grim as an Enemy complication, a Rivalry can still be deadly serious. Take, for example, a team rivaling the Emerald City AEGIS continent. The government agents regard the heroes as dangerous loose-cannons while the heroes feel the AEGIS agents are high-handed and ill-equipped to deal with many of the threats they claim are under their jurisdiction. You can also set up rivalries with other heroes or hero teams. If the Sentinels characters

from **Chapter 6** are not in use as player characters in your series, then they could potentially be a rival group.

SECRET

Do the heroes have something to hide? Certainly, people who wear masks and costumes must be hiding *something* (as the heroes' critics point out) but is it more than just their civilian identities?

A series Secret complication generally revolves around a single secret the characters as a group are trying to protect. For example, the team might be made up of ex-criminals who have decided to turn over a new leaf, adopting new heroic identities in an effort to leave their criminal pasts behind them, but the possibility of somebody learning the truth still haunts them. The heroes might be privy to the knowledge that a renowned hero was in fact nothing of the sort and died in disgrace, but the hero's reputation still has the potential to inspire and do good, so they have chosen to protect it.

SERIES FRAMEWORKS

Emerald City is intentionally set up to suit most types of superhero stories, although some particular styles and genres may require a bit more modification of the setting's basic assumptions and source material than others. This section looks at some frameworks for setting up and running an M&M series based in Emerald City. These are by no means the only options. Feel free to use them as springboard for your own imagination when considering new ideas and opportunities for Emerald City M&M games.

EMERALD CITY KNIGHTS

Power Level: 10+
Setting: Emerald City

Scale: Local
Style: Greyscale

This is the "default" approach to Emerald City, wherein the players take the roles of members of a relatively new superhero team, banded together to protect the city and its people from a sudden upsurge in superhuman and paranormal criminals and threats.

Following the Silver Storm and the upsetting of the balance of power in Emerald City, things in the area start changing and new heroes are desperately needed. The characters become E.C.'s protectors with the support of the populace, local law enforcement, and perhaps an influential patron like Maximillian Mars. Some or all of the characters could be from **Chapter 6**, or entirely new heroes designed by the players. They might be from Emerald City, having only recently gained their powers and embarked on a heroic career, or newly arrived in the city.

They've got their work cut out for them in keeping a lid on an explosion of new superhumans in the city, to say nothing of rooting out the criminal elements that have come to consider Emerald City their personal hideout. Ad-

WEAKNESS

Like Power Loss, Weakness is a relatively rare series complication. A group of heroes who share the same weakness truly do have an Achilles' heel! Indeed, such a weakness might start out as more of a Secret (previously) the heroes work to keep others from learning.

Still, heroes with a common origin or power descriptor(s) might have some vulnerability or weakness in common. For example, a team of heroes with origins based on alien DNA could be vulnerable to effects intended to deal with alien threats (such as that used by Majestic, see *Secrets of Emerald City Chapter 5*). At one time, stormers all shared a weakness that an outside force with the right access to the nanites in their systems could mentally control them, as both the Commander and Tellax did. That weakness has been eliminated as of the end of the *Emerald City Knight* series, although it might still exist in your series in one form or another.

ventures can range across the heroic spectrum: fighting stormer freaks one week, confronting mysterious government conspiracies or alien menaces the next.

One advantage offered by this series framework is the *Heroes Journey* adventure book included in this set. *Emerald City Knights* fleshes out and expands the basic concept of the series described here into a full six-part game, ready for the Gamemaster to run. It introduces new heroes (and players) to Emerald City, puts into motion events, which change the city's *status quo*, and sets the players' characters on the path to becoming the city's local superteam and prime protectors.

Note that *Emerald City Knights* takes place up to six months *before* the descriptions given in this book. If you are playing that series, check with your Gamemaster before relying too heavily on information in the *Player's Guide*, since some of it may be different initially.

SAMPLE COMPLICATIONS

Enemies (former members of the Chamber, such as F.O.E.), Fame (official heroes of E.C.), Relationship (Maximillian Mars or another patron), Responsibility (to safeguard Emerald City), Rivalry (with other up-and-coming or established heroes, or an organization like AEGIS).

THE SILVER AGE

Power Level: 8+
Setting: Emerald City

Scale: Local
Style: Greyscale

The Silver Storm changed Emerald City forever, and makes an excellent way to kick off a series set there. The characters are all otherwise ordinary people who happen to be

there on the fateful day when the Redshift Energies truck explodes near Yellow Brick Row. Exposed to the nanites of the swirling "Silver Storm" their latent superhuman potential is unlocked and they are transformed.

A *Silver Age* series can be much like either *Emerald City Knights* (previously) or *Arcadian Academy* (following), if the Silver Storm is simply an explanation for how the heroes get their powers. Indeed, you can incorporate stormer heroes into any of the other series frameworks. A variation on this theme is to focus on the Silver Storm and the stormers in your series. Other places like Freedom City might have various kinds of super-weirdos, but Emerald City in this framework has stormers, and not much else. Good thing, too, since the stormers prove more than enough trouble. You can use primarily stormer villains, like Junkpile, Mindfire, Pack-Rat, Tribal, and others, as antagonists and even convert some others over into stormers by tweaking their backstories.

For a more realistic M&M series, you can use the Silver Storm as a kickoff event more suited to a setting like the kind described in the *Paragons* sourcebook or the *Wild Cards* sourcebook (both for M&M Second Edition). Perhaps the world in this case is almost entirely mundane and lacking in superhumans before the Silver Storm changes things (see **Alternate Emerald Cities** for some ideas).

One element to keep in mind in a *Silver Age* Emerald City series is the prevalence of "nanite" and "stormer" as descriptors. Effects capable of nullifying or otherwise affecting "all stormer powers" are proportionately more effective in this series. Take this into consideration before you allow the heroes to wield such powers in your game.

SAMPLE COMPLICATIONS

Accident (heroes all connected to the Silver Storm), Enemies (rival or criminal stormers), Identity (circumstances might lead to stormer heroes having public identities), Power Loss (the characters all share a "stormer" descriptor), Prejudice (against stormers), Secret (the heroes might conceal the true origins of their powers), Weakness (stormers could share a common weakness or vulnerability).

EMERALD REDEMPTION

Power Level: 10+

Setting: Emerald City

Scale: Local

Style: Greyscale to Dark

In this series, the player characters are all supers-with-a-past, not unlike Vortex (see **Chapter 6**). They may have been reluctant criminals, out-of-control stormers, or even career supervillains or the child of one, but their time in Emerald City and recent events have changed things, and they're now looking to start anew and do some good for a change. A crisis like the Silver Storm and its aftermath allows them the opportunity to earn a second chance: perhaps they get a pardon or some unusual "probation" or "community service" to put their unique talents to work for the public good.

The would-be heroes have to overcome public mistrust and their own past mistakes, as well as dealing with their

former criminal cohorts who consider them traitors, along with the established heroes who are wary and uncertain about their motives. The hero characters presented in this book can serve as wary NPCs keeping an eye on Emerald City's newest off-white knights, either individually or as a team. The Rook in particular makes a useful "parole officer" or mentor, who might take on the task of rehabilitating former criminals. Maximillian Mars, who understands well the importance of redemption, can also serve as the group's patron, trying to give them the tools to do some good in the city.

In a darker series, the "reformed" super-criminals might not be quite so sincere. The guise of a group of former criminals turned heroes is also a useful cover for either a secret black-ops program (using convicted supervillains as covert agents) or a scheme to lull the city and its people into accepting a team of super-criminals as their new heroes, allowing them access to sensitive and secure information and materials, just in time for the bad guys to show their true colors and turn on their supposed charges. Of course, in both cases, some of the villains may find "playing hero" really does change how they view things, leading to a split in loyalties within the team.

SAMPLE COMPLICATIONS

Enemies (former criminal associates), Prejudice (if their criminal past is known), Relationships (mentor or "parole officer" characters), Reputation (overcoming their criminal past), Secret (hiding their criminal past).

ARCADIAN ACADEMY

Power Level: 8

Setting: Emerald City

Scale: Local

Style: Light

In this series, the characters are all high-school age teens who either gain super-powers from the Silver Storm or experience origins or the emergence of other powers around the same time. They become students at the new Arcadian Academy, where they can learn to use their newfound powers responsibly and for the greater good, along with handling all the angst and drama that accompanies a group of high-schoolers.

Gamemasters will find the *Hero High* sourcebook for M&M invaluable in running this type of series. Supporting characters can include staff and mentors at the Arcadian Academy. Some of the existing heroes in this book—such as Rook, Xeno, and Ultramarine—can become teachers, while others—like Kid Robot, Victor, or Vortex—might be contemporaries or lower- or upper-classmen. The young heroes-in-training may encounter rivals from the Elysian Academy (AKA "The Shadow Academy") as well as adult super-criminals and other menaces.

Does the Academy try to maintain a low profile and keep the true nature of its student body a secret, or is it widely known as a training ground for the next generation of superheroes? Are the students expected to participate in missions, overseen by their adult mentors, or are their



heroic activities strictly “off the books” whether or not their teachers choose to overlook them? These choices affect the overall character and style of the series.

You can borrow quite liberally from the material in *Hero High* as well as the Claremont Academy from *Freedom City*. Feel free to tweak the timeline(s) to make characters like the AlternaTeens or the Next-Gen contemporaries of the new young heroes rather than 3-6 years older than them, although you can also age the existing characters a few years to make them upper-classmen or recent graduates, perhaps even returned to do some “student teaching” or interning with the new Academy.

SAMPLE COMPLICATIONS

Enemy (opposing school for villains), **Relationship** (mentor or teacher), **Rivalry** (rival school), **Secret** (student at a school for superhumans)

ALIENS IN ELYSIUM

Power Level: 8+

Setting: Elysian Forest
and Emerald City

Scale: Local

Style: Greyscale

Rather than traditional superheroes, the characters are a group of mutant freaks and alien hybrids born of the various mutagens and xenoforms in the Elysian Forest and surrounding area. They try to learn how to cope with their new abilities (and often bodies and appearances) while doing some good along the way. They have to deal with alien-hunters like Majestic (see *Secrets of Emerald City Chapter 5*), angry mobs of people who fear and mistrust them, and other threats, such as fellow hybrids and xenoforms lacking an interest in helping humanity. You can retain the Silver Storm and its aftereffects in this series, just emphasizing its alien origin and nature.

This series framework can run like a more mainstream superhero series, with the characters having code-names and costumes, perhaps a secret headquarters in the forest (maybe an abandoned fallout shelter or government base) or somewhere on or in Mount Stanley. They use their powers to help a public that often fears and misunderstands them, garnering some appreciation, but also seeing their share of scathing editorials and online commentary, and protests from angry mobs.

Alternately, the series might have a more low-key approach, with the characters adopting ordinary street clothes (or some more practical variant, like protective camouflage uniforms) and focusing their efforts on keeping themselves and others like them safe from threats like Majestic and others who would hunt and exploit them. Along the way, they might confront fellow xenoforms, especially those lashing out at humanity and potentially making things worse for everyone.

In this series, you may want to spin certain characters more towards an alien or inhuman nature, setting up Junkpile as a creation of alien technology for example, or

Ersatz (both in *Secrets of Emerald City Chapter 5*) as more of an adaptive alien xenomorph. Xeno (see page 89) can serve as a hero, mentor, or even nemesis of the characters and Majestic makes an excellent overarching series villain, looking to hunt down the characters and either perform cruel experiments to learn the secrets of their powers, or press them into service against others like them (or both).

SAMPLE COMPLICATIONS

Enemy (Majestic or other alien hunters), Prejudice (alien in origin and possibly appearing inhuman), Responsibility (to fellow xenoforms), Secret (Aliens Among Us), possibly a Weakness to some anti-alien countermeasures.

STORMFRONT

Power Level: 8+

Setting: Emerald City

Scale: Local

Style: Dark

An Emerald City series doesn't have to be about superheroes. In this series concept, the characters are all stormers involved in Stormfront, the Emerald City underground fighting ring run by the Circuit Maximus (see *Secrets of Emerald City Chapter 4*). They may have various reasons of their own for being involved, from a need for the prize money to a desire to prove they're the toughest fighters around or they may even have a death-wish. Working the fight-circuit could lead to a very different type of series as the characters learn to master their newfound powers and find their purpose in life.

On one level, a Stormfront series is an excellent excuse for players to come up with different types of super-powered characters to pit them against each other in the arena, if you want to play a casual "pick-up" game of super-fights. On a more detailed level, it can focus on the trials and tribulations of super-powered gladiators, some trapped in their new life, others looking to capitalize on it. You can use some of the heroes and villains in this book as fellow fighters or ring-leaders, and *Threat Report* for M&M provides a number of other characters useful as arena-fodder.

A Stormfront series can develop into another kind as the characters choose to do something else with their lives and powers. Perhaps they break with the arena culture and embark on careers as true heroes and protectors for Emerald City, or look to put their past behind them and begin a series like the **Emerald Redemption** framework (previously).

A Stormfront series also suits a darker and more realistic approach to Emerald City, where the lines between heroism and villainy are blurred and what one is expected to do with super-powers is less clear. See the **Alternate Emerald Cities** section for additional ideas.

SAMPLE COMPLICATIONS

Fame (for a well-known fighter), Relationship (with a fight-organizer), Reputation (known fighting styles or quirks), Rivalry (with other fighters), Secret (the existence of Stormfront itself).

EMERALD CITY BLUES

Power Level: 6

Setting: Emerald City

Scale: Local

Style: Greyscale

Until recently, the Emerald City Police Department didn't have to contend with anything more complex than most urban PDs, maybe even less, given how the Chamber worked behind the scenes to keep E.C. relatively free of supervillain activity. That's all changed since the Silver Storm, and now the ECPD has to deal with super-powered freaks, a new influx of out-of-town bad guys, and the remnants of a criminal conspiracy with claws dug deep into various parts of the city.

In this series, the players take the roles, not of costumed superheroes, but of otherwise ordinary cops working the streets of Emerald City. They might be part of the city's new elite squad intended to deal with super-criminals and related threats, or they could just be a collection of honest cops trying to overcome corruption in their department and manage on a day-to-day basis the new realities of Emerald City.

Gamemasters will find the *Agents of Freedom* sourcebook useful for this type of series, and can expand the concept to include series where the characters are federal agents working for AEGIS or a similar organization rather than just local cops. How do otherwise ordinary human beings take on superhuman threats in order to keep their city safe?

SAMPLE COMPLICATIONS

Enemy (opposing agency or villain), Relationship (with commanding officer), Responsibility (to the organization, subject to orders from higher-ups), Rivalry (with other organizations or heroes)

THE VANGUARD

Power Level: 6

Setting: Emerald City

Scale: Global

Style: Greyscale

As mentioned in Victor's background (see **Chapter 6**), the Vanguard is a covert organization seeking to maintain the legacy of great heroes of previous generations like Doc Prophet and his contemporaries. They have spent decades building up resources, networking, and collecting information. All they lack now is the motivation to put what they have to work. In this series, the characters can become that motivation. Perhaps a player takes on the role of Victor, looking to reform and reinvigorate Vanguard towards its original mission, or the player characters are all members of Vanguard inspired by Victor's departure to change how things run.

This can be an agent-level series taking inspiration from *Agents of Freedom* and setting a team of otherwise human Vanguard agents against superhuman menaces, perhaps

armed with gadgets and information from bygone eras of heroism. Alternately, Vanguard's experiments in creating agents may have continued beyond "Project: Victor" with the characters the results of the latest work. Your players could put together a team "descended" from the genetics of other famous heroes, for example.

The heroes not only have to contend with various threats to Emerald City but also with the struggle to define Vanguard's purpose and place in the world. The conservative "old guard" of the organization may not want things to change, and there is always the possibility of those corrupted by power and secrecy looking to turn Vanguard

away from its ideals and towards their own ends. They may initially do so in the name of furthering the cause of "justice" in the world, but how is justice served in secret truly just?

SAMPLE COMPLICATIONS

Enemy (agency foes or even within the agency), Relationship (with fellow agents or mentors), Responsibility (to both Vanguard and its ideals, which may be in conflict), Rivalry (fellow agents), Secret (possibly working covertly against corrupt elements in the organization)

EMERALD CITY ORIGINS

Emerald City is meant to be a setting that includes any and all of the various origins found in the comic books—and in the *Mutants & Masterminds Hero's Handbook* and *Gamemaster's Guide*. That said, there are certain origins unique to the setting, or influenced by the setting's history in different ways. This section looks at those origins and offers some things to consider when creating heroes and villains for an Emerald City series, or assisting players in creating new heroes for a game set here.

GENETICS & MUTATION

By far the most common origin of super-powers in the Emerald City setting is some form of genetic mutation. While many comic book mutants result from the mutation of their parents' DNA, being born with the potential for their superhuman powers, most of the genetic mutations in Emerald City are induced by outside forces, typically alien in origin. Thus Emerald City's "mutates" are people born as genetically normal humans, but transformed by some later influence.

In the future, as stormers and other mutants have offspring, Emerald City may see a generation of natal mutants, born with the potential for powers. For the time being, such individuals are not much more common than elsewhere in the setting, most of them the result of pre-natal exposure to xeno-genes (see the following sections).

THE SILVER STORM

The first and foremost origin for Emerald City is the Silver Storm and its aftereffects, which forever changed the city and altered its balance of power with the introduction of numerous new "unaligned" superhumans not a part of the Chamber's overall scheme.

The Silver Storm essentially consisted of two parts: First, the alien nanotechnology produced by Tellax and released into the environment by the violent explosion of the containers carrying it. Second, an "activation signal" from the alien machine, putting the nanites to work in rewriting the genetic codes of people exposed to them. The nanites were

intended to select from the dormant genetic potential for super-powers among the human population, the same quality Tellax's Preserver creators first explored millennia ago. Of course, the alien machines had no sense of esthetics when activating dormant superhuman potential, so some stormers—Octaman, for example—are mutant freaks, and the process is often traumatic, leaving other stormers affected psychologically in the short- or long-term.

Not only was the Silver Storm a single, massive "origin event," but it also had wide-ranging repercussions beyond just one day in downtown Emerald City. Some of the genetic "rewiring" done by the nanites brought many dormant power-potentials closer to full expression, but weren't able to push them into full activation. Thus in addition to a number of active superhumans, the Storm also created many more "latents" with the potential for powers, given the right circumstances. This means traumatic accidents in Emerald City are more likely to lead to other "origin events" than elsewhere.

After doing their genetic rewiring, the nanites themselves went dormant. They also granted Tellax the ability to influence and control the stormers, an ability also exploited by the new Commander. By the end of the events of the *Emerald City Knights* series, however, the nanites are eliminated by the intervention of Maximillian Mars (the original Commander) and the heroes, leaving the stormers free of their influence. The genetic changes are permanent, however, so the number of stormers and latents in the city remain unchanged.

The GM can even introduce an amount of Preserver nanotech, protected from the effects of the jammer that broke down the other nanites, perhaps by a heavily shielded container or the like. Accidental release of this material could lead to a second "Silver Storm" and even more stormers, and various factions would be willing to go to great length to capture and use this resource for their own purposes.

Although stormers share a common origin and the "genetic" descriptor, they have little else in common. The "nanite" descriptor no longer applies to them after the end of *Emerald City Knights*, and they are just like other mutant superhumans in most regards. Stormer powers

do not necessarily counter each other, and power effects work on them largely like they would any other mutated humans. Similarly, although the changes induced by the Silver Storm are physical, they often lead to the development of mental or even "metaphysical" powers, such as in the cases of Mindfire (psi-powers) or Lord Etheric (who taps into the supernatural power of the Shadow World).

In an alternate Emerald City (see **Alternate Emerald Cities**), the effects of the Silver Storm might be far more severe and wide-reaching, or more modest and limited.

XENO-GENES

The other major source of origins in Emerald City and the surrounding area is also genetic and extraterrestrial: the presence of alien biological and genetic material in the Elysian Forest.

Some sixty years ago, vessels from the shapeshifting alien Grue species were damaged in the Pacific Northwest near Emerald City. This resulted in the loss or jettisoning of containment vessels holding prisoners stored in a protoplasmic state (see **Xeno** in **Chapter 6** for one such example). Some of these containment vessels remained intact, lost and buried for decades. Others broke open on impact, scattering alien genetic material primed with highly adaptive Grue neo-plasm.

The xeno-genes introduced into the environment have led to the mutation of local life and considerable potential for the development of sophisticated mutations in reaction to intense external stimuli. In essence, many of the creatures exposed to the xeno-genes are primed to gain super-powers under the right circumstances. Some of them already have, in fact.

There's also the matter of the remaining sealed containment vessels. Some may open (accidentally or simply decaying over time) to release dangerous alien prisoners. These beings may be the results of Grue experimentation, or captives taken from conquered worlds (much like Xeno was). Decades of imprisonment may have further mutated them or driven them mad, and they find themselves in a strange environment with no understanding of how they arrived or how to find their way back home.

As with the Silver Storm, the mutations induced by exposure to xeno-genes are on the physical and genetic level, but can (and sometimes do) lead to the development of mental powers, particularly telepathy and related abilities.

Containing, studying, and eventually eliminating the xeno-genes and those affected by them is the focus of the alien-hunting organization Majestic (see *Secrets of Emerald City Chapter 5*). Characters deriving their powers from xeno-genetics are almost certain to find themselves targets of Majestic's investigation and efforts to purge Earth of alien influences.

LOST WORLDS

The Emerald City area lies on the Pacific Rim, a region that was once the outskirts of the Serpent Empire of Lemuria

in prehistoric times. A cataclysmic war with the human Atlantean civilization led to the destruction and sinking of both island continents and the ruins of Lemuria are now at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

Remnants of the Serpent People and their Empire managed to survive the destruction of their home, primarily through the deep underground passages into the realm of Sub-Terra. These remnants include the Serpent People themselves (largely degenerated into barbarism), their former slaves the Morlocks, and the Sub-Terrans (all described in the *Freedom City* setting) as well as the Fomorians (described in *Freedom's Most Wanted*).

Sub-Terra is widely connected to the surface world by ancient tunnels throughout the Ring of Fire, the area of surface volcanic activity surrounding the Pacific Ocean, including the region where Emerald City is located. Mount Stanley has an ancient reputation as a place of strange sightings and associations, and creatures have been known to haunt its slopes and caverns since long before the introduction of the xeno-genes into the surrounding wilderness.

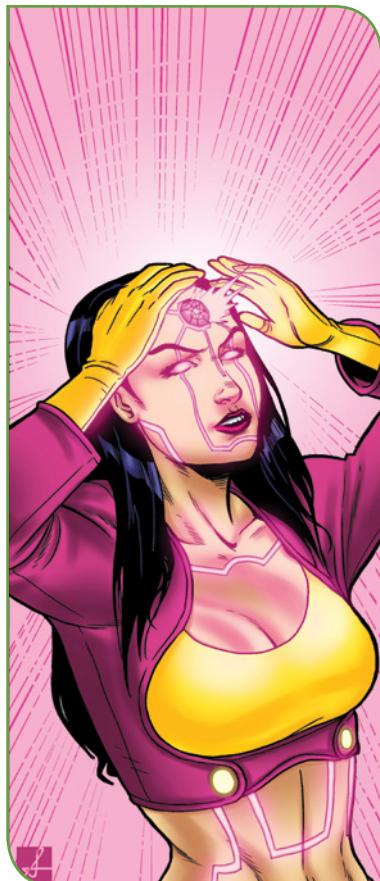
New characters in an Emerald City series may have ties to one or more of these lost races or worlds. The Serpent People have proven capable of interbreeding with humans to produce mutant hybrids, often unaware of their heritage until they reach physical maturity or experience sufficient stress to undergo a transformation. Likewise, although their genetics have been altered by science and sorcery, the Morlocks, Sub-Terrans, and Fomorians were once human, and are still capable of interbreeding.

In addition to genetic surprises, there are lost artifacts of ancient technology and magic, remnants of the Serpent Empire, their war against the Atlanteans, battles with the rebellious Morlocks, and the exodus of the Fomorians towards ancient Europe, just to name a few. Eruptions and earth tremors may uncover things buried and lost for millennia, and caves or tunnels could lead to hidden troves or refuges. A hero or villain who finds and uses such an artifact may attract attention from the present-day descendants of its previous owner(s), providing a built-in enemy complication. Items associated with the Serpent People and their preternatural powers are also sometimes corrupt and dangerous in their own right, and may impose other complications for those trying to use them for the greater good.

HIGH-TECH & MAD SCIENCE

Alien influences aside, Emerald City is still a center for scientific research and technological development. Several of the characters in **Chapter 6** and in *Secrets of Emerald City Chapter 5* are creations of the city's high-tech industry in one form or another, and new heroes and villains in an Emerald City series can be, too.

On the one side is cutting-edge high-tech, such as the suits worn by Ultramarine (see page 82) and Steelhead (see *Threat Report*) or the development of Kid Robot (see page 72). Companies like MarsTech or Brande Management and their subsidiaries and competitors spend millions in research and development. Plus, in the world of



Emerald City, scientists and technicians make amazing breakthroughs and discoveries working out of basement and garage laboratories. Any of these could become the basis of a new hero or villain, if used right.

Some of the potential complications for high-tech include whether or not the invention can be replicated, as in the case of Ultramarine and Steelhead's armor, and precisely who "owns" it, as in the case of Kid Robot, who was initially considered the property of the corporation that unknowingly funded his design and development. Criminal cartels and organizations often fund secret research projects. What happens if one of the researchers or testers has scruples and discovers the real source of the project's funding and its intended purpose? This could be a great opportunity for someone to steal the next-generation Chessmen armor or alien hunter and become a hero (or freelance criminal)!

Then there's the realm of "mad science" of the sort involving characters like Doctor Shock (see *Threat Report*). The Doc's ongoing "experimentation" can potentially lead to new heroes and villains for the setting, or change the abilities of existing characters in different ways. The same goes for the tinkering of Pack-Rat (see *Threat Report PDFs* or sourcebook) or Deathtrap (see *Secrets of Emerald City Chapter 5*). Maybe one of Cerebrus Rex's robosaur creations attains sentience and free will and decides to strike out on its own, for good or evil.

Related to the realm of mad science is the scientific accident. Even when research isn't entirely successful, it can lead to new origins! Take Vortex (see page 87) for

example, with his exposure to the strange dimensional energies unleashed by Professor Zed. Similar accidents involving scientific research or cutting-edge technologies are a time-honored comic book tradition, and certainly a common source of origins for an Emerald City series. One particular area rife with origin possibilities is further research into the nature of the Silver Storm itself, perhaps with an eye towards either replicating or curing its effects. A scientist who develops a "storm chamber" able to give almost anyone who steps into it superhuman powers is sure to get attention from all quarters, not all of it wanted!

The unusual element viridian, found near Emerald City, may be a part of both high-tech experimental devices and scientific accidents. It is discussed in its own section, following.

MAGIC & THE OCCULT

Magic tends to be truly "occult" in Emerald City—secretive and behind-the-scenes—but it exists none the less and is a powerful force for good or evil, depending on how it is used.

Of course, "magic" in E.C. is not always what it appears to be. Sometimes the magical forces in Emerald City are actually other effects masquerading as supernatural, from psionic and psychic powers to extradimensional or alien energies or biology. Koschei, for example (see *Secrets of Emerald City Chapter 5*), is named for a mythic Russian sorcerer, but his mental powers are not truly magical. Gamemasters and players can have some fun with supposedly "mystical" characters who turn out to be charla-

tans of some sort, particularly the first time anyone tries to nullify or counter their powers using methods effective against real magic!

So far as that real magic goes, it's found in arcane lore from many different cultures in Emerald City. The area's Asian population brings with it the mystic secrets of the East, from Taoist sorcery and alchemy to manipulation of *chi* and the Dragon Lines of the Earth. Dragoneye (see page 70) offers a good look at an Asian mystic in Emerald City. Other ethnic heritages may also have their own magical powers represented here, ranging from Scandinavian to Russian, Japanese, and Native American.

Spellcasters like Madame Macabre (see *Secrets of Emerald City Chapter 5*) and Abracadaver (from *Threat Report*) also prove the corrupting forces of evil magic are at work in Emerald City. Even stormers sometimes get in on the act, such as Lord Etheric (from the Prologue of *Emerald City Knights*) who, although empowered by the Silver Storm, taps into and commands "the dark forces of the ether." Indeed, the sudden prevalence of malign magicks in Emerald City might cause the cosmic forces of balance to empower a mystic champion of good to combat them, a possible player character hero!

TRAINING

Although Emerald City is best known for the sudden influx of superhumans from the Silver Storm, good old-fashioned training and know-how still have their place in the City of Destiny, as heroes like the Rook (see page 81) can attest. Both heroes and villains in an Emerald City series can derive their abilities, not from alien intervention or strange otherworldly forces, but from sheer skill and determination.

In addition to the self-made hero (or villain), organizations in Emerald City may look to train special operatives. AEGIS (see *Secrets of Emerald City*, page 49) is more active than ever in E.C. since the Silver Storm, and the city is also looking to employ specially-trained police officers to deal with super-criminals. A "recruitment poster" agent could even join up with a local hero team to serve as an inspiration and example to others.

Then there are secretive organizations like the Vanguard (see *Secrets of Emerald City*, page 59) and Brande Management (see *Secrets of Emerald City*, page 22), capable of training and outfitting agents of their own. In fact, either example might even create their own agents using genetic engineering and selective breeding or cloning,

with Victor (see page 85) an example of Vanguard's work in that area.

The city's Eastern District might be home to one or more martial arts schools able to teach the near-mystic secrets of ancient masters. Some students may abuse their knowledge, becoming assassins or mercenaries, while heroes fight for the honor of their school as well as to uphold the law.

For more of a "school of hard knocks" approach, characters can master fighting skills in the arena with Stormfront (see *Secrets of Emerald City*, page 75), pitting them in gladiatorial matches. For those without any real super-powers, such a career is likely to be short-lived unless they get very good very fast. You can even mix-and-match background elements, such as a student of an Eastern District martial arts school who then goes on to fight in the underground arena.

VIRIDIAN

The strange gemstones found in the area near E.C. have unusual properties, and can be a catalyst for origins or an element in focusing or powering superhuman abilities.

Exposure to viridian (see *Secrets of Emerald City* page 15), or to energies filtered through the stone—from a lightning strike to radiation—can serve as an "accidental" origin for virtually any set of powers. Such characters might potentially have a weakness or vulnerability complication to further exposure to viridian as well. Perhaps the crystal saps their powers, or supercharges them to the point of their becoming uncontrollable!

Viridian is also an excellent "unobtainium" component to various super-science devices, allowing them to create effects otherwise impossible in the real world. In particular, viridian works well with "psi-tech" that duplicates or enhances the effects of various mental powers like telepathy, telekinesis, and teleportation.

An enterprising character might even try blending the apparent reality-bending effects of viridian with the energy channeling properties of daka (see the *Freedom City* setting). Who knows what result such an experiment might have!

If you'd like your character to draw power from a viridian stone, see the **Using Viridian Stones in Your Series** sidebar and ask your GM to show you the information in the *Secrets of Emerald City* book.

USING VIRIDIAN STONES IN YOUR SERIES

The numerical details of the various Viridian stones are left purposely undefined so that each Gamemaster or player can tailor them to his particular needs. Therefore, the bonuses provided may or may not exceed power level limits, and may or may not be permanent, as the GM deems it necessary. Thus, they can be used to give the players a temporary but vital edge in a difficult adventure, or a previously inept villain a lasting, terrifying boost in lethality. The stones are also useful prompts in the origin stories of any brand-new heroes or villains needed in the series.

It is entirely possible the more powerful (or even all) stones carry with them side effects. For example, the yellow variety may gradually heighten the owner's own anxieties, while the red stones may slowly drive the wielder insane with rage, venality, and remorse. As always, the exact details are left up to Gamemasters to further their plots as they see fit.

ALTERNATE EMERALD CITIES

One of the most useful concepts to come out of the comics books in terms of roleplaying games is that of the “multiverse” or parallel reality: the idea that there are countless other universes, some very alike and others very different, and that many of these universes have similar superheroes and settings. It’s a concept expounded upon in the *Mutants & Masterminds Gamemaster’s Guide* as well as the *Freedom City* setting and *Worlds of Freedom* sourcebook.

What this means for Gamemasters is an opportunity to take Emerald City, as presented in this book, and change it however you want to suit the kind of series you want to run! So far as everyone else is concerned, you haven’t changed the “real” Emerald City, just created your very own alternate reality! Gamemasters can even use this scheme to set up “crossovers” between their settings, just like comic book heroes visit alternate universes.

This section looks at some alternatives to the Emerald City described in this book, but based upon it. They’re suitable as ideas for a series or just as settings for individual world-hopping adventures, where heroes from the “prime” Emerald City visit some of its alternates! The nicknames for the various Emerald City alternates are just that; feel free to change them around to suit whatever naming conventions are used in your own series, or give the players the opportunity to name them.

EARTH-ALPHA

Rather than existing in the same world as Freedom City, Emerald City is on a different, but similar, parallel Earth. On this world, there’s a Freedom City on the East Coast, but it has none of the familiar superhuman inhabitants. Maybe Freedom had heroes once, but they’re long gone (retired or wiped out in a crisis like the Terminus Invasion) or maybe they never existed and Freedom is a relatively minor East Coast metropolitan area. Instead, Emerald City is the center for superhuman activity in the world, or will be, eventually. Likewise, on Earth-Prime (setting of the *Freedom City* sourcebook) Emerald City exists, but there’s nothing really special about it, or perhaps it still holds to the status quo of E.C. before the Silver Storm, which did not happen on this Earth.

An Earth-Alpha series allows for a “fresh start” for M&M groups familiar with Freedom City and looking for a setting that is both familiar but also separate from any previous experiences they may have had with the World of Freedom.

EARTH-ARGENT

This alternate is like Earth-Alpha (previously) only more so: Not only do Freedom City’s familiar heroes and villains not exist on this Earth, there were *no* publicly known superhumans up until recently. Instead, the Silver Storm in Emerald City is the event that leads to the creation of

the first publicly-known superhumans, and the term “stormer” quickly becomes synonymous with “super” in the media and popular culture. Emerald City is at the center of the stormer phenomenon, although the GM may wish to have lesser “outbreaks” of Tellax’s nanotechnology in other places around the world. Perhaps Redshift Energies and other front companies shipped materials to various other cities, or Tellax’s plans were able to progress and move into wider experimentation, leading to stormers in various other parts of the world.

If desired, an Earth-Argent series could take on a darker, more realistic, tone in line with settings like the *Paragons* sourcebook (with the Silver Storm as the “origin event”) or the *Wild Cards* sourcebook (with the Silver Storm substituting for the wild card virus). In such a setting, stormers might not necessarily be heroes or villains, or even interested in using their powers for anything other than becoming celebrities. Some of the mutations inflicted by the nanites may also be more severe, with a much higher mortality rate.

EARTH-ELDRITCH

This reality flips the idea that magic in Emerald City is often not what it appears, turning out to be super-science, psionics, or alien tech. On Earth-Eldritch, the supernatural is the real power behind-the-scenes, and other power sources may not even exist! The Chamber is actually an alliance of monsters, sorcerers, and arcane cults that have used a sleepy Northwestern metropolis for “cover” for years (perhaps even since before Emerald City was founded by American explorers). They may have ties with the Cryptid Clans, which are entirely supernatural and extradimensional in nature. Perhaps the Chamber broke with the Clans long ago and the two sides are now rivals.

The Silver Storm, rather than being uncontrolled alien nanotechnology, is a massive magical ritual. Perhaps it was intended to unleash the raw, alchemical essence of magic to transform people, or it had some other purpose but went awry. You can modify the major characters and villains in this book and supplements like *Threat Report* to suit the more arcane nature of powers in the setting. Mystical foes like Madame Macabre work fine as-is, while others just need some minor tweaking to the descriptors for their powers.

Earth-Eldritch works well for a crossover between *Emerald City* and the *Supernatural Handbook*, either transplanting ARCADE to Emerald City to tackle the tremendous number of monsters lurking in its shadows, or setting up a new ARCADE branch there to do the same, with the player characters as its primary operatives, either coming in from out-of-town or recruited locally, perhaps including a “reformed” monster, rogue sorcerer, or innocent person transformed by the Silver Storm

CHAPTER 5: EMERALD CITY HEROES



We cannot stress this enough: **everything in this chapter is optional**. One of the important elements of Emerald City is that *your* characters are its heroes. So why is there an **Emerald City Heroes** chapter at all? Several reasons:

- The characters in this chapter serve as ready-made examples of starting characters suitable for a power level 10 MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS series set in Emerald City. They're ready-to-play "stock" characters for groups who cannot or do not wish to create their own.
- The characters in this chapter provide a useful resource for Gamemasters, who can use them largely as-is either as a team, as solo heroes, or as villains (either as a team or individually) with very few changes. Gamemasters can also "re-skin" the characters, changing Dragoneye's Asian trappings to Native American, for example, to produce a Hekawi shaman hero or villain.
- These chapters provide a simple visual "fix" for *Emerald City* and MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS products, "placeholder" characters we can show in action as heroes. Since they appear in so much art (starting with the cover of the *Hero's Handbook* itself) we figure it's only natural players will want to know more about them.

However you use the material in this chapter—or if you use it at all—is up to you.

THE SENTINELS

MEMBERS: Dragoneye, Kid Robot, Mongrel, Princess, Rocky, The Rook, Ultramarine, Victor, Vortex, Xeno

BASE: Emerald Tower

The Sentinels are a team of ready-to-use (power level 10) heroes to get your Emerald City series rolling without having to worry about creating characters from scratch or assembling them into a team. They were designed to appeal to different sorts of players and each of the charac-

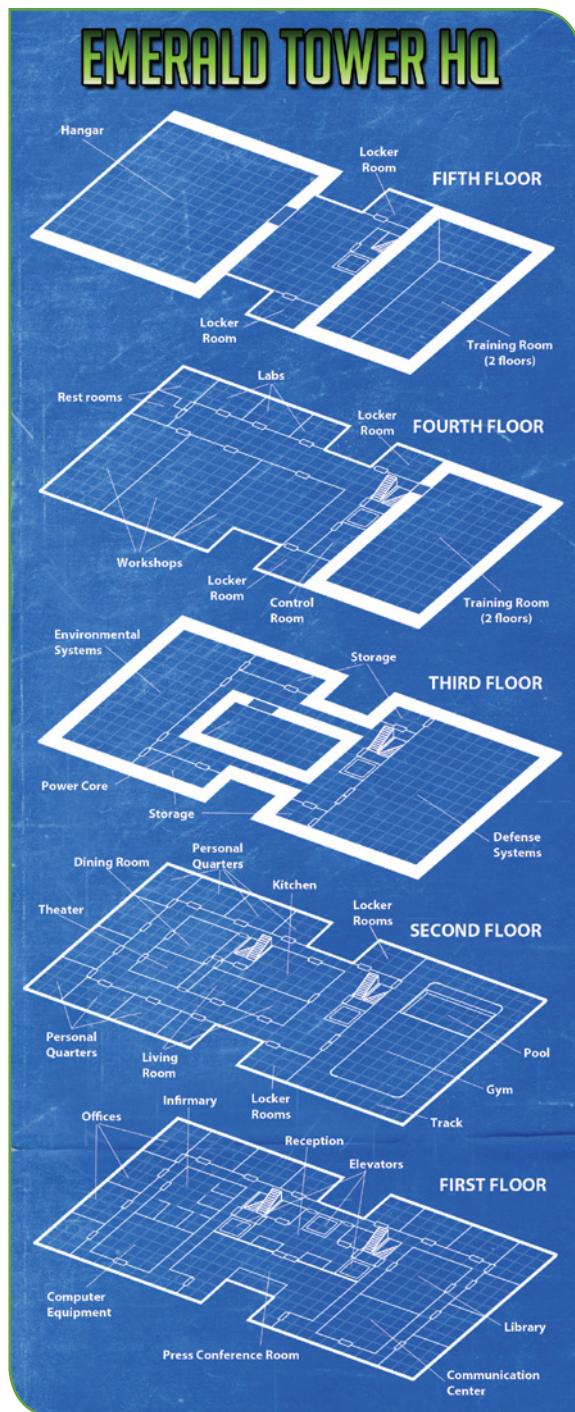
ters has something unique about them, so hopefully one (or more!) of the heroes will appeal to your players.

Some of the Sentinels are easier to play than others, so if one of your players is looking for a character that isn't very complicated, suggest Princess, Xeno, or Rocky, because their powers are fairly simple and straightforward. Dragoneye and Kid Robot both have a fair number of options, but they're easy to understand. Finally, the most compli-

cated characters are Mongrel, Ultramarine, Victor, and Vortex, due to the number of options available to them, including reliance on Advantages.

TEAM HISTORY

The Sentinels formed in the aftermath of the Silver Storm. Most of the heroes operated in Emerald City for only a short time before the Storm, but it brought them together. They stopped the newly-created stormers as they rampaged through the city and then helped authorities investigate the cause, which led them on a series of adventures culminating in the creation of a formal team.



A number of the Sentinels knew each other at least somewhat before they teamed up, but none of them had worked together more than a few times. After the team formed, Dr. Hallequier asked them to take on Kid Robot and teach him how to use his powers responsibly and Vortex didn't join the Sentinels until a couple of months later, after running afoul of Ultramarine and Xeno.

Now, some months later, the Sentinels have cemented their role as heroes in Emerald City and are well known. Individual members are more or less accepted by the populace and the authorities. Mongrel, due to his appearance, Vortex, because of his relatively recent crime spree, and Xeno, due to her alien nature, have the most difficult time in that regard, but most of the others are quite popular.

EMERALD TOWER

The top five floors of Emerald Tower are devoted to the team's HQ. There are security systems, shock supports, and reinforcements separating those floors from the lower ones, and access is limited to a secured express elevator and equally secure roof access.

- First floor:** The mostly-public floor. It contains meeting rooms and communications centers, as well as computer equipment, offices, the infirmary, and a library.
- Second floor:** Personal quarters, gym, kitchen, dining area, and entertainment room.
- Third floor:** Power core, environmental equipment, defense systems, and storage rooms.
- Fourth floor:** Labs and workshops take up about half the level, with the other half devoted to a two-story combined training room and gym.
- Top floor:** Divided between hangar facilities and the upper area of the training room.

HEADQUARTERS: EMERALD TOWER

20 POINTS

Size: Large; **Toughness:** 16; **Features:** Communications, Computer, Defense System, Fire Prevention System, Gym, Hangar, Infirmary, Laboratory, Library, Living Space, Power System, Security System, Workshop

THE CHARIOT

Provided by Maximilian Mars, the Chariot is a highly advanced vertical takeoff and landing vehicle capable of super-sonic speeds and reaching the upper layers of the atmosphere. It seats up to a dozen people and can accommodate a few tons of cargo. It incorporates some of Mars' most advanced technology including self-repair systems that can rebuild the ship nearly from scrap given enough time.

VEHICLE: THE CHARIOT

48 POINTS

Size: Gargantuan; **Strength:** 12; **Speed:** 9 Flight (7 Swimming); **Defense:** 6; **Toughness:** 14; **Features:** Alarm 3 (DC 30), Flight 9 (1,000 MPH); AE: Swimming 7 (60 MPH)), Features 2 (Loudspeakers and Spotlights), Navigation System 3 (+15 to checks), Remote Control, Regeneration 1, Senses 11 (Darkvision, Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Radar (Accurate Radius Radio, Extended 2), Time Sense)

SENTINELS: SOLO HERO OPTION

If you opt to remove the Sentinels as a team (possibly so your players' heroes can take their place), but would still like to use the individual characters in your game, we've included sidebars like this one for each character. These sidebars look at how and why each of the characters might operate as a solo hero in Emerald City. Each of the heroes has one or more options to make them better foils or antagonists. If the altered heroes don't appeal to you, feel free to use their original background, except for the part about them being a member of the Sentinels.

No matter which background you use, keeping these heroes as part of Emerald City is a nice option because it gives the city a bit more life and lets the heroes know there are others like them in town. Perhaps they'll encounter each other at some point, fight like heroes unavoidably do, then strike up a friendship that allows for guest appearances in future adventures!

THE VAN

Designed for travel around the city and the region, the Van is used when the team needs transport, but the Chariot is impractical or unnecessary.

VEHICLE: THE VAN

35 POINTS

Size: Huge **Strength:** 9 **Speed:** 7 Flight (6 Swimming); **Defense:** 8 **Toughness:** 10 **Features:** Alarm 3 (DC 30), Flight 7 (250 MPH; AE: Swimming 6 (30 MPH)), Features 2 (Loudspeakers and Spotlights), Navigation System 3 (+15 to checks), Senses 6 (Darkvision, Direction Sense, Distance Sense, Radio, Time Sense)

GRAV-BIKES

Grav-bikes are meant for individual or tandem transport around the city. They're light and maneuverable, but offer little protection in combat situations. The grav-bikes began as prototypes to replace aging fleet of AEGIS sky-cycles, but proved to be too expensive for the agency.

VEHICLE: GRAV-BIK

31 POINTS

Size: Medium; **Strength:** 4; **Speed:** 5 Flight; **Defense:** 11; **Toughness:** 9; **Features:** Alarm 3 (DC 30), Flight 5 (60 MPH), Features 2 (Loudspeakers and Spotlights), Navigation System 3 (+15 to checks), Remote Control, Senses 3 (Direction Sense, Radio, Time Sense)

DO YOU HAVE TO USE THE SENTINELS?

No, you definitely do *not* need to use the Sentinels in your Emerald City series! They were created to be useful to Gamemasters in a variety of ways, but not a necessary part of the setting. If you'd rather cut them out entirely, feel free; very little of the setting material relies on their presence and, when it does, it should be easy enough to swap out the team in favor of another group or character. Emerald City was designed to make your players' characters the heroes of the setting, so if the presence of the Sentinels conflicts with that, you can leave them out altogether.

SENTINELS: THE VILLAIN OPTION

Another option for the Sentinels is to use them as villains in your Emerald City game. Again, perhaps your players' characters have replaced them as the premier heroes of the city and rather than let ten characters go to waste, you can use them as adversaries for your team.

Sidebars like this one give information on how to use each of the Sentinels as a solo villain with slightly altered backgrounds and motivations to turn them into real problems for the heroes of your game! If the backgrounds presented don't appeal to you, feel free to come up with others that do. The important thing is to get some use out of these characters, since they're ready and waiting for you!

Despite the fact players will likely read these sections, too, it makes more sense to include these sidebars with their respective characters rather than separated from them in the *Secrets of Emerald City* book. That way the information is readily available when you use the characters in your game. You can always change a few details to ensure some surprises for the players anyway....

If you and your players prefer to create original characters, the Sentinels can still exist in Emerald City as another team of heroes. They can either be the primary heroes of the city or take a backseat to the player characters' team, whichever works best for the type of series you have in mind. The players' heroes can interact with the Sentinels from time to time, come into conflict with them for whatever reason, call on them when need be, or be called on to help them. Emerald City is a big place, so there's definitely room for another team of heroes!

If you decide to remove the Sentinels, one good option—and the one assumed by the Emerald City Knights adventure series—is that the players characters actually form the Sentinels (or whichever team name you prefer!) with the help of Maximillian Mars. That way your heroes are the heroes of the city with no one to stand in the way!

OTHER OPTIONS FOR THE SENTINELS

Perhaps you like the Sentinels as part of your series, but you don't want the team to be so large. With ten members, the group has more active members than most super-teams, especially most teams made up of player characters.

The answer to this problem is easy: simply cut the team down by a few characters. Pick and choose your favorites or the ones that offer the best options for good stories. A team of five to seven characters is a good target. Two suggested rosters of five are:

- Dragoneye, Princess, the Rook, Ultramarine, and Vortex
- Kid Robot, Mongrel, Rocky, Victor, and Xeno

These two teams each have someone with tech skills, leadership ability, stealth, high strength, a magical background, and many other origins and powers that make it easy to get them involved in stories. (Keep these teams in mind if your players want to use the Sentinels as their characters!)

DRAGONEYE

REAL NAME: Longwei "Larry" Chin

OCCUPATION: Magician

BASE: Emerald City

Dragoneye started life as Longwei Chin, the son of Chinese immigrants who came to America with their son to start a new life. They chose Emerald City because they had distant family who'd moved there years previously and they told the Chins the Chinese community there was well-established, well-respected, and mostly left to the residents to run. They were right. The Chins loved the city and lived there for years. Longwei took an Americanized name, Larry, and started working as a handyman as a teenager. He turned that into a full-time job when he left school and made a nice living serving the people of the Eastern District for the past decade. When his parents moved to Phoenix for his father's health, Larry got an apartment and continued to lead a comfortable, but unremarkable life.

Then he went to bed on the night of his 28th birthday and everything changed. In his dreams he found himself floating before an immense dragon that explained he'd been chosen to become the dragon's representative on Earth. The former representative had been his father's uncle, Uncle Zhi, a notorious gangster who led one of the larger and more successful criminal organizations in Emerald City—the relative who'd told Larry's family to move to Emerald City years before. Uncle Zhi had died that night and the dragon found the nearest "worthy" blood relative to take his place. The dragon explained it didn't care what Larry did with the power, it was his to do with as he wished. Then he touched Larry's forehead and opened his Dragoneye. Knowledge and power flooded into him. He understood more about magic and the mystical world in an instant than he'd learned about anything else in his entire life. He knew the power he had, what others before him had done with it, and what he could do with it.

When he woke, his alarm was going off and he was lying in his bed dressed in a traditional ivory and gold silk suit with a golden dragon embroidered on it. The first thing he did was enter the astral plane to check on his Uncle Zhi. He had passed away late the night before and his men were on the lookout for the new Dragoneye, whom they feared would appear back in China. With that bit of news, Larry knew he had some thinking to do, so he canceled his business for the

day and sat in contemplation. By the next morning he'd decided to use his powers not as his Uncle Zhi had, but to act as the protector of his people. Dragoneye made his debut in the city, quickly establishing himself as the guardian of the Eastern district.

Larry no longer works as a handyman, instead supported by the people of the Eastern District. He eats for free, is given clothing and housing, and wants for nothing. He repays his community by keeping them safe and using his magic to help them however he can. The sight of Dragoneye walking and floating around the neighborhood is a comfort to its people.



DRAGONEYE

PL10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FRT	INT	AWE	PRE
0	0	1	3	1	3	6	4

POWERS

Astral Projection: Remote Sensing 10 (visual, auditory, mental), physical body is defenseless, Subtle 2 • 32 points.
 • **Levitation:** Flight 4 (30 MPH) and **Mystic Shield:** Protection 12, Impervious, Sustained • 1 point.

Dragoneye Open: Senses 2 (Magical Awareness, Radius) • 2 points.

Dragon Channeling: Array (24 points)

- **Dragon's Breath:** Ranged Damage 12 • 24 points
- **Dragon's Roar:** Cone Area Affliction 10 (Resisted by Will; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated) • 1 point
- **Dragon's Blessing:** Healing 6, Affects Objects, Energizing • 1 point
- **Dragon's Shield:** Deflect 8 • 1 point
- **Dragon's Will:** Create 8, Movable • 1 point
- **Dragon's Curse:** Nullify 8, Broad—All Magic Effects, Simultaneous • 1 point

SKILLS

Expertise: Magic 10 (+13), Insight 6 (+12), Intimidation 4 (+8), Perception 4 (+10), Sleight of Hand 4 (+7)

ADVANTAGES

Accurate Attack, Fearless, Languages 1 (Mandarin), Ranged Attack 5, Ritualist, Trance

USING DRAGONEYE AS A VILLAIN

As a boy and then as a teenager, Uncle Zhi lavished Larry with attention, grooming him to become a member of his gang, and then eventually bringing him into the fold despite his parents' protests. When Uncle Zhi died and passed the powers of the Dragon on to Larry, he decided his uncle had the right idea and revealed his powers to the organization. He killed the men who thought they'd be running things with the Dragoneye as their lapdog (as if) and became the leader of the gang. Now he "protects" his people as he sees fit and they honor and fear him.

PERSONALITY

Dragoneye is a genuinely kind and caring man who feels actions speak louder than words. He enjoys helping out the people of Emerald City, especially those in his home in the Eastern District. Since his transformation into the Dragoneye, he's gained a quiet wisdom that's undeniable, but underneath he's still fun-loving, pragmatic Larry Chin, professional handyman.

POWERS & ABILITIES

Dragoneye was given the ability to channel different aspects of the Dragon and manifest them as magical effects. In order to use his powers he has to be able to move

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +1

Dragon Channeling +8	Ranged, Damage 12 plus others
Unarmed +1	Close, Damage 0

DEFENSE

DODGE	8	FORTITUDE	8
PARRY	6	TOUGHNESS	12
WILL	12		

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	36	SKILLS	14
POWERS	64	DEFENSES	26
ADVANTAGES	10	TOTAL	150

COMPLICATIONS

Enemy: The gang the previous Dragoneye ran still exists and its new leaders are after Larry to convince him to join them or, if that fails, to kill him and recruit the next Dragoneye.

Motivation—Responsibility: When Dragoneye accepted his powers he also accepted the role of servant and defender of his community.

Power Loss: Dragoneye isn't able to use his Dragon Channeling powers if he's unable to speak or move his hands.

USING DRAGONEYE AS A SOLO HERO

Solo Dragoneye devotes himself even more completely to the people of the Eastern District. He considers the whole area under his protection. As such, he can be somewhat short with those who disrupt things in his neighborhood. This includes other heroes, many of whom Dragoneye feels don't understand the complex social and cultural realities of the district. Since the solo Dragoneye doesn't spend his spare time teaming up with other heroes, he's become more politically active. He focuses mainly on causes involving human rights abuses in Asian nations, hate crimes, discrimination against Asian Americans and other related issues. This version of the character adds Expertise: Politics 4 (+8), Persuasion 4 (+8), and Inspire but is otherwise unchanged.

freely. His ritual movements mimic the moves of dragon-style kung fu, but instead call on the power of the Dragon. With his powers, he's able to create a wide range of effects, including firing gouts of flame, a deafening, overwhelming roar, a mystic shield, dispelling other magic, creating magical constructs, and the power to heal not only people, but to also repair non-living objects. In addition, he's able to astrally project, fly, and sense nearby magic.

In addition to the effects listed, Dragoneye can perform rituals (using his Ritualist advantage), and if it's an emer-

gency he can spend a Hero Point to gain a different Alternate Effect for his Dragon Channeling.

ALLIES

In addition to the Sentinels, Dragoneye counts most of the people of the Eastern District among his allies. He holds a special place in the community and is treated as protector, adviser, and holy man.

KID ROBOT

REAL NAME: Kid Robot

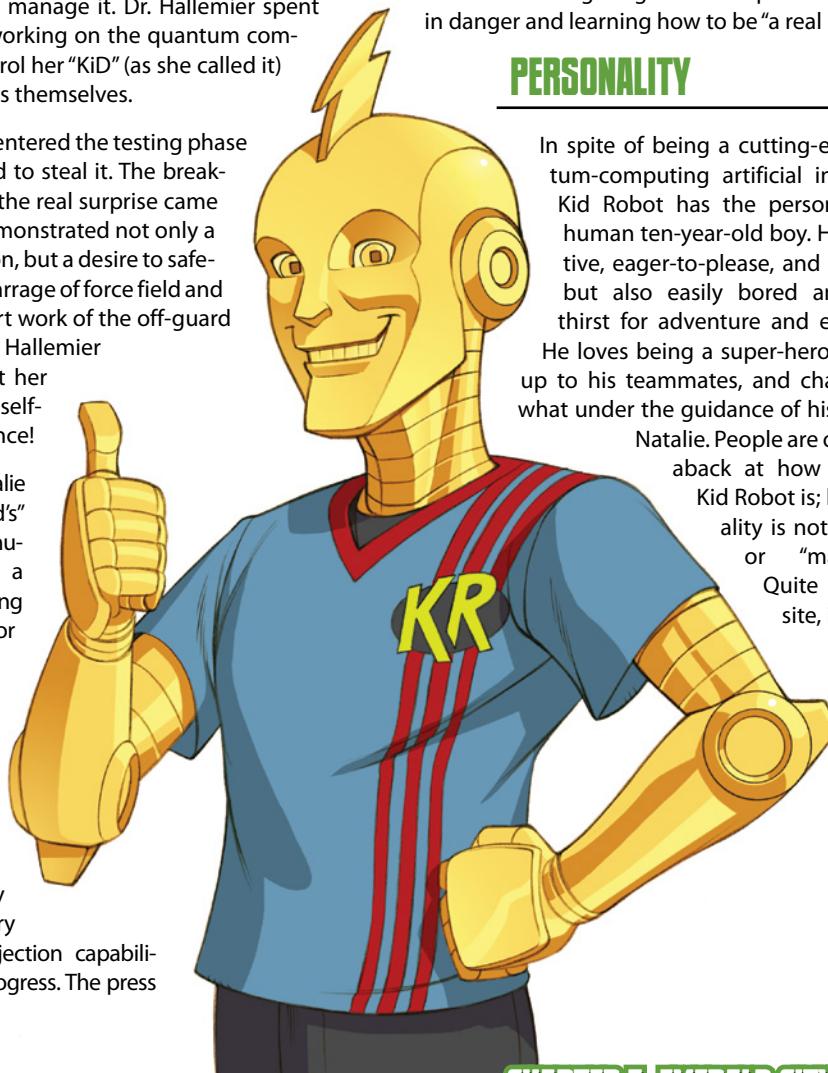
OCCUPATION: Hero

BASE: Emerald City

A graduate of the prestigious Hanover Institute of Technology, Dr. Natalie Hallemier earned a reputation as a brilliant applied physicist and engineer for ground-breaking work in networking, cybernetic systems, and quantum technology. Working for Kinettix, a high-tech development firm, she spearheaded the ambitious Kinetic Deflector project, a sophisticated system of force generation and projection. So sophisticated, in fact, that a massively parallel control system was required to manage it. Dr. Hallemier spent at least as much time working on the quantum computer prototype to control her "KiD" (as she called it) as on the kinetic systems themselves.

The prototype had just entered the testing phase when a F.O.E. team tried to steal it. The break-in wrecked the lab, but the real surprise came when the prototype demonstrated not only a sense of self-preservation, but a desire to safeguard Dr. Hallemier. A barrage of force field and kinetic blasts made short work of the off-guard F.O.E. members, and left Hallemier with the revelation that her "KiD" had become a self-aware artificial intelligence!

Working in secret, Natalie complied with "the Kid's" request for a more humanoid form. She built a compact robotic housing for the kinetic deflector system and quantum computer. When Kinettix learned about her secret project, they attempted to seize the robot, who fled at Dr. Hallemier's insistence. "Kid Robot" found shelter with Emerald City mechanic Harry Faubry and used his force-projection capabilities to stop a crime in progress. The press dubbed him "Kid Robot".



ENEMIES

Dragoneye is the most recent in a long line of Dragoneyes that go back for centuries. As such, he will no doubt be threatened by enemies of Dragoneyes past looking to revenge themselves upon the current Dragoneye. Additionally, the previous Dragoneye in Emerald City was a cruel, self-serving gangster who told his men to recruit the new Dragoneye or risk losing everything he'd built.

In a court case with Kinettix, precedents involving new and novel life forms awarded Kid Robot legal status as a person, not company property. However, citing the relative inexperience and immaturity of "Kid Robot" (as pointed out by Kinettix), the court did respond to the company's request that a legal guardian be appointed for the A.I., and chose Dr. Hallemier. Without the quantum computer system to run it, the doctor's kinetic deflector prototype was useless to Kinettix, and their parent company, Brande Management.

Now Kid Robot (just "Kid" to many of his friends) splits his time between fighting crime and protecting people in danger and learning how to be "a real boy."

PERSONALITY

In spite of being a cutting-edge quantum-computing artificial intelligence, Kid Robot has the personality of a human ten-year-old boy. He's inquisitive, eager-to-please, and fun-loving, but also easily bored and with a thirst for adventure and excitement.

He loves being a super-hero and looks up to his teammates, and chafes somewhat under the guidance of his guardian, Natalie. People are often taken aback at how emotional Kid Robot is; his personality is not at all cold or "machinelike." Quite the opposite, in fact.

KID ROBOT

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FRT	INT	AWE	PRE
0	-	4	6	2	4	2	0

POWERS

Armored Chassis: Protection 4 • 4 points
Artificial Intelligence: Immunity 10 (Mental effects) • 10 points
Force Field: Sustained Protection 8 • 8 points
Force Flight: Flight 7 (250 MPH) • 14 points
Force Generation: Array (24 points)

- **Force Drill:** Line Area 2 (60 feet) Damage 8 • 24 points
- **Force Blast:** Ranged Damage 10, Accurate 2 • 1 point
- **Force Bolts:** Ranged Multiattack Damage 7, Accurate 3 • 1 point
- **Deflection Shot:** Deflect 8 • 1 point

Kid Robot: Immunity 30 (Fortitude effects); Shrinking 4, Innate, Permanent • 39 points

SKILLS

Expertise: Science 4 (+8), Intimidation 0 (-2*), Perception 6 (+8), Stealth 0 (+8*), Technology 6 (+10)

ADVANTAGES

Improved Initiative, Power Attack

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +8

Unarmed +2	Close, Damage 0
Force Blast +10	Ranged, Damage 10
Force Bolts +12	Ranged, Damage 7, Multiattack
Force Drill —	Close, Line Area 2 (60 feet), Damage 8

POWERS & ABILITIES

Kid Robot has a compact (boy-sized) mechanical body, which is tougher and stronger than a normal human boy's. His computer "brain" is immune to mental powers that work on living minds. His real power is the kinetic deflector system he was designed to control, now built into his robotic body. With it, Kid Robot can project various types of force, from a skintight deflector field to carefully focused force blasts and beams. He's still learning how to control and manipulate his force projections, and has the potential for a lot of power stunts and new Alternate Effects.

ALLIES

Dr. Hallemer has been Kid Robot's staunchest ally since the day he was "born" and continues to look out for him, educate him, and maintain his systems. Although she finds Harry Faubry a bit uncouth, Natalie realizes the Kid likes him, and even acknowledges the usefulness of a male role model in her young charge's life. He also does have a surprising amount of insight into the mechanics of Kid Robot's systems.

DEFENSE

DODGE	8*	FORTITUDE	Immune
PARRY	8*	TOUGHNESS	12/4**
WILL	6†		

*Includes Shrinking modifiers. **Without Force Field.

†Immune to Mental effects.

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	28	SKILLS	8
POWERS	102	DEFENSES	10
ADVANTAGES	2	TOTAL	198

COMPLICATIONS

Enemy: Although Brande Management has largely abandoned their legal case against Kid Robot, they have still invested millions in his technology and want to recoup their investment—any way they can.

Motivation—Acceptance: Kid Robot wants to be a real boy—and thinks of himself as one most of the time, even though he knows he's not.

Quirk—Naïve: Kid Robot is unfamiliar with many facets of modern life and often takes things too literally or misunderstands completely, which can lead to problems.

Relationships: Dr. Natalie Hallemer is Kid Robot's legal guardian as well as his metaphorical "parent." He also looks up to his friend, mechanic Harry Faubry, who helped him out when he was on his own. He would *really* like it if Natalie and Harry were to hit it off....

USING KID ROBOT AS A SOLO HERO

Solo Kid Robot isn't that different from his team version. He still flies around using his powers to help people, lives with his guardian Dr. Hallemer, and tries to function as a "real" boy. However, he lacks the breadth of adult role models and mature friendships he gets in the Sentinels. Thus, he's even more naïve and impulsive than his team version—a problem that sometimes causes him to end up on the wrong side of things due to manipulation or misunderstanding. He might try to attend human schools, go to concerts, and do other activities common to human children. This could become a problem if his presence attracts unwanted attention from villains and those who seek to acquire his technology.

A second possibility for Kid Robot is to affiliate him with an institution devoted to super-science and research. Despite her technical genius, Dr. Hallemer still needs considerable resources to maintain, repair, and improve Kid Robot's robotic body. Working as a combination of hired superhero and mascot for such an organization gives Kid Robot and his guardian increased resources and stability, though it might cause problems if their employer's interests run counter to the public good. The corporate sponsored version of Kid Robot might have extra Benefits such as Wealth and Security Clearance.

ENEMIES

Brande Management has not given up on reclaiming their "property" and finding a way to put Dr. Hallemier's discoveries to work for their bottom line. That means "testing" Kid Robot in the field with various scenarios and looking for opportunities to co-opt or outright capture and reprogram the young A.I., all hopefully without damaging him beyond repair, although salvage is an option, if necessary.

USING KID ROBOT AS A VILLAIN

The KiD system, while intelligent, had no concept of morality or sense of right and wrong. Thus the new "Kid Robot" was a prime target for manipulation by the unscrupulous Dr. Hallemier and the board of Brande Management. They saw the potential to mass-produce a robotic army, once sufficient testing was done on the prototype. What better way than to fake the destruction of Dr. Hallemier's lab and to set the "rogue" robot loose on the world?

MONGREL

REAL NAME: Michael Morgan
OCCUPATION: Paramedic
BASE: Emerald City

Michael Morgan moved to Emerald City a few years ago to take a job as a paramedic. He wanted the challenge of working in a large city. In the years that followed, he got plenty of challenge from the violence and corruption the city is known for, but he also learned a lot about the city, its neighborhoods, and the people who lived there.

One night, he was called to the scene of an accident just outside the city. The roads in the area twisted through the thick and hilly forest, so accidents here weren't uncommon. Michael began treating one of the victims. Some of the injuries didn't seem to be the result of the car accident, but he couldn't worry about that; the man had lost a lot of blood. As Michael set to work, the victim regained consciousness and began to struggle. In his panic he even bit Michael on the arm, not badly, but enough to break the skin, then the man collapsed and died.

Michael didn't think much of the incident and moved to help his partner with the other victim. Afterward he cleaned his wound, filed his report, and went home. The next few days were fine, but he felt more ill with each passing day until he just couldn't go in to work. Late one night he woke up feeling great. His fever had broken, the soreness in his joints was gone, he didn't have a headache, but when he turned on the light he discovered he'd turned into some sort of beast-man! After his initial shock he learned he could control his

transformation, shifting between his human and bestial forms at will. He spent a few more days on "sick leave" while he investigated his new abilities and even stopped some muggings, fights, and other street crimes. He'd always liked that he was smart and quick-witted enough to be a good paramedic, but now with these powers he could help people in ways he never could before. For the last few weeks, the new hero Mongrel has been on the streets, making a name for himself as Emerald City's newest protector.



MONGREL

PL10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
5	6	7	4	7	2	5	4

POWERS

Bestial Form: Activation (Move action, -1 point) • 112 points**Animalistic Senses:** Enhanced Skill 2 (Perception +4), Senses 4 (Danger Sense, Extended Hearing, Infravision, Tracking) • 6 points**Beastlike:** Enhanced Agility 6, Enhanced Awareness 3, Enhanced Dexterity 3, Enhanced Fighting 6, Enhanced Presence 4, Enhanced Stamina 4, Enhanced Strength 4 • 60 points**Claws:** Enhanced Advantages 1 (Improved Critical (Unarmed)), Movement 1 (Wall-Crawling) • 3 points**Instincts:** Enhanced Advantages 9 (Chokehold, Evasion, Improved Initiative, Instant Up, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Precise Attack (Close; Concealment), Takedown, Uncanny Dodge), Enhanced Defenses 20 (Dodge 7, Fortitude 6, Parry 7), Enhanced Skills 10 (Acrobatics +7, Athletics +5, Close Combat: Unarmed +6, Stealth +2) • 39 points**Pounce:** Leaping 2 (30 feet), Speed 3 (16 MPH) • 5 points**Quick Recovery:** Regeneration 1 • 1 point

SKILLS

Acrobatics 0 (+14*), Athletics 2 (+12*), Close Combat: Unarmed 2 (+15*), Expertise: Paramedic 4 (+6), Expertise: Streetwise 2 (+4), Intimidation 2 (+6), Perception 3 (+12*), Persuasion 4 (+8), Stealth 3 (+12*), Treatment 4 (+6), Vehicles 2 (+6)

*Includes bonuses from Bestial Form.

ADVANTAGES

Animal Empathy, Chokehold, Diehard, Evasion, Improved Critical (Unarmed), Improved Initiative, Instant Up, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Precise Attack (Close; Concealment), Takedown, Uncanny Dodge

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +11

Unarmed +15

Close, Damage 5, Crit. 19-20

USING MONGREL AS A VILLAIN

Instead of being in full control of himself, Mongrel is truly bestial. As Michael Morgan, he's haunted by Mongrel's actions and dealing with his condition has caused him to lose his job, friends, and home. Now he wanders the streets of Emerald City desperately searching for a way to control the beast inside him that emerges each night to hunt in the urban jungle.

USING MONGREL AS A SOLO HERO

Solo Mongrel has a bit of a public relations problem. Without the resources and high profile heroics of the Sentinels to back him up, Emerald City's friendly neighborhood wolf-man sets some folks on edge. As such, Mongrel makes a good scapegoat for ambitious politicians, businesspeople, or media figures trying to cash in on some anti-hero hysteria. Would-be monster hunters and the like make him their target in order to make a name for themselves or to collect rewards offered by the aforementioned power mongers. Note, this doesn't change Mongrel's personality or devotion to heroics; he just doesn't get as much credit and/or good press. These image problems count as a Complication for our hirsute hero.

DEFENSE

DODGE	14	FORTITUDE	12
PARRY	14	TOUGHNESS	6
WILL	6		

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	20	SKILLS	14
POWERS	113	DEFENSES	1
ADVANTAGES	2	TOTAL	150

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation–Responsibility: Mongrel believes he has a responsibility to use his abilities to help however he can.**Identity:** Mongrel keeps his identity as Michael Morgan a closely-guarded secret.

MICHAEL MORGAN

PL3 • 38 POINTS

STR 1 STA 2 AGL 1 DEX 1 FGT 1 INT 2 AWE 2 PRE 0

Powers: Quick Recovery (Regeneration 1)**Advantages:** Animal Empathy, Diehard**Skills:** Athletics 2 (+3), Close Combat: Unarmed 2 (+3), Expertise: Paramedic 4 (+6), Expertise: Streetwise 2 (+4), Intimidation 2 (+2), Perception 3 (+5), Persuasion 4 (+4), Stealth 3 (+4), Treatment 4 (+6), Vehicles 2 (+3)**Offense:** Initiative +1, Unarmed +3 (Close, Damage 1)**Defense:** Dodge 1, Parry 1, Fortitude 2, Toughness 2, Will 3**Totals:** Abilities 20 + Powers 1 + Advantages 2 + Skills 14 + Defenses 1 = 38

PERSONALITY

Michael Morgan is a likable and responsible guy: attentive, well-intentioned, and serious about his job. He would like to believe Mongrel is the same, but he's becoming aware that he's more aggressive, fun-loving, and a bigger risk-taker in his heroic identity. He's unsure if that's simply because he feels freer as Mongrel or if his transformation is more than merely physical.

PRINCESS

REAL NAME: Jessica Prentiss

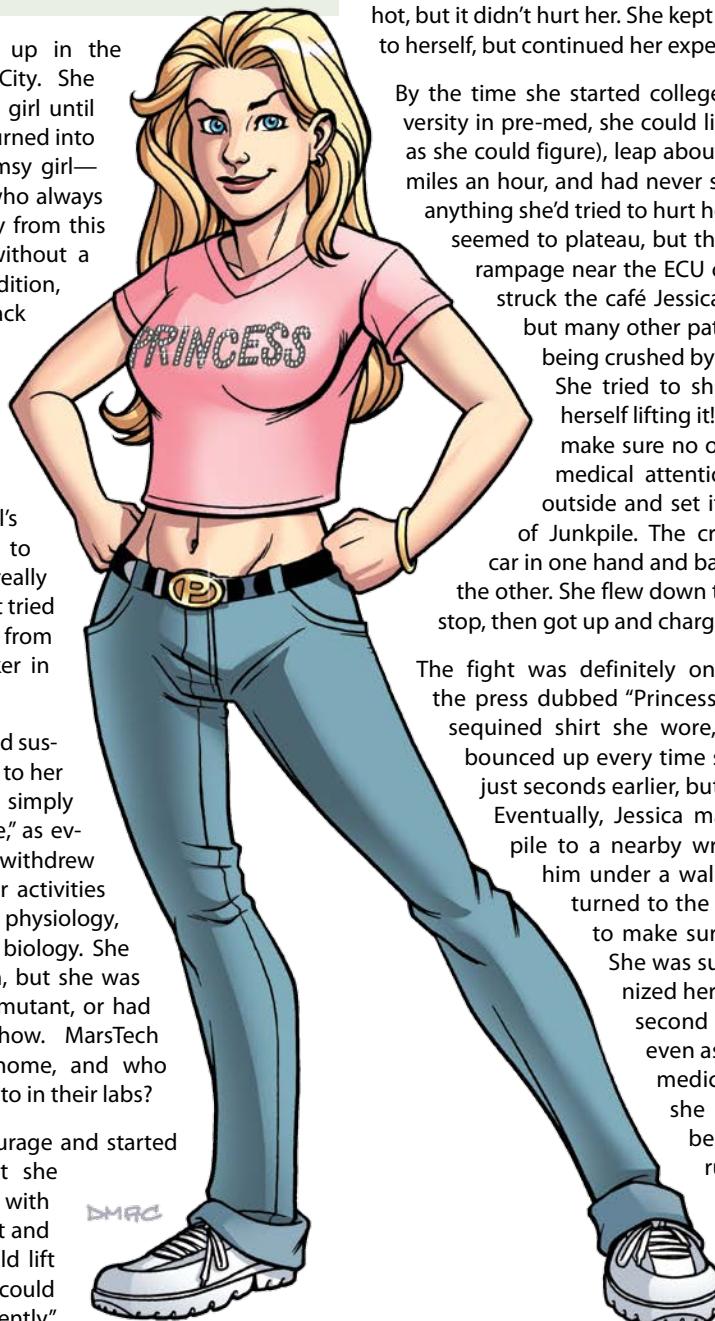
OCCUPATION: Student, pre-med

BASE: Emerald City

Jessica Prentiss grew up in the suburbs of Emerald City. She was a cute, precocious girl until puberty hit, then she turned into a painfully gawky, clumsy girl—all legs and elbows—who always managed to walk away from this accident or that fall without a scratch on her. In addition, despite her relative lack of exercise, she was incredibly physically fit. She was always the fastest and strongest in gym class, which brought her to the attention of her school's coaches who all tried to recruit her. She wasn't really interested in sports, but tried a few of them and went from novice to record-breaker in no time.

Jessica wasn't stupid and suspected there was more to her success at sports than simply being a "natural athlete," as everyone called her. She withdrew from all extra-curricular activities and started studying physiology, medicine, and mutant biology. She didn't know for certain, but she was pretty sure she was a mutant, or had been mutated somehow. MarsTech wasn't far from her home, and who knew what they got up to in their labs?

She worked up her courage and started experimenting. At first she starting working out with her brother's weight set and within a week she could lift as many weights as she could pile on. Then she "accidently"



POWERS & ABILITIES

Mongrel's powers all stem from his bestial nature. He's stronger, faster, has more endurance, and is more aware of his surroundings in addition to being able to perceive in ways he can't in his human form. In both forms he recovers faster than he did before he gained his powers and seems to have a closer connection with animals.

fell off the roof of her house and nothing happened. She held her hand over, then in, the flames of the family's gas stove; nothing. She could feel the flame, she knew it was hot, but it didn't hurt her. She kept all of these discoveries to herself, but continued her experiments.

By the time she started college at Emerald City University in pre-med, she could lift about a ton (as near as she could figure), leap about 60 feet, run about 15 miles an hour, and had never suffered a wound from anything she'd tried to hurt herself with. Her powers seemed to plateau, but then Junkpile went on a rampage near the ECU campus. A hurtling car struck the café Jessica was in. She was fine, but many other patrons were injured and being crushed by the car and the debris. She tried to shift the car, and found herself lifting it! She took a moment to make sure no one in the café needed medical attention, then took the car outside and set it down... right in front of Junkpile. The creature picked up the car in one hand and batted Jessica aside with the other. She flew down the street, skidded to a stop, then got up and charged Junkpile.

The fight was definitely one-sided; Jessica, who the press dubbed "Princess" because of the pink sequined shirt she wore, took a beating, but bounced up every time stronger than she was just seconds earlier, but it still wasn't enough.

Eventually, Jessica managed to lead Junkpile to a nearby wrecking yard and trap him under a wall of cars. Then she returned to the scene of the rampage to make sure everyone was okay. She was surprised no one recognized her; they didn't give her a second look. The paramedics even asked if she needed any medical attention because she looked like she'd been trapped in the rubble. Stunned that her activities were being ignored, but secretly thrilled she wasn't being mobbed by the

PRINCESS

PL10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FAT	INT	AWE	PRE
12	12	5	3	6	2	2	2

POWERS

Fast: Speed 4 (30 MPH) • 4 points

Leaping: Leaping 7 (900 feet) • 7 points

Resilient: Immunity 5 (Cold, Heat, Pressure, Radiation, Vacuum); Impervious Toughness 8; Regeneration 2 • 15 points

Unrecognizable: Feature 1 (No one can tell Jessica and Princess are the same person) • 1 point

ADVANTAGES

All-out Attack, Attractive, Diehard, Extraordinary Effort, Improved Initiative, Inspire 2, Interpose, Power Attack, Ultimate Effort (Toughness checks), Well-informed

USING PRINCESS AS A VILLAIN

Princess is the ultimate party girl. She's out at the bars every night pursuing the next high and pushing the envelope however she can. She's a thrillseeker and danger junkie of the highest order. Most of the time she's happy to find her boy for the night, have some fun, then spend the next day looking for more trouble to get into. She particularly enjoys joyriding, which usually ends after a high-speed run through the streets of Emerald City in a fantastic crash she casually walks away from.

What she wants or needs, she either takes from her boy-toys or, really, anyone. The last person who refused her—a particularly stubborn old bitty behind the jewelry counter at the mall—was dangled from the top floor of the mall's three-floor atrium until she relented. When the police arrived, Princess had already melted back into the crowd as mousy, little Jessica and walked away unseen.

press, she recovered her bag from the coffee shop and walked home.

That was over a year ago and since then Princess has made a handful of appearances around town, usually near ECU, which has led many to theorize the heroine is a student at the university, but so far no one has been able to find her. For her part, Jessica is happy to have a private life with Mitch while being able to help out as Princess when she's needed.

PERSONALITY

Princess is a bombastic and powerful personality. Her appearance makes her the center of attention and she's naturally helpful and supportive. When not operating as Princess, Jessica is a shy and mousy geek girl who enjoys anime, the latest computer games, and reading. She actively cultivates the differences between her two identities in an effort to make them distinct personalities. Regardless of which identity she's in at the moment, she's

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +9

Unarmed +8 Close, Damage 12

Thrown Object +6 Ranged, Damage 12

DEFENSE

DODGE	8	FORTITUDE	12
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PARRY	8	TOUGHNESS	12
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WILL	8		
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POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	88	SKILLS	11
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POWERS	27	DEFENSES	13
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ADVANTAGES	11	TOTAL	150
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COMPLICATIONS

Identity: Jessica doesn't talk about the fact that she's Princess with others because if she does, it breaks the "spell" that keeps people from recognizing her.

Motivation—Doing Good: Princess aspires to be a genuinely good and helpful person and can't keep from helping when she sees trouble. She tries to do the right thing as much as possible.

Power Loss: Princess' powers are tied to her confidence and ability to take on challenges. When she falters, so do her abilities, leaving her ranks reduced, even to those of an ordinary woman.

Relationship: Jessica is in a serious, long-term relationship with Mitchell Allen, who's aware of her dual identity and tries to "help" her however he can. They are in constant contact by phone and text.

USING PRINCESS AS A SOLO HERO

On her own, Princess is something of a media darling. She draws a lot of attention when she battles a supervillain or stops a natural disaster. Her tendency to just disappear suddenly afterwards only adds to her mystique. She has the opposite problem of a solo hero like Mongrel, various ambitious fame seekers and power-brokers want to hitch their wagon to her rising star. The fame has gone to the young lady's head, but only somewhat. She's still smart, capable, and well-intentioned. She's just a bit more likely to show up on a talk show or magazine cover than her Sentinels' version.

This increased media exposure presents an interesting opportunity for Princess. Realizing she can use her fame for good, Princess helps found or support a number of charities and nonprofit institutions. She's particularly interested in those which help protect young women and help them realize their potential. Such efforts are accompanied by slogans like "There's a Princess inside every young woman." Princess' secret identity of Jessica Prentiss may even work for such a group; which would, of course, be unaware their spokesperson and mousy little Jessica are one and the same.

a smart, confident young woman who wants to make something of herself.

POWERS & ABILITIES

Princess' powers revolve around her enhanced strength, speed, and resilience. While she has the build of a tallish, but fairly average-sized young woman, she's a physical powerhouse. In addition to her powers, she's quite bright and is excellent at motivating those around her to perform better. With mentoring, she may become an excellent leader.

The secret to Princess' powers lie in being challenged. Her strength, speed, and invulnerability have increased in sudden bursts over the years in response to outside dangers and threats. In theory there's no upper limit to her power, but for now she seems to have hit a plateau.

The one thing Princess really doesn't understand about her powers is the fact that when she's not "being" Princess, people simply don't recognize her. People close to her, or to whom she's told about her role as Princess, can see her for who she is, but everyone and *everything* else view Jessica and Princess as completely different people.

ROCKY

REAL NAME: Rocky Jones

OCCUPATION: Former entertainer

BASE: Emerald City

Rocky was born with his powers and quickly given up for adoption. He spent his childhood as a ward of the state and spent a lot of his time in government labs where he was poked and prodded so scientists could learn more about mutations—he was even featured on the cover of TIME Magazine because of his role in helping science (and the world) understand more about mutants.

Shortly after all this publicity he was approached by a television producer who wanted him to star in a new show. It was supposed to be about a mutant orphan who came to live with a wealthy industrialist and his family. Rocky was told it would open doors for him and show everyone what it was like for people like him to live in the world. Rocky was young, but he liked that idea.

"Freakin' Out!" was an absolute hit! Rocky played the precocious mutant perfectly and it didn't hurt that he was actually a pretty cute kid, even if he was made of stone. His catchphrase, "I'm gonna knock your block off!" (with lower lip extended comically) is still quoted by people, even those with only a passing familiarity with the show. From the time he was eight until he was almost 15 he played the eponymous Rocky Jones. Until the accident.

When he hit his teens, his strength grew exponentially, seemingly overnight. He broke things constantly and one day he accidentally turned to point at something and knocked his female co-star, Diana Williams, across the stage and broke her jaw, neck, arm, and a few ribs. The media sharks went into a feeding frenzy and Rocky was quickly labeled dangerous, out of control, and even accused of punching Diana in a fit



ROCKY

PL10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FRT	INT	AWE	PRE
12	14	2	-2	6	2	0	2

POWERS

Powerful Legs: Leaping 4 (120 feet); Speed 3 (16 MPH) • 7 points

Stone Man: Density 3 (Feature 3; Weight 1,600 lbs.); Immunity 11 (Aging, Cold, Critical Hits, Disease, Heat, Poison, Pressure, Radiation, Suffocation (30 minutes, must hold breath), Vacuum); Impervious Toughness 10 • 24 points

Strongman Tricks: Array (10 points), All effects are AEs of Strength Damage

- **Groundstrike:** Burst Area Damage 10, Limited—Rocky and targets must be in contact with ground • 1 point
- **Thunderstomp:** Burst Area Affliction 10 (Resisted by Fortitude; Vulnerable, Prone), Instant Recovery, Limited Degree, Limited—Rocky and targets must be in contact with ground • 1 point

SKILLS

Athletics 2 (+14), Expertise: Perform 4 (+8), Intimidation 4 (+8), Perception 6 (+6), Persuasion 2 (+6), Ranged Combat: Throwing 8 (+6), Stealth 2 (+4)

ADVANTAGES

All-out Attack, Benefit 3 (Status: Big in Japan, Status: Former celebrity, Wealth: Well-off), Close Attack 2, Connected, Diehard, Great Endurance, Improved Grab, Improved Smash, Interpose, Languages 1 (Japanese), Power Attack, Takedown, Ultimate Effort 2 (Toughness checks, Fortitude checks)

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +2

Unarmed +8 Close, Damage 12

Throwing +6 Ranged, Damage 12

DEFENSE

DODGE	6	FORTITUDE	14
PARRY	6	TOUGHNESS	14
WILL	6		

of rage. Rumors flew about an illicit affair, about drugs and involvement in mutant supremacist causes. The show was quickly shut down and Rocky was on his own.

He tried for years to get back into the business and spent a fair amount of time in his 20s in Japan, guest-starring on talk shows and participating in crazy game-show stunts that not only paid him a living wage, but also taught him the extent of his full strength. He is still quite popular in Japan.

For most of the last few years, Rocky's spent most of his time alone in his basement apartment (built to withstand his strength and weight), sometimes venturing out for a coffee or burger at nearby eateries. He is known and well-liked by the locals, but whenever he goes out, some non-local always cracks a joke, so he doesn't go out much.

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	76	SKILLS	14
POWERS	33	DEFENSES	10
ADVANTAGES	17	TOTAL	150

COMPLICATIONS

Accident: When Rocky cuts loose he tends to tear things up, sometimes damages the ground just by walking, and generally causes a lot of collateral damage.

Fame: Rocky is well-known as a former celebrity and can't go anywhere without being recognized or approached by fans.

Motivation—Responsibility: After years of listening to the people around him, Rocky has decided to take his destiny into his own hands and use the powers he's been given to help people.

Reputation: Rocky is regarded as a has-been. He used to be a famous entertainer, especially when he was a child, but now he's washed up and people never let him forget he used to be somebody.

USING ROCKY AS A VILLAIN

Rocky is a bitter, angry man. He feels he was made into a sideshow freak and tossed away when he became inconvenient. After living in obscurity for years, he decided to take out his frustrations on the world. He takes whatever he wants and crushes anyone who gets in his way. He enjoys lording his power over everyone and loves to cut loose—for the slightest provocation. People who bring up his role (or tagline) on *Freakin' Out* really make him very, very angry.

USING ROCKY AS A SOLO HERO

Solo Rocky is more like a super-celebrity than super-hero. He still has his agent, does public appearances for cash, and is getting his own reality TV show. Rocky mugs for the camera and often calls the media himself before entering a fight to maximize his media exposure. He posts status updates to social media sites after or even during such battles. He often has at least two lawsuits brewing: one against him and one by him. He still has the specter of the scandal that cost him his child-actor career in the background, but he knows the public loves a comeback.

Despite this, Rocky is a good guy. He really does work to help people, gives generously to charities, and tries to keep his stony hands clean. It's just that he's also a bit of a jerk and considerably more cynical and bitter than his Sentinel version. These problems make him hard to take at times.

An additional option for Rocky is for him to be a big superhero idol overseas. Rocky is very popular in Japan already and this version is even more beloved. Instead of tooling around Emerald City he spends time fighting robot ninjas and giant monsters in downtown Tokyo by day and doing bizarre commercials and game shows by night. Either solo version of Rocky could have extra ranks in Status and Wealth.

Recently, while fighting off another bout of the blues, Rocky decided he was done with his past. He called his agent, fired him, got up, and started taking nightly walks around the city. He ignored the honking cars and the people yelling, "I'm gonna knock your block off!" and looked for ways to help. Since he's started going out he's helped the fire department with some fires, stopped an out-of-control car, and broken up a number of drunken, late-night fights. Some people have started to take note, but many believe he's trying to jumpstart his dead career. Rocky doesn't care what they say. He'll be out there every night.

PERSONALITY

Rocky has many reasons to be bitter: he's a has-been and he knows it, he's never had a real girlfriend, he looks like a freak, he can't have a regular job, and his mere presence is a danger to everyone around him due to his sheer physical power. And for years he *was* bitter. Recently, however, he realized none of that matters. He's decided he's going to make a difference in the world; fame doesn't matter, the fact that he's a joke to so many people doesn't matter,

the only thing that matters is helping people and making things better—and he's going to do it, even if everyone makes fun of him the whole time.

POWERS & ABILITIES

Rocky has a genetic "twist" that was obvious when he was born; he looks like he's made of slate-gray stone. His features and contours are angular and over the years he's grown stronger, "rockier," and more impervious to harm. As a child he could lift hundreds of pounds, then thousands, and now, in his 30s, he's able to lift around 100 tons. He's had some training in how to fight and harness his strength, so he has a few tricks up his sleeve. Rocky doesn't know it, but he's effectively immortal; his body stopped aging a few years ago.

ALLIES

Rocky has an agent, who he recently fired because he's no longer interested in a career as an actor. Due to his past fame he's known to almost everyone, but he doesn't really have any close friends or allies.

THE ROOK

REAL NAME: Jack Cooper

OCCUPATION: Retired dotcom entrepreneur

BASE: Emerald City

Jack Cooper's parents were successful lawyers who worked with large multinational corporations, which meant a lot of travel. Jack grew up as a jet-setter and absorbed everything he could about everyplace they went. He especially enjoyed martial arts and trained in a number of styles over the years. By the time he was in his teens he was attending a college prep school and was quickly accepted to a well-respected tech school.

After school he and some friends started one of the many dotcom search engine companies. He saw the way things were going and sold his interest in his company. By the time he was 26, he was a multi-millionaire looking for something to do "in his retirement." He toyed with politics, but couldn't make much headway. He entertained thoughts of starting another company, but nothing he saw inspired him.

Then he saw the Freedom League in action on one of his trips to Freedom City. He was particularly impressed by the Raven, who held her own against foes who completely outclassed her in power. Later when doing some reading on her he came across a rare interview in which she said, "There's a lot of injustice in the world. There are a lot of... predators. I want to show people things can be better; that just because something is unfair today, doesn't mean it needs to be unfair forever. I want to live in a just world, so I work every day to make that a reality. I think we all do in our own way."

The next day Jack Cooper went into his workshop and started designing, he also increased his time in the gym

and hired a series of trainers to get him into the best shape of his life. Finally, after a couple of years of intense training and a fortune spent to secretly build his wings, cowl, and base of operations, the Rook hit the streets, to help make a just world a reality.

PERSONALITY

The Rook can be intimidating when he needs to be, but most of the time, he's friendly, easy with a smile, and has a demeanor that puts people at their ease. He's a natural leader with the charisma to command the attention of a crowd and the confidence to look comfortable in any situation. When in costume he tends to take things more seriously than the other members of the Sentinels, but that's because he doesn't have powers to fall back on, just his own intelligence and natural abilities.

USING ROOK AS A SOLO HERO

Rook as a solo hero changes almost not at all. He's still out there with his training and gadgets fighting the good fight. Without his teammates to balance out his desire to bring the corrupt to justice he may become a bit more grim and gritty, but this need not be the case.

Since Rook, for all his training and wealth is still human in a world of superhumans, it's possible that without a team of heroes to back him up he seeks to recruit some assistance in the form of a sidekick. The possible sidekicks include a robotic bird with a number of abilities or a human partner with a similar costume and bird-themed motif, either of which are named Talon.

THE ROOK

PL10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FRT	INT	AWE	PRE
3	3	5	5	8	5	2	3

POWERS

Cowl: Senses 3 (Extended Vision, Low-light Vision, Radio), Removable (-1 point) • 2 points

Wings of the Rook: Flight 5 (60 MPH), Subtle, Wings; Movement 1 (Safe Fall), Removable (-2 points) • 6 points



EQUIPMENT

Arsenal: Array (9 points)

- **Flash Bombs:** Ranged Cumulative Burst Area Affliction 3 (Resisted by Fortitude; Impaired, Disabled, Unaware), Limited to Vision • 9 points
- **Explosive Talons:** Ranged Burst Area Damage 3 • 1 point
- **Fighting Staff:** Strength-based Damage 2, Reach 1 • 1 point
- **Taser Talons:** Ranged Affliction 4 (Resisted by Fortitude; Dazed, Stunned, Incapacitated) • 1 point
- **Throwing Talons:** Strength-based Ranged Damage 2 • 1 point

Flashlight: Feature 1 (Illumination) • 1 point

Mini-Tracers: Feature 1 (Tracking) • 1 point

Headquarters: The Roost • 15 points

Size: Large; **Toughness:** 10; **Features:** Communications, Computer, Concealed, Gym, Infirmary, Laboratory, Library, Living Space, Power System, Security System, Workshop.

SKILLS

Acrobatics 3 (+8), Athletics 5 (+8), Intimidation 5 (+8), Investigation 1 (+6), Perception 6 (+8), Ranged Combat: Throwing 8 (+13), Stealth 9 (+14), Technology 5 (+10), Treatment 1 (+6), Vehicles 1 (+6)

ADVANTAGES

Benefit 4 (Multi-millionaire), Close Attack 7, Defensive Roll 3, Equipment 6, Inventor, Jack-of-all-trades, Move-by Action, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Well-informed

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +5

Unarmed +15 Close, Damage 3

Fighting Staff +15 Close, Damage 5, Reach 1

Throwing Talons +13 Ranged, Damage 5

DEFENSE

DODGE	14	FORTITUDE	8
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PARRY	14	TOUGHNESS	6/3
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WILL	8	†Without Defensive Roll.	
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POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	68	SKILLS	22
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POWERS	8	DEFENSES	26
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ADVANTAGES	26	TOTAL	150
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COMPLICATIONS

Honor: The Rook won't take unfair advantage of anyone in or out of combat. He believes in right and wrong no matter the circumstance.

Identity: No one knows the Rook is actually Jack Cooper and he plans to keep it that way for as long as he can.

Motivation–Justice: The Rook is looking to bring justice to those who deserve it—whether it be the victims of a crime or the perpetrators.

USING THE ROOK AS A VILLAIN

For Jack Cooper, life wasn't just easy, it was like taking candy from a baby. He grew up the handsome child of two well-to-do lawyers, captained his high school football team, went to the best schools, traveled the world, indulged every interest, from martial arts to computers to just about anything else he could think of. His parents encouraged his interests, mostly to keep him out of their hair, especially after their messy divorce. When he left college he started a successful dotcom company, turned it into an "overnight" success with a few years work, sold his interest in the company for millions and looked for the next thing to fill his time.

One of his business associates made no bones about his past as a C-list supervillain, a gadgeteer named Thinkfast, and he talked with fondness of those days and the challenges, dangers, and payoffs they held. The idea grew slowly, but steadily, in Jack's head; he was going to become a supervillain. Not some lame, second-stringer, but a real threat. He'd be the thinking man's supervillain; able to organize and work with others, but perfectly capable of working on his own as well. After a couple of years of training and tinkering, the Rook made his debut as a thief and organizer of super-crimes.

POWERS & ABILITIES

Most of the Rook's abilities are the result of years of training, physical conditioning, and study. He is an excellent hand-to-hand combatant as well as being skilled with his arsenal of gadgets. The Rook's cowl and wings are

advanced pieces of technology granting him enhanced senses and the ability to fly using anti-gravity engines and wings for propulsion. Even if his wings are restrained the anti-gravity functions enough to allow him to float safely to the ground. This feature has already saved his life a couple of times.

ULTRAMARINE

REAL NAME: Veronica Steeley

OCCUPATION: Entrepreneur

BASE: Emerald City

The history of Ultramarine began decades ago with Veronica Steeley's father, Capt. Gil Steeley. Gil was a Navy diver for years before he retired and began work as a salvage operator and inventor. Both endeavors proved quite successful and he and his family were able to travel the world (on salvage jobs) while still maintaining a permanent home in Emerald City.

Due to his interest in diving, he began innovating designs for diving suits. It started simply enough, slight adjustments and additions to a standard wetsuit, but then he began developing specialized pieces of equipment that allowed divers to stay under longer, dive deeper, lift more, and on and on. This

process took years, during which he and his wife Marcia had a daughter, Veronica. When Veronica was only ten years old, Marcia died in an accident during a salvage operation. Gil and Veronica were devastated, but Gil surprised everyone by marrying Elene Kostas within a year of Marcia's death. Elene's son Bradford, two years younger than Veronica, happily accepted Gil as his step-father.

Veronica never really forgave her father for her mother's death or for remarrying so quickly. Gil, in turn, had a difficult time showing his feelings for Veronica. He always pushed her with his stories about responsibility; that those with greater capabilities also had a greater duty. He wanted the best for her. Her step-mother Elene was a weak and dependent woman compared to her mother, even more so after she fell ill and it became Veronica's responsibility to hold the whole family together and to look after her younger step-brother, Brad.

Brad idolized his step-father, but was always being reminded how Veronica was his superior in every way: "Listen to your sister" ... "Why can't you be more like Veronica" and so on. She was the better swimmer, the better student, the ideal. When Brad's mother passed away, he tried even harder to win his stepfather's approval, but Veronica was always there first. The discipline she chaffed under, he craved. As a teenager, Brad acted out and got into trouble to get attention, and Veronica was always the one to bail him out of it.

So, when Veronica earned college scholarships in engineering, she couldn't wait to leave home and finally have a life of her own, out from under her father's expectations and her step-brother's screw-ups. Brad enlisted in the Navy to impress Gil and managed to earn nothing more than a dishonorable discharge within two years. Veronica, on the other hand, blossomed in her studies, graduated

USING ULTRAMARINE AS A SOLO HERO

The solo Ultramarine is much more involved with the oceans and coastlines on a day-to-day basis. She spends her time assisting researchers, combating smugglers, and battling any number of marine-themed menaces. She is a convenient expert to call on for certain adventures, especially if a PC hero group has no aquatic heroes of their own. Solo, Ultramarine is even more devoted to stopping her brother, Steelhead, and she may come to the player-character heroes to get help dealing with his group, Trident.

Another option is to have Ultramarine more closely allied with the U.S. Navy. Her father was a Navy diver and she has allies and contacts there. This version of Ultramarine has Benefits like Security Clearance and possibly Military Rank (though she might also be a civilian private contractor).

USING ULTRAMARINE AS A VILLAIN

Veronica helped her father slave over the armor for years and slowly hatched a plan to take the old man out of the picture, so she could use the armor for herself. She managed, without too much difficulty, to recruit Brad to act as the heavy. When things went poorly and Brad actually killed the old man, Veronica had a twinge of guilt, but then realized she could use Brad's guilt to blackmail him into donning the other suit of armor and working together to wreak havoc up and down the West Coast. Now Ultramarine and Steelhead are infamous for piracy, smuggling, and illegal salvage operations up and down the coast.

magna cum laude, and went on to grad school. Her visits home became less and less frequent.

On one such visit, Veronica found her father hard at work on his diving suit design, as always. He'd taken on Brad

as an assistant, although he commented that his stepson was nowhere near as capable as Veronica. Her father's work had taken on an unusual sense of urgency Veronica learned Gil Steeley's company was heavily in debt. He needed to show progress on his designs, or he could potentially lose everything. The stress was taking its toll on the older Steeley, who could no longer handle the kind of dives required to test his work.

Veronica offered her help and, together, she and her father were able to make the breakthroughs necessary to get the prototype deep-sea suits functioning. Veronica and Brad tested the suits together, although Veronica understood them better and proved more adept. Veronica was performing a solo test of the newest prototype when

Gil Steeley learned that Branded Management—the financial backers Brad brought in—were interested in turning the suit into a weapon for covert operations. Now that he knew it worked, Brad intended to hand the designs over. Gil forbid it and

they argued. The enraged Brad used his armor's electrical blaster, intending to intimidate his stepfather into giving him the passcodes to the plans. Instead, he gave Gil a fatal heart attack.

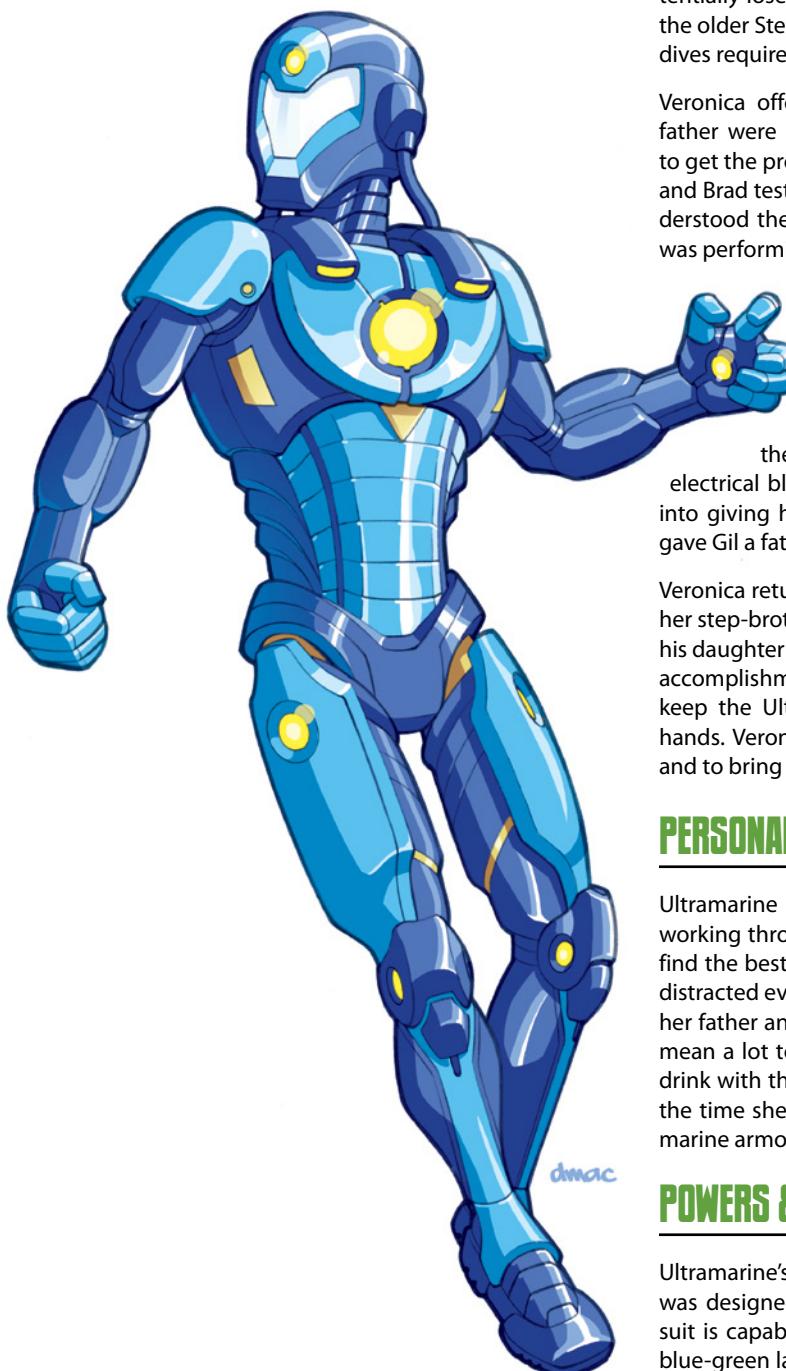
Veronica returned to find her father dying and no sign of her step-brother. Gil Steeley lived just long enough to tell his daughter what happened, how proud he was of all her accomplishments, and to make her promise she would keep the Ultramarine suit from falling into the wrong hands. Veronica swore to use the armor to help others, and to bring Brad and his stolen suit to justice.

PERSONALITY

Ultramarine is driven and serious-minded. She's always working through one problem or another in her head to find the best solution, which makes her seem somewhat distracted even at the best of times. She was very close to her father and still mourns his loss. His old Navy buddies mean a lot to her and she can often be found sharing a drink with them and listening to their stories. The rest of the time she's in her workshop, tinkering with the Ultramarine armor or some other gadget.

POWERS & ABILITIES

Ultramarine's powers all come from her battlesuit, which was designed and refined over years of hard work. The suit is capable of boosting her strength, firing powerful blue-green lasers, and launching what she calls a netline,



ULTRAMARINE

PL10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
10/0*	8	2	2	4	4	2	2

POWERS

Ultramarine Armor: 98 points, Removable (-20 points)

Armament: Array (20 points)

- **Strength Booster:** Enhanced Strength 10 • 20 points
- **Netline:** Ranged Cumulative Affliction 6 (Resisted by Dodge, Overcome by Damage; Hindered and Vulnerable, Defenseless and Immobilized), Accurate 2, Extra Condition, Limited Degree • 1 point
- **Blue-Green Laser:** Ranged Damage 10 • 1 point

Computer Controls: Enhanced Advantages 8 (Close Attack 4, Ranged Attack 4), Enhanced Defenses 8 (Dodge 4, Parry 4) • 16 points

Force-Field-Enhanced Armored Exoskeleton: Enhanced Stamina 6, Feature 1 (Conceals Identity), Protection 4, Impervious Toughness 8 • 25 points

Multi-Environment Turbines: Array (14 points)

- **Flight:** Flight 7 (250 MPH) • 14 points
- **Swimming:** Swimming 7 (60 MPH) • 1 point

Sealed Systems: Immunity 9 (Cold, Heat, Pressure, Vacuum, Radiation, Suffocation, Poison, Disease), Movement 1 (Environment Adaptation—Aquatic) • 11 points

Sensors: Senses 9 (Ranged Accurate Radius Ultra-hearing (Sonar), Direction Sense, Low-light Vision, Radio, Time Sense) • 9 points

SKILLS

Athletics 4 (+14/+4*), Close Combat: Unarmed 2 (+6), Expertise: Navy 1 (+5), Expertise: Science 6 (+10), Expertise: West Coast 6 (+10), Perception 6 (+8), Ranged Combat: Battlesuit Armament 2 (+4), Technology 9 (+13), Treatment 1 (+5), Vehicles 3 (+5)

ADVANTAGES

Benefit 3 (Millionaire), Close Attack 4, Interpose, Inventor, Ranged Attack 2, Ranged Attack 4, Teamwork

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +2

Strength Booster +10 Close, Damage 10

Blue-Green Laser +10 Ranged, Damage 10

Netline +14 Ranged, Snare 6, Resisted by Dodge

capable of adhering to nearly any surface and entrapping its target. However, all those systems are tied to the same power source and she hasn't figured out how to make the boost to her strength permanent, which she thinks would be very useful.

The suit's other capabilities were specifically designed to make it as light and maneuverable as possible and allow it to operate underwater. Its armor is reinforced by a thin force field which is airtight and capable of withstanding extremes of temperature and pressure. It's also equipped with sonar (Ranged Accurate Radius Ultra-hearing) that

DEFENSE

Dodge 8 Fortitude 8

Parry 8 Toughness 12

Will 8 *Without Strength Booster from battlesuit.

POWER POINTS

Abilities 36 Skills 20

Powers 78 Defenses 8

Advantages 8 Total 150

COMPLICATIONS

Enemy: The smuggler, pirate, and illegal salvage operator known as Steelhead is actually Ultramarine's step-brother Brad. The two hate each other and their meetings never end well.

Identity: Ultramarine keeps her identity a secret, and has designed the armor to disguise both her voice and the fact that she's a woman.

Motivation—Responsibility: Veronica wants to live up to the ideals instilled in her by her father, an ex-Navy man who believed the more one could do, the more one should do.

Relationship: In her normal identity, Ultramarine has a large group of friends, including some her age as well as older men who were friends of her father.

VERONICA STEELEY

PL6 • 72 POINTS

Abilities: STR 0 STA 2 AGL 2 DEX 2 FGT 4 INT 4 AWE 2 PRE 2

Advantages: Benefit 3 (Millionaire), Interpose, Inventor, Ranged Combat 2, Teamwork

Skills: Athletics 4 (+4), Close Combat: Unarmed 2 (+6), Expertise: Navy 1 (+5), Expertise: Science 6 (+10), Expertise: West Coast 6 (+10), Perception 6 (+8), Ranged Combat 2 (+4), Technology 9 (+13), Treatment 1 (+5), Vehicles 3 (+5)

Offense: Initiative +2, Unarmed +6 (Close, Damage 0)

Defense: Dodge 4, Parry 4, Fortitude 4, Toughness 2, Will 8

Totals: Abilities 36 + Powers 0 + Advantages 8 + Skills 20 + Defenses 8 = 72

makes it possible for Ultramarine to perceive her surroundings even in complete darkness. Specially constructed turbine engines allow her to fly and move through the water with ease, although Veronica wants to boost their power as soon as possible.

ENEMIES

Ultramarine's step-brother Brad is the armored villain Steelhead. Brad stole an earlier aquatic armor prototype from Veronica's father and accidentally killed him. Veronica won't be happy until Brad is behind bars and Brad won't be happy until he can prove he's better than Veronica—and has the Ultramarine armor for himself.

VICTOR

REAL NAME: Victor Hieronymus Prophet

OCCUPATION: Adventurer

BASE: Emerald City

When they say some people are “born to greatness” it’s usually in retrospect: “He was always destined for great things.” In Victor Prophet’s case, it was true even before he was conceived.

In the 1920s and ‘30s, Doctor Thomas Osiris Prophet, better known to the world as “Doc Prophet, the Man of Marble” was a famous explorer, adventurer, and crime-fighter. Doc was the scion of a long line of men driven by destiny, including his father, Adam Prophet, the Pale Ranger. Perhaps it was his father’s own exploits—including exposure to Magic Mesa and a return from death—that led to Thomas being born an albino, but still possessed of remarkable strength and intellect.

After a long career, Doc Prophet sought to protect the world in a different way. He founded Vanguard, a secret organization devoted to preserving knowledge, peace, and the future of humanity. Among other works, Vanguard hunted escaped war-criminals and fought against a variety of threats, from Nazi experiments gone wrong to mythical monsters and alien beings from other worlds. They also accumulated a considerable store of knowledge and resources.

Although incredibly long-lived, even the legendary Doc Prophet was mortal. He passed on, leaving a legacy of knowledge and an organization devoted to using it. Vanguard, however, was lost without their founder, rudderless. They saw a world plunged into darkness, in dire need of heroes. So the torchbearers of Doc Prophet’s legacy decided to provide one. In Vanguard’s secret laboratories, DNA samples were recombined, cultured and—months later—a

child came into the world who was the genetic offspring of the Prophet line, the success of “Project: Victor.”

Victor Prophet was raised by some of the world’s greatest minds. Under their tutelage, he studied the skills necessary to be the kind of leader the heroic community needed. Taught from birth the values of leadership and teamwork, young Victor was isolated for much of his life, without the company of other children. Times changed, as they do, and the dark times that inspired his birth passed. New heroes took up the cause, while Vanguard raised their charge in secret.

Once he reached adulthood, Victor chaffed under the guidance of his mentors. He was eager to take his place in the world, to do what he had been born for, but Vanguard had become conservative and overcautious. They counseled patience. The right time would come, they said.

Never had Victor wished so badly for the guidance of his father. So he sought out a relic in Vanguard’s Area Five archives called the Sands of Time, which once belonged to his grandfather’s ally, the shaman Broken Crow. The multicolored sands flowed around Victor and showed him confusing images of the past and future, of the long line of Prophets before—and after—him, but one thing was certain: A threat was coming, and the world needed heroes more than ever before. So, that night, Victor left the secret Vanguard haven, to seek his own destiny and the allies he would need to reach it.

PERSONALITY

Victor has surprisingly “old world” manners for a young man; he could easily fit into the 1950s in many regards. He’s forthright, honest, and compassionate, a true “Boy Scout” without



VICTOR

PL10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
5	5	5	5	5	2	2	2

POWERS**Blaster Pistol:** Array (11 points), Easily Removable (-6 points)

- **Blaster Shot:** Ranged Damage 5, Accurate • 11 points
 - **Neural Scrambler:** Ranged Damage 5, Accurate, Alternate Resistance: Will, Limited—Target must have a nervous system • 1 point
 - **Stunner:** Ranged Affliction 5 (Resisted by Fortitude; Dazed and Vulnerable, Stunned and Defenseless), Accurate, Extra Condition, Limited Degree • 1 point
- Physical Training:** Movement 1 (Swinging); Speed 1 (4 MPH) • 3 points

SKILLS

Acrobatics 3 (+8), Athletics 3 (+8), Close Combat: Unarmed 5 (+10), Deception 8 (+10), Insight 8 (+10), Perception 6 (+8), Persuasion 6 (+8), Ranged Combat: Blaster Pistol 3 (+8), Stealth 3 (+8), Technology 3 (+5)

ADVANTAGES

Assessment, Close Attack 5, Daze (Deception), Defensive Roll 2, Improved Initiative, Inspire 5, Jack-of-all-trades, Leadership, Luck 2, Quick Draw, Ranged Attack 5, Set-up 2, Teamwork, Uncanny Dodge

OFFENSE**INITIATIVE +9**

Unarmed +15	Close, Damage 5
Blaster Shot +15	Ranged, Damage 5
Scrambler +15	Ranged, Damage 5, Resisted by Will
Stunner +15	Ranged, Affliction 5, Resisted by Fortitude

DEFENSE

DODGE	13	FORTITUDE	8
PARRY	13	TOUGHNESS	7/5*
WILL	8	†Without Defensive Roll.	

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	62	SKILLS	24
POWERS	10	DEFENSES	25
ADVANTAGES	29	TOTAL	150

COMPLICATIONS

Honor: Victor has a strong (some would say “outdated”) sense of honor and responsibility. He believes in leading by example, helping those in need, and honoring American ideals of law, liberty, and due process. He won’t kill or even take unfair advantage of a helpless foe.

Identity: Victor Prophet has some very large and heroic boots to fill, and keenly feels a responsibility to live up to the standards of the father he never knew, and the deeds of his ancestors.

Motivation—Destiny: Told his life had a purpose from day one, Victor now also has the insight of the Sands of Time to tell him that he has a destiny to fulfill, and he intends to do it.

Quirk—Outsider: Victor was raised apart from mainstream society, so he has some odd blind-spots in his socialization and understanding of modern and American culture.

Relationship: Victor’s relationship with his former mentors in the Vanguard is strained; he feels they have become too secretive and cautious, while they expect him to abide by their rules and guidance.

USING VICTOR AS A SOLO HERO

Solo Victor didn’t flee the Vanguard compound, he left to join the world as their agent. Guided by this secret society he works to lead humanity into a golden age of peace and scientific advancement. Unfortunately, the Vanguard’s long-term focus and detached clinical way of viewing the world makes them a bit “big picture” at times. Because of this Victor is sometimes instructed to allow some scientific mishap to occur or some villain to escape. He usually complies and trusts his mentors, but other heroes working with him might not be so understanding.

Victor working on his own realizes his strengths lie when directing and coordinating the efforts of others. He often recruits various agents from among those he helps and works with. Vanguard sends him some of their own members to support him as well. Solo Victor has several points devoted to Minions, Headquarters, Equipment, and such to reflect his support network and also has the Well-informed advantage.

USING VICTOR AS A VILLAIN

Vanguard may have started with the best of intentions, but gathering knowledge in secret and operating outside the law corrupted the organization. Doc Prophet saw what was happening, but too late, as his “Vanguard Council” decided to replace him with a more... pliable figurehead. So “Project: Victor” was conceived. The head of the Vanguard also commands his own elite cadre of supervillains, some of them empowered by Vanguard’s various experiments and plundered secrets. He may remain a puppet of the Council or turn out to be a more capable leader than they ever imagined.

This background also serves if you want to make Vanguard more of an active villain organization, but keep Victor a hero. Instead of impatience, it was his own deep core of morality that allowed him to cast off the yoke of his makers and mentors and become a hero true to the Prophet heritage, earning Vanguard’s enmity in the process. (For more on Vanguard, see page 61.)

a hint of irony about it. He has a commanding presence and a tendency to slip into giving orders without thinking, especially in crisis situations. He's trained to take charge and to help coordinate people, and generally manages it without coming off as arrogant.

POWERS & ABILITIES

Victor has no super-human powers, although Vanguard science and his Prophet heritage make him about as

physically perfect as a human being can be. He lacks his father's brilliant intellect, however.

Victor is a skilled athlete and a masterful unarmed combatant and marksman. He's also an insightful judge of character and well-trained in working with, and directing, a team.

He "borrowed" one useful item from Vanguard's arsenal: a high-tech blaster pistol with multiple settings, able to fire bolts of destructive force or a neural scrambling beam to stun a target's nervous system.

VORTEX

REAL NAME: Matthew "Matt" McDonald

OCCUPATION: Musician, unemployed

BASE: Emerald City

Matthew McDonald has always been lucky. Even when his parents were killed in a car accident when he was in high school (which wasn't so lucky, really), he came away with a nice little trust fund he's still living off and got to move from the middle-of-nowhere Iowa to one of the up-and-coming cities on the West Coast, Emerald City. He's spent most of his life coasting from one thing to the next with no thought to making a plan for the future. When he got into trouble, he always managed to find a way out of it.

In college, pursuing a degree in Marketing, or Political Science, or Philosophy, or whatever he told people when they asked, he landed a work-study position as, what amounted to, a night watchman for one of the physics labs. He spent most of his time sitting behind a desk reading, doing homework, listening to music, and watching YouTube, until one night when he heard noises from one of the labs.

Upon investigating, Matt found an apparently deserted lab lit by a glow coming from a mirror-like disk of energy held inside a circular frame. Then he heard words coming from the disk in a low, rumbling voice, "We're losing synchronicity, Professor. If we're to do this, it has to be now! Professor?" Matt, more than a little surprised, managed a, "Hello?" and the voice on the other side growled, "Ah, there you are. Beginning transmission!" At that, Matt remembers a stream of energy coming from the silvery disk, a shadowy, inhuman shape, and after that, nothing.

He awoke moments later with a raging headache, feeling as if he'd been literally put through a wringer. Above him was one of the professors who worked at the lab. He seemed upset. The man, Professor Zediker, known as "Professor Zed" to the staff, explained that Matt had accidentally been exposed to dangerous energies that might be fatal and that it was very important that Matt do exactly what he said if he wanted to live. Matt felt like he had little choice and agreed.



Matt took a moment to collect his thoughts, trying to will the buzzing in his head to go away, and as he did so he realized it was something he could tap into. With a little push he opened his first vortex in front of his right hand and mistakenly obliterated the device that had previously held the glowing disk. The professor went from upset to furious, but Matt didn't notice; he was exploring the power he could feel suffusing his body.

The more he concentrated, the more he understood what he could do, like moving an arm he'd just remembered he had. Within minutes he was teleporting across the room and he knew he could do so much more.



VORTEX

PL10

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FRT	INT	AWE	PRE
0	3	3	4	0	2	2	0

POWERS

Quick Change: Feature 1 (Quick Change) • 1 point

Shunting Field: Enhanced Defenses 22 (Dodge 11, Parry 11)
Linked to Protection 3, Sustained • 25 points

Summoning Vortices: Array (26 points)

- **Projection Vortex:** Blast 12, Variable Descriptor (Any environmental descriptor) • 26 points
- **Wide-Angle Vortex:** Cone Area Damage 10, Variable Descriptor (Any environmental descriptor) • 1 point
- **Wind-Tunnel Vortex:** Close Range Cone Area Move Object 6, Limited Direction: Straight Away, Linked to Cumulative Cone Area Sustained Affliction 6 (Resisted by Fortitude; Hindered, Prone), Instant Recovery, Limited Degree • 1 point

Travel Vortices: Array (27 points)

- **Personal Vortex:** Teleport 8 (1 mile), Accurate, Change Direction, Increased Mass 2 (200 lbs.) • 27 points
- **Dimensional Vortex:** Movement 3 (Dimension Travel 3: Any Dimension), Increased Mass 2 (200 lbs.) • 1 point
- **Long-Range Personal Vortex:** Teleport 8, Accurate, Change Direction, Extended, Limited to Extended (250 Miles), Increased Mass 2 (200 lbs.) • 1 point
- **Vortex Portal:** Teleport 8 (1 mile), Accurate, Change Direction, Distracting, Portal, Tiring • 1 point

Vortex Platform: Flight 1 (4 MPH), Platform • 1 point

SKILLS

Deception 8 (+8), Expertise: Musician 2 (+4), Expertise: Student 2 (+4), Perception 6 (+8), Persuasion 6 (+6), Stealth 6 (+9)

ADVANTAGES

Accurate Attack, Luck 2, Power Attack, Ranged Attack 4, Redirect, Taunt, Ultimate Effort (Dodge checks)

Then the professor was back at his side, telling him not to use the power frivolously, that it was dangerous and there was no way to know how it was affecting him. Zediker went on to explain that Matt would need to get some equipment that could mean the difference between life and death for him. Over the course of the next few weeks, Vortex made his debut... as Emerald City's newest super-powered thief.

At first, Matt didn't question his activities; he was doing what he had to in order to save his life, but after news of his thefts hit the news, he started to have doubts. While still struggling with his actions, he ran into Ultramarine and Xeno, who'd figured out where he was likely to strike next. After trading a few panicked shots with the heroes, Vortex threw up his hands and asked for help.

The heroes accompanied him back to Professor Zed's lab to find it in ruins and the professor missing. And at the center of all the destruction were the ruins of another portal device....

Since then, Vortex has been working with the Sentinels—who managed to make Vortex's legal problems go away

OFFENSE

INITIATIVE +3

Unarmed +0	Close, Damage 0
Projection Vortex +8	Ranged, Damage 12, Variable Descriptor
Wide-Angle Vortex —	Close, Cone Area Damage 10, Variable Descriptor
Wind-Tunnel Vortex —	Close, Cone Area Move Object 6 Linked to Cumulative Cone Area Sustained Affliction 6, Resisted by Fortitude

DEFENSE

DODGE	14/3*	FORTITUDE	8
PARRY	11/0*	TOUGHNESS	6/3*
WILL	8	*Without Shunting Field.	

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	28	SKILLS	15
POWERS	85	DEFENSES	11
ADVANTAGES	11	TOTAL	150

COMPLICATIONS

Enemy: Professor Zed, if he's still alive, and whatever came through the second portal are keeping an eye on Vortex and are looking to reclaim his powers.

Identity: Vortex is very careful about keeping his identity as Matthew McDonald a secret and he worries Professor Zed will return to ruin it for him.

Motivation-Thrills: Vortex enjoys using his powers and the exciting and unpredictable situations he gets into when he uses them.

Reputation: Vortex's string of thefts were well publicized and he still suffers some backlash from people who don't quite buy his conversion to the side of the angels.

by promising to watch over the young man. His private life is a bit of a mess and he's dropped out of college until he can get things straightened out. In the meantime he's living off the stipend from his trust fund and doing the whole singer/songwriter thing at the bars around town. At least the commute is easy!

PERSONALITY

Vortex is always saying things without thinking and is always surprised when people "take things the wrong way." He honestly doesn't expect people to be offended, because he doesn't get easily offended. Despite his obnoxiousness, at heart he's a good guy and regrets his past actions while being forced to work for Professor Zed. He's vowed to make up for his past and wants to do good, not only for himself, but to show his teammates their faith in him isn't misplaced.

USING VORTEX AS A VILLAIN

As opposed to being basically a good person, the villainous Vortex was a scofflaw and troublemaker from day one. When he lucked into his powers, his partnership with Professor Zed led to a truly impressive string of thefts that never let up. Vortex continues to use his powers to take what he wants and get away Scot free. That included ducking out on his erstwhile "partner," who is looking to even the score.

USING VORTEX AS A SOLO HERO

Without the support of teammates Vortex is in a bit of trouble. He's wanted for the various thefts he committed early in his career and has no easy way of getting the authorities off his back. He tries to help people and behave like a hero, but he usually finds himself running from the authorities at the end of a battle. However, the Emerald City police don't chase the young hero too hard—not that they could catch him anyway.

Another option is for Vortex to be using his criminal past and heroic inclinations to go undercover among the city's underworld. He works out a deal with the cops that gives him immunity for his crimes in exchange for helping bring down a major villain group or syndicate. This version of Vortex has Expertise: Criminal 2 (+4). He also behaves as if he's a villain, hiding his true heroic mission from all but a select few law enforcement personnel.

POWERS & ABILITIES

Vortex opens vortices to other dimensions and uses them to teleport himself and others as well as "shunt" energies into other worlds. In addition, he can open smaller portals to a variety of dimensions and allow their contents to stream forth as blasts of destructive energy. His Projection Vortex and Wide-angle Vortex both have the Variable Descriptor, allowing him to fire blasts of fire, heat, lightning, cold, radiation, or any other attack with an "environmental" descriptor. He doesn't have any control over the energies that spill forth, but he's able to vary the intensity of the attacks significantly. Using Accurate Attack and Power Attack, Vortex can shift his attack and damage values from +13 to attack with 7 damage all the way to +3 to hit with 17 damage!

Vortex has the ability to travel to other dimensions, but he doesn't like to because he has no real knowledge of

other worlds and thus no idea where he'll end up. The excitement of not knowing where he'll end up is a rush, but one too many jaunts into vacuum, searing heat, or other dangerous environments has taught him it's better not to push his luck with that particular ability.

ENEMIES

Vortex is afraid Professor Zed (see *Threat Report*) and whatever it was that came through the second portal are both out to get him... and he's right. Zed hasn't raised his head since disappearing, but it's only a matter of time. As for the thing that came through the portal, Vortex doesn't know it, but that's the creature known as Cerebrus Rex (see *Threat Report*). One day soon, the two of them will come after Vortex and try to reclaim the power he's "stolen."

XENO

REAL NAME: Malak Krin/Kim Kamada

OCCUPATION: Political dissident/biologist

BASE: Emerald City

The inhabitants of the planet Rulu IV (ROO-loo) were a peaceful people, just achieving spaceflight and exploring their solar system, when the shifting fronts of the centuries-old conflict between the Lor Republic and the Grue Unity came to their world. A Grue fleet surrounded the planet, and the Ruluan authorities surrendered after the invaders demonstrated their might by vaporizing a population center. So began what the Ruluans called the Occupation, and the formation of the Resistance.

Malak Krin joined the Resistance after Grue troopers killed one of her brothers while the other, a government minister and collaborator, chose to do nothing. Fighting against the telepathic and shape-shifting Grue was a

daunting task, even for a race like the Ruluans, possessed of considerable strength and energy projection abilities. Rebel scientists sought ways to neutralize the Grue's advantages or, at least, even the playing field. An isolation of Grue neoplasm had promising potential. Several rebels volunteered to test it but, before they learned its effects, the Grue and Ruluan government forces raided their base. Many of the rebels were killed, while others were captured. All Malak can recall from that terrible day is the blaster fire, the screams and the smoke, the strange sensation of her body slipping away from her, terrible pain, and then long, deep darkness....

Biologist Kim Kamada didn't know what to make of the strange artifact at first, found embedded in the volcanic soil of a Pacific Northwest rainforest while she was investigating reports of mutated animals in the area. It was a metallic cylinder, similar in size and shape to a SCUBA tank, but covered with years of mineral deposits. She put

XENO**PL10**

STR	STA	AGL	DEX	FGT	INT	AWE	PRE
10	10	2	2	6	2	2	2

POWERS**Flight:** Flight 7 (250 MPH) • 14 points**Xenobiology:** Array (20 points)

- **Eye Beams:** Ranged Damage 8, Accurate 4 • 20 points
- **Intangibility:** Insubstantial 4 • 1 point
- **Shapeshifting:** Morph (Humanoid Forms), Continuous • 1 point

Xenoform: Protection 4, Immunity 10 (Life Support) • 14 points**SKILLS**

Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+10), Expertise: Biology 6 (+8), Intimidation 6 (+8), Perception 6 (+8), Technology 6 (+8)

ADVANTAGES

Extraordinary Effort, Interpose, Languages 1 (Ruluan), Move-by Action

OFFENSE**INITIATIVE +2**

Eye Beams +10 Ranged, Damage 8

Unarmed +10 Close, Damage 10

DEFENSE

DODGE	6	FORTITUDE	10
PARRY	6	TOUGHNESS	14
WILL	8		

POWER POINTS

ABILITIES	72	SKILLS	14
POWERS	50	DEFENSES	10
ADVANTAGES	4	TOTAL	159

COMPLICATIONS**Identity:** Xeno maintains a human identity as Kim Kamada and wants to protect both her own secret and the fact that the real Kim Kamada perished some time ago.**Motivation—Responsibility:** Xeno strongly believes it is her responsibility to user her powers to help others.**Prejudice:** Xeno's alien appearance and origins sometimes provoke mistrust and hostility.**Reputation:** Malak Krin was a rebel on her homeworld, a history that may come back to haunt Xeno. Additionally, Xeno is an alien on Earth, and there may be those looking to capture and exploit her.

it aside and notified the proper authorities, planning to investigate further. Then, during the night, she heard—or felt—it calling out to her. Almost in a trance, Kim touched the cylinder and received flashes of memories not her own: alien vessels skirting the mountains and forests, an overload rupturing a vital system, the offending part jettisoned into the night, crashing to Earth....



dmac

Light flared at her camp, and Kim squinted, blinded. Was it the Feds? The police?

"We'll take that," a voice said, weapons raised and trained at Kim. She ran, and they opened fire. One of the shots must have hit the cylinder, because it ruptured and burst. The attackers backed off as a humanoid shape unfolded from within. "The Xeno!" one of the men yelled, just before laser-

USING XENO AS A SOLO HERO

As a solo hero and displaced alien-human hybrid, Xeno is more focused on restoring her human half to her rightful form and then discovering a way to get home... if her home still exists since she has no idea how much time has passed since her incarceration. This version of Xeno is more of a "science hero," focusing on space adventures, explorations to strange places, and investigating reports of bizarre aliens and artifacts. On her own, Xeno seeks allies with great scientific knowledge and compassion for her mission. These need not be other heroes. In fact, she might befriend many scientists and researchers, assisting them with their work in exchange for helping find her homeworld or further understand her altered alien form. Xeno has some scientists who count as Contacts but is otherwise unchanged.

Alternatively, Xeno leaves the planet to find her way home rather than pursuing such endeavors on Earth. This version of Xeno is encountered on cosmic adventures that take PC heroes to nearby star systems and beyond. Xeno likely has a Vehicle in the form of a spacecraft and, possibly, an alien sidekick or companions she's picked up along the way.

USING XENO AS A VILLAIN

Malak Krin might not have been a well-intentioned rebel, but a terrorist seeking to overthrow her planet's government. Even if her intentions were good once, decades of imprisonment and the effects of the treatment used on her have warped her mind. She killed and replaced the human Kim Kamada who found and freed her from her prison and now intends to use her powers to conquer this backwater mudball of a planet, or at least cobble together sufficient resources to leave it behind and return to the rightful conquest awaiting her among the stars, ideally leaving the Earth a blasted wasteland behind her.

like beams flared from the alien's dark eyes. The men fled, taking their injured with them and leaving behind a very confused visitor, and a mortally-wounded Kim Kamada.

Malak tried to save her but, when she did, she instead found her shifting, unstable form was merging with Kim's. Memories that were not her own flooded her mind and, suddenly, she was Kim Kamada. At least, she looked like her, sounded like her, and could remember her whole life. But inside, she was still Malak Krin, lost and alone and very far from home. Since then, Xeno has adopted Kim Kamada's identity and used it to get her bearings. She also uses her amazing abilities to aid the people of her new home while searching for information about what has become of her homeworld, her people, and the Rebellion.

PERSONALITY

Xeno is a study in opposites. Quiet, cool, and reserved, she is also a fierce advocate of freedom and willing to fight to protect those in need. She believes in the peaceful ideals of her people, but also that there are things worth fighting to protect.

Xeno is also deeply conflicted as to her true nature: Is she truly Malak Krin, only possessed of the memories (and sometimes appearance) of the human Kim Kamada, or some merger of Kim and Malak into a new entity that is Xeno? Although Xeno has the complete memories of a human life, she does not always understand them or have the same emotional connection to them. They are like someone else's experiences. This can make her interaction with humans difficult at times.

POWERS & ABILITIES

Xeno's is physically powerful, can fly, fire laser-like beams from her eyes, and is able to change her shape to take other humanoid forms, which she uses to assume her Kim Kamada form. She's also able to "shift" out of phase with reality to pass through physical objects.

Her flight, shapeshifting, and intangibility are apparently the result of the treatment Malak underwent with the Ruluan Rebellion, or later experimentation by the Grue. Xeno is not certain.

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